



Annual Report

July 2012 - June 2013

Who We Are

Since 1980, the Beacon of Life has been a safe and supportive environment for homeless women. In the last 33 years, we have helped over 5,500 women become productive, self-sufficient members of the community. Our setting provides anonymity and a sense of community allowing our residents to overcome addictions and personal struggles, while providing a full pantry and kitchen, laundry facilities, activity room and around the clock staff. We accept women from all different avenues. However the majority of our residents are re-entering society from incarceration, fleeing domestic violence, struggling with substance abuse concerns, or are in danger of becoming homeless. Our programming consists of different components such as; Financial Literacy and budgeting, Employment Readiness, Women's Health, Victim Impact, Healthy Relationships, Parenting, Empowerment and in-house weekly 12-step meetings.

Beacon of Life's Mission:
**To create an Environment that Empowers Women in Crisis
to Achieve Positive Long Term Change**

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Beacon of Life Staff

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Linda Pallwitz, *Volunteer Coordinator*
Pat Prunella, *Resident Assistant*
Levette Johnson, *Resident Assistant*
Anita Brown, *Resident Assistant*
Jacki Franklin, *Resident Assistant*

Words from 2012-2013 President, Greg Patterson



This past year, has been a fulfilling and successful 12 months at the Beacon of Life. We improved our stability during a time of great uncertainty in the non-profit world as funding continues to get ever tighter. While I am very excited about the number and quality of our new board members we added in the past year, we could not have done it without the outstanding leadership we have from our Executive Director and her dedicated staff, who very truly go above and beyond the call of their duties. Without them, there would be no Beacon and that would be a travesty.

As I leave the Presidency, I look forward working with our new President and our fellow board members to help us continue to meet the challenges facing our residents and the employees that so competently serve them.

...and just as important, I would like to thank our donors, as none of the great work performed at the Beacon would be possible without your generosity. Thank you! I look forward to continuing our work with you, as we use the considerable power of your philanthropy – in both traditional and new ways – to serve this community.

Executive Director, Keshia Meissner



We are so excited about all of the positive things happening at the Beacon of Life. This past year has been an exciting time filled with rebranding, developing new client programs and strengthening our mission.

As I celebrate two years at the Beacon I feel honored to be the leader of such an amazing organization. It's truly wonderful to work closely with such dedicated staff, board members, volunteers, and generous donors who all believe strongly in our mission. With everyone's combined passion, talent, and contributions we are growing stronger and more dynamic.

The Beacon staff and I are looking forward to another year of changing lives and empowering women! A special thank you to all the volunteers, board members, and donor that help keep us going year after year!

The Year in Review

This past year the Beacon of Life provided services to 127 women with our on-site intensive case management, rehabilitation programming and expanded community collaborations. Through a combination of programming, structure, accountability, support, and broad rehabilitation services the Beacon has been able to empower residents to make significant changes in their lives.

The Beacon's program takes a minimum of four months to complete but the residents may stay up to two years. The average length of stay is eight to twelve months. This time period is necessary to break the cycle of addiction, violence and homelessness. Our clients learn the skills necessary to become self-sufficient and build positive relationships. This year, 55% of our program participants increased their income and 54% of those who left our program transitioned into permanent housing.

The Beacon of Life has many components that work together to ensure the women leave with the confidence they need in order to be self-sufficient.

Counseling

Almost half of all women entering our program, 46%, reported having both drug and alcohol addiction. Through our partnership with House of Mercy, each woman received a free substance abuse evaluation and were referred to the appropriate treatment services within the community.

During 2013 we established collaboration with Mosaic Family Therapy to provide our clients with free mental health assessments, counseling and groups. This collaboration was started in October of 2013, and in the last three months of that year, eight individuals received services. Of the 104 women that entered our program, 56% reported a mental health diagnosis. Underlying trauma is often one of the causes of criminal behavior and substance abuse. Domestic violence was reported by 82% of participants entering our program. By providing this partnership we are guaranteeing our clients have access to the resources they need.

Employment Support

Out of the residents that transitioned from the Beacon, 53% maintained or improved their monthly cash income. The Beacon supports residents through the employment search process and assists with providing transportation to interviews. The case manager assists the residents by aiding in securing proper identification needed to apply for positions, referring them to Iowa Workforce Development for job seeking and resume classes and consistently providing job leads.

Found Treasures – Resale Boutique

In September of 2010 we successfully opened a resale boutique, Found Treasures, to promote the Beacon of Life's self-sufficiency and to help decrease our reliance on grants and donations. The store provides on-site retail training for our residents as well as being a resource for interview clothing. The store currently has over forty volunteers that help organize, provide customer service, and provide training to Beacon residents.

Medical Care

Planned Parenthood provides an initial complete medical screening to all residents. This past year 53 women received this free service. If further care is needed, the case manager will assist the residents in filing for insurance and applying for discounted services.

Classes and Programming

Empowerment

During the resident's first month at the Beacon they are required to take a one-time class that covers important topics such as independence, self-sufficiency and confidence. This class is vital in reminding the women of their ability to stay sober, strong and self-sufficient.

Alcoholics Anonymous and Winner's Circle

Alcoholics Anonymous meets twice a week on site, while Winner's Circle meets once a week on site. These classes are also open to women from the community.

Financial Literacy

The Financial Empowerment Program consists of three components: A four week Financial Literacy class, weekly individual budget coaching sessions and a collaboration with Freedom Financial bank for our resident's savings program.

During the four week Financial Literacy class, multiple topics are covered including learning to balance personal finances, credit repair and understanding credit scores, different account and savings options, differences between banks and credit unions and cautionary money practices including identity theft.

Weekly individual budget coaching sessions begin upon their arrival and continue through the duration of their stay. Each client participates in a personalized program which includes savings, debt reduction and personal goals. Freedom Financial Bank works with our clients in opening and managing a savings account despite credit history.

Healthy Relationships

This weekly class was developed to teach new skills to help vulnerable women at the Beacon with not only male-female relationships, but with family, employment and landlord relationships. This twelve week course helps to improve relationships within the Beacon as well.

Victim Impact

This class began in the spring of 2009, is also twelve weeks and provides insight to the victim's reactions and responses to the trauma of crime. The impact that crime has on families and friends is also discussed in detail.

Beacon of Life is so grateful to the individuals, businesses and foundations listed on the following pages for their contributions between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013. These charitable gifts support our work with homeless women in the Greater Des Moines area. Every effort has been made for complete accuracy. Please contact us for any corrections.

THANK YOU for your support in and generosity!

THANK YOU!

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