

A Story of Success (cont. from pg. 1)

was addictive.”

So Darrell ignored it. He moved back to Indianapolis, where he worked as an area manager for Cingular Wireless and continued to drink.

After slurring his words during a conference call with his manager, the manager drove directly to Darrell’s house. When he came inside, he saw the empty vodka bottles strewn across his home.

Darrell went to Fairbanks Hospital after that and soon lost his job at Cingular. He got a new job with Angie’s List, but resigned because he couldn’t control his alcoholism.

Darrell went through a series of recovery programs, jobs, and moves back and forth from Bloomington to Indianapolis. His relationships fell apart with his friends and family. After a fight with his sister,

Darrell became homeless.

Darrell was first drawn to Shalom because of the phones, which allowed him to call his family. But, he didn’t take advantage of Shalom’s other services right away.

After a fellow homeless person died from a drug overdose, Darrell reached out for help.

“Her death was my wakeup call,” he said. “I went to Forrest and told him, ‘I need to get out of here or I will die.’”

Darrell was set up with Amber Smallwood, Shalom’s rapid rehousing coordinator at the time, who began supporting him in his efforts to find a home. Amber and Darrell called landlords all across town, but it wasn’t until he reached out to his old landlord, Mark Hoffman of Pavilion Properties, that he found a home.

“I have a great history with Mark,” Darrell said. “He said he would rent to me because I kept trying. He told me, ‘More people in this town want to help you than you realize. People care about you and we are rooting for you to survive.’”

Darrell moved into his apartment in 2014, becoming the first person housed through Shalom’s rapid rehousing program. He continues to maintain his home and his recovery, but he said the best result of the program is that it taught him to love himself.

He says, “Shalom is a source of strength. When I feel like I’m about to lose my mind, I go there. They gave me the courage to continue. If I messed up, they never, ever judged. It saved my life.”

Written by Press Corps Intern Jordan Canary and SPEA fellow Jeremy Ward

Shalom—For All Who Seek Home

Our Mission

The Shalom Community Center is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to aiding and empowering people experiencing homelessness and poverty. As a daytime resource center for people who are living in poverty and experiencing its ultimate expressions, Shalom provides hunger relief, life essentials, case management, street outreach, housing support, including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing, employment assistance, and community access for many government and social service agencies.

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On the Front Lines of Hunger and Homelessness

DIGNITY

The Newsletter of Shalom Community Center

September 2015

A Story of Success—Darrell Leslie

Darrell Leslie had always been fascinated by movies and psychology. He appeared as an extra in the film “A League of Their Own” while it was filmed in his hometown of Newburg, Indiana. This interest in movies followed him beyond his college years at Ball State University, where he studied psychology and graduated *cum laude* in 1995.

After one year of graduate school, Darrell moved to Los Angeles. He lived and worked there for 9 months with five other roommates, in an apartment where he could see the

Hollywood sign and Santa Monica mountain range.

While on his way home after a night at the bars with friends, Darrell was attacked by a man who attempted to mug him. The incident triggered the beginnings of a long battle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It also triggered his alcoholism.

“I began drinking pretty heavily after that,” Darrell said. “When I was in college, I counseled prisoners for a year at an internship, and I never understood how some prisoners, like



the ones who get 5 DUIs a year, could become addicted. I didn’t understand that alcohol

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Housing First

In the summer of 2011, Frank Crawford died. He passed away homeless and alone behind a dumpster out back of an abandoned Ponderosa. He had been released a few weeks earlier from a nursing home, declared too healthy to stay.

Frank was disabled, chronically ill, and suffering from late stage alcoholism. He had been in and out of nursing homes for several years. On the streets, he would decline to the

edge of death and then get nursed back to health - only to be released to the streets once again.

Every time Frank came back to the Shalom Center, we all sighed with despair, astonished that anyone thought Frank could care for himself. We knew soon enough he would be in a nursing home again... if he was lucky.

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Rev. Forrest Gilmore
Executive Director

Staff Profile—Ron Kerner

After working over 10 years at the Shalom Community Center, it is safe to say that Shalom is a place Ron Kerner has come to love. Ron says it is the joy he receives from helping others that keeps him going.

As Director of Hunger Relief, Ron is responsible for the acquiring of all food, assessing the inventory, and then planning the next week's menu.

“The question I regularly must ask myself is, ‘Given what we have, what meals can we make? Do we have enough from this item to make it into a meal?’”

Given that Shalom serves over 6,000 meals per month, being creative with meals can be quite the challenge, which Ron greatly enjoys.

In addition to managing food donations, planning, and cooking, Ron also supervises volunteers and trains new volunteers every day.

Ron has stated that, “We could not do what we do and serve as many people as we do, without the help of our volunteers who are integral to our operations.”

Ron's theory on hunger relief is simple: “The people we serve deserve good meals; fresh and from scratch and we aim to provide that at all costs.” Ron explained that someone might already be going through any number of hardships which may cause them to be tired and



Ron Kerner
Director of Hunger Relief

stressed. However, a hot meal, made by Ron and the volunteers with care, love, and great ingredients might give them the energy to persevere through their circumstances.

Our Director of Hunger Relief also has a pretty active personal life. In his spare time, Ron can be found gardening, spending time outdoors, practicing calligraphy, and he also prides himself on being a “mushroom photographer” and an amateur mycologist (someone who studies mushrooms). If you visit his website: indianamushrooms.com you will find over 300 different mushrooms from Monroe and surrounding counties, including his favorite, the morel.

There is no doubt that Ron is a vital asset to the staff at Shalom Community Center and we are privileged to have a servant like him on our team.

*Written by Allison Bailey,
SPEA Fellow*

Homeless Discrimination Now Banned

Bloomington has become the first city in Indiana to prohibit discrimination against people because of their “housing status,” which includes current or past experiences of homelessness and where a person lives or has lived.

The City Council voted 9-0 to amend the human rights ordinance, which protects people in Bloomington from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

The ordinance change emerged out of several very public instances of discrimination, including derogatory graffiti and a major employer that fired an employee when it learned that the employee had used several homeless shelters and social service agencies, including Shalom, in the past.

Great gratitude goes to Shalom supporters Trevor Richardson, Ross Martinie-Eiler, Michael Gastineau, and Executive Director Forrest Gilmore, the Bloomington Human Rights Commission, including chair Byron Bangert and Director of Human Rights Barbara McKinney, the entire City Council and their staff, including Dorothy Granger who was the initial sponsor, and the many others who advocated for the change in various ways.

Housing First (cont. from pg. 1)

Unfortunately, this last time, Frank wasn't so lucky and he passed away.

His death sparked a collaborative effort in Bloomington to prevent this from ever happening again, which led to the Crawford Homes program.

You may have read about communities across the country and how they are ending homelessness – Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Houston, and others.

They are doing so using a simple practice – Housing First. By providing housing without conditions (plus voluntary wrap-around services) for people who are both disabled and experiencing long-term homelessness, these communities not only reduced homelessness but dramatically improved the lives of the new residents.

The Crawford Homes program has shown similar results, providing homes for over 60 long-term homeless adults and children.

Through the first year:

Crawford Homes had a 92% housing retention rate (55 of the 60 people maintained their homes).

Residents had an 88% reduction in incarcerations, dropping from 141 in the year prior to 17 in the first year.

Residents' use of the emergency room dropped 65% as compared to the year prior.

But, even more importantly were the intangible results.

Resident Jeremy Blackwell described his new life: “I'm sober, I'm not in jail, and I've noticed the stronger presence of God in my life.”

Resident Woody Wilson described his new outlook: “I believe there's a future. There's hope. Before I knew there wasn't a future. Now I can get things straightened out.”

Resident Deborah Flowers talked about the improvements from her former life: “I'm not sleeping in the rain, not lying on the ground with the bugs and snakes and skunks and wild animals and everything else we ran into out there. It's a safe place... It's a great place to be.”

Resident Durrell Patton said, “When I was homeless, my responsibility was one thing – finding me a warm spot to sleep. Right now, my sole responsibility is to seek gainful employment.”

There is still much more to do. Many chronically homeless people still sleep on the streets of Bloomington... and some are still dying. We've found a method that works – investment in Housing First. If we have the will, we, too, can end chronic homelessness in our beloved city.

Written by Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director

Can't Miss Events

Public Art Dedication
Wed., Oct. 7, 5:15 pm
Shalom Community Center

A Home For All
Shalom's 2020 Vision to Reduce Homelessness in Bloomington, Year 2
Thurs, Nov. 5, 5-7 pm
Fountain Square Mall

Sylvia McNair & Friend's Sing for Shalom
Sun, Dec 6, 2pm
First United Methodist Church

Check out our Facebook page and website for more details as the events get closer.

Ten Gifts You Can Give to Support Our Guests

10. Socks
9. Razors
8. Tampons
7. Diapers
6. Coffee
5. Shampoo
4. Boots and Sneakers
3. Backpacks
2. Deodorant
1. Winter Wear (Coats, Hats & Gloves)