

Rebuilding Lives



Stories from Caritas Communities ■ Preventing homelessness through affordable housing ■ Spring 2014

By raising your hands, you held a roof over their heads

The uplifted hands of 74 inspired donors, who enthusiastically raised their paddles at the 2013 Annual Dinner, enabled Caritas to launch its emergency rent assistance program.

'The Homelessness Prevention Program' funds will ensure that responsible residents will not lose their housing during a financial crisis.

Because no one is immune from hard times, sickness, or loss of employment, this fund supports carefully selected residents not able to make ends meet and helps keep them in their Caritas home.

Given the support you have provided, these recipients can take a breath and stabilize. Low- and extremely low-income wage earners do not have the luxury of rainy day funds. Thank you for raising your hands to help keep a roof over the heads of these deserving people.

Because no one should be homeless. ■



2013 Annual Dinner Donors

Meet a recipient of your generosity:

ANNE has been a Caritas resident since 2009. A grandmother who works in a "big box store" making minimum wage, she has experienced a loss in hours due to the store being remodeled. Anne is diligently seeking additional employment as she struggles to pay her rent.



Please spend a moment and listen to Dave's, Gerry's and Seamus' stories. You will never forget them.
www.caritascommunities.org

Vets Inspire Guests as Annual Dinner Raises \$660,000

Caritas' 2013 Annual Dinner, co-chaired by board members Diane Rubin, partner at Prince Lobel Tye LLP, and Jim Coughlin, CEO of Northbridge Co., raised the most funds in the Dinner's 28-year history. That special evening, we were proud to honor Jack Connors, Jr. with the P. Leo Corcoran Humanitarian Award and three residents – Dave, Gerry and Seamus – all formerly homeless veterans living in

our Bedford Veterans Quarters (BVQ) who shared powerful stories of triumph over PTSD and homelessness, direct results of having served our country.

Dinner speaker Seamus, shared his story of his path from military service to homelessness to sobriety and stability at the Caritas BVQ.

Seamus's mother, who was a guest that evening, spoke about a mother's pain and healing:

A Soldier Son and a Family's Path to Healing As I reflect on last night, I have to say it was one of my proudest moments in being this man's mother. I was proud when he chose to serve our country, I was proud when he placed my first grandson in my arms; but this night was all that and more. This night was cathartic for us both as one year ago we were at our darkest point. I didn't know if he would be another one to lose his battle with PTSD or if he would choose to live to fight it. Seeing the pictures he shared of the ethnically cleansed homes in Bosnia & Afghanistan brought back the memories of the phone call from my broken soldier son, weeping because of what he had to do and not knowing how to help him, left me nearly as despondent as he was. Mothers can always fix it, right? Not always, and that helpless feeling is sometimes more than our loving hearts can take. So for that feeling to start to mend in my heart and to watch a man who has chosen to heal through the wonderful programs made available to him brings me full circle. My son has only just begun to be the great man that is yet to come. — **Seamus's Mother**

Dear Friends,

Every once in a while you are lucky enough to be reminded why you do what you do. Today I received such a reminder, in the form of a letter from a person I have never met.

Maggie and her sister are why I am committed to creating affordable housing for the homeless.

They are also the reason why generous people like you support Caritas. Because we agree that everyone deserves to have a roof over their head. Please take a moment today to give whatever you can afford.

Mark Winkeller

P.S. Caritas is responding to Maggie to make sure her sister gets the help she needs.



CARITAS ANNOUNCES the hiring of Karin Cassel, the organization's first Director of Fund Development and Communications. Shown with Mark Winkeller, Executive Director.

Dear Mr. Winkeller:

My sister resides in Boston; she is being evicted from her apartment where she has lived for the past 20 or so years. In many ways, she is an ideal tenant. She is a quiet woman, non-drinker, 66 years of age, loves to cook and has a small social security income. When driving a taxi, she was out of her apartment by 6 am and drove until 4 pm, 6-days a week.



Her ability to work consistently has been difficult due to flare-ups caused by Crohn's disease. She recently had surgery and has been home for 2 months now and unable to work.

I have been providing monthly financial support but this is something I am unable to handle long-term. She might move in with me in my one bedroom apartment and use the sleep sofa but this is not a long-term solution.

It is shocking to all of a sudden have a sibling about to become homeless.

If your organization can respond to me I'd be very happy to learn of any opportunities for housing my sister.

Sincerely,
Maggie Lord

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This newsletter is published twice a year for supporters and friends of Caritas Communities. For information about Caritas or to arrange a tour of our properties, please contact Karin Cassel, Director of Fund Development and Communications at 781.843.1242 ext. 23 or kcassel@caritascommunities.org.

Mark Winkeller, *Executive Director*. Karin Cassel, *Editor*. Carol Maglitta/One Visual Mind, *Designer*. Wendy Price, *Writer*. Romana Vysatova, Wendy Price and Greig Cranna, *Photographers*.

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From the Caritas Rooftops: State awards \$2 million to Caritas

Thank you Governor Deval Patrick for shining a light on the need for supportive housing for veterans, the homeless, and very-low wage earners by dedicating \$25M in support of

this initiative. Partnering with 18 state agencies, the \$25M includes \$2M dedicated to renovate Caritas' Cortes Street, a 48-unit Single Room Occupancy (SRO) project in the Boston's Back Bay Village neighborhood. Cortes Street is the home to BHA 'Priority 1' individuals, those coming from the most vulnerable situations including domestic violence and homelessness. ■

See Us. Know Us. You May Be Surprised.

WAYNE was born in Detroit to a teenage mom in a hard core ghetto. As a kid, he had a love for creating. His mom encouraged him, and kept him involved at the YMCA, in sports, in learning. That was before she started using drugs. Then, she would disappear for months on end.

Wayne learned to stay under the radar so he wouldn't be taken by Social Services.

"I would go around every night making sure the doors and windows were sealed," Wayne recalls. "I learned independence and took care of my mom when she did come home. I'd flush her drugs in the toilet. That drug was like Satan."

At school, some teachers were no-shows and bullying was rampant. Determined to be educated, he made his way to Cambridge, living with an 'uncle,' allowing him to graduate from high school in 2006. After high school, he was on his own again and without a home. He held down his job as a bank teller while applying for a place to live.

"I didn't want people to see me, so I had a couple of locations so no one would know I was homeless," Wayne says. "I would sleep outside a church, wash up at Starbucks and go to work. I paid for my braces with the money I made at the bank. That was a huge accomplishment for me."



Wayne, now 25, has been at the Central House for seven years. He no longer has to think about where he is going to sleep.

"I don't know where I'd be without Caritas," says Wayne. "Now I have goals. I am working full time and going to college part time."

Wayne wants to be a software engineer with a Master's degree and, down the road, buy a house in Cambridge and have kids. From what we know of Wayne, we expect he will get there. ■



Meet Melanie, the 'angel' of the Bedford Veterans Quarters.

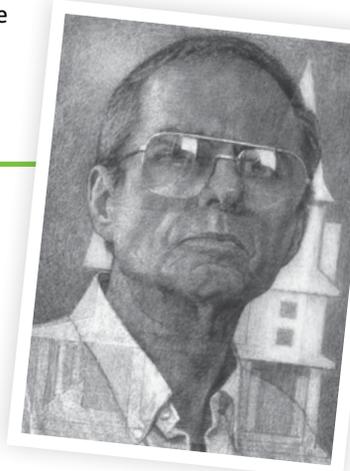
Melanie is a residential administrator at the BVQ, the largest provider of permanent SRO housing for homeless veterans in greater Boston. She helps with the business of rent, jobs and support. She cooks weekly meals, not because it is in her job description, but because she wants to do something nice for the men. She addresses each resident by name, sensitive to the stories that brought them here from homelessness.

What is happening at the BVQ is nothing short of remarkable: 60 previously homeless men are living in clean, close quarters. Each has a key to their own furnished room. 70% work. The others are on disability. Sometimes there are 'slips' and Melanie and the other workers stand behind the residents to help them get back on track. Everyone greets Melanie with a joke and a smile. They tell her she's 'an angel'. The BVQ is a home for those who served their country and returned to a vastly different world than they had previously known.

"Without Caritas, many of these veterans would still be living on the streets. They call me their angel" she whispers. "As for me, I am so lucky. I used to have a 'job'. Here, I have found my calling."

"This Could Be You Tomorrow"

John, a Caritas resident for 20 years, is extremely intelligent and a magnificent portrait artist. He recently shared some of his thoughts on the economy and homelessness.



Self portrait by John

"Caritas is serving the practical function of providing decent housing for many people who, like myself, are simply economically challenged, and for those in transition or requiring reeducation.

Just as the Industrial Revolution brought sweeping change that benefitted humanity in the long-term but had a devastating impact on the short term, so it is with our current technological transformation where, as economic disparity widens, decent affordable housing becomes ever more relevant and necessary.

There is a whole section of people who had jobs, had a home, they were stable middle class, who – because of economics – are now pulled down to poverty and they have no experience with it. This substantial group reflects a larger issue of our whole country. This could be you tomorrow." ■



Caritas Communities

Preventing Homelessness with Affordable Housing

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SAVE THE DATE!

29th Annual Dinner to benefit Caritas Communities

Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.
Sheraton Boston Hotel

P. Leo Corcoran Humanitarian Award
Ann Marie Connolly
Philanthropist and Community Activist



Give the Gift of a home.

Please support Caritas Communities

Contact Karin Cassel at
kcassel@caritascommunities.org
or visit www.caritascommunities.org



Have A Few Minutes A Month? Give. Do. Receive.

ARE YOU A YOUNG LEADER? DO YOU KNOW A YOUNG LEADER? Calling young professionals: Network, volunteer, raise awareness and funds on behalf of Caritas residents. All inquiries, contact Karin Cassel at kcassel@caritascommunities.org.

'WELCOME HOME BASKETS' Give the gift of a fresh start to one of 200 previously homeless men, including veterans. Donate a laundry basket containing new essential items:

Suggested items:

- dishes and utensils sets for one
- set of dark towels
- fleece blanket (twin)
- toiletries (soap, deodorant, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, nail clipper, razor, mirror).

'SHARE YOUR SKILLS' VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Offer to lead an educational workshop in managing finances, cooking nutritionally on a limited budget, seeking employment and employment training. Lead monthly discussion groups or launch a book group. Artistic? Enjoy writing? Share your skills through an art or writing workshop. All inquiries, please contact Wendy Price at wprice@caritascommunities.org.



Why Caritas Communities?

Because we believe every person deserves a safe, clean place to call home.

- Established in 1985 by P. Leo Corcoran, Caritas Communities is the largest non-profit owner and manager of permanent veteran and Single Room Occupancy housing in Greater Boston.
- Caritas provides low- and extremely low-income residents safe, clean, and stable housing in its 895 rooms in 29 buildings in Greater Boston.
- Rents range from \$120 to \$145 per week and include all utilities and furnishings.