

GOOD SAMARITAN MINISTRIES SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

"My Life Was Going to Change for the Better"

We recently received this moving letter from a former housing client, and we couldn't be more excited to share his inspiring words with you!

To all whom it may concern;

My experience working with Good Samaritan is a profound one. When I was homeless, staying at the local shelter, I needed to find stable housing and a viable job to support myself. Little did I know that by applying for a housing voucher, my life was going to change for the better.

When I was first introduced to Good Samaritan, they helped me find a local landlord with a unique program to occupy a local room with a few tenants. I was especially relieved to have landed a local job and at the same point, move out of the local shelter and into a room where I could get back on my own two feet. During my stay in the local room, Good Samaritan took it upon themselves to go above and beyond by helping me acquire the things I needed to get started. At this point, I thought things couldn't get better. I was wrong.

When I lost my job due to a work injury, Good Samaritan was there for me. While being supported by Good Samaritan, my housing voucher was pulled from the list and Good Samaritan staff helped me acquire a place in another town to be close with my family.

To those of you out there, let it be known that this was a miracle for me. These people working at Good Samaritan are truly miracle workers. The work they do is remarkable to the point that your resolve will be strengthened that there is a higher power out there and He still cares for you.

With the diligence of our Intake Team, the support of his Case Manager, the flexibility of local landlords, and the generosity of donors and volunteers, this man's life was changed in ways he never imagined!

THIS is why we do what we do - walking along side individuals and families in their time of need and helping them on their journey toward thriving.

We could not do this critical work without you. **Thank you** for your continued support of our mission to end poverty and homelessness!

Welcome, New Board Members!

Good Sam is pleased to welcome 2 new members to our Board of Directors. We're excited to see how their passions and expertise will contribute to our work!



Bryan Knott serves as the Chief Financial Officer at Extol, Inc. and is excited and honored to serve our community in this pivotal and unprecedented time in Good Sam's history.



Sandy Pierce serves as the Commodity Manager/Trader at PADNOS, is a member of Women of Color GIVE, and is energized to join our team as we tackle our mission.

Consider a Monthly, Sustaining Gift!

A monthly gift to Good Sam helps us prepare for and meet the ongoing needs of the families we serve, and is an easy way to maintain your support of our programming!

Automatic gifts can be set up with credit card or EFT.

Visit our website or contact Kerri Brandsen to sign up!

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Good Sam Goes to Grand Haven

We are pleased to announce the launch of a Good Sam satellite office in the Tri-Cities thanks to the generous support of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation!

As the Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (HARA) for Ottawa County, Good Sam is dedicated to providing the entire county with critical services that prevent and provide a path out of homelessness. However, we recognized a barrier for our neighbors in Northwest Ottawa County to access services at our Holland office.

The three-year grant from GHACF will be used to catalyze an expansion of our Housing Services already provided to Northwest Ottawa County, allowing us to hire dedicated staff, establish a physical presence, and provide rental assistance for families facing homelessness.

"Availability of time and transportation should not be a barrier to anyone receiving help," said Drew Peirce. "And it's a barrier we can remove, thanks to the incredible support of the GHACF. We are thrilled to **build a local, accessible, and collaborative presence** to work with our Grand Haven nonprofit partners in making sure all those in Northwest Ottawa County facing homelessness are helped."

Stay tuned for more details about our new space!



Eviction Diversion Task Force Honored

On January 13, The Holland Human Relations Commission awarded the Eviction Diversion Task Force with the 2020 Social Justice Award for Housing. The Task Force was made up of the Good Sam Eviction Diversion Program Team, the 58th District Court of Ottawa County, and Legal Aid of Western Michigan. Together, the **Task Force kept nearly 500 families from losing their homes**, and created a model for other Michigan courts to continue streamlined efforts to serve those in housing crisis.

The annual Social Justice awards recognize individuals and organizations who exemplify the virtues of social justice by promoting equal opportunity and equal access for residents of Holland.

We are so proud of our team and the collaborative effort to serve our neighbors in need!



And the work continues! The latest round of COVID Relief funds include eviction prevention dollars so we can offer services to families through the end of 2021. Already, **the team has helped to keep over 182 families in their homes**, and more are on the waiting list. We are committed to working with these families so they can maintain safe, affordable housing.

If you are a landlord or tenant that wants to learn more about the Eviction Diversion Program, email edp@GoodSamMinistries.com, or call us at 616-392-7159.

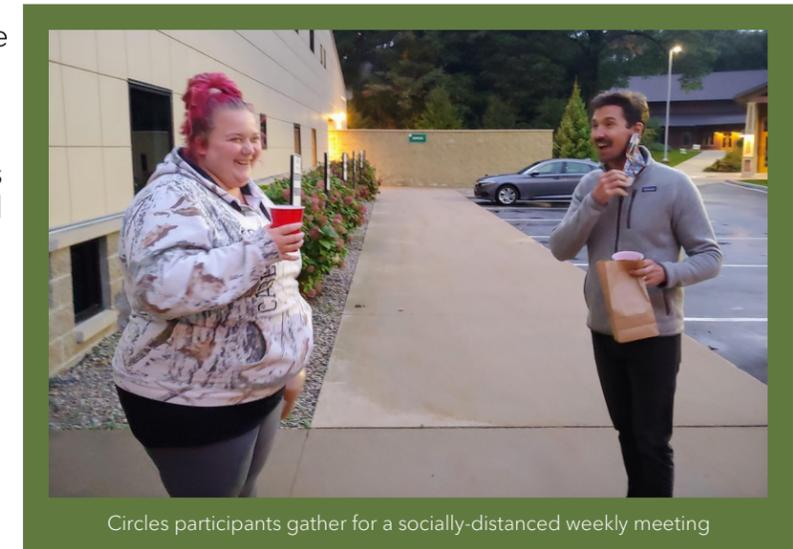
Circles Provides Connection Through Time of Isolation

The last year was defined by challenge, and this was no different for Circles Ottawa County, a program whose success is dependent on the unique relationships built between Circle Leaders, the program participants, and Circle Allies, volunteers who walk alongside Leaders as they work toward their goals.

The pandemic changed the way the Circles community gathered, but not the heart of the mission. Good Sam was committed to providing the important relational supports for those that were already struggling before COVID-19, so Circles continued to meet virtually and in limited socially-distanced gatherings through the duration of the pandemic. These **meetings were an anchor for Leaders and Allies alike, providing crucial connection during months of isolation.**

After many months of virtual Circle meetings, the Northside site gathered for a socially-distanced, in-person meeting in the fall of 2020. After the meeting, a Leader approached Lotefa Bartlett de Villarreal, the Circles Director, with tear tracks on her mask – overwhelmed with things she had been struggling with, but also feeling hopeful for the first time in months.

"I am so grateful," the Leader said over and over. "I just need y'all to know how grateful I am. **I would not have made it if you had given up on me.** I don't know where I would be if you just said, 'oh well' and stopped everything when COVID happened."



Circles participants gather for a socially-distanced weekly meeting

She shared how her mindset had changed since joining Circles, and even though she has felt overwhelmed and stuck these past few months, she is **thinking differently about her ability to get out of a "victim mentality" and start making changes in her life.**

JOIN THE CIRCLE!

BECOME AN ALLY

A 1-day training session is available on June 26, 9am-1pm. Weekly meetings for new Allies begin Wednesday, July 14

VOLNTEER WITH YOUTH

Until we can get back to a full-scale youth program, we are in need of volunteers to care for infants to elementary-aged kids while their parents participate in weekly meetings

BE A CONTENT/SKILLS EXPERT

Help Leaders create resumes, identify appropriate career and educational opportunities, and practice interviewing and development skills

Contact Lotefa Bartlett de Villarreal for more info!
lvillarreal@GoodSamMinistries.com

"It is the most optimistic I have heard her since before social distancing started," said Lotefa. The Ally, who continued to reach out even when the Leader turned to old coping habits, said, "I feel really encouraged."

It's inspiring how their match was strengthened through difficult times, affirming that **investing in relationship truly does help overcome barriers!**

The Circles Community is eager to return to in-person meetings where they can once again enjoy a meal together, sit in a large group to share their New and Goods, and pat each other on the back for progress made on financial and personal goals.

