I'd probably be dead right now. The way I used to be, I never thought I’d live past 30.”
- Bobby Ray

Dear friend,

Perhaps more than any other time of year, the holidays remind us to live the aphorism of “peace on earth, good will to all.” We extend ourselves in tenderness and care, remembering that the light still burns and that every child is a holy child.

During the holidays, we are especially drawn to home. The old song croons, “I’ll be home for Christmas. You can plan on me.”

Yet, this year, in Bloomington, over 340 souls will have no place to call home for the holidays: children, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, neighbors. They have names: Shawn, Candace, Isaac, Deidre, Randy, Bethany. Sadly, such homelessness is not just a reality at the holidays but every day of the year.

Please make a donation, to help people who need YOU right now, by filling out the enclosed supporter card. Together, we be can a light in the darkness for those in their time of need.

Bobby (pictured above) used to be one of those homeless souls at the holidays. He first became homeless around 9/11, nearly two decades ago. As a child, he was physically and emotional abused. He was molested at the age of six by his stepfather. Rather than receiving the tender care that every child deserves, he found violence, trauma, and betrayal, the early death of innocence.

Today, he struggles with a host of physical challenges, including a slipped disk in his back, severe arthritis, and traumatic brain injury. He also struggles with late stage alcoholism and other mental health challenges, including the trauma from his upbringing.

But a bit over a year ago, he came to Shalom and got news that he later said “actually saved my life.” He was getting an apartment in Crawford II, our Housing First program for people with disabilities who experienced long-term homelessness.

While Bobby still struggles, he’s a different man than a year ago. With the “safe haven” of a home, he feels like he’s now able to give back. He says, “Well, I’ve had a rough life, and I’m pretty tough, but I completely changed my life around... to helping everybody I can.”
With a smirk, he says, “I turned out of be one hell of a guy!”

Shalom Community Center is the most comprehensive, solutions-based approach to addressing homelessness in Bloomington. But we only can do what we do because of YOU.

Because of supporters like you:

- Our Housing First/Crawford Homes program ended more than 500 years of collective homelessness for people with disabilities experiencing long-term homelessness, providing a warm home and a helping hand to 105 adults and children, including Bobby.

- Last year, Shalom helped find homes for 201 formerly homeless people through our Rapid Re-Housing program, including 149 people in families (88 children), providing more homes for homeless families that any other homeless services provider in Monroe County.

- Our day shelter serves 6,000 meals every month and our caseworkers provided 8,267 counseling sessions to people experiencing extreme poverty last year, 60% of whom were women and children.

- A Friend’s Place, our overnight shelter, provided a safe and sober place to sleep for 202 people over 13,310 nights and moved 67% of our guests into permanent homes (the state average is 30%).

- In total, Shalom housed or prevented homelessness for 884 people in 2017.

No other homeless organization in our community has that kind of impact! And that’s what you get when you give to Shalom.

We are a local organization, tackling a local problem, for our neighbors and by our neighbors. We pay a living wage to all our employees, are audited every year to ensure our financial integrity, and spend 88 cents of every dollar you donate on direct services to the impoverished of our community, which is considered exceptional by charity watchdogs.

Please make a donation right now to help us continue to do this amazing work and more!! You can fill out the enclosed support card right now, because when you give to Shalom, you are guaranteed to make a difference.

Blessings of the season to you,

[Signature]

Rev. Forrest Gilmore,
Executive Director

P.S. What greater holiday gift could you give than food for those who are hungry and shelter for those without a home!?! Please write a check right now to make a difference in the lives of people like Bobby who would be lost without you.