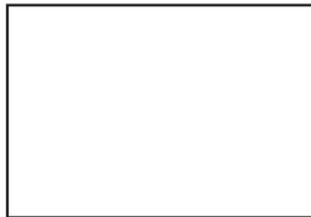


STEP UP



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Summer 2018

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STEP in Steel Toe

STEP is returning to Steel Toe Brewing on **Tuesday, July 24, 2018, 5:00-7:00 pm.**

Attendees are encouraged to purchase tickets well ahead of time. Tickets can be purchased at www.stepslp.org.

A ticket price of \$20 will include beer samples and an opportunity to learn about STEP's successes and future goals, with a focus on STEP's efforts to prevent homelessness in St. Louis Park.



If the event does not sell out ahead of time, tickets will be available at the door for \$30 each.



FIND STEP ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Get updates on needs, events & volunteering! Search for STEPslp.



DONATE ONLINE

Support STEP through a one-time or monthly donation at STEPslp.org.

DONATIONS CURRENTLY NEEDED:

Personal care items (soap, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, toothpaste), cereal, tuna/chicken/canned meat, sugar, coffee.

STEP accepts donations

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

STEP UP

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

Community Responds to Housing Crisis

Diane Forest, Social Worker

Affordable and secure housing are unattainable for too many of our neighbors. Housing is a complex problem for which there are no easy fixes, but St. Louis Park has responded with the following initiatives:

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

STEP partners with the St. Louis Park Housing Authority to run the federally-funded, voluntary Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, available to current housing choice voucher and public housing participants. The program helps individuals overcome barriers to self-sufficiency and increase financial security and personal achievement. As participants successfully increase their household income, some of their rent is saved in an account for them to access upon completion of the program.

Kids in the Park Program Rent Assistance Program

STEP, St. Louis Park School District, and the city of St. Louis Park have created a new program to assist low income St. Louis Park rental households with school aged children remain in their current housing. Housing instability can keep students from attending school consistently and diminishes the likelihood of achieving key benchmarks like reading proficiency, a predictor of future success. To develop their full potential, children need safe and stable housing. The program provides rental assistance to households for up to 48 months. Nine working families with a total of twenty children are receiving assistance through this program, which was rolled out in December 2017. Future openings are expected by fall of 2018 and will be announced by the city.

Housing Inclusionary Policy: Affordable Rental Units

In an effort to promote the creation of affordable housing in new multi-family residential developments, the city council adopted the Inclusionary Housing Policy in 2015. The policy requires newly built apartment developments receiving financial assistance from the city to include a percentage of affordable housing units. Since the policy was adopted, three multi-family rental buildings have been completed, adding affordable units at 50% and 60% of the area medium income.

NOAH Protection Ordinance

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) complexes are increasingly being purchased by new owners who immediately increase the rent. St. Louis Park recently passed an ordinance based on the recommendation of a workgroup of landlords and tenant advocates. It requires new owners of a NOAH complex to wait three months before increasing rent, or pay a moving penalty of \$2600 to \$4100. This is the first known ordinance of its kind.

There remains much more for us to do to alleviate the damage of the current housing crisis. STEP will continue to seek ways to work alongside the city, apartment managements, and philanthropies to ensure that all kinds of families continue to call St. Louis Park home.



Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

From the Director: STEP's Strategic Plan

Derek Burrows Reise, Executive Director

"Goals are pure fantasy unless you have a specific plan to achieve them." Stephen Covey

STEP has a plan. Following a process that gathered insight from internal and external stakeholders, the Board of Directors has adopted a three-year Strategic Plan. This is the first time in a decade that STEP has gone through a comprehensive planning process.

The plan serves STEP's vision to be *"the trusted expert for connecting community members with resources to fulfill their basic needs."* We have four primary goals:

1. **Increase awareness of STEP in the community.**
2. **Connect residents with the best available community resources to meet basic needs without duplicating other services.**
3. **Create a collaborative and rewarding work environment.**
4. **Maximize the impact of services while ensuring the long-term sustainability of STEP.**

Twenty-one strategies comprise the plan to achieve these goals. One strategy will be to secure resources to expand the impact of our homelessness prevention efforts *three-fold*. Each month, we see long-time neighbors being pushed out of their housing due to extreme rent burden (spending over 50% of income on housing) and temporary financial set-backs. By ramping up our intervention, we will prevent homelessness. Another strategy will identify options to expand on STEP's limited space. With additional space, we can improve our core programs and be positioned to embrace future opportunities.

STEP will need the involvement of supporters to fully achieve our goals. I invite you to consider how you can help. The full strategic plan is posted on STEP's website.

School Supplies-A Catalyst for Academic Success

Julie Lapointe, Program Manager & Social Worker

STEP's School Supply program promotes academic success with kids showing up to school excited about their first day and equipped to learn. Access to essential school supplies embodies protective factors needed in childhood to become successful at life. It is one of the ways the playground is leveled between children who come from impoverished backgrounds to those who come from a background of financial stability.

In 2017 STEP served 464 children with new school supplies. STEP expects to serve equally as many this year. Registration for the program is July 9 through August 17. We ask for donations by August 17 so that volunteers have time to sort and pack the bags. Over the years the list of school supplies has grown in cost and specificity. STEP continues to meet this challenge through donations and with volunteers packing individualized bags for each

child's specific school, grade and classroom. Children who received supplies last year attended twenty-five schools and fifty-two different classrooms.

The support that families receive from STEP and the St. Louis Park community reduces stress and translates to better outcomes for kids.

Your contributions make a difference and put smiles on the faces of students and the adults in their lives. Thank you!

TOP ITEMS NEEDED 2018:

- Expo Dry Erase Markers (4 Pack-Colors)
- Crayola Color Pencils (12 pack)
- See Our Entire Wish List at www.stepslp.org



Volunteer Spotlight: Friday Morning Crew

Mari-Claire Dart, Volunteer & Community Relations Coordinator



have worked together for almost 10 years- that's a lot of combined knowledge!

There's a little bit of everything with this group: Jim and Rita are the power couple who stock the food shelf. Don and Dave are the friendly faces you see at the back door when you come to drop off donations. Marilynn, Judy, Julie and Tom help clients shop and pack groceries with love and care. Andi, Norma and Sue make sure clients have the best variety of options when stopping through our clothing closet. We can't forget about Mary. Mary's face is the first you see when you walk in the door and she always makes you feel welcomed at STEP.

STEP volunteers know commitment. With thousands of volunteer hours between them, STEP wouldn't be the high functioning and welcoming place that you see each time you stop by. Each volunteer group has their own dynamic way of serving our mission, and our Friday group is no exception.

There is a reason why people volunteer on a weekly basis and have done so for years, and it's because of the tight-knit community that is built by staff and volunteers. Thank you Friday morning crew for your many years of volunteering and contribution to the spirit of STEP.

They are responsible for getting STEP ready for the weekend and preparing for Monday. Many of the Friday morning crew

Help Your Neighbors Keep Their Housing

Derek Burrows Reise, Executive Director



Maria has lived in St. Louis Park for seven years. She is a single parent of two kids who attend St. Louis Park schools. Maria works 30 hours a week. Her above-minimum-wage job earns \$1,560/month. Her two-bedroom apartment rent is \$1,015—65% of her income. She tries to cut back on basic expenses but has been unable to build any savings.

Recently, Maria's son suffered an extended illness, causing Maria to lose two weeks of work. She has fallen behind on her rent and the management plans to file for an eviction. If she loses her housing, she doesn't know where she'll go. She may go to a homeless shelter in Minneapolis while she works to find one of the few landlords that will rent to a person recently evicted. She may need to leave Minnesota entirely and ask her brother in Arkansas if she can move in and start over there.

This is a hypothetical story, but it represents typical experiences of many neighbors. Each month, STEP receives requests from 30-40 families experiencing similar circumstances and are at risk of losing their housing. Once a family is evicted, future housing options are limited. Many start a repeated cycle of experiencing homelessness. In 2016, STEP surveyed 17 apartment buildings housing low-income families. Only one accepted new resident applications with an eviction filing within the past three years.

STEP has a housing assistance program that works with people like Maria and their landlords to prevent evictions with one-time financial assistance. We attempt to provide assistance to those with the most immediate need, but decline 90% of requests due to limited resources. With community financial support, we can prevent homelessness for more of our neighbors. **Please help our neighbors remain our neighbors with a contribution.**