



Photo by the Dubuque Museum of Art
see more from the @Home Opening on Page 2

Sarah's Story

CSEI connected with Sarah during her shelter stay. She had been at the shelter for four months after fleeing from domestic violence. She had been separated from her children, who were living with family temporarily so they could remain in school. With the help of her caseworker, Sarah quickly found housing for her family. Within the three months that Sarah was enrolled in the program, she obtained food stamps, secured a job, and saved enough money to purchase a reliable vehicle.

Sarah now works in a care provider role at a local agency and credits her ability to serve people in need as a result of the opportunities she's received through our programs. Although she recognizes that there is more work to do, with the help of CSEI's support services, Sarah has begun to stabilize her family after homelessness.

"I owe a huge thank you to the staff. They helped feel like I wasn't alone and always had support. I worked hard to get to this point. Now, I need to work harder to stay. Just because I'm mostly back on my feet doesn't mean I can just stop. There are still mountains to climb."



Housing Shortage: A Systematic Challenge to Homeless Services

Nationally, there is a shortage of more than 7 million affordable homes for our nation's 10.8 million+ extremely low-income families.¹ On average, in Iowa, there are only 42 affordable **and** available rental homes for every 100 low-income renters.¹ This shortage, coupled with the requirements that federal and state funds may only be allocated to "Fair Market Rent" or "Rent Reasonable" units, is creating a challenge for CSEI's programs. Homeless and housing unstable households are being offered assistance to meet their needs, with few rental homes to utilize it. CSEI works with many landlords in our area to meet the needs of these households but is always seeking partnerships with new landlords to serve our clients. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about CSEI's rental assistance programs, please reach out to Shelby at seipperle@ecia.org

¹) National Low Income Housing Coalition. *The Problem*.

"Sleep is a biological necessity, not a crime."

—Justice Sonia Sotomayor, in her dissent from the Supreme Court's majority opinion in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*. This supreme court ruled that states may criminalize the homeless for sleeping outside

@Home CSEI Photovoice Exhibition Opening



On June 7th, more than 200 people attended the @HOME Photovoice opening reception to learn more about Community Solutions of Eastern Iowa and to see photographs from 21 local photographers of what “home” means to them.

Photovoice is a research method that was developed about 25 years ago. The intent is to gather participant-taken photographs and narratives to translate experience into actionable knowledge.

We had been looking for a meaningful way to share what we do day in and day out – help people have a home and help people keep their homes – but we found that most people didn’t know the name of our organization, much less what we do.

Using photovoice principles is a perfect fit for what we want to communicate: everyone has an idea of what home means to them. It’s deeply personal.



For those of us with a roof over our heads, we get to start thinking about people, pets, and objects that enrich our lives and provide comfort. For those of us without a home, the reality can be harsh. This exhibit helped us share that message from 21 different perspectives.

Below are a few of the photos featured in this exhibition. The exhibition will be on display at the Dubuque Museum of Art until July 20th.



Board Features: Connie Behnken



Connie was born and raised in Delaware county. She currently lives in Manchester with her husband. They have two grown children and 3 grandchildren. Connie was elected mayor of Manchester in 2021 and joined CSEI's Board of Directors the same year.

What's the biggest surprise you've learned about housing and homelessness since joining the board?

I was most surprised by the abundant need for affordable housing and how that need has increased so much since the COVID pandemic. I have been impressed with the work CSEI has done to help the homeless population. Be it mental health, substance abuse, physical or mental disabilities. Their outreach, in person and hotline programs are such a valuable resource for the community.

What's the greatest need surrounding this issue in Manchester and Delaware County? In Iowa?

Like Dubuque county, Delaware county is in need of more affordable housing, and food insecurity is also more of a concern with rising food prices. Delaware county has no homeless shelters. Because we are located between Dubuque, Cedar Rapids and Waterloo, we find it hard to win grant dollars to help us get one started. We continue to brainstorm to make this happen so we can serve the greater Delaware county area.

I have met some truly exceptional people who work so hard for our most vulnerable citizens. I have enjoyed being on the board and helping with different campaigns. It has been a very rewarding experience.

Homelessness is Delaware Co.



While homelessness in Delaware county often presents in households living doubled-up, unsheltered individuals and families can often be found camping for long periods of time in local campgrounds during the warmer months.

Iowa NAHRO Presentation

Director of Special Programs, Jennifer Walker, spoke to a full room at the Iowa conference for National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials in April.



Invited by Iowa NAHRO and CSEI Board Member, Mindy Wiley, Jennifer's session focused on the difficulties of pairing Public Housing Authority and Homeless Provider roles and funding, but how the two work in adjacent spaces.

Congrats Christine!



Christine Efferding has accepted the position of Homeless Program Coordinator. Christine has been with ECIA since 2023 will now assume case management responsibilities for several of CSEI's programs.

Program Updates & Summer Point - In - Time Count

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

What's coming up?

2024 Summer Point-in-Time Count

The 2024 summer Point-In-Time (PIT) count is scheduled for the evening of July 31st, 2024.

The PIT count is a HUD process by which each state conducts a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night across the United States.

CSEI has participated in the summer PIT count since 2017 and year over year has continued to find an increased number of individuals living outside.

The highest needs for the summer PIT are heavy duty tarps, tents, bug spray, and bottled water.

If you're interested in joining or donating supplies for the PIT count, please reach out to Shelby at seipperle@ecia.org



Apr. - Jun. 2024 Service Statistics

688

HOUSING INSTABILITY CALLS ANSWERED

118

INDIVIDUALS SERVED IN TBRA, RAPID REHOUSING, & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

30

INDIVIDUALS SERVED THROUGH STREET OUTREACH

Grants & Gifts

Thank you for your generosity and support!



CSEI is proud to be a United Way funded program. United Way funding is essential to CSEI's services as it meets the gaps in other federal and state funding. United Way gives us the opportunity and flexibility to do what we do best: address homelessness & housing instability.