Ensuring Stability In Uncertain Times

As everyone in the community is adjusting to a new way of life, Good Samaritan Ministries has shifted our work to address the unique challenges COVID brings while continuing to do the critical work of serving our most vulnerable neighbors. Our programming has pivoted to meet the growing demand for assistance while maintaining a holistic, wrap-around approach with our program participants!

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONNECTIONS
Our Housing Team has seen a significant increase in calls from families unable to pay rent and utilities. While the team continues to help families exit homelessness into permanent housing, there has been a growing need for prevention work that ensures families do not enter the cycle of homelessness. Thanks to emergency response funding from the Greater Ottawa County United Way, the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, Chemical Bank and others, we have the capacity to serve more families in this proactive way.

CIRCLES
Our Circles groups continue to meet in large gatherings via Zoom, and Circle Leaders and Allies are in regular communication to walk alongside each other as they face new barriers during this time. We’re also excited to see how the Circles Youth have stayed engaged with online tutoring opportunities and daily challenges like: read a book, help Mom, and practice deep breathing.

CLEARINGHOUSE
We are working closely with our church partners to address the needs of their congregation and neighbors through the Rent Utility and Support Program (RUSP). RUSP helps churches find the best ways to support those in need during this time, particularly those going to the church seeking rental and utility assistance.

FAITH IN YOUTH
AmeriCorps Members at The Bridge Youth Center adjusted their work from mentoring to food distribution for families in need in Zeeland. Our other Members are conducting online mentoring and tutoring sessions to maintain relationships with students.

GSM PROPERTIES
We continue our property management functions for tenants and landlords, including filling newly-vacant units. Virtual unit tours allow potential tenants to see available properties, and special safety measures are taken to ensure proper social distancing during lease signing and move-in.

GOOD SAM’S WILD RUN WENT VIRTUAL!
We tried something a little different with this year’s Wild Run, and asked families to create obstacles using objects in their own home. The results were amazing!

THANK YOU to all those who participated by creating obstacles and submitting videos, and to those that made financial contributions to the event. A special thank you to Wausau Homes Holland for providing a generous matching gift!
Essential and Homeless

The COVID-19 crisis has put a spotlight on how many people in Ottawa County are on the brink of homelessness. This one event has been the breaking point for many, and while most of these individuals and families are working hard and are deemed essential to the well-being of our community, they struggle to make ends meet.

Good Sam is committed to providing services that ensure our neighbors get housed and stay housed, and we are grateful for community partners that make this work possible.

We recently saw successful partnership at work as we collaborated with the Holland Rescue Mission, Cornerstone Property Management, and a number of local churches to house 3 homeless men - 2 of whom are deemed essential workers during the COVID crisis.

The Good Sam staff recently identified a newly vacant housing unit as ideal to become a rent-a-room property, creating 3 affordable single room rentals. The property was converted thanks to the flexibility of Cornerstone Property Management, adding locks to bedroom doors, and adjusting procedure so each tenant signs their own lease and pays their own deposit.

Knowing that single men have a particularly hard time finding housing, we contacted the Holland Rescue Mission who quickly identified 3 gentlemen as a good fit for a rent-a-room environment. 2 of these men were homeless despite working - one at a local factory, and the other in food service.

Following social distancing guidelines, leases were signed electronically, and keys delivered directly to the Mission. Good Sam provided the deposit for reach tenant, and virtual case management sessions began to support ongoing success.

Several local churches provided much needed furniture and household items, allowing the men to move into not just a house, but a real home.

We are proud of this collaboration that made such an impact on the lives of these men, and we know that by working together, we’ll see more stories of success in the future!

Sharing the Stimulus

Community leaders in Ottawa County are spreading the word to “Share the Stimulus,” encouraging those that do not need the extra resources for their own financial stability to donate their stimulus to a local organization. Brenda Vander Meulen, former Good Sam Board Member, has found a way to do just that.

Brenda started sewing masks when the COVID crisis began, and used her stimulus check to purchase fabric to make isolation robes for Holland Hospital. She has generously provided masks for the staff at Good Sam and for clients coming in that do not already have their own. She has sewn many more for other organizations, neighbors, and family.

Said Brenda, “As a follower of Jesus Christ, I’m called on to be his hands and feet. This is a very tangible way I can be the hands of Christ when our community needs it.”

Thank you to Brenda and all those using their time, talent, and resources to support of all our neighbors!

Experiencing the Work

It seems like a lifetime ago when we were able to gather with friends, family, and our community to share meals, meet new friends, and learn from one another. We celebrate those moments of connection we experienced prior the stay-at-home order where we shared about the work of Good Sam, and gathered as a community to learn how we might all contribute to these efforts.

The mission of Good Samaritan Ministries to end poverty and homelessness can be overwhelming. It is sometimes hard to grasp what we as an organization, as individuals, and as a community can really do to accomplish this mission.

To help better understand the challenges we face, and how Good Sam is stepping up to find solutions, we have offered some unique opportunities for people of all ages to experience our work. One of these events was with Faith Church in Zeeland:

In January, several members of the Good Sam staff joined the congregation at Faith Church for their Mission Sunday. After the morning worship service, over 100 people of all generations participated in a poverty simulation activity, then packed welcome baskets for families in our housing program.

Rev. Marcia Bosma said of the experience, “The poverty simulation and debriefing time was eye-opening for many in our congregation, and led to good conversation and tangible follow-up. We have been pleased with how this Mission Sunday experience with Good Sam has raised awareness of, compassion for, and engagement with the realities of poverty in our own community.”

When it is once again safe to gather, we look forward to offering more learning and mission opportunities! If you are interested in learning more, or are looking for ways to engage our work during this time, please contact Dillene Van Beek (616-392-7159 ext. 115) for more information.

Calling All Frontline Workers

In an effort to offer peer-to-peer support for those at risk of burnout and compassion fatigue, and are in need of self-care, Good Sam has launched a virtual gathering to provide a forum to share, learn, and grow together as we navigate the uncertain waters of the pandemic.

If you’re seeking a safe place to share feelings about work, receive emotional support, learn coping techniques, problem solve, and get feedback from other professionals, we hope you’ll join us!

Contact Patti VanderVeen (pvanderveen@GoodSamMinistries.com) for more information and to register!