

September 2024

Hope is not hope if its object is seen: For who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we watch for it with patience.

[Romans 8:22-25]

A Message from the President

Dear Families, Friends, and Supporters,

Sometimes we are inundated with requests for shelter from people living in cars or couch surfing, and for funds to pay for emergency accommodation, rent, or utility bills. St Luke's Guesthouse is a small temporary shelter with beds for just 12 adults and children and with cribs for 2 babies. Our commitment to breaking the cycle of homelessness in southern Worcester County is guided by our mission statement (*to provide short term sheltering and to support empowerment for guests to achieve self-sufficiency*) and by our vision (*that all persons who are homeless in southern Worcester County would have a place to experience Christian hospitality and empowerment to achieve self-sufficiency*).

We strive to help whenever we can, BUT sometimes, we have to say no. When this happens, I remember the 5th grade D.A.R.E Program graduation speech I first heard 28 years ago: Onlookers from the promenade in a coastal town watch a young child on a vast beach littered with stranded starfish as the tide recedes. The child picks up a stranded starfish and carefully places it in a small bucket and continues along the shore, picking up one starfish at a time. When the bucket is full, the child walks into the sea and empties the starfish into the water. He then returns to collect more starfish and puts those into the sea. After a while a person walks up to the child and asks "Why are you bothering to collect starfish? There are so many that you cannot possibly make a difference!" The child holds up one starfish and says, "I have made all the difference to this starfish." He picks up another and says "and all the difference to this starfish. And if everyone watching would join me, we could save a lot more."

St. Luke's cannot help everyone in need of shelter, BUT we strive to help as many as we can. The Guesthouse offers a warm, dry safe space and a mailing address that provides stability, allows children to succeed in school, and improves mental and physical health. Housing First is the initial step out of poverty. We are able to do this because of the support of our

community, donors, volunteers, and newsletter readers! Thank you for making St. Luke's Guesthouse a reality.

*Tamsin Lucey
President of the Board of Directors
Friends of St Luke's, Inc.*

We welcome a new Board Member



On August 17th Carla Delacruz Davila was elected to the Board of Directors of Friends of St. Luke's, Inc. Carla is the Co-founder and President of The WellStorm Inc., an organization dedicated to supporting and empowering marginalized communities. A social worker by training, she is an alumnus of the Leadership Worcester Class of 2024 and is involved in several local community initiatives: She is Vice Chair of the Southbridge School Committee, a member of the Committee for the CASA Project, the DTA Advisory Board, the Town Managers Substance Abuse Task Force, the Wellness Subcommittee with You Inc., and the Southbridge Community Connections Committee. We are very grateful for the vision and the network of relationships that Carla brings to our mission of empowering the most marginalized members of our local community.

A Story of an Angel and a Stove

At the end of August, we were made aware of damage to the upstairs stove: the door was hanging off. After the stove was deemed unrepairable, we posted a note on Facebook about our need for a used stove.

Within a few hours someone, who prefers to remain anonymous, called the Guesthouse and ordered a new stove; it was delivered the next day.

We could not serve our community without the generous donations of so many "angels."

Fundraising: Build a Scarecrow at Bemis Farms

We will be participating in "Scarecrows for Solutions" at Bemis Farms Nursery in Spencer on weekends during September and October, 10am-4pm [September 28 & 29; October 5,6,13,14,19,20]



They will have classes for people to make a scarecrow in a pot, for a fee of \$25. \$10 of this will be donated to non-profit organizations of the participant's choice.

Please consider attending one of these classes and listing Friends of St. Luke's, Inc. as your organization. It's that easy! Go to the Bemis Farms nursery website to sign up:

www.bemisfarmsnursery.com

Tricia Gay, Volunteer Coordinator

A Family's Story

The Guesthouse is working with a family of four. The husband and wife both work full time. "Dick and Jane" (not their real names) lost their apartment after falling behind in bills due to Dick's medical issues. When they contacted us, they were living in their car with their two children, ages 13 and 9. Dick has diabetes and was very sick. Upon their arrival in July, Dick was almost immediately hospitalized due to blood clots/stroke. He has been in the hospital several times and needs treatment for a heart condition. Their main concern was to be able to have a place for Dick to stabilize, allow time to save money, and find housing. Jane has continued to work full time. While we are not sure how long they will stay at the Guesthouse, they are grateful that we have been working with them. The children are attending school in Dudley, their hometown.

Mary Jo Mason, Case Manager

A Reflection by a Board Member: Nancy Waugh

I was asked to join the board of the Friends of St. Luke's Inc. as clerk by Dr. John Howland in 2020. I asked if I could pray about it before I accepted the invitation. It became clear to me that stewardship of the community was the answer. I was eager to learn how Friends of St. Luke's, Inc. is the best kind of steward of our community.

St. Luke's Guesthouse and the Finding HOPE/Preventing Eviction programs are wonderful examples of stewardship of our communities. The following communities are served by St. Luke's: Brimfield, Brookfield, Charlton, Dudley, East Brookfield, Holland, Oxford, North Brookfield, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Wales, Warren, Webster, and West Brookfield.

The goal of helping guests to achieve self-sufficiency is especially important to me. After all, self-sufficiency helps end homelessness one family at a time. Families can gain the confidence they need to continue to be productive members of the community.

A View from the Staff

The past few months at St. Luke's Guesthouse have been filled with lessons in patience, compassion and keeping an open mind. As the housing crisis shows no sign of improving soon, we continue to streamline our screening and admissions process to accommodate guests more efficiently. The staff have worked hard to keep the Guesthouse organized and stocked with items guests may need. With winter approaching we pray that our current guests will find housing. We also pray to accommodate those who will be in need during the coldest months.

Mary Jo Mason, Case Manager

News from the Guesthouse

For the months of June, July and August we provided 807 nights of shelter and case management for 20 men, women and children ages 13 months to 64 years.

Over the 3 months, 4 families found other housing and left the Guesthouse. At the beginning of September, we have 9 guests with 2 more anticipated.

One family is waiting for acceptance into housing.

Finding Hope/Preventing Eviction

Many families are struggling financially, behind on their rent and at risk of losing their homes. Finding HOPE/ Preventing Eviction is an outreach program of Friends of St. Luke's, Inc. that provides the support necessary to prevent an individual or a family from being evicted. **We currently have openings for the Finding HOPE program.** If you or someone you know is behind on their rent or bills call us at **774-230-6416** to see if you might qualify to join the program.

What Is St. Luke's Guesthouse?

Founded in 2017, St. Luke's is the only homeless shelter serving single men, women, and families in fourteen towns of southern Worcester County. St. Luke's receives no government funding and operates thanks to the generosity of local donors, churches, and grants from local businesses and organizations.

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.

Desmond Tutu



St. Luke's Guesthouse, 141 Main Street, Southbridge, MA 01550 (774) 230-6416

Website: <https://www.friendsofstlukes.org/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/StLukesGuesthouse/>