

# AURORA Anniversary

Giving light to the homeless

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## MISSION

Aurora exists to bring an end to homelessness in our community.

## Learn about our new housing programs



see inside for details

### Special Events & Projects

#### Trivia Tonight

Sat., Oct. 11 6:00 p.m.  
 Victoria National Golf Club  
 2000 Victoria National Blvd.,  
 Newburgh  
 \$75.00 per player  
 (Teams of 4 to 8)  
 1st Team Prize—\$500  
 2nd Team Prize—\$300

Your check payable to "Aurora" is your reservation. Mail to *Trivia Tonight*, PO Box 74, Evansville, IN 47714

For more information, email sbias@auroraevansville.org or call 428-3246 x 29

Support Aurora through the annual  
**SIMON EVENING OF GIVING™**

Sun., Nov. 23  
 Eastland Mall  
 Tickets available at Aurora

Contact us for information on how you or your group can help our clients during the holidays through these programs:



House Pins®



In November, Denver Mattress Co. in Evansville will donate to us \$20 of every mattress sold during the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving!

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Aurora, Inc.

September 2008

# Aurora News Anniversary

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## Changing Lives



Three years ago, our Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) met Joe, a 28-year-old man originally from California. The team saw him regularly during the weekly outreach trip, yet they noticed he seemed to have a real distrust of people and he never asked for help. Recently, while reflecting, Joe said, "The way I was raised, you don't ask for anything. You do your own thing and do it yourself."

Joe stayed in shelter, abandoned houses, or, when he was working, doubled-up with others. Through his enjoyment of computers, he met a lady from India online. Saving up funds for a year, he took leave from work, went to India and married her. He returned to his previous job, but wasn't earning enough to make ends meet. When that job ended, he struggled with short-term, sporadic work and low pay. By Feb. 2007, Joe "was at rock bottom for a long time and desperate for

help. Aurora gave me the offer of help getting some type of employment." Jill Miller, a Case Coordinator on HOT, began serving Joe by linking him with employment programs which provided additional support that led to a full-time job. During his first year on the job, Joe stayed in shelter then was able to get into transitional housing last fall for about three months. Just before Christmas, he was housed. Joe continues to work by cleaning and painting big trucks. He has been able to save enough funds to

retain a lawyer and work toward his wife's citizenship and to bring her to the U.S. "I tell everyone at the shelter that they need to ask Aurora for help," Joe says. To him Aurora was "always there, helpful, giving out supplies ... knowledgeable about all the resources available." Direct services through our Homeless Outreach Team is part of the work of Aurora. Connecting with people like Joe and linking them to housing is a main goal of HOT. YOUR SUPPORT helps us end homelessness one household at a time!

## From the Executive Director

I believe we can learn lessons from all experiences if we take the time to examine and reflect. Some of you are aware that my mother passed away at the end of June. I wanted to thank you for the tremendous outpouring of support, cards, calls, visits, flowers, donations and prayers that I received from many of you. As many others do, I have found myself reflecting more on what's important and the "meaning of life" since her death. Mom lived to be 90 years old and had a full but hard life. She grew up on a farm in Kentucky, the youngest of five children. Her father was overly fond of moonshine, which led to her quitting school after the

eighth grade to work to help support the family. She married and had three children. When her youngest child was four, her husband died and she became a single mom. She moved her young family, along with my grandmother, to Evansville in hopes of finding better opportunities to provide for her family. She worked as a welder in the shipyards during the war, worked the cafeteria line at International Harvester and obtained a beautician's license before she met and married my dad. She was a caretaker for my grandmother, who was bedfast for the last four years of her life and for my dad, who became increasingly more disabled over a fourteen-year period.

She was not a complainer but a doer. She didn't sit around talking about how things should be; she actively worked to make things better for the people and things she loved. As I reflect on life - I can't help but think about how I'm spending my time, my talent, and my resources. Am I talking too much or taking action? Am I doing enough to make things better for the people and things I love or could I do more? Every day we work to end homelessness, one family at a time. Every day we work at a systemic level to equalize the playing field for those in our community who find themselves without a home. You, too, are part of this work. Every time you read our newsletter, drop

us a line of encouragement, volunteer for a project or committee, send a donation, tell a friend about our work, collect in-kind items, advocate for more affordable housing, host a fundraiser, think about what it would be like if you didn't have a home tonight, ... YOU too are taking action in the fight to end homelessness. If you haven't yet moved from the talking to active stage, reflect on what's stopping you. We have plenty of ways you can get involved. Can I do more? Can you? Can we as a community? Only time will tell.

Luzada Hayes



## Housing Programs

At the heart of ending homelessness is housing. On the average, Aurora houses four individuals or families each month. As more doors open for funding sources and partnerships in the community, that average is expected to grow.

This year, we have launched two new housing programs:



### Emergency Housing Program

Homeless families need first and foremost housing. Once housing is established, it is easier to begin to identify and address the barriers that led to the homeless experience. Having worked directly with homeless families for over ten years, we've observed that the lack of a positive support system can also increase the probability of becoming or remaining homeless. This program has been created with these factors in mind.

Families will have been assessed in order to be program candidates. Families are considered guests of this program, with minimal rules and expectations that will govern their stay. The rent and utilities are paid by Aurora, with funding supplied by our initial partner, Christian Fellowship Church (CFC).

In this is a pilot program through *Compassionate Connections* (see "Community Connections," pg. 3), the family will join a Case Manager from Aurora and 3-4 volunteers (called *Connectors*) from CFC to form a team. This team works to-

gether to create an action plan that includes the establishment of permanent housing and other complementary areas that might include employment, education, transportation, life skill training, financial literacy, day care, etc.

The program is designed in two stages: (1) The initial six months can include housing assistance, case management and developing relationships with *Connectors*; (2) The second phase includes continued support of *Connectors* for an additional six months. At the end of the initial six-month period, when case management services terminate, we hope the family will be able to assume the rental lease and utilities. If the current unit is unacceptable (by cost, family's determination, or other factors), locating other housing will be part of the action plan.

This trial program will be continually evaluated for improvement, positive outcomes and need within



the community.  
**Home4Good**

In July, Amanda Sartore was hired as a Housing Specialist with Home4Good, in a partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Evansville. Home4Good serves to educate, empower and guide families toward rising out of homelessness and settling into homeownership.

Target families include residents in the transitional housing programs of Goodwill Family Center and Lucas Place, current homeowners of Habitat for Humanity homes that are in jeopardy of foreclosure, and families who applied for Habitat, are considered "borderline," but have been denied.

Through participating in *Home4Good*, families receive supportive services that include but are not limited to assessment, goal development, links to community services, crisis intervention, life skill training, support, and assistance with interpersonal, financial and homeownership related issues.

*Home4Good* believes in empowerment, not enablement of the individual. Families are given the tools necessary for change, yet it is the sole responsibility of each family to pursue that change.

A holistic evaluation of the health and safety of each individual is utilized. Families who are enrolled in the *Home4Good* program are not just "clients," they are individuals and families each with their own unique set of positive characteristics and dreams. Each family is evaluated based on its own circumstances and are not compared to other families.

The Emergency Housing Program and *Home4Good* are two means through which Aurora is participating with the community in addressing the *Destination: Home* strategies that aim at increasing affordable housing opportunities for people in our community with low and extremely low incomes.

## Community Connections



### Destination: Home

Our director, Luzada Hayes, continues to be vitally involved as Resource Coordinator for *Destination: Home*, supplying assistance to the Commission on Homelessness as it oversees the strategies of the ten-year plan to end & prevent homelessness in our city & county.

The plan is in its fourth year of making a difference in our community. Several strategies continue to unfold, laying the foundation and making an impact on the issue of homelessness here.

### Compassionate Connections

"*Compassionate Connections*" isn't a new ministry or organization, but rather a new approach for local congregations to partner with the homeless service providers in Evansville and Vanderburgh County in order to make greater strides toward ending and preventing homelessness as we've known it in our community.

*Compassionate Connections* has been developed to train volunteers from congregations for a one-year commitment to come alongside and befriend or support and encourage families and individuals who are homeless, while a homeless service

agency provides services for part of that time.

*Compassionate Connections* fosters a belief in the abilities of individuals and families who have experienced homelessness to reenter housing and reach stability in their lives. The program fosters an attitude of "You can do this. We're with you," as it brings together caring and trained teams of people from agencies and congregations to create a network of support and encouragement for households.

*Compassionate Connections* has been launched with the initial agency/congregation partnership of Aurora, through our "Emergency Housing Program" (see "Housing Programs" pg. 2), and Christian Fellowship Church (CFC), who provides donated items, funds, and volunteers to help set up a new home and teams of *Connectors* who are matched with up to six families for one year (1 team + 1 family for 1 year).

The congregation identifies volunteers who participate in a *Connectors*' training. Agency staff identifies families to participate in the program and work together with the families to locate and acquire housing. A coordinator in the congregation matches trained *Connectors* to the family. Agency staff, *Connectors*, and *Connectees* become acquainted. The family moves into its new home with the

assistance of the *Connectors*, other volunteers from the congregation, and agency staff.

After the initial matches of *Connectors* (volunteers) and *Connectees* (families), as the year develops, gatherings will be scheduled for the *Connectors*, *Connectees*, and the agency staff to do periodic check-ins all together for support, encouragement, fine-tuning the program, and more.

The vision for *Compassionate Connections* includes creating more partnerships among more homeless service providers partnered with more congregations to house and support more families and individuals who are homeless in order to foster stable housing and prevent a return to homelessness.

### Discharge Planning Coalition

Mindy Niehaus, hired this summer as the coalition coordinator, is currently located at Aurora. The DPC was launched in July and holds regular meetings on 1st Thursdays at 11:00 at the Central library's Browning Events Room. The coalition is a network of community institutions addressing aimed at preventing homelessness among those released from health care, corrections, & foster care

Learn more about these & other projects & strategies by visiting [www.destination-home.info](http://www.destination-home.info) or by calling 812.428.4975 x 28



### Special Thanks ~ We extended thanks to the following:

- **Seek & Find, Buy-U-Boutique, The Corner, Sadie's Collectibles & Consignments, & many individuals** for Housing Starter Kit supplies & more
- **St. Mary's Breast Center & Daughters of Charity** for outreach supplies
- **Matt's Lawn Care**—grounds keeping
- **Vectren** for Aurora News assistance
- **Tri-State Fire Protection Inc.** for servicing office fire extinguishers
- **Mountain Glacier** for bottled water
- **PennyJohn's and Sadie's Collectibles & Consignments** for selling House Pins
- **Christian Fellowship Church** for partnering with our Emergency Housing Program through *Compassionate Connections*
- **USI & U of E** students & staff donations in the annual "U-Donate" project & the **46 volunteers** who spent 158 hours transporting & sorting items that benefited 6 homeless service providers & 3 other nonprofits!
- **East Side Christian Church** for hosting/helping with the U-Donate sorting project
- **Mater Dei Provincialate** for selecting Aurora as a volunteer site
- **Seek & Find Home & Garden Consignments** -hosting the Parking Lot Sale
- **Contributions in memory of Fannie Bratcher**
- **MANY VOLUNTEERS** who have invested more than **750 hours** in helping us once & some, more than once, this spring & summer through collecting &/or sorting donations for our clients, serving at events, assembling outreach bags, Housing Starter Kits, &/or bulk mailings, & clerical tasks!



## Wish List/Seasonal Needs

### For clients living out (not sheltered/not housed)

tents, blankets (darker/non-attention-getting colors), lip balm, razors, denture adhesive, powder (foot, body, etc.), hand lotion & sanitizer (small containers), warm gloves (men's sizes), men's underwear (med. & lg.) & socks, men's hooded sweatshirts (L, XL, 2X), thermal underwear, hand warmers, wallets (new/used), key chains, sleeping bags, rain/wind/snow garments, flash lights, batteries, individually wrapped toilet paper rolls, non-perishable food especially protein sources (easy-open cans), bottled water, instant coffee, wind-up alarm clocks

### For clients re-entering housing

towel sets, twin sheets, pillows, blankets (any color; not throws), cleaning supplies

FURNITURE: dressers, chest of drawers, comfortable living room chairs

### For Aurora

Free storage space to store donated furniture & household items until clients are ready to move in

