

A BACKGROUND ON LAZARUS HOUSE
Working Together to Offer Hope and a Future
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History and Purpose

Lazarus House was founded as a 501(c) (3) not for profit in June 1997. It started its Emergency Shelter program that year and has since expanded services and the area served in response to community needs. In 2003 it added a second program of transitional housing. In 2006 a new Women and Children's Day Center (which is part of the Emergency Shelter program.) was added along with an expanded Homeless Prevention/Outreach program. These programs continue to grow to provide needed services to greater numbers of persons. In 2008 a nearby building was purchased to provide desperately needed space for the Outreach program and for other operating needs. This building, the Community Resource Center, opened in October, 2008.

Lazarus House's mission is to provide hospitality, food, safe shelter, and support services to men, women, and children who are homeless or in need connected to Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles, and western rural Kane County, Illinois. Lazarus House's desire is to give all those coming to its doors the opportunity for hope and a future. Goals are to:

- Help the homeless return to independent living with the skills and habits needed for long-term success
- Offer services and referrals to help those in need in our community in order to prevent homelessness and support the well being of individuals and their families.

Many diverse factors cause homelessness and put people at risk, including "systemic issues" of unemployment, low wages, expensive housing, lack of health insurance, coupled with "personal issues," such as divorce, domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, serious mental health issues, physical illness, and poor money management. Lazarus House serves the diverse populations impacted by these issues and works with over 50 social service agencies to provide support to address the underlying cause(s). Information, encouragement, case management and support services are provided to help meet the needs of our guests.

A national effort is in place to create community based Continuums of Care. A Continuum of Care is a community plan to deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end and prevent a return to homelessness. The Emergency Shelter (with its Women and Children's Day Center), Transitional Housing, and Outreach programs at Lazarus House are cornerstones of the Continuum of Care for the area Lazarus House serves.

Lazarus House is located at 214 Walnut Street in downtown St. Charles on the second floor of the Free Methodist Church. The Women and Children's Day Center and an administrative office are across the street. The Emergency Shelter consists of 3 sleeping spaces, a small kitchen and dining area, 2 adjacent single person half bathrooms, one shower, and 2 case management offices. Due to extreme demand for shelter space in the summer of 2008, more beds were added. The Emergency Shelter sleeping areas now have 28 bunk beds and one loft, sleeping 57 people. Overflow beyond 57 is provided by temporary set up of youth beds, cribs, and adult cots. Children sleep with either their mother or father. The Day Center contains a small, homelike living, dining room and kitchen area, a permanent indoor and fenced in outdoor play area, two showers and a bathtub, as well as space for case management and education. The Center for Transitional Housing (CTL) has 12 dormitory type rooms that accommodate 16-20 people, depending on family

configuration. It also has a lounge area, learning lab, dormitory-style bathrooms, and an office. The Women and Children's Center provides daytime and evening living space. The shelter is handicapped accessible and the bathrooms/showers comply with ADA requirements. Overall capacity for both the ES and CTL is approximately 73.

Services Provided

In FY10, Lazarus House anticipates providing 360 homeless individuals 23,000 nights of service---an average of 63 per night. In addition, we estimate providing 670 months (20,100 days) of one-time or ongoing housing assistance to 85 households (150 persons) at risk of homelessness, funded through Illinois Housing Development Authority, federal and state government grants. These figures would represent a 37% increase over FY09 days of service to those at risk of homelessness. They reflect increases in federal government ongoing subsidy funding and decreases in state one-time assistance. These figures do not include 220 plus calls each month from families seeking assistance, advice, referrals, or emotional support for themselves, their family or friends, but who do not stay at the shelter or obtain subsidy funds.

The shelter offers the following to those in need:

- 1) Safe shelter, food, personal hygiene items and shower and laundry facilities, clothing through the local clothes closet, healthcare through a local free clinic and other local funding.
- 2) Case management: Assess the reason for homelessness; Coach guests to develop and successfully implement a plan to address their issues; Link guests to needed services in the community and to federal and state programs, including access to mental health and substance abuse services; Transport guests to appointments as needed; Provide budget and credit counseling; Offer rental assistance to qualified persons (funded by government grants.)
- 3) Employment assistance/skills upgrade: Assist with: finding the right type of job, resume writing and interviewing skills; Identify training needs to improve employability; Support job fairs and interviews, GED; Assist with securing college scholarships and job training grants; Offer day care funding to enable parents to seek and obtain work and/or go to school (funded through federal programs and foundation grants.)
- 4) Twelve dormitory-type rooms in the Center for Transitional Living (CTL). Ten of these are approximately 70 square feet in size. Two are somewhat larger to accommodate a three or four person family. As part of the CTL, qualifying individuals and families are offered specific services and case management focused especially on enhancing income, employment, skill development, and in-house training.
- 5) Classes that support successful living. Part-time Education staff plan and deliver a learning curriculum to address diverse needs of our guests, including topics on getting a job, parenting, self-esteem, healthy relationships, anger management, and budgeting. Topics in the Day Center address issues specific to women and children. Classes are available to those at Lazarus House as well as to those at risk of homelessness in the community.
- 6) Outreach: Help households attain and retain housing. Provide one time and ongoing government funded rental and utility assistance to qualifying low income households. Help those in need but not homeless by providing telephone and in person support and referrals to community resources.

Emergency Shelter and Women and Children's Day Center

The shelter is open 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, Monday through Saturday and 15 hours per day on Sunday. The Women and Children's Day Center is open seven days a week from morning till bedtime. A strong case management focus is offered to each person to help them address their needs. At least one staff member (Operations Manager) and one volunteer provide services and supervision overnight. Professional staff is available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday, along with some regular weekend hours. No fees are charged and the program does not receive third-party reimbursement.

The Women and Children's Day Center, located directly across the street from the main facility, has home-like space, providing a more peaceful daytime and evening space to recover from health issues, depression, violence, abuse, or being a single parent. This space is free from the distractions that might be caused by adult male guests staying at the shelter. Children have space, both indoors and outdoors where they can just be kids. This environment supports better access to the specific support services women and their children need to return to successful, independent living.

Center for Transitional Living

In July 2003, the Center for Transitional Living (CTL) opened. This Center features 12 dormitory-type rooms, meaning that guests who qualify can have their own living space for up to two years. The CTL at Lazarus House is open 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. To qualify, Lazarus House Emergency Shelter guests agree to consistently work with their case manager, be compliant with their case management plan, and pay 10% of their income which helps cover the cost of housing, utilities and food. During their time in the CTL, guests develop life skills, including budgeting and debt reduction, to prepare them for independent living. This Center provides the important next steps to successful independent living, and gives those in need hope and a future.

Outreach to Prevent Homelessness

Lazarus House has sought out grant funds to help prevent homelessness and has expanded services to address the additional unmet needs of those at risk of homelessness in our community. Those at risk of homelessness often have the same types of issues and needs as those who stay at Lazarus House. They often are desperate and have no where else to turn for help. To help them avoid homelessness, staff speak with these individuals, meet with them, offer them food and other services, refer them to other social service agencies for assistance, and, where possible, provide homeless prevention funds. Outreach staff provides:

- 1) Information on rent, utility and mortgage assistance grants available in the service area
- 2) Guidance on completing the paperwork to apply for grant funds
- 3) Referrals to other support services/benefits that the household may qualify to receive
- 4) Optional case management services to persons participating in select grant programs
- 5) General information and referrals to callers seeking information

Today, Lazarus House administers two types of funds, with monies from the state and federal government: Ongoing rental support to low income and/or chronically homeless persons. Persons in this program often need ongoing case management assistance. Funding for these programs are being made available by the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), HUD and the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (for up to 3 years) starting this year.

One-time emergency assistance, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), to households that fell on hard times but can manage going forward if someone just helps them catch up on rent/mortgage/utility payments.

These grants provide partial funding for case management and other program costs. Lazarus House has also partnered with other agencies in Kane County to offer ongoing rental subsidies to households in the northern and southern parts of Kane County. This effort to support low-income households is consistent with the current Illinois Comprehensive Housing Plan.

We anticipate that this fiscal year, Lazarus House will help 80 households maintain housing. Of this total, 48 households will receive ongoing monthly subsidies through the IHDA and HUD Samaritan programs. We expect to help about 13 additional households with one-time emergency assistance from IDHS (These state funds have been dramatically cut--by 78%--for FY10 given the state's fiscal crisis.) New grant funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are targeted toward households impacted by the current economic downturn. Our best projection is that an average of 18 households each month will be served during the 36-month term of this grant. Outreach staff also expects to continue to receive an average of more than 180 financial assistance calls monthly from those at risk of homelessness or their concerned family and friends.

Staffing and Volunteers

Lazarus House is currently operated by a 17-member voluntary Board of Directors and 38 full-time or part-time staff. This staff includes an Executive Director, Associate Director, Transitional Housing Director, Case Managers, an Administrative Coordinator, a Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator, full and part-time Operations, Outreach and Education staff, a part-time Administrative Manager, and a part-time Development Manager.

Lazarus House has very broad and positive community support, including 1,700-plus volunteers that help it to operate each year. These volunteers provided 20,000 hours of volunteer labor last year, the equivalent of over nine additional full time staff. They pick up, prepare and serve meals, provide on-site support during the day and evening to the paid operations staff person, assist with handling phone calls, and other administrative tasks, volunteer in the Learning Lab, and assist with a variety of special needs and activities. The assistance of volunteers makes a significant difference in the amount and quality of services that can be provided. That figure does not include the time of Board members, and the time of numerous professionals who donate labor for various maintenance or professional service needs.

Lazarus House and its Executive Director are the recipient of multiple awards. The Executive Director received a 2000 Illinois Women of Achievement Award (for founding Lazarus House), a 2000 Barth Award (for outstanding work in a human service field), a 2006 Peace Award (for work on behalf of victims of violence), and a 2009 NAMI Advocate of the Year Award (for efforts advocating for those with mental health issues.) Lazarus House received the 2002 Illinois Hometown Heroes Award (for volunteerism), and multiple St. Charles Chamber of Commerce Awards, including a 2006 Not-for-Profit Small Business Award (which recognizes a small business that has made big contributions to the community outside of the business world), the 2007 Community Development Award (for its new Women and Children's Day Center) and the 2007 Civic Image award (recognizing humanitarian efforts which have brought outstanding, positive recognition to St. Charles). These awards reflect the ongoing dedication of the Board, staff, volunteers, and donors in serving community needs.

Budget

The current estimated budget for fiscal year 2010 is \$1,667,525. This is a 3.6% increase over the prior year. The budget reflects the estimated cost of expanded Outreach programs for low income persons, the continued cost of serving record numbers of person overall, and significant cost containment efforts across all expense categories to keep expenses down—including no salary increases for 2 years, changes in insurance policies, phone service, close monitoring of summer electricity usage, etc. This budget will be revisited in the fall of 2009 to reflect the impact of known income and expenses changes for the year.

Cash and in-kind contributions from a variety of sources support Lazarus House. These include:

Federal Sources: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In the first review by them, Lazarus House was commended for the quality of the Program and documentation.

State Sources: Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA)

Local Government Sources: Kane County Community Development Block Grant, City Mental Health Boards

Private Sources: private foundations and contributions from businesses, schools, churches and individuals

Lazarus House is grateful to all those who give financially as well as with their time to continue the important work of giving others hope and a future.

Monitoring Impact

Primary goals are to equip homeless individuals with the skills and resources necessary to live independently in the community and to prevent homelessness for “at risk” individuals. A computerized client tracking system and outcome evaluation measurement system is in place to monitor daily attendance, incoming needs and progress in achieving individual and overall program goals. The Board reviews monthly financial statements and an annual audit is completed. House meetings are held and surveys completed to secure client input for planning purposes.

Lazarus House is unique in its breadth of services. It is the only mid Kane County agency that houses homeless men, women and children and the only agency that offers ongoing rental assistance and support services to help at risk households stay

Shelter Outcomes

Lazarus House served 51 persons in its first year of operation. Last fiscal year it provided 22,948 nights of shelter to 382 different persons, providing 68,800 nourishing meals to guests and those at risk of homelessness. This total included 103 women and 86 children. An average of 13 children stayed at Lazarus House each night of last year. A total 49% of all nights of service were provided to women and children in FY09.

Many guests have special needs when they come to Lazarus House. Of those with the following specific needs, Lazarus House has gratefully been able to assist:

- 82% to receive case management
- 95% to obtain independent transportation
- 98% to receive medical care
- 69% to obtain or improve employment
- 80% to receive mental health services
- 78% to achieve continuing education or job training goals
- 84% to access legal services
- 40% to move into transitional or independent housing
- 74% to receive substance abuse services
- 72% to receive dental care

These results reflect that some people do not stay long enough to achieve all their goals, that some need to address higher priority needs (for example, medical care) prior to working on other needs (such as getting a job). It also reflects that some people may not be ready to work on all the needs they have. Sometimes it takes time for people to get to a place where they are able to do the work required to change both their self image and their life.

In recent months, we have also been finding that guests must wait longer to get help from referral agencies because some agencies have laid off staff, due to budget cuts.

Outreach Outcomes

In FY09, Lazarus House served a record 249 persons (from 112 households) at risk of homelessness. Lazarus House provided 58 households at risk of homelessness with one-time rental and/ or utility assistance. An average of 36 households each month (54 households in total) were helped with ongoing rental subsidies, funded primarily through the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In total 489 months of housing support and other services were provided to these households—a total of 14,760 days of service.

Lazarus House also serves as a soup kitchen for struggling households and as a de facto 24/7 crisis hotline for over 2,600 calls annually.

Results from the most recent follow-up period include:

- 93% of households receiving ongoing rental assistance remained in permanent housing for at least six months.
- 100% of households in the ongoing rental programs that require households to use direct services learned to follow a monthly budget.
- 25% of households new to the ongoing programs that require households to use direct services accessed new benefits (better job, government benefits, Food Stamps, day care funds, etc.) to improve their finances and/or health.
- 87% of those receiving one -time rental assistance in the prior year remained in housing for at least 6 months.

Lazarus House is responsible for being a guiding light to help offer hope and a future. Staff will work tirelessly with those coming to its doors to help them find a better future. The person in need also needs to work tirelessly to address the issues that brought them to our doorsteps. When they do so, miracles happen.