



4-24-2014

Yes, Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S.

Christopher R. Fee
Gettysburg College

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Fee, Christopher. "Yes, Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S." *Gettysburg Times* (April 24, 2014).

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Abstract

Founded in the autumn of 2012, Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S. is a collaborative effort by local churches and citizens to provide emergency shelter to those without housing of any kind during the winter months. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

homelessness, homeless shelter, emergency shelter, volunteers

Disciplines

Social Work

Comments

This piece appeared in the *Gettysburg Times* on April 24, 2014 (A8).

Yes, Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S.

Founded in the autumn of 2012, Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S. is a collaborative effort by local churches and citizens to provide emergency shelter to those without housing of any kind during the winter months.

If you looked out the window this winter or glanced at your fuel bills, I'm sure that you won't be surprised that this year the need for the program expanded alarmingly, in terms of the number of guests, the economic need, and the almost unbelievably harsh environmental conditions. The good news is that C.A.R.E.S. rose to the occasion, operating at its capacity of 30 guests almost every night, while the weather, of course, worsened steadily: It was nothing short of a brutal winter; when one considers the alternatives available to our neediest neighbors on a frigid, arctic night, one shudders. Hundreds of our Adams County neighbors worked together to give from their hearts to keep these good people warm, safe and dry! These simple acts of hospitality spread love and hope where they were needed most, and everyone involved should be commended.

This year C.A.R.E.S. served 56 people — of whom 11 were children — in nine different family groups over the course of the winter. Well over half of the adults in the program were employed, retired, or disabled. The total impact was staggering, especially considering the size of our community: The total number of overnight stays for those 56 individuals

HOMES FOR EVERYONE

Chris Fee



over the course of the winter added up to 2633 guest nights. Put in those terms, it is easy to see that our tight-knit community worked together to fulfill a very great need with compassion and dignity.

Likewise, through volunteer efforts the C.A.R.E.S. Resource Center provided day services (laundry, showers, job-search services, etc., as well as a warm, clean, welcoming place to be) for a total of 2,381 unduplicated visits. Dedicated volunteers allowed C.A.R.E.S. to show real hospitality and care to those who need (and appreciate!) it most.

The number of people committed to this program — and the fervor of that commitment — is truly inspiring: This year the C.A.R.E.S. program engaged 11 local churches and some 280 volunteers, who filled a total of 940 slots from November 2013 through March 2014; 129 volunteers acted as church hosts and truck drivers, while 113 folks took it in turns to fill

560 slots to spend the night at the shelter with the guests; 27 volunteers and the St. James Confirmation Classes worked as breakfast volunteers, while eleven more helped to staff the Resource Center. Gettysburg College provided the truck and drivers needed to move the mattresses and equipment every other week.

The unfailing good cheer and infectious positive attitude of everyone involved are emblematic of Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S. as a whole: Time and again, when it seemed that the shelter might not open because of lack of staff, a good-natured volunteer would step into the breach and keep the lights on for another night. In short, Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S. represents perfectly Adams County's indomitably cheerful and hospitable spirit and gracious community-mindedness. This project represents the best in all of us: It reflects traditional Adams County neighborly values.

Unfortunately, this great need is not likely to disappear overnight; please join Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S. in this effort: Let's continue to work together to help our neighbors in need to strive for a self-sufficient future.

Chris Fee, a Professor of English at Gettysburg College, is a member of the boards of Pennsylvania Interfaith Community Programs and of the Upper Adams School District, and belongs to the Menallen Quaker Meeting.