

September 2018



# REACH News

## BRIEF NOTES

Welcome back to our readers. We hope that you had a truly refreshing summer.

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**Rally for Public Assistance Justice** hosted by Rochester Homeless Union on Tuesday, September 11, at 5 p.m. at the Monroe County Office Building, 39 W Main St. Rochester.

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The Episcopal Church of St. Luke & St. Simon Cyrene, 17 S. Fitzhugh Street, Rochester is holding a community forum addressing **Housing Challenges in Rochester.** Saturday, October 13, 2018 3:00-5:00 p.m.

## REACH Happenings:

The Reach Team has been meeting regularly during these summer months and we have had some exciting developments that include:

- The closing and storage of our 2017/18 REACH Home furnishings.
- Exploring the idea of the creation of a REACH Tiny Home Village.
- Helping our organization grow from a team of volunteers to one that is run by a Board with clarity around our mission and purpose.
- Exploring the need for and potential locations for a REACH Home 2018/19

Read about each of these items below.

We are blessed with the twenty or so Team members who are keeping the vision of REACH alive and contributing to its growth. Each time we meet one of our Team offers a reflection to help us focus on what we are about. At our last meeting **Michael Van Aalst** offered a reflection we would like to share with all of you:



*Homelessness, it effects almost every person on the planet. From a family member, friend or even someone you pass on the street from day to day. Listen, things go wrong, rent goes up or you lose your job. Some people even have a physical or mental disability preventing them from getting their life together. The reasons are endless, but the results are all the same.*  
*Homelessness*

*Helping the homeless is near and dear to my heart because in 2012, I had a brush with homelessness for a short while. The daily feeling of fear having only the clothes on your back and not knowing where you are going to get your next meal or lay your head at night. When I had nowhere to turn it was lonely, depressing and scary. A certain loss of dignity, not being able to go to your family or friends because you have either burned your bridges with all of them or had no bridges to burn in the first place, feeling completely alone. That feeling can drive people to do things that they wouldn't normally do.*

*Being homeless makes life very unpredictable and that unpredictability is scary, most then turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with the pain and hurt of being homeless. You*

*apply for every job you can find, but have no leads, and have no phone to leave for them or home address. "What if I do find a job, I have a police record?" They worry that they won't be hired if they don't pass a background check or what to put on an application that asks if they have prior felonies or have even been convicted. These are the worries of someone who has lived a hard life and cannot see any way out of it. Many often turn to flying a sign at stoplights, on freeway passes and on corners of streets, scrapping, canning, stealing, or worst selling their body for money, often turning around and spending the money firstly on drugs and alcohol and whatever's left on what they should have put all the money towards to begin with.*

*Helping people is just in my blood, my day doesn't begin right if I'm not volunteering or doing something that is helping people. I started working at Asbury Church about two and a half years ago, where every morning I get to go in and feel like I am making a difference. Everyone knows me, and I get along with almost everyone. Trying to help the people I see every day to bring them up to where they can help themselves.*

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## Reach Tiny Home Village

envisions the creation of a Tiny Home Village to be built on two undeveloped St. Paul Street sites and a third site owned by the City of Refuge Mission. It is hoped that this village will offer

permanent supportive housing to chronically homeless men and women within a mixed housing complex of other village residents. This village concept will encourage residents to engage in communal life, enhance the quality of their lives, interact with service providers, and assist them in becoming contributing citizens of our city.



At this point we have had two meetings with the Pastor and People of the City of Refuge Mission who own the middle lot and they have responded favorably to our vision. We have met many neighbors to explain our concept and we have had a significant meeting with leaders of City Departments to whom we presented our proposal. We were encouraged to continue working on our idea and to solicit input from neighborhood associations.

We have entered into an agreement with Prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh in the Dept. of Architecture at the Rochester Institute of Technology to create a design of the tiny homes and the layout of an urban village.

Under the leadership of Team member John Curran site preparation has begun with volunteer support from students at Brockport and University of Rochester. See photos below.

Thank you, Students, – have a great academic year!



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## REACH Organizational Development

As reported in the last Newsletter the REACH Team is actively working on becoming a fully incorporated entity under NYS Law. We appointed a Nominating Committee to discern who from the Team would be part of the founding board. We have now entered into an agreement with CauseWave, to help us clarify our emerging mission and our expectations of Board members. You may wonder why we are doing this? Here are some of the reasons:

- We have been very successful as a voluntary organization in opening and running emergency shelters. At the same time, some of our team wants to explore how we can make a real difference by creating permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless.
- We have become very aware of the need to become our own 501c3 in order to

secure funding and make grant applications.

- By having a smaller Board, we will better manage ways to guide and direct the volunteers who have helped to make REACH the organization it has become.

Our goal is to have a named board by the end of the year.

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## REACH Home 2018

– we continue to be in the discernment stage. What will be the need? How will new NYS regulations affect us? We are in conversation with Dimitri House about returning to North Union Street should we agree that a 2018 REACH Home is needed. And we are fortunate that most of our needed furnishings have been stored at this site. We will keep you posted. Given the current overflow at the House of Mercy it is more than likely we will need to open an emergency winter shelter. Please go to <http://reachadvocacy.org> for the latest information about volunteer opportunities and other needs.

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