keys to independence:
cutting-edge program brings peer support to the Guest House

The Guest House is excited to introduce our newest permanent supportive housing program, Keys to Independence. The program, which is administered in collaboration with the Milwaukee County Housing Division, officially launched in January of 2014. Keys to Independence consists of placing forty individuals into permanent, independent housing and providing them with Peer Support services to help tenants maintain their housing and become self-sufficient.

The Keys to Independence staff has done an exceptional job of establishing the program, and has already filled twenty-six of the forty available spots. As with any new undertaking, there have been challenges. However, Terri Ellzey, Lead Clinical Case Manager, says that planning and implementing a new program has been immensely rewarding: “It’s been like starting from sketches and beginning to add color making a coherent, vibrant picture.”

What sets Keys to Independence apart from other housing programs is its use of Peer Support Specialists, a model of treatment that’s gaining significant traction in the recovery support field. Peer Support Specialists have recovered from mental health or substance abuse challenges themselves, and have also received formal training in recovery support. The specialists are able to combine their unique set of recovery experiences with solid, evidence-based skills in order to support peers living with mental illness. This model promotes a more mutual, as opposed to hierarchical, relationship between service provider and client.

The Peer Support Specialist model helps clients to live independently, but know that they have a peer who is actively engaged in helping to sustain their well-being. Reflecting back on the first six months of the program, Ellzey says, “It’s been humbling to see the gratitude that our clients have expressed. Seeing someone’s face light up when we hand them keys to their own apartment—that gives me a shot of adrenaline.”

Kind donations of ‘getting started kits’ have helped Keys to Independence clients get settled into their new apartments. Help the ‘keys’ staff continue the good work; the program is most in need of bedding (full and twin) and basic cleaning supplies.

*To make a donation, contact: Anne Olson at 414-316-2025, or email anne@guesthouseofmilwaukee.org*
Dear friends, Nothing greets a person more warmly than a big smile. The other day as I arrived at the Guest House, a former guest stopped me on the sidewalk and was grinning from ear to ear. He said, “Cindy, you’ll be so proud of me!” He went on to tell me of his recent successes.

This former guest, who we’ll call Thomas, had overcome homelessness through determination and participation in the many programs from the:

executive director

and services offered by the Guest House. After several months in shelter, he transitioned out on his own, finding a job and moving into his own place. He has since become engaged and has plans to start school in the fall. His long-term goal is to become a counselor and return to the Guest House or a similar setting to assist others, just as people had helped him.

Thomas was most proud to share that he had returned to the Guest House as a volunteer, offering a spirituality group for our guests. At this bi-monthly meeting, men come to discuss their faith and its role in their own personal journey out of homelessness. He smiled broadly once again and told me how great it felt to help others in a setting that had been so significant to his own journey.

As we carry out our mission to provide shelter, housing, education and services to Milwaukee’s homeless who seek to transform their lives with dignity and purpose, smiles are present each day. Thank you to all of our supporters who join us in making these smiles brighter.

With heartfelt thanks,

Cindy
This year marks our 12th annual Guest House Open and we are celebrating with a beautiful new location and exciting entertainment! After enjoying a hearty lunch, come play 18 holes with us on the prestigious championship course at North Shore Country Club on Monday, August 25th.

Golf not your thing? Come for the evening portion of the Guest House Open and get your picture taken with Ahman Green, the Packer’s all-time leading rusher! You can ask him your burning questions from his days as a Packer or win the chance to have dinner with him. You can also revel in the sounds of Piano Brew, a dueling piano band that is sure to delight. Bring home some amazing items from our silent and live auctions, and then sit down for a delicious first class dinner. All proceeds from the event benefit the Guest House of Milwaukee.

Sponsorships are also still available! To sign up for the Guest House Open, please visit www.guesthouseofmilwaukee.org; costs are $200/golfer or $50/person for the evening events. Questions? Contact Anne at anne@guesthouseofmilwaukee.org or 414-316-2025.

On a recent family vacation to the California coast, Sophie Gosetti and her sister noticed many people experiencing homelessness and living in terrible conditions. Instead of ignoring the issue, they began to talk about what they could do to make a change. Upon returning home to the Milwaukee area, Sophie and her family learned about the Guest House of Milwaukee:

“So every month my sister and I invite our friends over to make sandwiches to donate to the Guest House of Milwaukee. Everyone brings a loaf of bread and a pound of meat. We can make over 300 sandwiches in less than an hour. It seems like a lot and looks like a lot of sandwiches, but that provides lunch for all the people in the program for two days.

What I learned from this experience is that anyone can make a difference and those people can be us.”

This year’s Match Day, March 13th, was a great success for the Guest House. We thank the Greater Milwaukee Foundation for once again hosting this 24-hour, online giving event. We were even featured, with the Foundation’s own Janel Hines, on TMJ4’s Morning Blend.

With the generous support of donors, the city-wide event raised over $3 million. The Guest House doubled last year’s total, raising $141,000! Your gift helps sustain our quality programs.

Once again the wine, food, and beautiful views from the Pilot House at Discovery World made for an elegant night at our 2014 Wine Not? fundraising event.

Special thanks to presenting sponsor, Jomela Properties, as well as Bartolotta Restaurant Group for the delicious food, and Sendik’s Food Markets for the fine wines.

The event helped raise funds and awareness for the cutting-edge programming available at the Guest House.

Over 150 volunteers from Marquette University and the surrounding community gathered to kick off the 2014 growing season of our Cream City Gardens at the 2nd Annual Great Garden Kickoff on Saturday, April 26th.

Volunteers built new pathways between our garden rows, installed new compost bins, cultivated the soil in our garden beds, and planted the first seeds of the season.

Thank you to all who participated!
calendar of events

june
6/25 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration

july
7/23 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration

august
8/25 - Guest House Open - Golf, Dinner, & Auction
8/27 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration

september
9/18 - Cream City Gardens Harvest Festival
   with special guest Mayor Tom Barrett
9/24 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration

october
10/7 - Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
10/27 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration

november
11/8 - Key Classic Concert (tentative)
11/19 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration

december
12/17 - Graduation & Birthday Celebration
12/25 - Shelter Holiday Party

donation needs

+ Items for “Getting Started Kits” (larger quantities)
  - Twin Sheet Sets
  - Pillows
  - Silverware sets for 4
  - Broom with dustpan
  - Mop with bucket
  - Dishtowels
  - Bath towels
  - Washcloths
  - All purpose spray cleaner
  - Sponges
  - Dishsoap
  - Laundry Detergent

+ Items for the Cream City Garden
  - wheelbarrows (2)
  - pitchforks (2)
  - spade shovels (4)
  - square shovels (4)
  - steel garden rake (2)
  - weed barrier (4 large rolls)

Questions about donations? Contact Anne Olson by calling 414-316-2025 or email anne@guesthouseofmilwaukee.org