Look Inside to See How We’re Stepping Up Together!

A New Look
A new year—a new look for the newsletter! And even a name: Stepping Up is what our work is about at Stepping Stones. We offer people struggling to overcome difficult times a hand up, not a ‘hand out.’ We want to be a stepping stone on their path to health, housing, and hope. When people receive food through the pantry, a stay at one of our shelters, or possibly help with a utility bill or other emergency financial need, they learn that someone cares about them and wants to invest in their well-being. That experience of compassion leads to hope for a better future.

Sara’s Story
Low income families face so many challenges. A recent article in the Pioneer Press by columnist Karen Weese highlighted some of the issues:

Sara Morre was never forget about electricity. She was only $70 behind, and she planned to pay it off after her next paycheck. What happened next shocked her: “I called to get it turned back on, paid the $70 with what was supposed to be my rent money, and then the lady says, ‘Great, thank you for your payment. Now I need $250 for the ‘new customer deposit.’”

Morre, a convenience-store manager who has a child with special health needs, was in disbelief. “I was like, ‘Look, I couldn’t afford $70. Where am I going to get $250? Now I’ll be in the hole than I was before.’”

Morre had been a customer of the electric company for more than a decade, and the power had been on for less than an hour. It did not matter. She had to pay it. It took more than six months to pay off...

Our local electric companies are great to work with and regularly help us help clients with payment plans and avoiding shut-offs. The situation described above occurred in another community but is still a good example of the kind of thing people living from paycheck to paycheck often face.

For more information on the United Way Alice Report go to:
www.unitedwayalices.org/wisconsin

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Stan’s Story
One of our current shelter residents (I’ll call him Stan) is experiencing something similar. He’s the nicest guy. He recently started a full-time job but when he’s not working he’s often here volunteering in the warehouse. He’s been looking for an apartment but unfortunately has a poor credit history which is the case for many of the people we serve. He found an apartment he thought he could afford but the property owner would only rent to him if he paid 6 months’ rent in advance. Needless to say, he’ll keep looking.

The Saras and Stan, the ALICES (*Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), the many families just trying to make ends meet, sometimes need a hand up, a stepping stone to get back on their feet. That’s what we’re here for. But we’re not doing this work alone.

Through your donations, volunteering, referrals, and spreading the word about our work or events (like Empty Bowls!) you help make our mission of providing food, shelter, and support possible. THANK YOU for Stepping Up!

-Kathleen Dutron, Executive Director
Welcome New Board Members

We are pleased to welcome new board members:

Eric Atkinson, Menomonee Police Chief
Sara Carstens, Director, Community Engagement & Wellness – Mayo Clinic Health System
Andrew Felton, Asst. Professor, UW-Stout Clinical Mental Health Counseling
Dwight Fly, Engineering Manager, SourceCar, Inc.
Mark Kalscheur, President/Market Manager – Bremer Bank
Michelle Kloser, Director of Nutrition Services – Menomonee Area School District
Glenys Thompson, Manufacturing Product Manager – 3M

Thanks also to outgoing board members Joe Aronson, Michelle Hamilton, Mike Lauer, and Ticia Soronson as well as those continuing as listed in the sidebar on p. 3. We are fortunate to have past and present board members who bring such a wealth of gifts to Stepping Stones’ work.

Board Committees

In addition to typical board work such as financial oversight, strategic planning, policy making and review, board members also serve on committees: Executive & Finance, Development, Education & Advocacy, Personnel & Nominating, or Program Advisory. Community members are also welcome on several of these committees. Let us know if you’re interested!

Welcome Also to a New Staff Member

Henry Amherson took over from Mike Donnelly as Part-time Maintenance & Warehouse Coordinator. Henry has a Masters in Industrial/Technology Education and BS in Manufacturing Engineering, both from Stout. He also does contracted engineering and maintenance work. Henry’s responsibilities include managing food deliveries and inventory for the pantry, building and grounds maintenance at the pantry and shelters.

Are You a Thrivent Financial Member?

If so, please consider designating your Choice Dollars® to Stepping Stones before they expire on March 31, 2018. Thrivent distributes part of their charitable funds through this program each year. What a great way to help those in need in our community. To designate your dollars, go to thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call 1-800-847-4856 and say “Thrivent Choice” after the prompt. Thank you to all who have already designated Choice Dollars to Stepping Stones. Also, if you’re looking for projects for an Action Team let us know. We have ideas!

Discount Cards Now On Sale

Did you forget to get a Stepping Stones’ discount card this fall? Good news—they’re now half off! For only $5 you can still get discounts at lots of great restaurants and businesses around town. Cards are good through August. Stop by the Stepping Stones’ office or order online:

www.steppingstonesesd.org

It’s Cold Outside but Not at Winter Haven!

Thank goodness it’s warm inside at Stepping Stones’ Winter Haven shelter. Winter Haven has been very busy this season with all beds full almost every night. Thanks to all the fabulous volunteer hosts who spend part of a day or night at Winter Haven and make it possible for us to shelter more people during the coldest months. The need is so great and we couldn’t do it without our rock star volunteers (which is true of all of Stepping Stones’ programs)! Winter Haven is open through March and volunteer spots are still available. Contact Jill at communitycontacts@steppingstonesesd.org or 715.235.2920 if you’d like to help.

Little Library Good Samaritans

Stepping Stones is happy to have one of the Optimists Club’s “little library” boxes in the parking lot. We rarely see it being filled but somehow it seems to stay stocked with good books for anyone to help themselves to. Lately, another Good Samaritan has been filling in around the books with homemade hats for cold winter days. So many people find so many ways to be the good.

Believe THERE is GOOD in the world!

Words of Thanks

We often receive notes and words of thanks from clients. Here is one that came with a holiday card and contribution that was especially touching:

Wishing you a New Year of peace and happiness. Please take this donation with our thanks for the six months you provided us with food when my husband was sick. You made us feel welcomed and not ashamed that we came for help. May this help others!

-Karen & Robert

Nonprofit of the Year!

Thank you to the Menomonee Area Chamber of Commerce and its members for choosing Stepping Stones as the Nonprofit of the Year. Stepping Stones is honored to receive this award and to be acknowledged for the work we do to make Dunn County a stronger, healthier, more compassionate community. In turn, we thank all those who contribute financially, donate food or other items, and/or volunteer. Without such amazing community support from all sectors—individuals, businesses, churches, schools, service groups, and other organizations—our programs and services would not be possible. Together we are feeding, sheltering, and supporting our neighbors in need.
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Sara’s Story
Low income families face so many challenges. A recent article in the Pioneer Press by columnist Karen Weaver highlighted some of the issues:

Sara Moreno never expected her electricity to be shut off — she was only $70 behind, and she planned to pay it off after her next paycheck. What happened next shocked her: “I called to get it turned back on, paid the $70 with what was supposed to be my rent money, and then the lady says, ‘Great, thank you for your payment! Now I need $250 for the ‘new customer’ deposit.’”

Moore, a convenience-store manager who has a child with special health needs, was in disbelief. “I’m like, ‘Look, I couldn’t afford $70. Where am I going to get $250?’ Now I’ll be in the hole than I was before.”

Moore had been a customer of the electric company for more than a decade, and the power had been off for less than an hour. It didn’t matter. She had to pay it. It took more than six months to pay off...

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