

Lutheran Men's Shelter Offers Hope and a Future in Cleveland

By Abigail Genig

The men's emergency shelter at 2100 Lakeside Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio, offers hope, emergency shelter, support services, and solutions to homeless men in transition or crisis. Run by Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, the shelter serves 350 men per night and offers meals and clothing to 1,100 men each month. The shelter, the largest in Ohio, seeks to help these men regain self-sufficiency, employment, and permanent housing and reconnect them with their community.

With help from a LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) domestic grant, the shelter now has a volunteer coordinator program to recruit, coordinate, and enhance the volunteer experience at the shelter. As a result, the number of ongoing volunteers at the shelter has more than doubled and more volunteers, many from LCMS churches, have put their faith into action.

The shelter relies on volunteers to provide authentic interaction as well as the basic services needed by the residents. Volunteers help mentor shelter residents and offer support after the residents leave. Volunteers also prepare and serve meals and provide educational and recreational opportunities, such as training in computer skills, employment workshops, and gardening.

"[The shelter], a place so supposedly dismal, is where I had the opportunity to garden and do murals. I learned about vegetable gardens – even tomatillos! I had the chance to watch this mural go from blank wall to beauty. This shelter conveyed to me how good knowledge can be," said Lynn Anderson, a shelter resident.

As part of the volunteer recruitment and advocacy effort partially funded by WR-HC, the shelter recently established the *Portraits of Homelessness* gallery, featuring 40 photographs

and stories of shelter residents, in an effort to put a human face on homelessness.

The shelter's volunteer program serves the neediest of God's children in the community by promoting greater understanding of the causes of homelessness and providing ways to help those who are oppressed, forgotten, and hurting. To learn more, visit the Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry website at www.lutheranmetro.org.



Residents and volunteers tend the garden at Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's men's shelter in Cleveland, Ohio. The garden provides work therapy for residents.



This mural is part of the garden at Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's men's shelter in Cleveland, Ohio. Lynn Anderson, pictured, received services at the shelter and helped paint the mural.

A Decade of Accomplishments, Challenges, Joys

After preaching in New Orleans last August on the fourth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, I spoke with a man who told me about losing his wife and his home. He hesitated and then, crying, said, "Pastor, despite everything, I look at this as a blessing. There has been so much love."

I understood. WR-HC has seen firsthand God's mercy at work in the hearts and lives of survivors of 9/11, the Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the Haiti earthquake, and so many other disasters in the last 10 years.

Serving at this ministry helm has been a blessed endeavor. The generosity of you, our LCMS members, congregations, and partners, has encouraged and amazed us! Donors have given more than \$125 million in gifts during this decade to enable WR-HC to reach out with mercy and compassion to people in need, motivated by Christ's love.

Those supporters include so many who have given so generously to Haiti earthquake relief, contributing more than \$5 million to provide urgently needed food, medical care, and more to reach out with Christ's mercy. Just a sampling of those donors includes:

- The Monroe, Mich., Lutheran Laymen's League Zone Rally sent \$275 and their blessings for LCMS relief work in Haiti.
- JAM Kidz of Faith Lutheran Church in Bentonville, Ark., hosted a Valentine's Day banquet called "Hearts For Haiti" and raised \$406 for Haiti earthquake relief. "Our prayers will continue to be with your office and those throughout the world who serve as the loving hands and hearts of Jesus," wrote Mary Henry, who leads the children's ministry.

Over the past 10 years, WR-HC provided more than \$27.3 million to pan-Lutheran organizations (Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Services in America, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and Lutheran Disaster Response).

Even during the recent economic downturn, WR-HC managed to operate well in the black. As I write this, our financial situation is frankly outstanding, thanks to difficult cost-saving decisions made by our ministry and, of course, to our faithful supporters.

With deep thankfulness, I remain convinced "Mercy is the key to moving boldly and confidently into the future with courage in the Gospel – a confidence and courage based on conviction" (*Christ Have Mercy: How to Put Your Faith in Action*, Concordia Publishing House).

Rev. Matthew C. Harrison
Executive Director

