

Volunteers Come Through for Adopt A Family



Community Housing Network's Adopt A Family was a resounding success this year, helping 340 adults and children have a happy holiday, a 70 percent increase over last year. Over 200 volunteers and donors came together in a number of ways: purchasing and collecting gifts, providing critical outreach to businesses and schools, and wrapping and distributing gifts to recipients. Premier Realty provided an office suite of space to house the gifts and run the program, at no cost to CHN.

The Adopt A Family program culminated on December 14, with a festive kick-off to begin gift distribution. Over 80 gift recipients, volunteers, elected officials and Community Housing Network board members and staff gathered together to celebrate the season.

"It's wonderful to see people coming together to help others in time of need," said Congressman Gary Peters (pictured with gift recipient), who attended the event. "I am happy to support Community Housing Network and the work it does to promote affordable housing in our communities. In this difficult economy, many local nonprofit leaders tell me they are facing tighter resources and more demand for their services, so it's great to see local residents stepping up and going the extra mile during the holiday season."



State Representatives Marie Donigan and Chuck Moss (pictured below with gift recipients), as well as staff members from Senator Debbie Stabenow and Congressman Sander Levin's office, joined in to celebrate the season and help distribute gifts.



"We are so happy to see our elected officials, supporters and program participants at this kick-off event," said Marc Craig, Community Housing Network President & CEO. "What a great way to start off the gift-giving season. We have so many families in need, it's great to see people helping in any way they can."

"Were it not for this program, many of our program participants would not have had any gifts for themselves and their families this holiday season," program coordinator Sue Cole added. "Most of the families asked for so little, and their smiles are from ear to ear as they leave with things that so many of us take for granted - a warm coat, a pair of pajamas, a new pair of tennis shoes, treats and toys for their pets."

Community Housing Network started Adopt A Family five years ago to help fill the wish lists and basic needs of people the organization has helped to house. For more information about our programs through the year, please call CJ Felton at (248) 269-1342.

Find us on



Community Housing Network has joined the Kroger Community Rewards program. For information on how you can put your grocery dollars to work, please visit our website at www.communityhousingnetwork.org

‘Raise the Roof’ a huge success!

Friends and supporters of Community Housing Network “Raised the Roof for Affordable Housing” at its ninth annual fundraising event, held at Andiamo Italia in Warren on October 15th, 2009. The gala evening, co-sponsored by The HOMES Coalition, raised over \$52,000 to help people with disabilities and those who are homeless find and maintain affordable housing.



Over 250 people enjoyed mingling and bidding at silent auction tables filled with items that encouraged the spirit of giving for a worthy cause. Included in the live auction was an opportunity to take a “Sweet Ride with

Marc Craig,” Community Housing Network President & CEO, in his vintage Camaro convertible at the Celebrate Birmingham “Basset Hound” parade. Bids came in at over \$1,000 for this unusual prospect. Other auction items included a personal portrait, a Pistons suite, a “Night on the Town”, and an Andiamo Italia Dinner for Eight, among others.

As the festivities came to a close, Craig summed up the evening: “It was a great night, not only from the perspective that it went smoothly, the guests were happy and the food was good, but more importantly that we got to shine a spotlight on the increasing importance of affordable housing for people in need. There is a tremendous, growing need in our communities and it’s heartening to see so many people come out in support and recognition of that fact.”

Special thanks go to event co-chairs Anne Osmer and Cindy Boudreau, and to committee members Sue Cole and Mark Wiedelman.

“Everyone reached into their hearts to make this a success. So many people will have a warmer winter thanks to the generosity of everyone who attended,” said Cole.

Community Housing Network also thanks its very generous sponsors:

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“This was our ninth year for this fundraising event and we are so pleased that the momentum has continued and grown,” said Boudreau. “As with any charity event, the excitement begins with what we are doing for other people and the impact the money raised will have on what Community Housing Network does best . . . help people in need! The evening could not have taken place without the help of all our committee members, volunteers, and attendees. From the bottom of my heart, I thank each and every person. Your assistance and contributions were invaluable to furthering the work of Community Housing Network.”

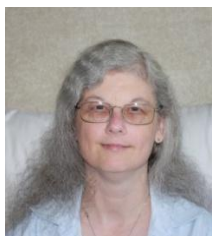


Special thanks to Ned Robinson and Boy Scout Troop 1034 for creating unique backdrops and sets for the event.

Program Participant 'Pays It Forward'

In 1986, *Claudia Swaney* was struck by a car while riding her bicycle. The accident left her with numerous broken bones and a traumatic closed head injury. She fought hard to return to her engineering studies and to achieve gainful employment, but her injuries prevented her from this. She also suffered from Post Traumatic Migraine Effect, debilitating panic attacks and depression. Inability to work and limited income put her on the verge of becoming homeless many times. In 2001, Swaney was referred to the newly created Community Housing Network.

CHN staff members Kirsten Elliott and Chuck Bratton went above and beyond to help her find permanent, affordable housing.



"Kirsten came to my place and helped me with my Section 8 Voucher Application," recalled Swaney (pictured). "Chuck even drove me to the Plymouth Housing Commission several times to get the paperwork and requirements completed. Every year CHN assists me with my recertification. They help me obtain the necessary paperwork and guide me through the entire process, including making sure my documents are mailed in on time. CHN helped me obtain and keep that safety net. I could not keep this housing without their assistance."

Swaney "pays it forward" by helping other CHN pro-

gram participants. She donates items, such as furniture and household goods, to families in the Leasing Assistance Program. When she moved into a smaller apartment last year, Swaney donated a wheelchair-accessible dining room set to the Furniture Bank and earmarked it for CHN program participants. Swaney said she always thinks of CHN first when she has items she would like to donate.

Swaney's greatest joy comes from creating art. She regularly attends the Paint a Miracle program in Rochester, for people with closed head injuries and other disabilities. There, using colored pencils and paints, she depicts angels, flowers, landscapes and animals. She also enjoys making handcrafted cards to send to friends.

Swaney has also volunteered at CHN by creating art and writing poems for fundraising events and other special occasions. CHN was thrilled to use Claudia's imaginative depiction of a peace dove for its holiday postcard this year.

"Creating art also helps me alleviate depression and gives me an outlet for stress and frustration," said Swaney. "I hope my art can give people who view it as much pleasure as it gives me creating it."

Swaney remains grateful to CHN for guidance that allows her to live independently. Her volunteer efforts and donations of artwork exemplify her desire to "pay it forward" and help others in need.

Volunteer Focus



Meet Wayne Maki, volunteer extraordinaire at Community Housing Network. Maki has photographed several CHN events, including last year's annual fundraising banquet and Adopt A Family kick-off. He also photographed artwork and created the layout for CHN's holiday postcard, and is helping with other visual projects at the organization's Troy headquarters.

Maki is a professional photographer, specializing in weddings (check out his website at www.waynemaki.com). A gifted artist, his photographs capture the essence of people and

events. CHN is thrilled to have him as a resource for memorializing important moments.

Maki became involved with CHN through his brother, who is a CHN program participant. "Witnessing the great amount of help Community Housing Network gave to my brother, I was more than willing to offer my services in any way I could," said Maki.

CHN is grateful to partner with such hard-working volunteers who are selflessly committed to the mission of providing affordable housing for people in need. Wayne Maki's use of his talents is truly appreciated by the staff and program participants at CHN.

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Marc's Message



As we move forward into a new decade, it's no surprise to anyone that the budget continues to be an enormous challenge. In 2009, Michigan made significant cuts to the General Fund; these cuts have carried through to this year, where the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority (OCCMHA) saw a whopping \$11 million reduction in funding from this source. (General Fund dollars are used to provide services and supports to people who do not have Medicaid.) While OCCMHA is trying to minimize any negative impact on the people it serves, in the end this loss of funding translates into fewer services for those who need it most.

At the state level, this is why it's crucial for you to stay in touch with your elected officials, and let them know the importance of the services and supports you or your loved ones receive, including housing services and supports. If you do not personally receive services, you can still let your legislators know that as a citizen and a voter, you place high priority on these services, and that it's important to continue funding them.

From a policy perspective, both state and federally elected officials need to recognize that as reductions in the General Fund and Medicaid arenas continue, funding for housing become even more important.

Advocates have long fought for separation of housing from supports (a move away from the institutional model of serving people with disabilities), and now that things are finally moving in that direction, we need to ensure the funding is there to continue this positive trend. While the recent increased funding to HUD is a step in the right direction, more is needed.

That said, from an organizational perspective, we as stewards of public funds need to redouble our efforts to seek additional sources of funding, while providing services at the lowest cost possible. At Community Housing Network, we're proud of our record on this front. For example, we recently attracted significant federal stimulus funding to fill in some service gaps, and now with our "HPRP (Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program)" up and running, not only are we able to help those who are homeless and people with disabilities, we are able to reach out to a new group of people who never in their lifetimes thought they would need help. While new people facing first-time homelessness is a sad sign of the times, we are glad we can be there for them.

Here's looking at a new year full of hope, health and peace for all.