

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

BEDS Plus Care helps vulnerable individuals stabilize their lives through housing and supportive services.

Volunteer Opportunities

COVID-19 has changed volunteering for BEDS Plus. Delivering emergency shelter on a nightly, rotating basis is not viable this year. But there are important ways you can help.

- Sign up to provide meals to BEDS clients across all programs.
- Deliver meals to motel-based shelter clients.
- Donate shelf stable meals.
- Donate grocery store or restaurant gift cards.
- Assemble laundry kits for clients.
- Help newly housed clients settle into their homes.

Go to the BEDS web site, email volunteer@beds-plus.org or call (708) 354-0858 for more ideas.

BEDS Plus in the Age of COVID-19: Why Your Help Means More Than Ever



Susan Valentine
Board Member

In its first 30 years, BEDS Plus built upon strong community support to respond to all the needs of the poor and homeless we serve. Starting with emergency overnight shelter, we added daytime services, professional case managers, housing and prevention programs, and over 100 units of permanent supportive housing, including Ogden Avenue Supportive Housing and Dover Place. This growth was made possible by volunteers, donors and advocates who believe that everyone deserves a home.

Responding effectively to COVID-19 has been a challenge, but BEDS was able to pivot and deliver emergency shelter during a mass quarantine. In mid-March we created a congregate 24-hour shelter at St. Barbara's in Brookfield, which moved to Salem United Church in Oak Lawn after two months. However, there were many who needed help. As a last resort, we placed these clients — often families — in motel rooms. By the end of July, we provided 12,506 shelter nights to 234 adults and children and provided them with 37,518 meals.

To adapt to the new reality of COVID-19 BEDS has a new initiative. We are partnering with Cook County to purchase a building that will provide 24-hour shelter and services for the most medically vulnerable homeless, while we help them secure permanent housing.

Launching a major new project was not among our strategic goals for this year, but then nothing about 2020 seems to be going as planned. If we are to stay true to our mission to help our neighbors struggling with homelessness, BEDS must look for new ways to achieve its goals. The generosity of our community has helped us grow and improve the opportunities for countless poor and homeless people. You came forward when COVID-19 struck. We hope you will join us as we find new ways to help those who need it most.

Susan Valentine, J.D., is a shareholder of Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel, P.C., a certified Women's Business Enterprise with 100 percent female ownership.

Read the full stories online at www.beds-plus.org/fall-2020-newsletter



From Homeless to Housed: Richard and Phyllis

Husband and wife Richard and Phyllis spent several years homeless and living in shelters with their children before getting matched with permanent supportive housing through BEDS Plus.

"I thank God that BEDS helped us get an apartment," Richard said. "I can't handle the streets anymore. I'm too old."

"It's hard when you're on your own and nobody's with you," Phyllis said. "It takes a toll on you."

Permanent supportive housing guarantees housing for people who have been chronically homeless for as long as they need it. For Richard and Phyllis, qualifying for supportive housing took time and plenty of help from their case managers to complete what seemed like endless paperwork. "It took a lot of time and a lot of patience, but BEDS had faith in us," Phyllis said.

When Phyllis recalls how unsafe she felt while living on the streets, too scared to go to sleep out of fear that someone might steal her belongings or something would happen to her children, she can



hardly believe how incredible it was when she and Richard were able to move into an apartment.

With their children grown and living in places of their own, Richard and Phyllis had the opportunity to visit and babysit their grandchildren.

As their lives continued to stabilize, they set a goal to leave supportive housing for their own apartment. Richard and Phyllis recently moved to independent housing in the south suburbs with a Section 8 voucher.

As they embark on the next chapter of their lives, they give a lot of the credit to their case managers who were always there when a problem came up. Richard says they are glad they stuck with the program for so many years, even when it wasn't easy.

“We finally have somewhere to call our own,” Phyllis said.

9th Annual Soup & Bread Goes Virtual!



In a year when the need is greatest, we cannot hold our traditional Soup & Bread event to raise funds for emergency services. But we can still raise funds — with your help.

We're working with our long time Soup & Bread restaurant and brewery partners on creative promotions to raise funds. And, what would a fundraiser be without a raffle? We will be selling raffle tickets and will hold the drawing at a one-hour virtual event on Sunday, January 31st.

We need your help with a new Soup & Bread crowdfunding program where your team of family and friends can raise money for emergency expenses, such as motel rooms, family shelter, and more.

Watch for announcements on our website, emails and social media.

In fiscal year 2020, BEDS Plus:



Delivered 22,197 nights of emergency shelter to 481 individuals in consolidated shelter and motels



Provided 63,000 meals to clients across our programs



Housed 1,250 clients through prevention and housing services

Volunteer Spotlight: Shawn Erickson

Shawn Erickson is deeply grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with BEDS Plus and help those in her own community. Shawn, CFO at C.J. Erickson Plumbing in Alsip, first started volunteering with BEDS three years ago after learning about the agency through her church.

She soon began contributing dinners to the St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church shelter site in Worth and then signed up to work the 5:30 a.m. shift once a month at Hope Covenant Church in Orland Park. Volunteering with BEDS became a passion for Shawn.

"People don't realize that there are homeless people who are really struggling right here in our area," she said.

Shawn and her staff at C.J. Erickson Plumbing, a Soup & Bread 2020 sponsor, have regularly made lunches for shelter clients. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, she and her employees have continued to provide lunches for BEDS clients. In addition to her staff, Shawn's family has also been delivering lunches.



Shawn Erickson (pictured left)

“You are engaged with real people [when volunteering with BEDS]. You're directly connected with the outcome,” she said.

“When you volunteer with other places, sometimes you're removed from where the need is.”

Shawn often shares examples from her time spent volunteering at BEDS shelter, noting that many have a misconception of why people are homeless.

“Not everybody has it in their life mission to improve the world, so I feel like I have a great opportunity and I have a great audience to try to make a difference,” she said. “I don't take that opportunity for granted.”

New Housing Programs Help Young Adults, Victims of Crime

In addition to 100 units of permanent supportive housing and rental assistance programs that moved more than 500 homeless clients into housing last year, BEDS Plus now has grants to provide transitional housing and rental assistance to victims of crime and youth age 18 to 24.



Both programs provide up to 24 months of rental assistance and intensive case management that address the particular traumatic experiences of victims of crime and homeless young adults, who are transitioning into adulthood.

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority awarded BEDS a large transitional housing grant for a three-year period to assist 12 households who were victims of crime. At BEDS, most of these clients are victims of intimate partner violence.

BEDS Plus is part of a HUD-funded collaborative pilot project for 18 to 24-year-old young adults. This population, known as Transition Age Youth, is one of the fastest growing homeless populations in the U.S.



To learn more about these and all of the BEDS Plus housing programs, go to the online version of this newsletter.

Program Spotlight: Homelessness Prevention

Last year, BEDS Plus provided more than \$350,000 of homelessness prevention assistance from a mix of public and private sources to 200 households in crisis. With new sources of prevention funds from Cook County and the State, BEDS likely will provide over \$500,000 of prevention support this year.

The influx of government support has made it possible to build a team of five Prevention staff, including specialists who are bilingual in Spanish and Arabic. According to Director of Stabilization Services Joann Boblick “Our team's success comes from our flexibility to serve clients in unexpected ways and at odd hours.” Prevention services are available from 8am to 8pm on weekdays, with staff traveling to meet clients at libraries and restaurants across the Southwest suburbs. Staff even meet with clients



Prevention Specialist Yvonne Butchee helps a client.

in apartment manager offices. Saturday appointments are also available.

A recent emergency rental and mortgage assistance program offered by the Illinois Housing Development Authority had staff working even harder to inform people in the community about the program. On the order of one hundred calls a day were coming in for a three-week period.

The end of the moratorium on evictions and increased unemployment benefits is already creating a surge in calls for help. Housing experts estimate as many as 800,000 Illinois residents could become homeless by year's end.

“Our work is only going to become more crucial,” Joann said.



P.O. Box 2035
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Check out our volunteer opportunities at www.beds-plus.org

(708) 354-0858

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“You see firsthand what the needs are out there. As you see more needs, you want to spend more time helping people.”
— Joe and Kathy Russo



Homelessness and Children

The instability and trauma brought on by homelessness affects a child’s development, progress in school and health. Last year, BEDS family services helped 217 families stabilize and put 545 children on solid footing for a better future.



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