

JULY 2020

Perseverance ❤️ in a Pandemic

Life changed for all of us when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March. Sanitization, hand washing, mask wearing, and physical distancing quickly became standard procedure. With your generous love and support, Home Sweet Home services never stopped and our intake screenings continued.

New routines were established to enhance safety including daily temperature checks for all residents and employees. Volunteer activities were temporarily suspended. Staff and shelter residents stepped up to enhance sanitization of all areas of the shelter. Even some our Veterans assisted with cleaning and packing up food boxes. Policies were put into place to allow for as much physical distancing as possible, such as spacing beds apart and limiting use of common areas.

"We were even able to provide residents with Wi-Fi access for school aged children to complete their e-learning assignments," says Debbie Reese, HSHM's Client Services Director. "Even counseling, telehealth, and support group meetings were held online which gave our residents the ability to access

services that were no longer available in person. It meant a lot that despite all of the changes and unknowns, they were still able to connect with others."

Meal services were restricted to shelter residents and employees only. Staff worked diligently to pack sack lunches for others in the community. We distributed 40 to 50 sack lunches every day.

your love
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endure this
pandemic.



As another safety measure, we temporarily closed the Bread For Life Food Co-op. HSHM substituted access by providing emergency food boxes to anyone in need. We distributed 30 to 50 emergency food boxes each day three times a week.

Your love has helped us endure this pandemic. Donations of face masks, boxed lunches, additional supplies, and financial gifts poured into the shelter. Even though we stayed apart, we came together.

"This is real love in action," shares Debbie. "It's such a blessing knowing that all we have to do is say the word and you spring into action to provide what we need. Our residents often see themselves how these needs are met and have expressed how thankful they are. We couldn't provide the services we have without your support. Thank you so much!"

The need is still great as we continue through summer. Together we can meet the ongoing need for safe shelter, healthy meals, and hope for a brighter future. Thank you for providing a hand up to those we serve when they need it the most. We are praying for you and wishing you health and happiness!

MISSION STATEMENT

Home Sweet Home Ministries demonstrates Christ's love through innovative approaches that instill hope, restore lives, and build community.



A Message from Mary Ann

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

— Galatians 6:9

The last several months have truly tested all of us in our efforts to “not become weary.” We are weary from the constant barrage of news about the toll that COVID-19 is taking on our world. We are weary from all the restrictions, limitations, and losses that we have experienced.

I am pleased to report that at Home Sweet Home, our staff have **NOT** become weary in doing good. Every day our staff have faithfully reported to work, worn their face coverings, washed their hands, and done their jobs, covering the front desk, preparing and serving meals, providing case management services, and sanitizing our building.

Just as important, our staff have encouraged our shelter residents through it all. Most of our residents have experienced significant past trauma and losses in their lives. Dealing with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic has made it even more difficult for them to cope. Many have endured losses of employment, social connection, and access to desperately needed services. Some have struggled with maintaining sobriety and mental stability. Your prayers and financial support have enabled our staff to respond to these needs. Thank you!

Some of you have contributed your stimulus checks to Home Sweet Home Ministries. Some of you have dug a little deeper in your pockets to ensure that our residents have their needs met. Many of you have included our residents and staff in your prayers. Thank you for not becoming weary and not giving up.

Blessings,

Mary Ann Pullin

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Recipe for Change



On a typical day in our dining center, guests are happily served by volunteers. A variety of options awaited on the salad bar and six people could sit around a table to enjoy a meal. As the COVID-19 pandemic progressed, that routine all changed.

“We learned to adapt for everyone’s safety,” says Carol Schrenk, HSHM’s Kitchen Manager. “We’re still serving meals to our residents and staff. As a primary safety measure, we closed the dining center to all non-shelter guests and offered sack lunches.”

Without volunteers, staff faced a heavier workload. “One of the biggest adjustments we had to make was working with less since we didn’t have volunteers coming in,” shares Carol. “Staff worked tirelessly to serve our residents.”

Several other precautions were also put in to place. All self-serve options were removed. The salad bar was taken down and drinks dispensed behind the counter. Tables were spread apart, with seating limited to two people per table to help maintain safe distancing. Our dining center may not look the same, but hope continues to be served up.

“Restaurants, farmers, and others in the community have been a real blessing to us,” says Carol. “Their generous donations have allowed us to dish out some terrific meals including meatloaf, pork chops, and ribeyes. It’s been wonderful to serve such great food to those in need.”

Help us continue to fill hopeful hearts. Please check out our urgent needs list under the ‘Participate’ tab on our website at www.hshministries.org. Thank you!

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Mission Mart Closes

Home Sweet Home Ministries' Mission Mart has been a mainstay in Bloomington since 1988. Its mission was to provide revenue to support the services at Home Sweet Home and to be a source for quality used items, employment, and volunteer opportunities.

Like many retail establishments, Mission Mart saw declining sales due to the popularity of online shopping. Additionally, we were faced with escalating personnel costs due to the increase in the Illinois minimum wage. It became economically unfeasible for us to continue operating Mission Mart, so we made the difficult decision to close the store on March 21.

Our salvage operation has also been curtailed due to the suspension of the salvage market in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our donation bins are still in Bloomington-Normal and are being serviced regularly. We hope to re-open our salvage operation in the future. We will post updated information on our website and Facebook page when we are ready to resume our salvage operation. Thank you for your patronage of the Mission Mart and your generous donations to our salvage operation.

Community Heroes



The outpouring of donations during this time has been amazing. Several organizations and businesses have donated food and other items. One farmer donated almost 500 pounds of fresh beef. Another volunteer donated 70 pillowcases for kids coming into the shelter. Many local restaurants and businesses, including Jason's Deli, Hy-Vee, and Avanti's have provided boxed lunches. We received grants from CIBM Bank, First Farmer's State Bank, and the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation COVID-19 Response Fund to help with shelter operations. Many community members rallied to help us surpass our May Community Challenge goal of \$60,000! It is beautiful to see our neighbors coming together to offer so much support. Your kindness is truly appreciated. From all of us at Home Sweet Home, Thank You!



Running Strong

Like many other events this year, Run For Hope was canceled in March. Even though the race did not happen as planned, Fleet Feet Bloomington kindly offered registered participants the option to donate their race fee. Home Sweet Home is pleased to share that \$3,700 was raised! Many thanks to Fleet Feet Bloomington in addition to all the sponsors and participants for your generous support. Keep running strong!

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Todd Keller joins HSHM Staff

Todd Keller has assumed the position of Donor Relations Coordinator at Home Sweet Home Ministries. Todd is the Lead Pastor at Point of Change Church of the Nazarene in Bloomington. He holds a master's degree in pastoral leadership from Olivet Nazarene University and a doctor of ministry degree in community transformation from Bakke Graduate University.

Todd has a passion for connecting with the community. Todd remarks, "Your generosity, faithfulness and thoughtfulness to Home Sweet Home has really inspired me. I'm so excited to join you on the team. I look forward to becoming better acquainted with you. Feel free to contact me anytime at tkeller@hshministries.org or (309) 319-2839."



Current Needs

Each day Home Sweet Home strives to provide individuals and families with access to food and other basic needs.

Help brighten someone's day. Please help us collect the following items:

- Bottled Water
- Boxed Meals
- Canned Vegetables
- Canned Soup
- Pasta
- Hand Sanitizer
- Sanitizing Wipes

Donations can be dropped off at the shelter at 303 East Oakland Avenue in Bloomington at any time. Thank you!

A Hand In Prayer

During these ever changing times, we cannot thank you enough for all of your prayers for HSHM staff, clients, and volunteers. We ask for you to keep in prayer:

- Frontline workers keeping us safe during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Local churches exercising care and caution as they continue to serve others during these challenging times.
- Our volunteers as they train to keep safe and healthy to serve in our kitchen.
- Bread for Life Food Co-op and its members.
- Community members working in gardens to support our food services.
- Our food source providers, including local restaurants and grocery stores.
- Individuals and families in need of shelter.

Thank you for lifting our ministry up in spirit.

Positive Vibes

On a beautiful Sunday morning in April, sweet praises filled the air outside HSHM's main doors. Joe Palma along with his fellow band members from *Style In Stereo* performed a free no-touch concert for our residents.

As the owner of Palma Entertainment, Joe felt the effects of COVID-19. When events cancelled, he decided to use his free time to reach out and help others. Joe says he is grateful for the opportunity to spread a little



joy. Having once been homeless himself, he truly understands the importance of lifting spirits.

"This place saved my life several years ago," shares Joe. "I was living in L.A. and I moved here to be closer to my kids, not knowing what I was going to do. After getting out of rehab, I called HSHM. I actually got to move in the very day I called! I am so grateful for what HSHM did for me."

HSHM is thrilled to have Joe as a helping neighbor. Many thanks to Joe Palma, Jennifer Rusk, Kimberly Wright, and Abraham Zuniga for your performance!

