

A BACKGROUND ON LAZARUS HOUSE
Working Together to Offer Hope and a Future
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History and Purpose

Lazarus House was founded as a 501(c) (3) not for profit in June 1997. It started its Emergency Shelter program that year and has since expanded services and the area served in response to community needs. In 2003 it added a second program of transitional housing. In 2006 a new Women and Children's Day Center (which is part of the Emergency Shelter program.) was added along with an expanded Homeless Prevention/Outreach program. In 2008 a nearby building was purchased to provide desperately needed space for the Outreach program and for other operating needs. This building, the Community Resource Center, opened in October, 2008.

Lazarus House's mission is to offer guests connected to Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles, and western rural Kane County, Illinois, who are homeless or in need, hope for the future by providing hospitality, food, safe shelter, and education – tools for life. We strive to make certain that all who enter feel the love of Jesus.

Goals are to:

- Help the homeless return to independent living with the skills and habits needed for long-term success
- Offer services and referrals to help those in need in our community in order to prevent homelessness and support the well being of individuals and their families.

Many diverse factors cause homelessness and put people at risk, including "systemic issues" of unemployment, low wages, expensive housing, lack of health insurance, coupled with "personal issues," such as divorce, domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, serious mental health issues, physical illness, and poor money management. Lazarus House serves the diverse populations impacted by these issues and works with over 50 social service agencies to provide support to address the underlying cause(s). Information, encouragement, case management and support services are provided to help meet the needs of our guests.

A national effort is in place to create community based Continuums of Care. A Continuum of Care is a community plan to deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end and prevent a return to homelessness. The Emergency Shelter (with its Women and Children's Day Center), Transitional Housing, and Outreach programs at Lazarus House are cornerstones of the Continuum of Care for the area Lazarus House serves.

Lazarus House is located at 214 Walnut Street in downtown St. Charles on the second floor of the Free Methodist Church. The Women and Children's Day Center and an administrative office are across the street. The Emergency Shelter consists of 3 sleeping areas, a small kitchen and dining area, 2 adjacent single person half bathrooms, one shower, and a case management office. Due to extreme demand for shelter space in the summer of 2008, more beds were added. Children sleep in their own bed near either their mother or father. The Day Center contains a small, homelike living, dining room and kitchen area, a permanent indoor and fenced in outdoor play area, two showers and a bathtub, as well as space for case management and education. The Center for Transitional Housing (CTL) has 12 semi-private rooms that accommodate 16-20 people, depending on family configuration. It also has a lounge area, learning lab, dormitory-style bathrooms, and an office. The Women and Children's Center provides daytime and evening living space. The shelter is

handicapped accessible and the bathrooms/showers comply with ADA requirements. Overall capacity for both the ES and CTL is approximately 75.

Services Provided

The shelter offers the following to those in need:

- 1) Safe shelter, food, personal hygiene items and shower and laundry facilities, access to clothing through the local clothes closet, and healthcare through a local free clinic and other local funding.
- 2) Case management: Assess the reason for homelessness; Coach guests to develop and successfully implement a plan to address their issues; Link guests to needed services in the community and to federal and state programs, including access to mental health and substance abuse services; Transport guests to appointments as needed; Provide budget training and assistance; Offer rental assistance to qualified persons (funded by government grants.)
- 3) Employment assistance/skills upgrade: Assist with: finding the right type of job, resume writing and interviewing skills; Identify training needs to improve employability; Support job fairs and interviews, GED; Assist with securing college scholarships and job training grants;
- 4) Twelve semi-private rooms in the Center for Transitional Living (CTL). Ten of these are approximately 70 square feet in size. Two are somewhat larger to accommodate a three or four person family. As part of the CTL, qualifying individuals and families are offered specific services and case management focused especially on enhancing income, employment, skill development, and in-house training.
- 5) Classes that support successful living. Part-time Education staff plan and deliver a learning curriculum to address diverse needs of our guests, including topics on getting a job, parenting, self-esteem, healthy relationships, and budgeting. Topics in the Day Center address issues specific to women and children. Classes are available to those at Lazarus House as well as to those at risk of homelessness in the community.
- 6) Outreach: Help households attain and retain housing. Provide one time and ongoing government funded rental and utility assistance to qualifying low income households. Help those in need but not homeless by providing telephone and in person support and referrals to community resources.

Emergency Shelter and Women and Children's Day Center

The Emergency Shelter is open 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, Monday through Saturday and a minimum of 15 hours per day on Sunday. The Women and Children's Day Center is open seven days a week from morning till bedtime. A strong case management focus is offered to each person to help them address their needs. At least one staff member (Operations Coordinator) and one volunteer provide services and supervision overnight. Professional staff is available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday, along with some regular weekend hours. No fees are charged for the program.

The Women and Children's Day Center, located directly across the street from the main facility, has home-like space, providing a more peaceful daytime and evening space to recover from health issues, depression, violence, abuse, or being a single parent. This space is free from the distractions that might be caused by adult male guests staying at the shelter. Children have space, both indoors and outdoors where they can just be kids. This environment supports better access to the specific support services women and their children need to return to successful, independent living.

Center for Transitional Living

In July 2003, the Center for Transitional Living (CTL) opened. This Center features 12 semi-private rooms, which allows resident guests to have their own living space for up to two years. The CTL at Lazarus House is open 24 hours per day, 7 days a week year round. To qualify, Lazarus House Emergency Shelter guests agree to consistently work with their case manager, be compliant with their case management plan, and pay 10% of their income which helps cover the cost of housing and utilities. During their time in the CTL, guests develop life skills, including budgeting and debt reduction, to prepare them for independent living. This Center provides the important next steps to successful independent living, and gives those in need hope and a future.

Outreach to Prevent Homelessness

Lazarus House has sought grant funds to help prevent homelessness. Those at risk of homelessness often have the same types of issues and needs as those who stay at Lazarus House. They often are desperate and have no where else to turn for help. To help them avoid homelessness, staff speak with these individuals, meet with them, offer them food and other services, refer them to other social service agencies for assistance, and, where possible, provide homeless prevention funds. Outreach staff provides:

- 1) Information on rent, utility and mortgage assistance grants available in the service area
- 2) Guidance on completing the paperwork to apply for grant funds
- 3) Referrals to other support services/benefits that the household may qualify to receive
- 4) Optional case management services to persons participating in select grant programs
- 5) General information and referrals to callers seeking information

Today, Lazarus House administers two types of funds, with monies from the state and federal government:

- Ongoing rental support to low income and/or chronically homeless persons. Persons who qualify often need ongoing case management assistance. Funds for these programs are being made available by the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and several HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) programs for chronically homeless persons. We are grateful for the support provided by these sources and continue to seek out new sources to help prevent homelessness.
- Limited one-time emergency assistance, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to households that fell on hard times but can manage going forward if someone just helps them catch up on rent/mortgage/utility payments.

These grants provide partial funding for case management and other program costs. Lazarus House has also partnered with other agencies in Kane County to offer ongoing rental subsidies to households in the northern and southern parts of Kane County. We are the local administering agency for three grants in Kane County which provide funding for 53 total units. Of these, 18 units serve the Lazarus House area. This effort to support low-income households is consistent with the current Illinois Comprehensive Housing Plan.

Staffing and Volunteers

Lazarus House is currently operated by a 17-member voluntary Board of Directors and full-time or part-time staff. This staff includes an Executive Director, Associate Director, Case Managers, an Administrative Manager, an Administrative Coordinator, a Volunteer/Special Events Coordinator, a Fundraising Manager, a Grant Writer, full and part-time Outreach, Education and Operations staff.

Lazarus House has very broad and positive community support, including 1,900-plus volunteers who help it to operate each year. These volunteers provided countless hours of volunteer labor. They pick up, prepare and serve meals, provide on-site support during the day and evening to the paid operations staff person, assist with mail and other administrative tasks, and assist with a variety of special needs and activities. The assistance of volunteers makes a significant difference in the amount and quality of services that can be provided. That figure does not include the time of Board members, and the time of numerous professionals who donate labor for various maintenance or professional service needs.

Lazarus House and its founder are the recipient of multiple awards. The founder received a 2000 Illinois Women of Achievement Award (for founding Lazarus House), a 2000 Barth Award (for outstanding work in a human service field), a 2006 Peace Award (for work on behalf of victims of violence), a 2009 Roscoe Eby Kane County Citizen of the Year award (for humanitarian services), and a 2009 NAMI Advocate of the Year Award (for efforts advocating for those with mental health issues). Lazarus House received the 2002 Illinois Hometown Heroes Award (for volunteerism), and multiple St. Charles Chamber of Commerce Awards, including a 2006 Not-for-Profit Small Business Award (which recognizes a small business that has made big contributions to the community outside of the business world), the 2007 Community Development Award (for its new Women and Children's Day Center) and the 2007 Civic Image award (recognizing humanitarian efforts which have brought outstanding, positive recognition to St. Charles). In 2010, the St. Charles Mayor proclaimed June 19 in perpetuity to be Lazarus House Good Neighbor Day in St. Charles in recognition of the agency's services and the community's support. In February 2011, Lazarus House was named as "Best of the West / favorite local charity" by West Suburban Living magazine. In 2012 the Executive and Associate Directors were presented with Partners in Peace awards on behalf of efforts to help victims of domestic violence. In 2013, the Executive Director received the Toastmaster's International District 54 Communication and Leadership Award. Also in 2013 the Executive Director was recognized as a Kane County Woman of Distinction as a representative role model and leader in her field and community. Within the year 2014, Lazarus House received both the Julie McCormack Award from the Renz Center for collaborative work on behalf of the homeless and the Dene Ecker Award from the Ecker Center for Mental Health for outstanding service to the community. Lazarus House was given a 2015 State of Illinois Recognition Award for its efforts in the fight against human trafficking and in 2016 was awarded the Golden Heart Award from Tri-City Family Services for outstanding service to the community. These awards reflect the ongoing dedication of the Board, staff, volunteers, and donors in serving community needs.

Darlene Marcusson, the founder of Lazarus House, stepped down from her role as Executive Director in January 2011. The Lazarus House Board voted unanimously to promote the very capable Associate Director, Liz Eakins to the Executive Director role, effective January 1, 2011. Under Liz' leadership, the Outreach program expanded to the point that in FY11 it comprised one half of the daily support provided to households. She continues to advocate for and seek out, in partnership with others, ways to help those in need. She has garnered a strong reputation for leadership and providing compassionate service to the needy during her eight years with Lazarus House and in her prior positions.

Budget

Cash and in-kind contributions from a variety of sources support Lazarus House. These include:

Federal Sources: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

State Sources: Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA)

Local Government Sources: Kane County Community Development Block Grant, City Mental Health Boards

Private Sources: private foundations and contributions from businesses, schools, churches and individuals

Lazarus House is grateful to all those who give financially as well as with their time to continue the important work of giving others hope and a future.

Monitoring Impact

Primary goals are to equip homeless individuals with the skills and resources necessary to live independently in the community and to prevent homelessness for “at risk” individuals. A computerized client tracking system and outcome evaluation measurement system is in place to monitor daily attendance, incoming needs and progress in achieving individual and overall program goals. The Board reviews monthly financial statements and an annual audit is completed. House meetings are held and surveys completed to secure client input for planning purposes.

Lazarus House is unique in its breadth of services. It is the only mid Kane County agency that houses homeless men, women and children and the only agency that offers ongoing rental assistance and support services to help at risk households stay housed.

Lazarus House is responsible for being a guiding light to help offer hope and a future. Staff will work tirelessly with those coming to its doors to help them find a better future. The person in need also needs to work tirelessly to address the issues that brought them to our doorsteps. When they do so, miracles happen.