



The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary & Friends with donations

Homelessness Awareness Month

Homelessness Awareness Month, observed each November, is a time to raise understanding about the ongoing crisis of homelessness and to advocate for solutions that address its root causes.

This fall, CSEI staff presented on homelessness issues to many different community groups including Dubuque Area Retired School Personnel (DARSPA), Dubuque Chamber Power Hour, a panel at Steeple Square, Dubuque Area Congregations United (DACU) and others, reaching hundreds of individuals. During the fall and winter months, outdoor conditions start becoming inhospitable for people experiencing homelessness. CSEI aims to raise awareness about homelessness and housing instability in our communities. Through speaking engagements, public advertisements, direct requests, and other networking opportunities, we spread the word about our work, homeless issues, and the immediate needs of our clients.

In 2022, CSEI created the Care & Share drive with the goal of spreading awareness on the topic of homelessness throughout Delaware and Dubuque Counties while also collecting donations to support individuals and families living outside, and for those moving into their own apartments. This event takes place during the month of November, paying special observance to Homelessness Awareness Month. Each year, this event continues to grow, as does our reach.

Thanks to our generous community and partner organizations, CSEI received numerous donations that will go directly into the hands of our clients.

2024 Care & Share Donation Sites *Without you this drive would not have been possible, thank you!*

City of Asbury Offices - Asbury, IA
First Congregational Church UCC - Dubuque, IA
Mount Carmel Bluffs - Dubuque, IA
Nativity Church - Dubuque, IA
Off the Hoof - Delhi, IA
Premier Bank - Dubuque, IA
Sisters of the Presentation - Dubuque, IA
St. Luke's United Methodist Church - Dubuque, IA
Tri-State Christian School - Asbury, IA



The Sisters & Friends of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary graciously donated thousands of dollars worth of items to CSEI's Care & Share program.

This included 22 backpacks, 29 insulated sleeping bags, 20 tarps, 31 boxes of cleaning supplies, 37 boxes of hygiene products, and more. We are so incredibly grateful for this wonderful group and their generosity!

Want to learn more on how you can help CSEI serve our community's most vulnerable?
Visit our website at www.CSEIowa.org

CSEI Board Member Feature: Andy Mozena with Premier Bank

Tell us about your family or hobbies or something you enjoy doing!

My wife, Amy, and I have been together since the days before we had drivers licenses. Together we have raised three wonderful daughters and are busy preparing our empty nest as our youngest is currently a high school senior. My passions include cooking and traveling and inventing ways for our family to spend time together. I also enjoy attending local events and supporting arts and cultural opportunities in Dubuque.

What made you join the CSEI Board specifically?

I joined the CSEI board because of the personal respect and admiration I have for many of the board members already serving. I didn't know much about the organization or mission until my eyes were opened to the need in our communities.

Before joining the CSEI board I believed that homelessness was mostly a big city problem. The media generated stories of tent encampments and overrun city centers sort of blinded me to the everyday homeless challenges facing members of our community on a daily basis. Being homeless is not a position that people find themselves in by choice. Often times it can be a temporary condition with the right support and guidance. I salute the dedicated employees of CSEI who have chosen this calling and strive to achieve successful outcomes.



Disconnected and Displaced: The Impact of Loneliness during Homelessness



Social isolation and loneliness are prevalent and significant issues in the lives of people with homelessness experience. The lasting social and health outcomes of these co-occurring experiences are still largely unexplored, but we do know: meaningful social connection is vital to the human function and without it, there are undoubtedly negative impacts. Understanding this impact is important when developing and implementing assistance programs, community centers, and social services.

Homelessness and loneliness are considered co-morbidities: two things that are negatively impacting the health and wellness of the person experiencing them. Homeless individuals are already susceptible to mental illness and substance use disorders. Social isolation and loneliness exacerbate these issues and can negatively impact someone's ability to exit homelessness and find stable housing, creating a cyclical relationship between the two conditions.

Social isolation and loneliness may only be solved by creating a meaningful social identity and developing relationships with other people that bring value to the person experiencing a hardship. This looks different from person to person. Some individuals find meaningful connection in creating a community with others who have experienced similar hardships, while others feel that creating community with those with similar experiences further stigmatizes and traumatizes them.

Services, like those offered through CSEI, that work to develop clients social identity during and after homelessness can have the greatest impact on a person's feeling of isolation and loneliness. This is most successful when supportive services lead with a client-centered approach with practices that are rooted in the understanding that people make choices based on their own motivations and ambivalence.

Key Factors Contributing to Social Loneliness and Housing Status

- Lack of stable housing and community ties
- Stigma and social exclusion
- Mental health challenges and substance use disorders
- Demographic characteristics

Companionship through Crisis: The Critical Role of Pets



Evidence shows that animal companionship is fortifying and contributes to the emotional well-being of people experiencing homelessness, including encouraging owners to obtain sobriety, leave abusive relationships, and avoid incarceration. CSEI recognizes the importance of helping people keep their pets, especially after they experience a crisis like homelessness. Below are two stories of CSEI clients who were able to find housing for themselves and their furry friends with the help of CSEI's programs.

Tessa & Baby Boy

Tessa has had her cat, Baby Boy, for eight years, since he was eight-weeks old. "An old friend brought him over for a visit, asked if I wanted him, and that was that," she said. Through that time, Tessa had a couple episodes of homelessness. "I was in the shelter for a month and I couldn't have him with me. He stayed with my son during the month I was there. I would walk every day to see him. The walk was over an hour, one way. I could only visit with him for an hour or two before I had to go back to the shelter. Being away from him wasn't only stressful for me, it was stressful for him," Tara said.



When asked how Baby Boy helps Tessa, she said: "He's so sweet and cuddly. He's my emotional support and stability. He gives me something to focus on. I would rather have nothing with him than to have everything without him. I struggle, mentally. What I've been through has been hard to survive, and at times I didn't want to, but I try every day because I can't bear the thought of being without him."

Tessa noted "I just want landlords to understand that we're not bringing animals into these units to destroy them or to be irresponsible, we're bringing these animals with us because we need them. They're our family."

Brett - Ralphie and Bear

Brett has had Ralphie for about five years, and Bear about a year, both since they were puppies. Both pups were happy accidents for Brett, but he wouldn't change a thing about them. Ralphie was Brett's dog before Brett became homeless, so they were by each other's side through one of the biggest changes of their lives. Bear is a newer addition to their family, and is one hundred percent puppy energy. The highlight of both Brett and the pups day was always a long walk on the trail near their camp. While Brett worked, Ralphie was great about staying put in the tent, but Bear quickly developed a "chewing problem" and had to be kenneled whenever Brett was away from the site.

"The toughest part about having dogs and camping, was leaving them to go to work. Every day I just hoped that when I came back they'd still be there."

When asked about his favorite thing about his pups, Brett said, "They keep me company since my brother died. They're always here to greet me when I come home." Now that Brett and the pups are in an apartment through CSEI's TBRA program, they enjoy playing with toys, walks, and lounging around on their new dog beds.



Our Mission

Our mission is to promote and encourage public well-being; provide homeless prevention resources to those living in poverty and threatened with homelessness; to help individuals and families survive and exit homelessness; and to expand opportunities and empower people to be self-sufficient in east-central Iowa cities and counties.

Our Programs

Rapid Rehousing

Short and medium-term rental assistance and case management serving individuals and families who are homeless

Homeless Prevention

Short-term assistance serving individuals and families who are at imminent risk of homelessness

Tenant Based Rental Assistance

Rental assistance for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Street Outreach

Outreach program with emphasis on reaching those living unsheltered and providing basic needs

Housing Helpline

Individuals at risk of homelessness in Delaware or Dubuque counties are encouraged to call the Housing Helpline to access information, referrals, and resources in their communities related to housing instability or homelessness

How Your Gifts Directly Help Our Community

A Letter from the Director, Jennifer Walker

According to the financial services company, Charles Schwab, **59% of Americans are one paycheck away from homelessness**. CSEI uses homeless prevention funding to help people who are in immediate risk of losing their homes due to extenuating circumstances like illness, job loss, and the high cost of housing. Homeless prevention funding is critical to CSEI services, because once a person loses their home through eviction or foreclosure, they are much more difficult to restabilize and to rehouse. Many landlords won't consider applicants with a recent eviction on their records. Others require applicants to pay more – like double deposits, and first and last month rent – before they'll consider renting to them. Further, with an ongoing national housing crisis, it's really difficult to find available affordable units with spotless records, much less to someone with an eviction on their record. If we can help people stay in their homes, it's much less expensive than having them enter the cycle of homelessness – and it's obviously much better for the person or family to stay housed.

However, by October 2024, all federally funded homeless prevention grants CSEI managed were fully committed and the list of those in need began to grow rapidly. CSEI made the decision that we could best use most of your unrestricted monetary gifts for to help people stay in their homes. We've put the same parameters into place that our federal funding had, and we will start directly helping people make short-term rent payments. We anticipate helping dozens of people from heading to shelters or living outside in the next six months. What you give matters and we'll be back in touch with full numbers at the end of our fiscal year. From all of those who won't be able to tell you personally: **THANK YOU!**

2025 Winter Point-in-Time Count

The 2025 Winter Point-In-Time (PIT) count is scheduled for the evening of January 29, 2025. If you're interested in accompanying a team or donating supplies for the PIT count, please reach out to Shelby at seipperle@ecia.org

Grants & Gifts

Thank you for your generosity and support!

Fred C. & Katherine B. Andersen Foundation

Jon & Connie Behnken

Keith & Eugene Berning

Elizabeth Bonz

Crawford Cares

Dubuque Area Retired School Personnel Association (DARSPA)

Falb Family Charitable Foundation

Jean Fritscher

GreenState Credit Union

Alan & Susan Hattel

Denise Hefel

Jane & Dave Heiar

John & Stephanie Ottavi Family

Deborah Pauly

Barbara Schlickman

Theisen's

Sue Wilson

Service Statistics

602

HOUSING INSTABILITY CALLS ANSWERED

156

INDIVIDUALS SERVED IN TBRA, RAPID REHOUSING, & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

15

INDIVIDUALS SERVED THROUGH STREET OUTREACH

