



Pressing Issues of Homelessness & Housing Insecurity

Our objective is to help you understand how Christian Neighbors uses their resources and efforts to address solutions for these critical issues through internal efforts, community support, partnerships and collaborations.

Homelessness is a reality that effects many of our community members. We see single adults and families with children that are homeless in our community. They may live in our parks, our forest, abandoned buildings, their car and other inhabitable locations. Many homeless spend their nights “couch surfing” from friends to relatives as long as they are welcome. To date in 2017 Christian Neighbors has served 69 homeless households with 8 of them living in inhabitable places. There are no traditional emergency homeless shelters in our county, therefore there is no data related to how many individuals are sheltered in emergency shelters.

The effects of homelessness are detrimental to all. Homeless children are less likely to have been immunized, more likely to be in poor health and at risk of developmental delays; school age children who are homeless are more likely to have behavioral problems, academic problems, as well as higher rates of asthma and infectious disease. We know that adults who are homeless or even at risk of becoming homeless have high levels of depressive symptoms and often in poor health.

Because of these effects, it is critical for agencies serving this population to identify barriers preventing families from being housed and seek solutions through effective strategies to overcome them. It is also imperative to have strong partnerships with funders and donors to support the financial needs to end homelessness. It is critical to collaborate with other important stakeholders such as our local landlords, schools, governmental agencies, United Way, foundations and county agencies in efforts to seek and develop solutions. Christian Neighbors is doing all of these things.

We have top notch staff and case managers committed to understanding the issues surrounding homelessness and housing insecurity and to finding solutions. In addition to the homeless families we serve we see a record number of families who are barely scraping by, living just one unforeseen event away from disaster. They are the face of

America's growing housing insecurity crisis. You will read more about this on page 3 and 4 of this newsletter.

I hope you find this newsletter engaging and helpful. May you be spurred to action in helping Christian Neighbors by becoming a champion for our cause, seeking ways to volunteer in a project, or by giving what you can to eliminate homelessness and housing insecurity in our community.

Thank You,

Terri Shaler
Executive Director



Our mission is to provide local families in need with Food, Emergency Financial Assistance, and Skill-Building Education to create self-sufficiency.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

First & Third Tuesday Each Month
Veteran's Service Assistance 10am-12

- Nov 17 & 18 **Stuff the Bus** 9 am-7pm
 Harding's, 114 S. Farmer, Otsego
- Nov 19 **Community Service of Thanksgiving** 6pm
 Otsego High School Auditorium
- Nov 21 Veterans Services Available 10 am-12
- Nov 24 & 25 Closed **Thanksgiving**
- Dec 7 **Connections: Make It Take It** 2-7pm
 at Hope Lutheran Church, 290 12th Street
- Dec 22 & 25 Closed **Christmas**
- Jan 31 **Soup Supper** 5:00-7:00 pm
 Hope Lutheran, 290 12th Street, Plainwell
- Feb 14 **Soup Supper** 5:00-7:00 pm
 First Baptist Church, 247 Allegan St, Otsego
- Feb 28 **Soup Supper** 4:30-6:30 pm
 Alamo Community Church, 7925 N 6th Kalamazoo

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

These local companies have proven to be dedicated supporters of Christian Neighbors on a consistent basis.

July

Shoppers Guide

August

Safari Circuits

September

Preferred Plastics

October

Nobis Agri Science



GREAT LAKES ENERGY

The People Fund By Great Lakes Energy

Rounding up your Great Lakes Energy bill to the next dollar helps support us. **We appreciate the support we receive from The People Fund.**



TRIBUTES

Special thanks to those who honored friends and family through contributions to Christian Neighbors 7/1/17-9/30/17.

In Loving Memory

Connie Adams, Sally Brown, Thora Lee Charette, Ken Doctor, Deb Geurink, Vickie Hale, David Hartig, David F. Marsac, Larry Myers, Larry Oberhill, Marilyn Scheel, Robert Scherzer, Jane Tice, Eugene Watson, Tag Wesler

In Honor of:

Harry & MaryLee Griffith, Bob & Barb Gulbranson's 50th Anniversary, Sheila Howard, Veronica Johnson, Lionel & Harriet Little, John & Cheryl Pickron's 50th

2017 MONTH IMPACT (JAN-SEP)

Throughout this period:

- * 1,975 food pantry visits
- * 642 households have received food
- * 160 first time households
- * 2,114 individuals received assistance
- * 33 Veterans received support
- * 69 Homeless households received assistance
- * 336 households received financial assistance:
 - Housing—\$ 25,358
 - Utilities—\$150,683
 - Medical Expenses—\$ 1,526

PANTRY NEEDS

- ◆ Pancake Mix & Syrup
- ◆ Cream Soups
- ◆ 64 oz 100% juice
- ◆ Shampoo/Conditioner/ Dish Soap
- ◆ Canned corn
- ◆ Muffin Mix
- ◆ Peanut Butter & Jelly
- ◆ Boxed Potatoes



Contributing Factors to Housing Insecurity

Documentation

To rent an apartment or home, families must have a current ID, birth certificate and Social Security card for all members of the household, including children. These documents are frequently missing or lost in a sudden eviction move. Replacement costs can be high, so Christian Neighbors recently established a fund to help families replace these documents, making them eligible to apply for housing. A small, but common barrier.

Utility Assistance

Previous utility bills are often a hurdle for homeless individuals to overcome when securing housing. An electric bill from many years ago can show up on a credit check and must be paid to be approved for housing. Christian Neighbors has a long-standing partnership with Salvation Army to assist our clients with paying these, thus eliminating the barrier.

Eric is a utility specialist for Salvation Army. He works out of the Christian Neighbors office twice a week.



MEET JANE.....

Jane was fleeing a desperate situation and found herself with nowhere for her and her children to go. She came to Christian Neighbors desperate for help. She stayed in an emergency shelter for several weeks while a case manager at Christian Neighbors worked with her to overcome the many barriers she had on her way to finding a new, affordable home. She was missing pieces of documentation needed to secure housing, she had a previous electric bill preventing her from moving in and she had trouble finding a place to rent with an affordable market rate covered by the emergency voucher she qualified for. Christian Neighbors helped Jane overcome these barriers by paying for documentation, partnering with Salvation Army on the previous electric bill and helping with over 60 pages of paperwork for her voucher.

Testimony from Jane.....

“Christian Neighbors never gave up on me and my kids. They stayed by my side and went way above and beyond what was expected. I would for sure still be living in a shelter with my children had it not been for them.”

Affordable Housing

Imagine using over half your paycheck just to pay the rent. Rental costs have increased exponentially in recent years, while wages at the poverty level, or just above, remain stagnant. When the economy is good, this does not often reach down to those in poverty. They are left paying higher costs of living on the same wages. Christian Neighbors recently held a Landlord Event to help build a partnership in an effort to make housing more reasonable in our area. In return, Christian Neighbors will help our clients gain the skills and resources needed to become more self-sufficient.

Support System

A support system is crucial for overcoming barriers and Christian Neighbors provides that through case management.



Kim Shafer
Financial
Case Manager



Shannon Fuller
Food
Case Manager

How Education Breaks Down Barriers

Budgeting can be difficult. Add to that trying to budget your basic living expenses when half of your paycheck goes toward your rent. Then there are utilities, food, and transportation. This does not leave much for anything else.

Look at the graph below. Many, if not all, of our clients struggle with this.

poverty level budget



People in poverty encounter day to day struggles. They are often one crisis away from losing their house, heat or other basic necessities. There is a lot of pressure with being poor.

At Christian Neighbors we raise awareness regarding poverty, homelessness, and hunger which affects many of our neighbors. An important part of our mission is to provide skill building education to reduce barriers. We have one-on-one mentor volunteers who, along with case managers, work closely with people to set a budget and follow it.

Education is one of the most effective strategies to tackle poverty. When people have basic life and literacy skills, they become more self-sufficient.

Meet Mike....

A single dad residing in his parents basement and a proud parent of 2 children. Mike struggles with obtaining a job and keeping that job. He never graduated high school and struggles with reading and writing. Mike had a desire to make serious changes in his life but needed direction.

Mike utilizes the pantry at Christian Neighbors on a monthly basis. During one of his visits he was challenged by a case manager as to why he didn't return to school to obtain his GED/Diploma. That's all it took, an individual to ask the question. Through the partnership with Plainwell Adult Education, Christian Neighbors encouraged Mike to get back into school. With the support, guidance, and follow through, Mike was placed into a class that focused on literacy. He is now able to read and fill out forms. Mike still has tests to take, but is on his way to obtaining his GED. A local business owner has a job ready for him to enter into with adequate pay and benefits.



Charlie Wynn, Plainwell Adult Education teacher. Christian Neighbors partners with his program to identify individuals in need of a High School Diplomas/GED.



Here at Christian Neighbors we encourage individuals to Take Control of their finances. So much that we named a 6-week workshop "TAKE CONTROL". This workshop is designed to cover topics such as Values and Goals; Expenses and Budgeting; Cutting Spending; Understanding Credit; Repairing Credit; and Consumer Skills.

Currently, we have 18 participants in our fall class.

Our goals are to create self-sufficiency through skill-building education. Remember Knowledge is Power. We are appreciative of the Perrigo Foundation for their financial support of our Education Program.

Christian Neighbors offers even more:

- * Connections— Social and skill -building workshops
- * Monthly Client Newsletters
- * Take Control classes offered to Senior Citizens and Adult Ed
- * Matter of Balance
- * Nutritional Education

WAYS TO HELP

AmazonSmile.com Next time you shop Amazon log into AmazonSmile.com, select Christian Neighbors as your charity of choice, a percent of your purchase will be directly donated.



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Each day add an non-perishable item to a box and drop off your items to Christian Neighbors by 12/21.



Hardings.com Sign up for Harding’s ecoupons and select Christian Neighbors as your charity of choice. Every time you check out enter your phone number & your earn money for Christian Neighbors.



Homeless School-Aged Children

At the end of the 2017 school year our school districts had the following homeless student count.

Village of Martin	60
Otsego	193
Plainwell	118

These students lack fixed, regular,

Looking for the Perfect Gift? Give the Gift of Hope

Make a donation in honor or memory of your loved one to Christian Neighbors. Your donation will help the people who live and work in your community. It’s a perfect gift that keeps giving! Don’t forget to send an

Your financial gift provides hope and...

\$25 gift

Food for 5 days for a family of 4



\$50 gift

Educational class for 2 people



\$100 gift

Budgeting & Mentoring for 4 people



\$200 gift

Feeds a veteran for a year



\$300 gift

Keeps electricity or heat on



\$500 gift

Secures housing for a family





Christian Neighbors * PO Box 53 * Plainwell, MI 49080 * Phone: 269.685.4166 * info@christianneighbors.org



Our Veteran's Services Officer is here 10am-12pm the 1st & 3rd Tuesday each month to assist ALL Veterans and their family members with any Veteran issues. No appointment is necessary, or you can call the office anytime 269-685-4166 x100 and Mr. Lubic will return your call.

Upcoming dates:

November 7 & 21

December 5 & 19

January 2 & 16

February 6 & 20



Dick Lubic
Veteran's Services

Save the
DATE

9th Annual

REFLECTION
of **H+**ope

Dinner Auction

MAY 3, 2018