



A Place to Call Home

December 2010

Member Agencies

- 211 of Ottawa County
- Arbor Circle
- Barnabas Ministries
- Center for Women in Transition
- City of Grand Haven
- City of Holland
- Community Action House
- Consumer Representatives
- Fair Housing Center of West Michigan
- Good Samaritan Ministries
- HHI Management
- Holland Deacon's Conference
- Holland Rescue Mission
- Jubilee Ministries
- Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity
- Love INC TriCities
- Ottawa County Community Action Agency
- Ottawa County Community Mental Health
- Ottawa County Department of Human Services
- Ottawa County Housing Commission
- Ottawa County Human Services Coordinating Council
- The People Center
- The Salvation Army of Grand Haven
- The Bank of Holland
- Webster House Youth Services

Update: Plan to End Homelessness



In June of this year, the Plan to End Homelessness Steering Committee, with the assistance of OAHHC members, completed a review of the plan and an assessment of local strategies. Details of the 2010 update to the Plan to End Homelessness can be found at

www.ottawahousing.org.

Here are some of the accomplishments of the last two years:

- The Homeless Youth Council (see page 3) has been actively seeking ways to address the needs of homeless and run-away youth. Three sub-committees were created to explore housing options, data collection and to create a comprehensive list of resources to share in the community.
- The Holland Rescue Mission has organized a task force to meet the housing needs of chronically homeless individuals who are not eligible for existing permanent supportive housing programs.
- Ottawa County has successfully implemented HPRP serving nearly 90 households to date.
- AmeriCorps members continue to provide case management for HARP voucher holders. Ottawa County was approved for a third member who began in October.
- Ottawa County has two active foreclosure prevention programs.
- A Steering Committee has been formed to create a financial literacy program aimed at youth.
- Funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funded a SOAR program which served 12 individuals this past year.
- Ottawa County conducted two Project Homeless Connects in the last year which served 400 people.
- A Homeless Awareness Committee was reorganized to include public relations and education. Regular press releases are submitted to media outlets with the help of the Statewide Communications Workgroup.
- Ottawa County Community Mental Health was approved for two more permanent supportive housing beds for homeless persons with disabilities.
- A consultant was hired to study the housing needs in the community and to examine the structure of the Ottawa County Housing Commission to determine whether changes should be recommended to the County Commission.

Website

The OAHHC has a website (www.ottawahousing.org) which has recently been undergoing some needed changes. A local volunteer has generously offered her time to update the website on a regular basis. On the website you can find links to plans and documents, hous-

ing news, data and programs; and an event calendar; and links to all the OAHHC member agency websites.

If you have housing news you'd like to post or an event you'd like to promote please contact the OAHHC coordinator at oahccoord@gmail.com .



To donate to
Homelessness
Prevention
endowments,
contact:

**Community Foundation
of the
Holland/Zeeland Area**
70 W. 8th Street
Holland, MI 49423
616-396-6590

**Grand Haven Area
Community Foundation**
1 South Harbor Drive
Grand Haven, MI 49417
616-842-6378



Ottawa County conducts a point in time count of homeless persons living in shelter, transitional housing and in places not meant for human habitation twice a year, in January and August.

The 2010 Summer count of 313 persons showed a decrease in overall homeless numbers as compared to the 2010 Winter Count of 316 persons. As expected, an increase in unsheltered

Point in Time

homeless was indicated in the summer count. The lower overall number of homeless persons and families could also have been attributed to the release of 38 new homeless preference housing choice vouchers as well as the influx of Recovery Act funding for the Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Re-Housing program (HPRP—See page 4).

Check out the website www.ottawahousing.org for more homeless data.



Member Agency in Focus

Love In the Name of Christ (Love INC TriCities) is a Christian nonprofit organization, certified by the State of Michigan as a Food Bank working with 45 area churches. Two office locations are offered for those in need, one in Grand Haven, and one in Nunica. The Main Office & Donation Processing Center is opened six days a week including some evenings and weekend hours. Our satellite office is called “Crockery” because it covers Crockery Township and is open Mondays and Fridays. Choosing not to utilize government funds for operational expenses, Love INC relies on the generosity of local businesses, individuals and the church community for their sole financial support, and of that financial support, 95 cents out of every dollar goes directly to serving those in needs.



Last year alone, Love INC provided over 3.4 million dollars in services to our local community. Working hand in hand with church partners, Love INC provides services through 29 ministries ranging from food assistance to budget counseling. One exciting new ministry is the Ministry Center set to open in April 2011. The Ministry Center will provide shelter to single women and/or women with children.

The primary objective of Love INC is always to assist people to move towards self-sufficiency and to edu-

cate clients about what they can do for themselves and what they can do with their lives in service to others. Love INC believes that self-sufficiency supports the dignity of the person seeking help. Encouraging self-sufficiency does not perpetuate a cycle of helplessness. Love Inc is committed to good stewardship. Like the old adage, Love INC believes it is better to teach people to fish than give them the fish. Love INC strives to be the bridge for people to a better spiritual life and one of economic self-sufficiency.

Love INC also operates a resale store in downtown Spring Lake offering a variety of items ranging from clothing and books to furniture and antiques. The proceeds of Love INC’s General Store go to fund the ministries of Love INC.

Homeless Youth Council

Over the last year, The Homeless Youth Council has been assessing what gaps in services exist for unaccompanied homeless youth and how to address those gaps. Three subcommittees are focused on a specific area of need:

The Data Collections subcommittee coordinates with the local school districts in conducting the biannual Point in Time homeless count as well as to help the school homeless liaisons understand and strengthen their own counts.

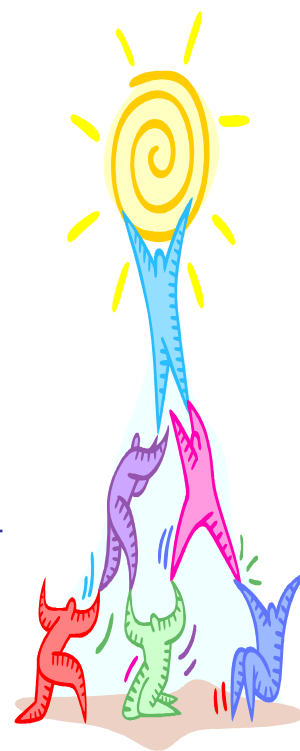
The Resource subcommittee is focusing on outreach to agencies, schools, and churches in the community who work with or may come into contact with homeless youth. Business cards and brochures have been created with information on how to contact Arbor Circle and Webster House. Both

agencies receive Federal and State funding to serve runaway and homeless youth and have 24 hour crisis lines. Webster House currently serves the northern part of Ottawa County and Arbor Circle the rest of the county. With this system in place anyone who contacts the number on the card will be connected with staff who will assess the situation and make the appropriate referral.

The Housing subcommittee is developing a short term housing plan for youth and families in crisis, as well as a drop-in center. The short term housing, called Host Homes, is intended to address the lack of a physical shelter in Ottawa County for homeless and runaway youth. Webster House has the capacity to license homes where youth, ages 11-

17, are able to stay for a maximum of 21 days. Webster House or Arbor Circle staff would work closely with the youth and the family through case management and counseling to ensure family reunification, or when necessary involve Child Protective Services. Both agencies are currently in the process of recruiting Host Homes. Cornerstone Youth Ministries recently expanded their services to include a Drop-In Center for at-risk youth. Evening hours have been increased and food and laundry services are available. Barnabas Ministries continues to move forward with their plans to build a youth shelter on the outskirts of Zeeland.

For more information or if you know of someone interested in the Host Home program please contact Anna Wehrmeyer at 594-7120.



Homeless Awareness

Homeless Awareness Week was November 14-20. Activities during this week and throughout the month are designed to inform the local community about homelessness.

On November 17, the OAHC sponsored the 7th annual fundraiser called *Soup for All* in Holland and Grand Haven. All proceeds are added to the Homelessness Prevention endowments funds at the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area.

Total revenues from the event exceeded \$12,000 this year. Special thanks go to the local

businesses that donated food, like Panera, the nearly 40 table sponsors, event sponsors like CapTrust and The Bank of Holland and scores of volunteers. The school children of Grand Haven and Spring Lake also participated by raising thousands of dollars.

The OAHC would like to thank the Grand Haven *Soup for All* committee which has shown enormous commitment to making this event successful. Please see the following links for articles and a video about *Soup for All*.

[Grand Haven Tribune Article](#)
[Holland Sentinel Article](#)



On Dec 6th the OAHC held a landlord forum in Holland. Topics covered included Fair Housing, Housing Choice Vouchers and Mediation. Nearly 25 landlords attended and according to surveys completed at the end of the forum most found it to be very helpful and would attend again if new information was provided.

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**The Ottawa Area Housing Coalition is a
collaborative group dedicated to identifying needs,
developing a vision,
encouraging a coordination of responses and
advocating for safe, accessible,
affordable housing and services
in the Ottawa area.**

HPRP

Nearly 15,000 people across Michigan were helped through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) during its first year, according to new figures released today by Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness.

All of these households had exhausted their family and community resources prior to seeking assistance from HPRP, which was created by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to respond to the housing crisis.

"In Ottawa County, HPRP is a great example of a successful effort to prevent homelessness in the first place. In situations where residents do lose housing, HPRP support returns homeless citizens to stable housing in a short period of time," said Linda Jacobs, Executive Director of Good Samaritan Ministries. "This promising approach is part of Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness in our area and across the state."

The HPRP initiative, a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, helps individuals and families secure stable housing. The program allows community agencies to provide a mix of non-financial services and other financial subsidies, such as help with rental or utility payments. Program applicants seeking financial assistance are required to show that they can become self-reliant with the limited funds made available to them.

Documentation from the pro-

gram's first year shows that thousands of individuals and families have avoided homelessness while others who were homeless have found stable places to live.

"We believe the HPRP initiative helped prevent homelessness from substantially increasing in our area during the past year," said Jacobs. Some other local statistics from the first year of operation (July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010) are just as compelling. For example:

A total of 86 families to date have been served which represents 345 individuals.

Fifty-five percent of the households were headed by single women.

Nearly one-third of adults receiving services were working an average of 22 hours per week.

Thirty percent had a disability of long duration.

Over a quarter of both homeless and prevention households reported high medical debt, and nearly as many reported an active medical crisis at the time of HPRP intake.

Of those reporting homelessness, 66% were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

A statewide comparison of prevention and homeless clients shows that they have similar risk factors. A significant percentage of both groups experienced evictions and unemployment, lacked basic education, and had medical debt and an

active medical crisis. A higher percentage of those who were homeless moved frequently in the year preceding HPRP enrollment, and had transportation problems that impeded their ability to get to work.

"Although risk factors present significant challenges, the program's performance is something we can all be proud of," said Jacobs.

Sally Harrison, director of Rental Development and Homeless Initiatives for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), said the program has been crucial at a time when Michigan residents are challenged by a struggling economy and a weak housing market. "These challenges are changing the face of homelessness in Michigan and are driving more and more households straight into the turbulent waters of homelessness or to the brink of it," said Harrison. "The HPRP initiative provides a crucial safety net between the economic storm we are experiencing and the well-being of the state's residents."

Michigan launched its 10-year Campaign to End Homelessness in 2006, the first state in the nation to do so. HPRP has become a critical part of that effort. Those who wish to learn more about Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness can visit

www.thecampaigntoendhomelessness.org