



November 20, 2009

It was cold. Rain was coming down in sheets. He huddled in the recessed doorway to keep warm and pulled the plastic tarp over him to stay dry. His stomach growled and pitched. He tried to sleep, but "the question" kept running through his mind: "How did this happen?" Last year I had a wife, kids, a house and a job. Now I am alone, broke, living on the streets and looking to just forget everything. Sure, I made some mistakes, but who ever thought I'd lose my job, my home, my family. I don't know how to start over. I don't know where to turn. If only I could begin again.....

Homelessness affects all of us. Many of us only have to miss a paycheck or two and we'll find ourselves in danger of becoming homeless. The house next door is in foreclosure and there's two more down the street. Where are the people who lived in those houses? Are they asking themselves how this happened? As a community dependent on the automotive industry, Macomb County has been struck a crippling blow. We need to re-invent ourselves. We need to start over. Agencies like MCREST are often the first step in the process of beginning again. It is our job to provide shelter, food, safety from the elements and the streets. But more importantly, it is our job to give Hope. Hope comes in the form of case managers with resources and information to give to those in need. Hope comes in treating all of our guests with the dignity they deserve. Hope comes in the form of encouragement to try again.

MCREST has provided shelter and support services to the homeless population of Macomb County for 21 years. Last year alone, we housed almost 900 men, women and children for a total of over 19,200 shelter nights and we will be well over that number for 2009. We did not do this alone. MCREST's membership consists of 88 churches and thousands of volunteers that continue to provide a bed and meals for the people coming to us for help. It has become much harder for our church families to continue to provide these services because they are also feeling the effects of the ailing economy.

MCREST knows that the faster we can get a person or a family into permanent, affordable housing the less likely they are to become homeless again. HUD has urged all emergency shelter providers to employ a rapid re-housing approach. First month's rent and security deposits, bad credit ratings, and minimum wage jobs are just some of the factors that keep people in a state of homelessness. We need your help to break that cycle.

The economic recovery has not come to Michigan or Macomb County as of yet. Our needs are greater than ever. Please remember that no gift is too small and every one is deeply appreciated. May you and your family experience the peace of the holiday and the joy of giving.

Thank you,

Laurie Huff

Laurie Huff, President
MCREST Board of Directors