

May 2018



REACH News

Homelessness is not a choice
it is a moral failure of society
to provide secure and
affordable housing for all
people.

We are signatures to the UN
Declaration of Human Rights
which says: *Everyone
has the right to a
standard of living
adequate for the
health and well-
being of himself and
his family, including
food, clothing,
housing....* (Article 25
Emphasis added)

REACH Happenings:

- REACH Home closed on April 16 and we said farewell to our remaining guests.
- REACH Advocacy is now moving on to explore how we might continue to serve the homeless of our region. *Please see Andy Carey's report on page 2 of this Newsletter. Our next meeting will be in the front room of REACH Home at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, May 14.*
- Under the leadership of John Curran, we have begun the clean-up and storage of our linens, bedding, and other items. Until Dimitri House is ready to gut the building we have been invited to store our items at the house.
- **We express our thanks to Dimitri House Inc., especially their Director, Laurie Prizel, for the gracious way in which we were hosted in their building.**
- **And we thank all of our staff especially our House Manager, Shannon Coleman, and our Assistant House Managers, Lauren Christ, and Oscar Brewer for a job well done.**
- Peter Peters, our co-chair attended the Housing First Partners Conference in April where he presented a paper, *Housing as a Human Right*. To read the full report go to the #5 on the [Resource](#) page on our Website.

Local Homelessness News:

- **The Cadillac Hotel is closing**, the new owner is planning on transforming this building into upscale apartments. It is one more plan to gentrify the city and marginalized poor people. Some of the residents in the hotel have been there for upwards of twenty years. REACH is joining with the House of Mercy and St. Joseph's House of Hospitality to consider ways to protest the total gentrification of the city of Rochester. Cities need to be places of diversity where people from every economic strata of society are able to flourish.
- **South Avenue Encampment** is facing an eviction by the landowner, Spectrum. Pat Dupont of St. Joe's House of Hospitality is coordinating an "eviction watch" and members of REACH are participating in this. Any interested person can message Pat at: patrickdupont@gmail.com
- **[City-Wide Tenants Union](#)** – Read about the work of this local tenant's union as they organize to protect their rights. Let us join in the movement for a Housing Court to help bring justice to those who live on low wages and are often the victims of unscrupulous property owners.

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National Homelessness News:

- The author of **Evicted**, Matthew Desmond is coming to Rochester, May 9. His research is helping to fuel the fire that surrounds the paucity of public affordable housing in this nation. Here in Rochester there are as many as forty eviction cases heard each day. To read more of Desmond's national study [click here](#).
- Sadly, the current leadership of HUD does not see the housing crisis for what it is, a crisis of justice. See this disturbing report in The Hill of what is happening at HUD: *Robbing the Poor of Public Housing*.

Forming the Future Vision of REACH - Andy Carey, Co-Chair

On April 24th, I had the privilege of being a part of an amazing meeting of REACH members as we begin to look to the future of the organization. It was privilege because I was with a group of people *who truly value treating all people with the dignity and respect they deserve as human beings*. As we discussed the future, it was easy to see that the values of REACH will remain intact because it is the right thing to do and *it works*. REACH has learned a great deal about homelessness and housing over the past three years. The REACH Team is unique: it is an organization of community members of all different walks of life who now have the practical knowledge from hands-on experience, combined with theoretical knowledge from seminars, videos, articles, etc. to continue this important work with our homeless neighbors.

Over the past three winters, REACH has created low-barrier winter shelters for individuals that have a difficult time staying in other emergency shelters due to symptomologies of various mental health, substance abuse, and even physical health issues. REACH has had over 400 men and women guests over this time period and has appropriately housed roughly 40% of those guests. I say "appropriately" housed because I am happy to say that the vast majority of the former REACH Guests are still housed. This winter, REACH had 115 male guests and 50 female guests. Even with some of the growing pains of our community transitioning to a new centralized housing subsidy system, REACH was able to assist with appropriately housing roughly 42% of the guests. Once again REACH showed it could put its values into action and produce amazing results.

As our team discussed the future, the lessons of the past three winters continued to pop-up. It became evident that *developing relationships with guests, staff, and volunteers is considered a key to success and vital to what REACH does in the future*. The subjective ideas of relationships and values need to be combined with objective work. The group appears to be focused on becoming an official 501c3. The work of becoming a 501c3 will formalize the REACH organization while also giving REACH the ability to better control its future. As *a 501c3, how will REACH move into the future?*

During the April 24th meeting, it became abundantly clear that REACH wants to house the difficult to house people in our community. REACH has a calling to do this through hands-on actionable initiatives, as well as focused advocacy efforts that assist with creating systemic change. REACH will create a unique value-based way to support chronically homeless people in a variety of housing/shelter options, while continuously advocating for change. REACH is in the midst of the process of creating our future vision now. We hope all interested people will join REACH on this journey. It is truly amazing to see what a group of committed community members can do.