

“Ending Homelessness in the Fox Valley”

COTS, Inc.

Newsletter – December 2010
A PLACE TO CALL HOME

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Foundation, Inc.

Thanks to a Challenge Grant Matching Opportunity from J. J. Keller for \$25,000, COTS opened a Single Mothers with Small Children program November 1, 2010. The community responded to the challenge and two families now have **a place to call home** for the holidays! Thank you to J. J. Keller Foundation & to our responding community!

A Word from the Director...

When I came to COTS in April of this year, I had no idea what to expect from this decision to leave corporate America in order to pursue a desire to make a meaningful difference in my community.

As I said, I had no idea what to expect.....

In my short tenure as director, I have learned that we live in one of the most caring, supportive communities in America. We take for granted such things as a wardrobe that changes with the seasons, a refrigerator stocked with too many options and a place to call home. ***A place to call home.*** That is what we provide at COTS. Simple in definition, but the difference between life on the streets, in jail, or crashing on someone's couch versus life with routine and the secure knowledge that tomorrow morning you will wake up in your own bed.

Ultimately, we provide the ways and means to traverse the long road from homelessness to permanent independent housing. This means securing stable employment, building a workable budget and accessing affordable healthcare. It means addressing issues and overcoming past circumstances. Whatever it takes, the staff at COTS is dedicated to assisting individuals from homelessness to independent permanent housing. One individual at a time.

Our new follow up program, offers former residents the security that support is never far away to address issues head on, when they feel themselves starting to slide back into old habits. At present, our success rate for transitioned individuals stands at over 60%. Individuals who are also making a difference and rebuilding family ties.

Additionally we opened a new program for single mothers with small children.

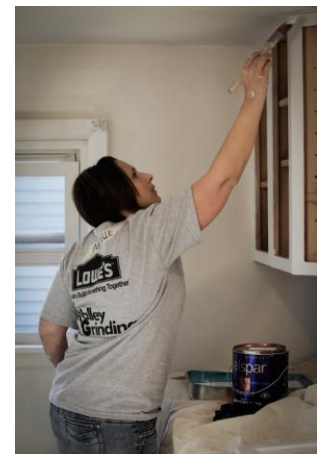
Together we are making a meaningful impact in the lives of others and throughout the community.

Thank you for your continued support,

Cindy Sahotsky



Single Mothers with Small Children... made possible with many willing hands!

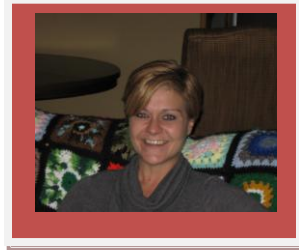


See page 3 for the complete story and more photos.

Making A Difference

LIISA BUSH, FORMER COTS RESIDENT

After completing treatment at Casa Clare, I knew I had to leave the program, but I had no idea where I was going to live. My counselor suggested COTS, which to me felt like I was taking a step backwards. Homelessness! Me? This negative reaction lasted until I met with my case manager for the first time. Trisha Timmerman is the case manager at the COTS women's facility. Immediately upon meeting with her, she put me at ease. I suddenly knew everything was going to be all right. I felt safe at COTS and I knew if I had any doubts or troubles or if I just needed someone to talk to I could always count on staff to help me figure things out or to just listen to me. The same still holds true today. I think that the staff at COTS are some of the most amazing people I have met. To me, COTS means a positive change in a time of crisis.



JAY KILSDONK, FORMER COTS RESIDENT

"If someone had told me 10 years ago that one day I would find myself homeless, I would have laughed in their face".

When extended unemployment led to a loss of home, I found myself at the doors of the Emergency Shelter. This humbling moment began the journey to personal change. In March 2007, a referral to COTS for program services launched me into positive change. Over the course of the next two years I found gainful employment, adopted the ideas of sound budgeting, most notably identifying purchase considerations – *is it a want or a need* – and making sound financial choices based on this simple question. "I have learned that to be truly free, I must have goals, plans and the ability to make good choices. "Now, having reached the ultimate goal of permanent independent living, I recall with gratitude the reshaping of my life that COTS staff helped me to achieve "Thanks to COTS, I now have my own place to call home!"

To read the complete testimonies of Liisa and Jay visit our website at www.appletoncots.org

Volunteers of the Year 2010 Meal Ministry

As the story goes, Honorary Board Member, Don Stoegbauer, came up with the idea of the "Meal Ministry" when brainstorming ways to feed the homeless. He approached local churches to talk to congregations during mass about this program. On many of his appeal visits he was accompanied by Tom Janssen who participated in the appeals.

Don encouraged people to sign up to make a "one dish meal" a catchy phrase that sums up the need without sounding too difficult to accomplish. Over the years, folks have been very creative and generous with their approach to the "one dish meal" While the importance of feeding hungry individuals a home cooked meal cannot be understated; the truth is that the real sustainment comes in the cooking. Many of the Meal Ministry participants attest to the truth that cooking the meal and delivering it to COTS is an act of grace that fortifies the spirit.

As our resident numbers at COTS continued to increase, the task of finding a daily cook became too much for one man. As Lynn tells it; "When it got to be a lot for Don to do on his own, he sent out a letter to all the cooks for help in calling and arranging meals to be delivered. Jean O'Brien and I contacted Don saying we would help. We worked together and eventually each took a shelter and recruited people to help us with the calling."

Lynn and Jean have managed to keep the program active for over ten years ensuring a home-cooked meal three times a week at each shelter. They have individuals who assist in coordinating meals; the true responsibility for "feeding the homeless" while shared by many is the coordinated effort of our two recipients of the "Volunteer Recognition" for 2010: Lynn & Jean.

Thank you to all of our Meal Ministers!

If you are a former meal minister and would like to help, please call us to update your information so that you can once more be a part of this powerful ministry!

To become a part of our Meal Ministry Program please call us at 920-734-3609 ext 404 or email us at info@appletoncots.org



Lynn Van Zeeland accepting her Volunteer Recognition award



Jean O'Brien accepting her Volunteer Recognition award

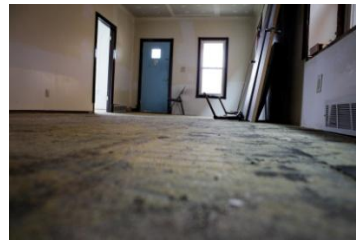
**IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO BEGIN...
A NEW PROGRAM FOR
SINGLE MOTHERS WITH SMALL CHILDREN**

What seemed a distant vision, a need to fill, is now a reality. The board and staff of COTS determined there was a gap in services to single mother families. This, the fastest growing segment of our population to face poverty and the uncertainty of homelessness, was without a bridge to cross over to independent permanent housing. Thanks to the responding efforts of Rebuilding Together Fox Valley financial support of Lowe's, the employees of CoCa Cola Bottling Company of Wrightstown following the direction and supervision of Travis Thyssen, and the men and women residing at COTS we are now actively addressing this gap...

On a brisk October Saturday the work began, when this group of individuals came together for one common cause: unite single mothers with their children and give them *a place to call home* before the holidays.

Working tirelessly to see the work to completion, many returned to finalize what was not completed on that busy Saturday over several more weeks.

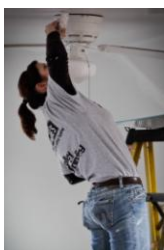
Then it was the COTS' residents turn to step up to the plate of giving. Together, the men and women residents worked to provide the final changes – painting, a good thorough clean up and placement of donated furniture, all necessary work to make *a place to call home*.



These before and after shots of the gathering area show just how much work went into this effort.



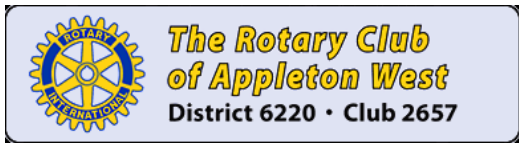
Awaiting their marching orders, the crew stands by to begin renovations!



Photos courtesy of Image Studios photographer Shane Van Bostel



P. O. Box 1645,
Appleton, WI 54912



The Rotary Club of Appleton West has provided terrific support over the years to COTS. Recently, the rotary members have started sponsoring meals with our residents. These shared mealtimes have become more than just a chance to enjoy culinary delights (usually prepared under the direction of Shawn Kennedy). The sharing of a common meal has opened dialogues in ways that make these casual conversations powerful in content. This wonderful group of community-minded individuals is a true gift to COTS staff and residents. Thank you club members for your ongoing support!

2009 Achievements	
People Housed	129
Days of Service	13,980
Meals Provided	41,940
Developed 2010 Strategic Plan	

COTS, Inc. Staff

Cindy Sahotsky, Executive Director



Trisha Timmerman, Program Manager



Mark Malcore, Case Manager



Liz Luciano, Case Manager



Nancy Grube, Office Manager



Laura Erickson, Development Office



The staff of COTS, Inc. is here to answer your questions. We believe our community to be a vital link in our mission *Ending Homelessness in the Fox Valley* Contact us for a tour or to learn more about our programs.