

STEP UP



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STEP accepts donations

M, W, Th 8 AM-4 PM; Tu 12 PM-8 PM; F 8 AM-12 PM

Highlights

STEP deeply appreciates the support we receive from all corners of the community in St. Louis Park. **Ben and Jerry's** of Calhoun Commons featured STEP at their May free cone day. **Parkshore Senior Living** raised \$2,700 for STEP at their spring pancake breakfast. **Bridgewater Bank** featured STEP and donated to us at its Parktacular activity. The retail and office businesses at **Miracle Mile Shopping Center** collectively raised over \$2,000 to purchase backpacks for STEP's Back to School program. **Citizens Independent Bank** collected food for STEP during their annual "shred day" and also sponsors Empty Bowls and our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.

If you have a creative way to support STEP's work, give us a call at 952.925.4899!

FIND STEP ONLINE!



FOLLOW STEP ON FACEBOOK

Get updates on needs, events and volunteer options!
[facebook.com/STEPslp](https://www.facebook.com/STEPslp)



DONATE ONLINE

Support STEP through a one-time or monthly donation at [STEPslp.org](https://www.stepslp.org). Any amount helps!

Save the Date!

St. Louis Park's Aquatic Park is hosting it's "Last Day of Summer" event to support STEP. Sunday, August 28, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Bring a non-perishable food item or cash donation for the STEP food shelf and pool entrance is just \$1. All season pass holders who bring a food donation will receive a coupon for one free small fountain beverage choice at the concession stand. Please come for fun and support STEP, too!

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

STEP UP

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

Summer 2016

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Find STEP Online

Emergency Rent Assistance in St. Louis Park

Julie Lapointe, Program Director

One of the important services the St. Louis Park Emergency Program (STEP) provides is rent assistance if a St. Louis Park resident is in crisis. A medical situation or job loss can cause a temporary financial crisis that could lead to the loss of housing and have a permanent negative impact on that family.

Historically, STEP has received county and state funds for homeless prevention. These funds are no longer available to STEP and for the first time in the history of this program STEP ran out of money to use in May and June of this year, thus needing to turn away people who very well could become homeless without our assistance. The past two years were very challenging due to our budget limitations. We served very few households with the limited funds. The need is greater than the funding available.

STEP clients are faced with many challenges when trying to remain in housing. Affordable housing for people living in poverty is scarce and with the current rental

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STEP's ability to provide emergency rental assistance to low-income SLP residents has dwindled over the years due to lack of available funding.

Fiscal Year	# of Families Assisted	Total Spent
2011/2012	158	\$118,622
2012/2013	76	\$66,139
2013/2014	64	\$52,045
2014/2015	35	\$34,673

Join STEP at Steel Toe Brewing

Jason Alvey, Board Member



We are very excited to announce an upcoming fundraising event at Steel Toe Brewing 5:00-7:00pm on September 14!

Steel Toe Brewing has generously donated their Taproom and staff for a fun STEP event. If that isn't enough, they are also going to donate beer. Each attendee will

get to sample four of their wonderful beers.

If you live in St. Louis Park and enjoy good beer you've probably already visited Steel Toe and know what an amazing job they do. If you haven't and were looking for a good excuse to go check them out, you are welcome!

Steel Toe Brewing has been producing consistently great craft

beer in St. Louis Park since 2011. They are a family-owned business, and Jason and his wife Hannah work long hours to make it all happen. They care deeply about their product as well as their connection to the community, striving to stay small so they can retain control of the business and still have time to interact with friends and customers.

Steel Toe Brewing has been a long time supporter of STEP, and we are honored to have their support again with this long awaited event.

The ticket price of \$15 will include a collectable pint glass, a guided tasting and tour with brewery owner Jason, and the knowledge that you are enjoying beer as a way to support STEP!

We look forward to seeing you there in support of your community and, of course, to taste great locally brewed beer. Bring a friend!

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

Notes from STEP's Director

Derek Burrows Reise, Executive Director

Join the challenge to prevent homelessness in the Park

Julie points out the unmet need to ensure our neighbors can weather temporary financial crises and stay in the Park. STEP aids the most needy with our limited funds, but with more ample funds, we could be more proactive and help more families. Our neighbors could still call St. Louis Park their home.

In order to ameliorate the unmet need of homeless prevention in St. Louis Park, the Park Nicollet Foundation has generously committed to match up to \$15,000 in donations to STEP's emergency housing assistance fund. The

City of St. Louis Park has also joined in the challenge by committing \$15,000. Both contributions would be used to prevent homelessness in St. Louis Park over the next three years. With a full match from the community, we can turn these two pledges into \$45,000—ensuring scores of families stay in their homes.

Right now, there is a child who just finished the school year in a St. Louis Park school. The community's support can help determine if, come September, that child is in a shelter and attending a strange, new school or keeps their home and returns to their school with all their friends.

Anyone interested in joining this challenge can donate to STEP and designate their gift to "emergency assistance." Donations can be made at STEPslp.org or sent to us directly at 6812 W Lake St, St Louis Park, MN 55426.

Back to School Supply Drive

It's hard to believe that it's time to start thinking about getting ready for another school year. At STEP we have already begun collecting school supplies and rounding up the volunteers to help us outfit over 420 St. Louis Park children with the school supplies they will need for the upcoming school year.

But there is still more to be done. If you would like to make a donation of school supplies, please check out our wish lists online at **Amazon School Supply Wish List** and **Target School Supply Wish List** via our website. Items purchased online will be sent directly to



It takes many hands to sort and fill over 420 bags of school supplies distributed each fall to SLP children.

STEP. Donations can also be dropped off at STEP (6812 W. Lake St. in St. Louis Park).

For more information on donating or volunteering, please give us a call at 952.925.4899.

STEP's Most Needed School Supplies

- 2-pocket folders w/o prongs (PURPLE)
- College ruled spiral notebooks (PURPLE)
- Wide ruled spiral notebooks (BLUE, YELLOW, PURPLE) NOT BLACK
- Composition notebooks (WIDE) NOT BLACK
- Sketchbooks—Canson or Strathmore—9x12, spiral, no lines
- Dry Erase Markers—Thick
- Crayola 8 count WASHABLE Markers—Thick, Classic Colors
- Pencil boxes
- Small pointed scissors NOT ROUNDED
- Large pointed scissors
- Backpacks for Jr./Sr. High students

Backpacks are distributed during registration and should be donated to STEP during the month of July. All other school supply donations should be donated by August 13. Thank you!

Food Shelf Super Heroes

Diane Forest, Social Worker



Z and Chris are two of our delightful, energetic food shelf volunteers. They bring smiles to the faces of shoppers as they bag and help load groceries or sort food donations. In their lives outside

of STEP, Z is an Administrative Assistant with Home Depot and is also a business student at MCTC. Her husband, Chris, is Quality Manager of North American Operations at Mocon, Inc.

What prompted you to volunteer at STEP?

Z: Around the holidays 20 years ago, I was down on my luck. STEP helped me with food, a \$10 gift card, and a visit with a social worker, who referred me to Hennepin County services. It really saved my life. When I was

asked to do service learning as part of an ethics class for school, I remembered that help and began volunteering at STEP. I had such a good time, Chris started volunteering too. Now it's our weekly date night!

What do you gain by volunteering?

Chris: Volunteer work is almost a zen-like experience. After dealing with the corporate rat race, I come to STEP and focus on what's really important. At the end of the day, we're all just trying to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table. I like being able to contribute to something that's rewarding, fulfilling, and fun.

Many STEP volunteers are retired. What would you say to millennials about the value of volunteerism?

Z: I wish more young people would volunteer as part of their college experience. It's very helpful in developing your identity and in communicating your values to others.

Chris: People need to understand that social causes go beyond putting the word out on Facebook. Showing up and doing the work is important.

STEP could not function without the generous contributions of our volunteers. Thank you for all you do!

Rent Assistance *(continued from page 1)*

market more barriers have been put in place for people living on a fixed income or working in low paying jobs.

Alarmingly, we have seen once affordable complexes purchased by companies who raise rents and change rental criteria—often making people living in poverty ineligible. This happened in St. Louis Park this year with Meadowbrook. STEP saw many of our clients displaced, facing consequences of paying much higher rent at another complex, becoming homeless, or needing to move out of the community. St. Louis Park is the place they have called home.

In trying to find options for our displaced clients, I contacted many complexes STEP typically has worked with over the past 20 years. These are the rental criteria trends our clients are faced with:

- Very low vacancy rate—the metro average is a 2% vacancy rate
- Income must be at least 2.5 to 3 times the rent. (STEP clients live at or below the poverty line, thus they would not be eligible for these units)
- No eviction history or eviction history must be more than 3 years old
- No criminal background (even if the issue has been resolved, restitution paid, or time served)
- Credit scores of 600 or more without a cosigner (many living in poverty have a low credit score and do not meet this criteria)
- Do not accept Section 8 or other housing vouchers that make rent affordable for the tenant
- Average rent for a two bedroom apartment is \$1,100 and a one bedroom apartment is \$900, making renting very unaffordable with rent consuming all or most of their income

We hear every day from our clients how much they love living in St. Louis Park and how much they appreciate the schools. Many have lived here more than seven years, and it is their home.