

STEP UP

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STEP UP

A Newsletter for Volunteers, Donors and Friends of the St. Louis Park Emergency Program



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STEP accepts donations

M, W, Th 8 AM-4 PM; Tues. 12 PM-8 PM; Fri. 8 AM-12 PM

SAVE THE DATE:

Last Day Pandemonium! At the SLP Pool

Sunday, Aug. 23, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Bring a non-perishable food donation for the St. Louis Park STEP food shelf and pool entrance is just \$1 (season pass holders will receive a coupon for one free small fountain beverage). Cash donations will also be accepted.

Bridge Party Benefit for STEP

Friday, September 25th
Westwood Lutheran Church
Registration Deadline: Sept. 11th
Info: LaDonna Reynolds at ladonnarey@comcast.net

Concert to Benefit STEP

Tuesday, October 27th from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Westwood Lutheran Church the ELCA Senior Synod Band will perform a benefit concert for STEP.

Trick-or-Treat!

Join us on Halloween by participating in a city-wide event of Trick-or-Treating for STEP. To organize your neighborhood event contact Allison at allison@stepslp.org.

FIND STEP ONLINE!



FOLLOW STEP ON FACEBOOK

Get updates on needs, events and volunteer options!
www.facebook.com/STEPslp



DONATE ONLINE

Support STEP through a one-time or monthly donation at www.giveMN.org. Any amount helps!

Special Thanks

Thank you to the Park Nicollet Foundation for their funding of the STEP transportation Program.

Correction

Due to an accidental omission, The Charities Review Council failed to list STEP in their *Spring Smart Giver Newsletter* as one of their most trustworthy nonprofits. Please visit their website, smartgivers.org, for more information.

Summer 2015

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Find STEP Online

A Note From STEP's Director

Jackie Olafson

Dear Friends of STEP,

You may or may not know that I am retiring August 1st after 12 wonderful years as director of this great organization.

Truly, it has been a privilege to be entrusted with this important job.

It has been a privilege because *together* we have succeeded to do many things, and to do them well.

Please allow me the opportunity to share some of the reasons behind STEP's success.

- STEP's mission— "responding to the basic needs of each person in need"— has remained central, strong, and runs deep. Regardless of the trends in funding and other possible diversions, STEP stays firm in its mission.
- Volunteerism has consistently remained at the core of STEP's values and key to its success. Volunteers by their example, lift our spirits.
- STEP is fortunate to be part of the strong, caring community of St. Louis Park. The City and community take ownership and pride in the mission and work of this organization. Food, clothing, and monetary donations from this community speak so clearly of its caring values.
- STEP's Board of Directors and Staff reinforce focus on professionalism, mission, and organizational balance.



Jackie Olafson, outgoing Executive Director, has served STEP and the St. Louis Park Community for 12 years. Under Jackie's leadership, STEP has seen wonderful changes including the finding of its permanent home at 6812 West Lake Street.

Each and every time I reflect on the mission and the work that gets done at STEP, I think how fortunate STEP is to be on the receiving end of such generosity and creativity. I will miss associating with our volunteers. I will dearly miss the personality of our staff—their devotion, selflessness, and great humor. And I will miss working with this marvelously talented and caring board of directors.

May you carry forward with a strong and firm resolve to go deeper and stronger in service to those in need. May you find the inner peace and joy that stems from unselfish giving and concern for another human being.

Poverty in the Suburbs

Julie Lapointe, Program Manager

According to the Brookings Institute Study on Confronting Suburban Poverty, national trends indicate suburbs are home to the largest and fastest growing poor population with numbers spiking between the years 2000-2013.

According to the research, patterns of poverty in the Twin Cities' 16 county metro area reflect that 60% of the people living in poverty are living in the suburbs. The study suggests that this growth becomes a strain on local resources.

STEP noted a 60% increase in the need for our services from 2008-2013. Notably in the past 20 years, households needing STEP services increased by 400%. There are other factors contributing to this growth trend according to the Institute's analysis.



For one, immigrants tend to be forming new communities in the suburbs verses in the city proper, as was the case in the past. Also, areas within 10

miles of the cities have lost jobs while jobs are increasing in farther out suburbs. But while job growth is happening in the suburbs, the wages for the poor living in the suburbs remains stagnant.

Many of the suburban jobs available only pay a minimum wage. Keep in mind, the minimum wage in Minnesota—depending on employer size—is \$6.50 to \$8 an hour. Compare that to the living wage of \$20.64 per hour for a household of 1 adult and 1 child. Women make up 56% of the minimum wage workforce which makes them and their households more vulnerable to the impacts of poverty.

Limited public transit also presents issues for those living in the suburbs. Many families living in poverty lack reliable transportation leaving them dependent on an inadequate public transit system.

As if these barriers weren't enough, the Institute also found that suburban nonprofit organizations tend to receive fewer philanthropic dollars than their urban counterparts. So as the suburban population affected by poverty increases, the systems in place to help them remain inadequately equipped to do so.

At STEP we feel fortunate to have the strong support of our donors and community. We know that this support will serve us well as we continue to address the basic needs of our St. Louis Park neighbors.

STEP Scores High in Annual Client Survey

Karen Clara, Social Worker

Each year STEP is purposeful in asking our clients for feedback on the services we provide, paying specific attention to the food shelf and assistance given by staff and volunteers. We hope to maintain a high level of service with all we do and feedback from our clients helps ensure we do so. This year we received great reactions from our survey overall. Here are some highlights:

95% found STEP staff sensitive to their situation

97% feel that meeting with a social worker is helpful

95% replied that the food they receive here is of good quality and safe to eat

98% find it easy to schedule a timely appointment

12% said that before coming to STEP they went hungry either 3 times a month or more; only 2% reported that was the case once they began using the food shelf.

I am thankful to have found STEP. Thank you for all your help for my family especially for my kids. Thanks to STEP's help my kids are going to graduate high school.
* * *

I take comfort in knowing that someone at STEP can direct me to the needed services. Thank you.

Frank Radermacher

Diane Forest, Social Worker

Meet Frank Radermacher! Frank's service to STEP began almost twenty years ago, initially through membership in his faith community. Frank was instrumental in organizing food drives for STEP. In 1999, Frank learned that STEP had an opening on its volunteer board of directors. As an accountant and longtime resident of St. Louis Park, Frank thought he might be a good fit for the position. Fortunately for STEP, Frank was welcomed into the board and eventually became its treasurer. In his twelve years of service, Frank helped hire Jackie Olafson as Executive Director and was instrumental in the identification and purchase of STEP's current home.



Frank says he didn't fully appreciate STEP until he became directly engaged as a board member: "Being up close to the agency, I grew to understand what a great organization it is, and what an important role it plays in St. Louis Park—not just for clients but the whole community. How could the city respond to the needs of struggling people if it weren't for STEP?"

Frank left the board in 2011, but his commitment to STEP continues. Frank is a principal accountant with Security Life, a company whose CEO takes community service seriously. Each year, employees are asked to choose four social service organizations to support through financial giving and volunteerism. Frank advocated for STEP in this process early on, and for the third year in a row, STEP is one of the agencies chosen.

When we wonder what one person can do to make a difference, we need look no farther than Frank Radermacher. Frank's message to readers: "STEP is a great organization that uses its resources wisely and efficiently. What you give goes to the heart of the mission of STEP."

Help School Children Get Off to a Good Start

It's that time already to think about a new school year ahead. Please help STEP by donating much needed school supplies for children in St. Louis Park. Through the **Back To School Program**, STEP is able to give each registered child supplies packed specifically for their school and grade. For more information on donating or volunteering with this program, go to www.STEPslp.org, or call STEP at 952-925-4899.

SCHOOL SUPPLY SHOPPING LIST

STEP Needs:

- 3-ring zippered binders
- Large backpacks for Jr. and Sr. High students
- 2-pocket folders without prongs
- Erasable ball point pens—blue and red
- College ruled loose leaf paper
- Basic Calculators (i.e. TI 30X IIS)
- Composition notebooks
- 8 count Crayola WASHABLE markers (classic colors)
- Dry Erase markers—thick
- College ruled spiral notebooks (all colors but black)
- Sketch books—Canson or Strathmore, 9x12, no lines
- Highlighters
- Elmer's large glue sticks
- Scissors—large pointed and small rounded
- Pencil boxes
- Wide ruled spiral notebooks (no black or purple needed)
- 5-Tab binder dividers (Avery)
- Hand held pencil sharpeners

At this time, STEP does not need the following items:

Wide Ruled Loose Leaf Paper Multi-subject Notebooks Blunt Scissors Crayons