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From Homeless to Hopeful:
Meet the team working to get Mission clients housed

Northlands Rescue Mission starts as an emergency shelter - a safe, stable environment for homeless men and women. We provide three meals a day, clothing and hygiene products, a bed, laundry/showing facilities, and more. A vital function of the Mission, however, is providing clients with the support and resources they need to lift themselves out of homelessness. That is where the Mission’s advocacy team comes in.

Northlands Rescue Mission currently has two in-house social workers, Bobbie and Anita. Bobbie has a bachelor’s degree in social work from the University of North Dakota. She worked at the Care & Share homeless shelter in Crookston for four years before joining the Mission’s advocacy team in September. Anita has a bachelor’s degree in social work from Minot State University and a master’s degree from the University of Minnesota. She has extensive experience in the developmental disability and mental health fields. She has worked as a social service case manager and has owned an adult foster care program. Anita also worked at the Care & Share homeless shelter for three years and is now starting her third year at the Mission.

Bobbie and Anita meet with clients at the Mission to gain an understanding of their situation and help them develop a plan for the future. “Our first priority with everybody is to make sure they are fed, warm, and that they feel safe with us,” says Anita. “That’s critical.” From there, the team can begin to work with each client one-on-one and determine the necessary steps to get them into housing.

“The idea, to go with housing first, is that people do better overall in their own space,” says Anita. “That can be an apartment, it may be a housing arrangement with another person, but it’s something that they want. When people start to work towards that, you see things improve. From my experience, when [a client] wants housing and they start to identify that as their primary need, it gives them hope.”

Finding housing can take many steps, however. A client may need to obtain identification or employment to help them qualify for housing. They may have mental or physical health issues, financial obstacles, or lack transportation. These things can all serve as barriers to housing. Because each client is different, it’s important to develop a personalized housing plan. “What we do is absolutely individualized for each person,” says Anita. “Every person who walks through the door has their own story, and that’s the story we work with.”

This approach is called client-led engagement. Rather than imposing a pre-determined set of goals on a client, the team takes time to understand what a person has gone through and what they want for themselves.

“We do motivational interviewing,” says Anita. “That means you are focused on what the person wants and where they are at. From there, we start building on their strengths. We never look at deficiencies...that somebody lacks something. We remove their barriers to housing in any way we can by utilizing their strengths.”

Often, removing these barriers requires collaboration with other agencies and individuals. The team regularly works with local employers, landlords, medical facilities, attorneys, and more.

“The reality is that no one person can manage an individual’s life,” says Anita. “A team is always better. Another agency might have what [a client] needs to move ahead. You know the old adage ‘It takes a village to raise a child’? Well, it takes a village to help somebody become sheltered. And when they do, it’s an asset to whichever community that person goes into. They are employed. They start paying local taxes. They pay their rent. They use the medical facilities. They become a contributing member of that community.”

This comprehensive approach to homelessness means an increased cost of care at the Mission compared to simply sheltering someone. However, it also results in a lasting impact on the clients and the community. That is why our donors are such an important part of the equation. They are providing the resources by which a person’s life is permanently changed for the better, and the entire community benefits.

“Working with so many people, it has made me realize how little it takes to become homeless. It could be a car repair that you had to pay, leaving you unable to pay rent and leading to eviction. It could be addiction. It could be anything. I’ve heard some traumatic stories, but all of them are inspiring. You just can’t believe what people can do after what they’ve experienced.” - Bobbie

“[Our clients] are still individuals. No matter where they’re at, or how they present to us, these are folks who have their own hopes and dreams. You have to start with that, first and foremost, and never forget it.” - Anita

Community Kindness & Mission Updates

**Handmade Quilts:** These ladies from Saint Matthew’s Lutheran Church in Thompson brought us some gorgeous handmade quilts for the clients. They’re durable and warm, and we love that a Bible verse is sewed into each quilt! This group meets weekly and donated more than 50 quilts in all to the community last year!

**Geared Up:** Service members from the GF Air Force Base’s 319th Contracting Flight visited the Mission to help break down boxes, organize the freezer, and fold letters. The twist? They were suited up in full military gear, gas masks and all! The group got some practice moving around in their gear and were a huge help to us at the same time!

**Holiday Spirit:** A group of UND Medlife students helped bring Christmas to the Mission in 2019! They set up and decorated several Christmas trees, prepared holiday treats, and helped wrap presents for Bags of Blessings. All the decorations certainly helped keep the clients and staff in good spirits during the holiday season!

**Community Thanksgiving:** The Mission once again hosted a free Thanksgiving Dinner at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, open to all community members. We are thankful for the many people who contributed their time and resources to make this happen! Texas Roadhouse cooked the turkeys, Central High School classes provided pie, and lots of people donated food. On Thanksgiving Day, 70 volunteers helped us serve more than 400 meals. We love this opportunity to bring people together each year!

**A Very Merry Christmas:** Christmas was a joy at the Mission last month! Clients enjoyed holiday desserts and handmade Christmas cards from Schroeder Middle School students, and we were treated to a wonderful performance from the Twin Forks Sweet Adelines chorus. Each client received their own bag full of useful gifts, such as new shoes or jeans. Thank you to the churches, organizations, and individuals who contributed items for these Bags of Blessings. You put a smile on each of our clients’ faces!

Follow us on Facebook to see similar stories and updates posted each week!

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<td>474 total clients stayed at Northlands Rescue Mission for 14,877 nights of shelter.</td>
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<td>249 clients obtained permanent housing. The average length of stay for a client was 31 days, down from 36 days in 2018 and 86 days in 2017.</td>
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<td>Approximately 55,000 total meals were served, 1650 food boxes were distributed to community members, and 27,300 bags of food were distributed to students through the Backpack Program.</td>
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<td>More than 1000 volunteers contributed 3700 hours of volunteer service!</td>
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The 2019 Mission of Hope Banquet and Silent Auction took place on November 4th at the Alexus Center. Executive Director Sue Shirek and Board Chair Dr. Wendy Opsahl spoke about the Mission’s role in addressing homelessness and food insecurity in the community. The Backpack Program and the need for a local family shelter were major topics of the evening. Thank you to guest speaker MB Busch, who spoke on the importance of faith.

Before the meal, food items for the Backpack Program were placed on each table. Together, guests assembled bags for the program. It took less than 2 minutes for our guests to pack enough to feed 75 elementary school children for a weekend! On top of this, many people brought their own food donations for the Backpack Program (pictured lower right).

We’d like to wholeheartedly thank our sponsors, donors, and everyone who attended the banquet. We’d also like to thank the incredible number of businesses and individuals who contributed to the Silent Auction, making it the largest one we’ve ever seen! We are truly blessed to have such a caring and involved community!

See insert for complete list of sponsors...

Join us on February 13th, 2020 for Giving Hearts Day!

Giving Hearts Day is a 24-hour online giving event for hundreds of charities in North Dakota and northwest Minnesota. Last year, our amazing donors raised more than $60,000 for the Mission on Giving Hearts Day! Donations this year will help us maintain and expand the Backpack Program, ensuring elementary students get enough to eat over the weekends. Funds raised will also help provide a stable environment for homeless clients and connect at-risk families with critical community resources.

With a match on Giving Hearts Day, MY $20: Feeds 16 children through the Backpack Program! Provides a night of shelter, 3 meals, guidance from a social worker, and access to showers, bathrooms, clothing, and hygiene products for a homeless man or woman!

To donate, visit givingheartsday.org and search for Northlands Rescue Mission. Or, go to northlandsrescuemission.org/heart to be taken directly to our giving page. Donations made now will automatically be scheduled for Giving Hearts Day, and at least $4000 in donations will be matched by generous friends of the Mission!

We are seeking additional match donors for Giving Hearts Day. If you are interested in matching donations or would like more information, please call us at 701-772-6600 ext. 200 or email sue@jointhemission.org.

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Key Bliss Boutique
KNOX Radio
Knutson Printing
Korin Nadeau
Kristen’s Bridal
L & M Meats
La Quinta Inn & Suites
Lakota Drug
Langdon Floral
Larimore Golf & Gift
Legendary Tackle Company
LeRoy Sondrol
Lighting Gallery
Little Jack Baby Store
LoneTree Designs
Lucious Boutique
Lunseth Plumbing & Heating
MimiOrigami
Marco’s Pizza
Market 180
Mary Ann Laxen
Matt Collings
Matt & Wendy Opsahl
MB Busch
McDonald’s
McKinnon Company
Michaels
Minnesota Twins
Minnkota Power Cooperative
Misti Kauffman
Modern Auto Body
Nail Studio
Neil’s Quality Meats & More
Nettiques
Nodak Electric
Noel & Sue Shirek
North Dakota Eye Clinic
North Dakota Mill & Elevator
Northern Air Family Fun Center
Northern Plumbing Supply
Northern Roots Boutique
Oak Lake Golf Course
One Majestic Place
Palm Beach Tan
Palubicki’s Family Market
Papa John’s Pizza
Papa Murphy’s
Paper Panther Design
Paradiso
Parrot’s Cay Tavern & Grill
Peppers Crafts and Stuff
Pete’s Za
Peterson Veterinary Clinic
Picks
Pita Pit
Planet Fitness
Popolino’s Pizza
Prairie Knights Casino & Resort
Q W Massage & Spa
Qdoba Mexican Grill
Ralph Engelstad Arena
Ramada Inn
Randall & Doris Karas
Red Barn Orchard/Spurgin Farms
Red River Commodities
Ken & Rachel Van Eps
Renewing The Heart
Richard & Phyllis Clark
Rick & Coleen Asche
Riddle’s Jewelry
River Cinema 15
Riverview Golf Course
RML Trading LLC
Rob Treuer & Consultants
Ruby Tuesday
Ruffing It Doggie Day Care
The Rustic Flea
Rydel Chevrolet
Salon 222
Salon East
Sam’s Club
Sandhill Golf Course
Scheels
Scrapers Hockey
Secondwindgranny
Sherry Thompson
Shooting Star Casino
Sickies Garage
Signature Jewelers
Ski & Bike Shop
Skydancer Casino & Resort
Sky’s Fine Dining
Sleep Inn & Suites
SLO Down Wines
SoapWekes
Southgate Bar & Grill
The Speckled Loon
Speedway 805 Grill & Bar
Spoiled Rotten Pets
Stacy Pahlen - Cleaning Fairies
Stay & Play Pet Resort
Steam Me a Cup of Tea
Stennes Granite Company
Sterling Carpet One
Steve Brekke
Sublime Aesthetic Professionals
Sunflower Butter
Sunrooms Plus Inc.
Swingen Construction Company
T’s Tangles
Taea Made
Target
Terry’s True Value
Texas Roadhouse
TheRose on Main
Tianna Country Club
Tim Shea’s Nursery
Tip Top Tux
The Toasted Frog
Torg Brewery
Trinity Lutheran Church - TRF
True North Equipment
Twin Pines Golf Course
UND Aerospace
UND Alumni Association
UND Bookstore
UND Coaches Brad Berry and Bubba Schweigert
UND Enrollment Services
University Federal Credit Union
Up North Pizza Pub
Urban Baby Co.
Valley Golf Course
ValleyTechPros
Vintage Renewed
Vivian Rydell
Walle Lutheran Church
Wall’s Medicine & Health Center
Waxing the City
Whispering Oaks Golf Club
Widman’s Candy Shop
Wildwood Country Club
Willow Creek Golf Course
Winnipeg Jets/True North Sports
Wooden Hearts
Wy’s Floral