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Sharing our Blessings with Those in Need

Christopher R. Fee
Gettysburg College

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Sharing our Blessings with Those in Need

Abstract

Each year, National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week asks us to think about our most challenged neighbors during the days before Thanksgiving. As we consider our own reasons to be thankful, let us ask ourselves how we may share our blessings with those around us in need of food and shelter. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

national hunger and homeless awareness week, gettysburg combined area resources for emergency shelter, C.A.R.E.S., homelessness

Disciplines

Social Welfare | Social Work

Sharing our blessings with those in need

Each year, National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week asks us to think about our most challenged neighbors during the days before Thanksgiving. As we consider our own reasons to be thankful, let us ask ourselves how we may share our blessings with those around us in need of food and shelter.

Founded in 2012, Gettysburg Combined Area Resources for Emergency Shelter (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. Guests at C.A.R.E.S. include a range from infants to folks of retirement age, schoolkids to veterans. At this writing, C.A.R.E.S. is at its capacity of 30, including four families with eight children under 12; eight adults are working, seven actively are seeking employment, two are retired, and three are disabled; 21 are natives of Adams County.

Since 2012, students in my Gettysburg College course on homelessness have volunteered for at least 20 hours per term in our local community, and have spent at least one night at C.A.R.E.S. I ask you to consider doing the same.

The voices of these students are compelling:

Julia emphasizes how economic factors, most especially the high cost of

C.A.R.E.S.

***Christopher
Fee***



housing, are prime causes of homelessness in America today. Of volunteering at C.A.R.E.S., Julia notes that, "many times it is just the lack of housing that is the issue. Many of the guests were very inviting and open towards me, reinforcing the idea that they are just like normal people."

Gemma, writing about distributing clothes, notes that many folks she has met on the street "give me so much hope and inspiration because so many of them remained positive, appreciative, and with a bright smile on their faces even though they are currently faced with one of the toughest times of their lives."

According to Francesca, the words of a homeless woman "really left me with something to think about. We see someone homeless on the street, and instead of talking to them, smiling at them, making eye contact with them, we ignore them."

Finally, Alex, who works at our local soup kitchen every week, noted recently: "It was striking that there were still so many locals who I had not seen until today that needed to resort to the soup kitchen. Ghastly." Ghastly indeed, but imagine how much more horrific it would be if there were no local community kitchen to feed the hungry, and no C.A.R.E.S. to offer shelter to the homeless.

One needn't be a college student to get in on the action, nor need one sleep in a shelter: Emma, a junior at Biglerville High School, helps move the mattresses from church to church every other week. Someone else needs to launder the blankets, and C.A.R.E.S. also needs folks to cook breakfast in the morning. We all can do our bit to keep our most vulnerable neighbors sheltered from the elements.

Unfortunately, this need will not disappear overnight, so let's all take a cue from these admirable young people: please join Gettysburg C.A.R.E.S. in its effort. Let's continue to work together to help our neighbors in need to strive for a self-sufficient future.

Christopher Fee is a board member for C.A.R.E.S., professor and chair of English, Gettysburg College; and clerk at Menallen Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).