Our Mission
Stephen Center partners with the community, families and individuals to overcome homelessness, addiction and poverty.

Celebrating 35 Years of HELP • HOPE • HEROES

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There are many suspected causes of addiction, such as mental illness, but there is no conclusive answer. The unfortunate truth is the science behind addiction is not settled and experts will tell you we still have a lot to learn.

In the 30 years our HERO (Health, Empowerment, Responsibility & Opportunity) program has existed we have learned no two addicts have the same stories. While many addict’s stories are similar, everyone experiences addiction differently.

One thing all addicts have experienced is stigmatization, a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person.

The severity of the stigma varies from substance to substance. For example, the abuse of alcohol is often seen as socially acceptable. Meth and heroin addiction, on the other hand, are viewed by many as addictions for people of a lower class, both socially and economically. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to addiction treatment. It is a process of trial and error that effects not just the addict but their loved ones.

Regardless of the severity of the stigma, almost all addicts will tell you the reason they didn’t get help sooner is because they were ashamed of their behavior and worried what their loved ones would think about them.

Stigma, therefore, is an obstacle for many addicts who want to change. As such, we as a community must dispel some myths and misinformation about addiction. Here are three things we need to understand about addiction for us to move past stigma:

1. **Addiction Is Not A Choice**
   While the first use of a drug is often voluntary, what follows that decision is not. We know this is true because not everyone who drinks becomes an alcoholic and not everyone who tries meth gets addicted. There are many circumstances one could experience that may lead to addiction.

2. **Addiction Is Not A Character Flaw**
   Having an addiction does not make you a bad person, rather, addiction is often the result of an absence of coping skills and lack of meaningful human connection in one’s life. Another term for substance abuse is “self-medicating”. Put another way, people use drugs and alcohol to try to treat ailments of the mind, soul and body.
3. View All Addictions As Equal

While different addictions require different treatments, we should view all addictions as equal. Addiction knows no class, religion or gender. There are many stereotypes about addiction and we need to be careful about how we talk about it. When we choose the wrong perspective or words it can be harmful to those who have addictions.

Our HERO program has evolved and changed over time, but one thing remains constant and that’s the belief that all people should be treated with dignity and respect. Part of that is building trust with clients and allowing them a safe place to process their issues free of judgement.

“One of the best parts about the program is the way the clients slowly transition back into society and the support they have along the way. We teach them how to live life and be responsible and accountable, managing their time and helping them find the balance within treatment, work and social activities,” says Sharon Hughbanks, HERO Director.

Having an addiction doesn’t make you any less of a human. In fact, after decades of speaking to addicts, we’ve come to learn that those who have experienced addiction have some of the kindest hearts of anybody you will ever meet.

Although the majority of Americans will not develop a substance use disorder themselves, most people will have at least one family member or friend who will. In fact, in 2017 almost 17% of American adults said they suffered from some degree of substance abuse disorder (SAMHSA.com).

We must stop thinking about addiction as a personal issue and instead think of it as a public health issue. In 2017 alone an average of 130 Americans died from opiate overdoses every day (hhs.gov). This number doesn’t include deaths from drug related complications.

Addiction is not going to go away on its own and we all have our own roles to play in the fight against it. It’s time to look at addiction from a different perspective. Not a perspective of judgement or condemnation, but a perspective of compassion and understanding.”
“Our collaboration with the fireworks vendor helps provide shelter and supportive services FOR NEARLY 360 HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS.”

The 4th of July is a time where friends, families, and communities come together to commemorate our Declaration of Independence from the King of England on July 4, 1776. These celebrations vary in many ways, but they almost always include friends, family and of course, fireworks.

Speaking of fireworks, I would like to thank everyone who visited Stephen Center’s fireworks tent on 144th and Maple. Our collaboration with the fireworks vendor helps provide shelter and supportive services for nearly 360 homeless individuals.

In this issue of our newsletter, we have focused on the HERO (Help, Empowerment, Responsibility, and Opportunity) program and more specifically, the addiction aspect of our mission; which is:

Stephen Center partners with the community, families and individuals to overcome homelessness, addiction, and poverty.

Stephen Center’s HERO program provides men, women, and juveniles in our community the opportunity to attend our In-Patient (adults only), Out-Patient and Intensive Out-Patient programming. With nearly 1 out of every 5 adults (SAMHSA.com) experiencing addiction in our community, “recovery services” provided by Stephen Center are needed more than ever.

The opioid epidemic, which began in the late 1990’s, has only added to the number of our community members who attend addiction recovery services. Within the last few years, there has not been a significant decrease in the use of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, or alcohol. In fact, in many populations there has been an increase in substance abuse.
As humans, we want to feel better when we are in pain. Trauma is a psychological pain that manifests itself in our personalities and impacts how we respond and react to certain situations. For those in recovery, the tyranny of past trauma is often the main obstacle to their recovery. This trauma often leads to behavioral disorders.

As one gets to the “root cause” of addiction, one often finds themselves becoming more vulnerable. Vulnerability can lead to breakthroughs and “aha moments”, but it can also lead to a relapse and further addiction issues. The services and support within the HERO program are not time limited which allows individuals to get to the root cause of their trauma while still being supported in hopes of avoiding the likelihood of relapsing and continuing the cycle of addiction.

For individuals who attend our HERO addiction recovery program, their day of independence is known as their sobriety date, or “birthday” as many refer to it. Our clients’ independence days are similar to our country’s independence day in that they both mark the beginning of new, hard-fought freedom. In the same way we shouldn’t take our country’s freedom for granted, we shouldn’t take ours’ or our loved ones’ freedom from addiction for granted.

We hope you had a safe, relaxing holiday and we look forward to creating more success stories with your help.

Michael Wehling
Golf Benefit
For Our Pettigrew Emergency Homeless Shelter

August 19th at Shadow Ridge Country Club
18-Hole Scramble – Shotgun Start
11:30 AM (Check-in opens at 10:30 AM)

Sponsorship Opportunities, Foursomes & Individual Registrations still available:
www.stephencenter.org/events

Client & Operational Needs
Most in need at this time:

- Unisex Sweatpants/Shorts
- T-Shirts
- Bras & Undergarments
- Conditioner
- Lotion
- Men’s Body Wash & Shampoo
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Laundry Soap
- Deodorant

Please take donations to back loading dock of 2723 Q Street

stephencenter.org | 402.715.5441
in loving memory of
FRAN HELD,
Stephen Center’s “first” & most impactful volunteer.

left: A recent photo of Fran

right: Fran as a young woman

during the Pettigrew Emergency Homeless Shelter
August 19th at Shadow Ridge Country Club
18-Hole Scramble – Shotgun Start
11:30 am (Check-in opens at 10:30 am)
Sponsorship Opportunities, Foursomes & Individual Registrations still available:
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above: Fran’s children, grand-children, great grand-children and friends gathered on June 25, 2019 for a memorial luncheon in our diner named in her honor

Fran’s Fun Facts:
Frances Joan Neveau Held
Born July 30, 1923 to Simon & Adeline Neveau
Grew up in Coleman Wisconsin where her dad was a barber and mortician
Valedictorian high school graduate at age of 16!
Former Miss Green Bay and the players were the judges!
Married Frederick John Held on April 27, 1942
All 7 of her children were born in a different state: North Carolina, Wisconsin, Illinois, California, Japan, Massachusetts & Nebraska
17 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren

Favorite Franisms
Your really should eat more fish!
Butter enhances everything!
Sugar is a preservative!
I could feed 200 people at Stephen Center for the amount of that bill!
Don’t forget to bless the hands that made the food!

A Career Volunteer!
Little league, football, Cub Scouts,
Volunteer at base chapel since 1962
Volunteer cook at the St. Francis House in 1973 for ten years
Volunteer cook at Stephen Center since 1984 (the year of our founding)
thank you

Omaha Gives! participants for helping us raise $42,500!

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special thank you to
Kruger Foundation for the $10,000 match.

You can memorialize a loved one or pay tribute to someone special in your life while helping those in need in our community. When you make a Memorial or Honor Gift, Stephen Center will send an acknowledgement card to the family or honoree. Gifts are also recognized in this newsletter. You may use the enclosed envelope to send your gift.

in loving memory:

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John Arkfeld

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Eleanore Barrett

Gloria Bartek
Tom Bartek

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Shirley Benash

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in honor of:

Ralph & Pat Holtmann’s 60th Anniversary
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Bob Mullin’s 70th Birthday
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  Caroline Parys

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  Arlene Winkler
We are extremely grateful to our generous donors from the brand new to those who’ve been dedicated to the Stephen Center mission for many years. We appreciate every contribution and thank you for your generosity. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please let us know.

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