

**SACRED HEART HOUSE OF DENVER  
2010/2011 YEAR-END REPORT/EVALUATION  
(June 1, 2010 – May 31, 2011)**

**NARRATIVE**

***Program Description***

With the help of its donors, Sacred Heart House of Denver offered a continuum of services to homeless mothers with children and single women through its In-House Stabilization, Follow-Up and Transitional Housing Programs. Through the In-House Stabilization Program, it provided temporary emergency housing, food, clothing and transportation to meet residents' critical physical needs. With case management, referrals to service providers in the community were made to help them identify and solve problems that caused or resulted from their homelessness. Living skills workshops familiarized women with community resources and helped them build self-confidence. The Follow-Up Program offered continued support to increase self-sufficiency and prevent future homelessness. Affordable housing and case management for mothers committed to increasing their self-sufficiency through education or job training was available through our Transitional Housing Program.

***Results***

Between June 1, 2010, and May 31, 2011, 204 homeless individuals, 58 mothers with 101 children and 45 single women, had the opportunity to rebuild their lives with services offered through the In-House Stabilization Program. Fifty-one percent of the women arrived at Sacred Heart House with no income. Seventeen percent, mothers with dependent children, received income through the TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) Program. Seven percent of the adult residents of Sacred Heart House of Denver received Supplemental Security Income, one percent received Social Security, two percent received General Assistance and unemployment insurance, respectively. Twelve percent were employed, and nine percent were supported by other means, e.g., child support or income from a relative.

Thirty-nine percent of the women who stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver attributed their homelessness directly to family/relationship problems. Eighteen percent of the women were evicted from their homes; 29% faced homelessness after they lost their jobs; eight percent were relocating from another city/state. Deinstitutionalization accounted for four percent of Sacred Heart House of Denver's residents. Most of these were single women. A chronic transient lifestyle and "lost funds" were among the remaining (2%) causes of homelessness. Thirty-two percent of the residents of Sacred Heart House of Denver during this period were African-American, 33% were White (non-Hispanic), 31% were Hispanic, and four percent were Native American. Of the 103 women 25 years of age and older who stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver, 42% were high school graduates or held General Equivalency Degrees. Twenty percent had finished between nine and twelve years of school, 19% percent had some post-secondary education, and 19% were college graduates.

Forty-one percent of the families who participated in the In-House Stabilization Program successfully moved into stable housing. Twenty-eight percent of the families reconnected and stayed with relatives; 9% moved into other emergency housing, in many cases continuing to work toward stabilization while waiting for housing to become available. The housing disposition of 22% percent was undetermined; they were unwilling or unable to put forth the effort and work to take advantage of the resources available to them through the In-House Stabilization Program: Their whereabouts were unknown after they left Sacred Heart House of Denver. The average length of stay for families was 19 days.

Forty-seven percent of the single women who stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver moved into permanent or transitional housing. Seven percent reconnected and moved in with friends or family, and 18% of homeless single women residents moved to other emergency housing. Twenty-nine percent left Sacred Heart House of Denver with their housing dispositions unknown. Mental illness and the consequences of extended periods of alcohol and drug abuse typically plagued homeless single women. Many of them simply did not have the capacity to change their lives. They needed shelter and support, while they struggled to find ways to maintain their daily existence. Single women stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver an average of 19 days.

For residents who found housing, money from our own *Fr. Woody Fund* through *Regis University* the *Denver Rescue Mission's Family/Senior Homeless Initiative*, *Helping Hearts and Hands*, the *Gathering Place's Housing Stabilization Program*, the *Church of the Risen Christ* and various programs through *Denver Department of Human Services* paid deposits and first months' rent; this

financial help was critical to their stabilization.

After residents of Sacred Heart House of Denver secured housing, the Follow-Up Program helped them continue their struggle to reintegrate into the community. To assist in reestablishing households, Sacred Heart House provided furniture and household goods with donated items. A monthly newsletter, *Sacred Heart UpBeat*, with its practical advice on parenting, economic issues and recreation information, kept former residents in touch with the staff of Sacred Heart House of Denver, who continued to support them. Personal achievements were published as positive reinforcement for progress toward successful independent living. Two hundred ten families/single women received holiday help through our Adopt-a-Family Program during the 2010 holiday season. Emergency food boxes throughout the year and at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, school supplies, resources with problem-solving advice and moral support were provided for 834 former residents, 208 families with 534 children and 92 single women, through the Follow-Up Program this year. Of 172 adults in this program who completed program evaluations in December 2010, 94% remain in permanent or transitional housing. Thirty-eight percent of these former residents have increased their level of education since they left Sacred Heart House of Denver! Twenty-four percent were enrolled in school at the time the survey was taken.

Nine mothers worked to ensure their long-term self-sufficiency in Sacred Heart House of Denver's Transitional Housing Program. These women were involved in educational programs at *Emily Griffith Opportunity School*, *Community College of Denver* and *Community College of Aurora*, while they were provided with affordable housing in Sacred Heart House of Denver's transitional units. Intensive weekly case management focused on educational success, as well as the development of budgeting/financial management, time/household management and parenting skills.

The case management at Sacred Heart House of Denver is referral-based, so we worked with virtually every provider in the Denver metro area that offers services needed by our residents. Upon admission to Sacred Heart House of Denver, Case Manager Chelsea Clearman helped each woman formulate a stabilization plan. School-age children were enrolled in neighborhood schools, *Whittier Elementary*, *Bruce Randolph Middle* or *East High Schools*; children in elementary school attended a *Kaleidoscope* after-school program at *Whittier Elementary School* designed to meet the special needs of homeless children.

With a referral from the case manager, *Child Care Innovations*, formerly *Family Resources and Child Care Education* at *Red Rocks Community College*, a Qualistar Early Learning partner administering the *Child Care Vouchers Project for Homeless Families*, paid for 30 business days or six weeks of child care for resident mothers. Child care providers were selected by the mothers with resources supplied by *Mile High United Way* in geographic areas best suited to their individual needs, i.e., proximity to work, school, etc. Depending upon their eligibility for child care help through the *Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) Program*, some mothers were forced to have their children with them, as they searched for housing and employment. *Operation School Bell* through *Denver Public Schools* provided clothing for children through middle school age participating in programs at Sacred Heart House of Denver. The *Women at Work Closet at Denver Works* provided professional clothing for women for job interviews and work. Clothing donated to Sacred Heart House of Denver helped women and children residents dress appropriately for each season.

If they were not already employed, the case manager referred women to *Denver Department of Human Services*, where they applied for *Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF)* and received information on benefits, child care and education. As part of the qualification process, they paid a mandatory visit to one of the *Denver Workforce Centers*, where they became acquainted with information on full or part-time jobs. *Work Options for Women (WOW)*, *Earthlinks* and the *Women's Bean Project* afforded additional job training opportunities. The *Platte Valley Computer Lab* offered free computer classes for Microsoft Package, as well as GED and ESL classes. Those without high school diplomas enrolled in General Equivalency Degree Programs at the *Department of Human Services*, *Emily Griffith Opportunity School*, *Community College of Denver*, the *Gathering Place* or another education provider. The *Educational Opportunity Center*, a federally funded program at the *Community College of Denver*, helped residents look at career options, select appropriate colleges or vocational schools and apply for financial aid. Those who were employed or received TANF benefits were encouraged to save money during their time at Sacred Heart House of Denver, so they would be financially positioned to reestablish their households.

Based on individual needs and availability, the case manager made appropriate housing referrals to

*Access Housing, Archdiocese of Denver Housing, Aurora Housing Corporation, Champa House, Chayah House, The Colburn, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Continental Divide, The Crossing, Decatur Place, Family Homestead, Family Tree's Families in Transition, Fr. Ed Judy House, House of Hope, Irving Street, Joshua Station, Joy House, Salvation Army Lambuth Center, New Beginnings, New Genesis, Ruth Goebel House, Providence House, Warren Village, Warren Village First Step, Stepping Stones, STRIDE, the Volunteers of America Young Mothers Program, Youth Transition Program and Transitional Living Program, among others. The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and Kirsten Strietzel from The Dolores Project helped families and single women, respectively, find housing through the federal government's Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.*

Public transportation was available with bus tokens from *Denver Department of Human Services* and those purchased by the agency at a discount from the *Regional Transportation District*. Throughout their residency at Sacred Heart House of Denver, frequent case management meetings provided women with guidance, encouragement and support and ensured their accountability. They also helped the women remain focused on their primary purpose of securing housing and addressing any peripheral problems that would hinder their stabilization process. Each woman was required to spend at least one session with a pro bono family therapist from the *Denver Family Institute*. Many welcomed the opportunity to meet again.

Residents of Sacred Heart House prepared themselves for independent living by attending weekly living skills workshops, which familiarized them with resources in the community. Representatives from *Community Housing Services, Inc.* presented information on housing, tenant's rights and understanding a lease. The *Conflict Center* gave mothers insights into their children's behavior and introduced them to effective parenting, as well as presenting information on anger and conflict management.

*Carol Goldstein* and students from *Regis University Nursing Program* facilitated health care workshops, which were complemented by presentations on nutrition by *Sara Powell* and *Michelle Szabo*, respectively. *Jim Walsh* and his class from *Regis University* raised awareness of social justice issues through dramatic presentations and dialogue. The *Sawaya Law Firm* introduced options for legal representation. Community volunteer *Kathy Clenin* presented workshops on domestic violence; *Sharon Breay* and *Kathryn Stitz* guided the women toward positive thinking and goal setting. *Bailey Blumenreich* taught stress management through yoga. *Mary Miranda* of *Community College of Denver's Career and Education Center* informed our residents of educational opportunities. *Work Options for Women* relayed information about useful vocational skills. *Amy Miller* worked with women to develop resumes and interviewing skills. Acquiring the knowledge to solve problems on their own built women's confidence. Former resident, *Carol Robinson-Jackson*, inspired and encouraged the women staying at Sacred Heart House of Denver by recounting her own experience with homelessness and her subsequent success.

*Stout Street Clinic* and the *Mental Health Corporation of Denver* supported the efforts of Sacred Heart House to promote residents' physical and mental health. In addition, *Stout Street Clinic, Denver Urban Ministries* and *Holy Ghost Church* helped residents obtain birth certificates and identification cards. *Lens Crafters* and the *Denver Rescue Mission* supplied their glasses. Financial help from *Friends of Man* helped residents and former residents through special crisis situations.

Sacred Heart House of Denver operated with two full-time and six part-time staff members. Executive Director Janet Morris and Assistant Director Garrett Singer have been with the agency for 20 years; Carrie Hansen joined our staff as our part-time program assistant in October 2009. For the fifth year, Sacred Heart House of Denver partnered with the *Colorado Vincentian Volunteers* to staff the in-house case manager position. Chelsea Clearman was our 2010/2011 CVV placement. In addition to increasing our cost-effectiveness (Sacred Heart House pays a stipend to CVV, while CVV provides the participant's housing and health insurance.), we see this partnership as a way to bring new energy and ideas to our residents and our staff each year.

This year, Sacred Heart House of Denver began a partnership with Denver University's Graduate School of Social Work. Allison Watson, a second year MSW intern, provided case management for the women in our Transitional Housing Program under the direction of the executive director and the assistant director. This partnership proved to be even more beneficial to the residents in the program than we had hoped. Sacred Heart House provided task supervision for our intern, while an MSW assigned our intern from Denver University provided additional guidance from a clinical perspective. We have known for a long time

that, even when our transitional housing residents were successful in their fields of study, their peripheral issues sometimes presented formidable barriers to their success. Through our partnership with DU this year, we gained the ability to guide women in the program to recognize and address these issues.

One part-time housekeeper, Dolores Tapia, who has been with Sacred Heart House of Denver for 15 years, a part-time Saturday house manager, and two part-time night managers complete the staff. Volunteer support by 745 members of the community throughout the year remained integral to the operation of Sacred Heart House of Denver. Volunteers provided services ranging from house management every evening and child care during living skills classes to evening meals and Sunday dinners.

### ***Lessons Learned***

Homelessness continues to be a major concern in Denver. An article by Wendy Koch in USA TODAY three years ago stated, "More families with children are becoming homeless as they face mounting economic pressures, including mortgage foreclosures, according to a USA TODAY survey of a dozen of the largest cities in the nation." Denver is among those cities, and the statement is as true now as it was when the article was written. According to the eleventh *Point-in-Time Study, 2011*, the most recent published report by The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative and the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, on January 24, 2011, there were at least 11,377 homeless persons counted in the Denver metro area. Of the surveyed homeless, 62% were individuals in families with children. Fifty-nine percent of the households were headed by single parents, mostly females. Twenty-four percent of single homeless adults were women.

Sacred Heart House of Denver has a proven track record of helping over 4,000 homeless families and single women strive for and maintain self-sufficiency over the past 30 years. Because of individual attention and support our residents receive and the extensive relationships the agency has developed within the service provider community, any homeless woman who is serious about working toward her self-sufficiency, will undoubtedly make significant progress while she stays at Sacred Heart House of Denver. While it is impossible for *any* agency to meet all the needs of every homeless mother with children and single woman, Sacred Heart House of Denver, with its staff and volunteers, was able to meet critical needs of its residents and provide them with as much information and support as possible to create a basis for future growth in self-sufficiency.

### ***Future Plans***

In October 2003, Denver's Mayor John Hickenlooper appointed members to the Denver Commission to End Homelessness with a mandate to create a plan to end homelessness in ten years. The Commission focused on eight core goals, realizing that "affordable housing and services to help people return to full participation in the community are fundamental." Sacred Heart House of Denver has worked toward these goals by providing emergency shelter beds, supportive services promoting long-term stability and improved functioning and transitional housing opportunities, as presented in the *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness*, now *Denver's Road Home*, even before the Plan was conceived and implemented. To increase its effectiveness in the service provider community and help Denver achieve its goals, Sacred Heart House of Denver is an active participant in the *Colorado Homeless Management Information Systems*.

Sacred Heart House of Denver plans to provide its continuum of services to homeless mothers with children and single women with the help of the foundations, individuals, social service, faith-based and business organizations that support its In-House Stabilization, Follow-Up and Transitional Housing Programs. Sacred Heart House of Denver submits applications to foundations, corporations and faith-based organizations each year. Cultivating new donors within these groups is always a priority.

Program activities/outcomes are shared with funders, service providers, volunteers and interested parties in an annual Year-End Report/Evaluation in the Colorado Common Grant Report format and in presentations/conversations based on the information in this Report.

## **II. FINANCIALS**

The fiscal year at Sacred Heart House of Denver extends from June 1<sup>st</sup> through May 31<sup>st</sup>. All expenditures were made in conjunction with the 2010/2011 Fiscal Budget approved by the Board of Directors in May 2010. Financial statements for Sacred Heart House of Denver are audited by Heider, Tanner and Dirks, Inc., annually.

