

April 2018



REACH News



A big thank you to Dimitri House, Inc., and especially to their Executive Director, Laurie Jones-Prizel for the hospitality REACH has enjoyed this past winter.

We wish them well in their future dreams for this home.



A Big Thank You

to all our supporters, volunteers, and staff.

Come to a BBQ in your honor on Wednesday April 18 at 4:00 p.m. at REACH Home and Dimitri House.

Please RSVP to reachrochester@gmail.com by April 13.

Closing schedule

General cleaning etc. – Beginning on April 16 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, & Saturdays, from 9:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. *after our* guests have vacated the space. Coordinated by John Curran who may be reached at 585-747-2324.

REACH furnishings etc. –During this past winter REACH Home has had many donations in kind and we plan to give our guests who are moving into their own apartment clothing and other items as they start their lives afresh. Clothing that is left over will go to Mary’s House and major appliances, furniture, and bed supplies will be kept for future use. We have been generously given permission by Dimitri House, Inc. to keep these items at the house we have been using until plans for the re-modeling of that commence.

Housing Open House on March 28

For the first time, REACH had a Housing Open House for our guests and guests from Dimitri House and St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. The open house featured a few property managers (East Coast Commercial Properties, Rochester Development Group, and Torres Turn Key), a couple housing programs (CCSI and PCHO), and DHS Emergency Housing. A special thanks also goes out to Laurie at Dimitri House for having guests over to Dimitri for a lunch. Overall, the inaugural Housing Open House was a great success thanks to the great providers and guests that showed up, along with the ever-present REACH Managers. Hopefully, this model can be utilized in our community in the future. It was a great way to build relationships, streamline process, and fill vacant unit. Thank you again for your support.

REACH Team meetings are scheduled for April 9, 16, & 23 at 2:00 p.m. at Dimitri House. All are welcome.

REACH members come from all over our community and belong to different faith groups but we share this in common:

We believe that all people should be shown hospitality and be treated with respect and dignity.

We invite your support of this work.

REACH has its own T-Shirts which may be purchased by contacting Sarah Peters at reachrochester@gmail.com for \$10 or \$12 for XXL and above.



As we close.....

We are thankful for all of our staff who have helped to give REACH Home a real sense of community and care, especially our House Manager, Shannon, and Assistant Managers Lulu and Oscar. Without all of your work and kindness, REACH Home would not have been possible. We wish Oscar a speedy recovery following his hip surgery on April 18. Shannon and Lulu will stay on our staff until the end of April to be sure that all of our paper work is finalized.

Meet our guests

Steven is now 50 years old. He was raised in Brooklyn by a good mother and father who did their best for him. He was the youngest child and has two older sisters and a disabled older brother. During his high school years, he became a boxing fan. Some of the boxers he recalled were Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Robinson, and Pernell Whitaker. At some point his parents divorced and while his mother did her best he chose to start drinking and smoke pot. When he was 18 years old he had his first job as a messenger and was introduced to crack. This ultimately led to an addiction and his mother sent him to a rehab program. He remained clean for several years.



In his twenties he was married and has four children, Eboni, Steven Jr., Imani, Jalil. He and his wife moved to the Binghamton area to raise their children. Later, they came to Rochester to be near his wife's sister. At some point their marriage began to fail. Steven admits that his drinking did not help, and they went through times of separation. In Rochester, Steven found easy access to crack cocaine as a way to deal with his depression. On one occasion he had a fall and suffered a brain injury. During all of this time he continued to work on and off, but when his wife went on DSS he was ordered to pay child support. When they finally separated, he began to get in arrears.

Steven came to REACH Home in November of 2017 looking for a way out of his addicted life. In December he entered into a rehabilitation program through Hope Haven and returned to REACH determined to begin life again. He has re-established a relationship with his children and is working on being friends with his wife. All of them now reside in Rochester.

At REACH Steven is learning to be a contributor to the life of the community and is always ready to pitch in when needed. He keeps his corner of his bedroom immaculate and attends his group counselling sessions each Monday through Friday. He really believes that he is ready for a new life, but he is fearful at the same time. Because of his past behavior, he owes a lot of back child support and agrees that he needs to pay this back. But he fears that when he does find work and has his own place to live, he will be driven back into despair because of his economic struggles. He is hoping that the court will see that he has enough to live on.

Steven found in REACH a place of support that has rekindled his hope. He is now connected to a church community and helps to keep the building clean. He is also delighted with his renewed relationship with his children and experiencing the benefits of being free from drugs.



Will is 21. He was born in Rochester and went to Rochester City Schools for elementary school and then went to Webster and Greece for Middle and High School years. He was raised by a single mother. His father was a drug addict and lived on the street. At times his father would give him drink and drugs when Will was with him. Will and his mother fought a great deal over his rebellious behavior. This became worse when his mother’s boyfriend joined the household. Will left at 15, spent some time with his grandmother or with a friend. At one point he and his friends lit a fire in an abandoned house and it caught fire. Will was taken into custody and placed at Hillside. At the time he did not like the regulations that he had to learn to live by. Looking back, he feels that his parents failed to teach him the rules of living and now he wants to live his life in a responsible manner, but he is finding it hard to know what values to live by and wishes he had been taught at an earlier stage.

When he was a first grader his father was living with a woman whose daughter chose to beat up on Will. This is all part of a failed familial life and has led to Will being diagnosed with PTSD as well as being ADHD. He began to suffer from terrible nightmares and anxiety. At some point he became eligible for SSI support, but his mother kept this from him, while he was on the streets fending for himself.

Now he wants to take responsibility for his life. Will had been sleeping behind a dumpster on a church property. The church gave him food but as the cold weather moved in he came to REACH. Here he has been helped to locate an apartment and he now has the keys! He is excited about the prospects of this new beginning. He has a job for the summer doing roofing and is hoping to begin working on his GED. He is concerned about his long-term finances—currently from Rapid Rehousing his rent will be covered for the next two months, but then his rent will be \$600/month and with SSI he will be responsible for \$200. What happens when his summer job ends, is the tough question for him.

He has found someone to call when things get tough and is tempted to relapse. He knows that he has a huge challenge ahead but really wants to succeed. He is thankful to the staff at REACH and has learned a lot from them about personal responsibility. Some of his fellow guests have been a challenge, but that has added to his coping skills. He is also doing much better with his mother and is in regular contact with her now.

Comments on Steve’s story by Peter W. Peters, Chair of REACH Advocacy

I am so very happy for Steven, but I share his fears. As I listened to his story I found myself asking, while it may not be the intention to create a punitive system, is it sensitive to the uphill battle facing people in recovery as they re-enter society? What is the role of compassion in helping people like Steven to re-gain his self-respect enabling him to become a productive member of society and a loving member of his family and community? All too often our social welfare system is experienced by those with little or no power to be more punitive than compassionate. And I suspect that people like Steven simply give up and return to old habits as the easiest way out. Letting go of a lifetime of drug use does not happen overnight. It will take time and patience for Steven to get his life back to the place he desires to be. He will need to finish with his group meetings to become work ready, but then once working he faces the challenges of maintaining sobriety, paying all of his bills, as he continues to work on his familial relationships. Our systems need to support such efforts, not put up road blocks! *This is a forceful argument for the need of Permanent Supportive Housing for chronically homeless persons and that is what some members of REACH are wanting to help create.*

REACH Advocacy will be engaging in a robust conversation in the next few months as to how we will achieve our mission:

REACH Advocacy advocates for and with chronically homeless persons in the Rochester, NY area, seeing that all are treated with dignity and respect.

REACH Advocacy collaborates to create safe, financially sustainable housing options to meet the needs of chronically homeless individuals by ensuring services needed and encouraging mutual care.

We invite all of our readers to be a part of this conversation. Team meetings are open to all persons who have been a part of our efforts to meet the needs of the chronically homeless men and women of our region.

Questions that team members have been wrestling with:

- With the increasing regulations coming from the State, can REACH do another winter shelter?
- Is there some alternative to what we have done for the past three years?
- What role can REACH play in helping to develop Permanent Supportive Housing for the chronically homeless?
- What is the best structure for REACH to carry on with its mission?
- To implement our by-laws, we need to elect a board. What kind of board are we looking for and what kinds of people do we want on this board?
- Is there any potential for a tiny home project in Rochester?
- How can REACH collaborate with the HSN Advocacy Work Group to encourage systemic change in the care of the chronically homeless men and women of the county?

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REACH Advocacy
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