

# THE BEACON

JUNE 2011

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## Fighting Hunger, One Day At a Time



Bethesda House Feeds the Hungry

Have you ever gone hungry for a day? Two days? A week? Bethesda House, which feeds the hungry and homeless every day, will observe Hunger Awareness Day **June 6** with several different events. “Every person in every community should be aware there’s a huge population that goes hungry, from infants to the elderly, every day, not just on Hunger Awareness Day,” said Kimarie Sheppard, Interim Executive Director at Bethesda House, an interfaith ministry to the homeless, disabled and economically disadvantaged citizens of Schenectady County. Sheppard said 100 to 150 meals are served every day to the county’s homeless and working poor. Congressman Paul Tonko, who has served on Bethesda House’s advisory board, will speak at the June 6 event and Assemblyman James Tedesco, Acting Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy and Mayoral candidate Roger Hull are expected to attend. Three members of Bethesda House Board of Directors will be honored for 30 years of combined service. Nutritionists from Cornell Cooperative Extension will hold a forum on Healthy Meal Planning. A daily meal with residents will be served at 2 p.m. All are welcome.

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## Garden of Goodness - Rotary Digs In

Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme are just a few herbs that will be planted at the “Rotary Garden of Goodness” at Bethesda House. The Schenectady Rotary Club donated \$300 for the garden behind Bethesda House. Butch Fogg, Director of Property

and Facility, and his crew prepared the ground in late May. Residents from Bethesda House and The Lighthouse will maintain the garden and herbs and vegetables that are grown will be used in the kitchen at Bethesda House. The

Womens’ Group will pitch in and help with the garden and flowers. Of course, anyone with a green thumb, or who enjoys the outdoors, is invited to dig in. Special thanks to the Schenectady Rotary for its donation.

### ◆ CALENDAR

◆ **June 3 Recognition Brunch Volunteers**

◆ **June 6 National Hunger Awareness Day**

◆ **Oct. 13 Mystery Fundraiser**

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Spring Blooms at Bethesda



## After Decade of Service, Board Members Step Down

*“There needs to be a wider bank of people willing to contribute to Bethesda House.”*

*Elaine Ognibene  
Board Member*

Three, long-time board members, with 30 years combined service, are stepping down. Board president **Richard Werner**, an engineer and businessman, saw an article in the Daily Gazette in 1999 about Bethesda House and got involved. Werner believed he could have a positive impact and said that during his tenure there have been ups and downs, but it's been most satisfying to move into the “new” Bethesda House and see improvements in staff effectiveness. “This goes along with housing 26 chronically homeless people and providing multiple services for up to 250 people a day in the

Hospitality Center,” said Werner. “We need to rely more heavily on our local community for support,” he said. “In the future, we will be soliciting contributions from corporate organizations and individuals to help us through this difficult period and preserve gains we have made.”

**Dr. Robert Michaels** said the mission to serve needy and vulnerable people has expanded dramatically in his tenure. Bethesda House is important to those it serves and the number is increasing. “We have overcome formidable obstacles, but more must be done and soon. Protecting our record of success into the future will require us to increase dramatically our efficiency in delivery services. It will require dedication and ingenuity.”

**Dr. Elaine R. Ognibene**, a retired Siena English professor, got involved on the board when she brought students from Siena College to Bethesda House to volunteer. The experience shattered many biases they had about homeless people. Most people don't know about services Bethesda House offers like daily meals and showers. She's seen drug and alcohol-addicted individuals give up negative behaviors, learn to respect themselves and earn an income. Clients learn responsibility, learn how to help others and develop a different concept of family. “Outcomes are unbelievable,” she said.

“All three believed in the mission and vision of the agency and in their unique ways supported Bethesda House,” said Interim Executive Director Kimarie Sheppard. “Bethesda House is grateful to them for steering the agency through the last decade.”

### STAFF

**Kimarie Sheppard, Interim Executive Director**

**Danny Payne, Program Director**

**Anne McGhee, Director of Residential Life**

**Louise O'Leary, Director of Case Management**

**Butch Fogg, Director of Property & Facility**

### The View from Here: Butch Fogg

When spring finally came, Butch Fogg, Director of Property and Facility, was busy with the second phase of landscaping at Bethesda House. It's just like any home: you have to do some spring cleaning. “It's important to

be a good neighbor,” he said. This spring he has mulched, extended the fence area near the entrance to Bethesda House, enclosed the corner and put in raised flower beds. Fogg is responsible for working with contractors and overseeing mainte-

nance at each of Bethesda House facilities. Every day is different and he's never sure what will arise. His work is more than a job. “You get pulled in emotionally and physically. No one says ‘that's not my job’. We all interact on everything. This is a mission at Bethesda House.”

## Case Management Corner with Louise O'Leary

It's an amazing time at Bethesda House in regards to the Case Management staff and programs. Bethesda House offers Case Management for housing, prevention of evictions, rapid re-housing for homeless individuals and management of monthly checks from Social Security Administration for disabled individuals. It provides emergency assistance to those in need of food, clothing and other services that need a professional referral. The Rep-Payee Program has 74 people enrolled and it

helps prevent people who have been identified by a doctor or the SSA to need someone to manage their funds. The Case Manager develops a budget with this individual, and ensures monthly bills are paid, and allows for some spending money for personal expenses. The Homeless Prevention Program expands every day and in the last quarter assisted 61 individuals find homes. The Case Manager assigned to this program works with landlords to ensure the homeless can find

affordable housing. We are developing a database that will allow others working at Bethesda House the opportunity to help their clients obtain housing. The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program provides quick funds to people facing eviction. To date, it has assisted more than 100 people remain housed or find safe housing and no longer live on the streets. It will remain funded until the end of the year. Case management works as a team and care is not provided in a vacuum.

### Hospitality Center Services

A Safe Haven  
Daily meal  
Showers.Laundry  
Mailboxes  
Storage lockers  
Phone.Fax. Copier  
Message center  
Clothing. Food Pantry  
Hygiene Kits

## Payne's Prism: We Need Volunteers

He unlocks the door in the morning and from that point on Program Director Danny Payne is off and running, coordinating everything from laundry, the food pantry, and soup kitchen to blood

pressure clinics and narcotic counseling. Despite his array of duties, his biggest challenge is finding reliable, consistent volunteers to help out. "A lot of times the volunteer's heart is in the right

place, but they don't stick with it." For Payne his job is a labor of love. When he locks the door at night he keeps thinking what he could have done better, how he could have better served. "You never feel like you've done enough."

*"Some residents were literally sleeping on the Streets. they tell me: 'Danny I love it here at the Bethesda House.'"*

*Danny Payne*

## Whodunit Mystery Theater

Looking for some intrigue? Come to the Mystery Dinner Fundraiser for Bethesda House Oct. 13 at the Stockade Inn and support Bethesda House and its programs.

A live cast will perform and the audience will try



to solve the mystery that unfolds. Sharran Coppola, who is planning the event, anticipates a sellout for the evening of mystery. Tickets will go on sale in August..Coppola said Bethesda House is also looking for underwriters.

### OUR WISH LIST

Hygiene Product Kits  
Gently Used Clothing  
Linens. Towels  
Paper Products  
Plastic Grocery Bags  
Food for Pantry  
Donations Building  
and Grounds Equipment

**BETHESDA HOUSE OF SCHENECTADY**  
834 State Street  
Schenectady, NY 12307

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Fax 518-374-5133

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### Director's Corner Q & A with Interim Director Kimarie

**Q: What is the most pressing need facing Bethesda House?**

**A: An increase in fundraising. Because of the economy, we are serving more clients in each of our programs. Donations from our supporters are more important than ever to sustain the programs we offer.**

**Q: What are your top three goals for the fiscal year which begins in July?**

**A: Increasing the volunteer base, increasing the donor base and putting wings on the education program - specifically literacy and basic living skills.**

**Q: Any message for the community?**

**A: Even though much of our funding is provided by the federal, state, and local entities, we still depend on the generosity of our friends in the community to help us meet all of the needs of our residents and guests. I would like to thank all of our friends and supporters. We will always be grateful to our partners in the community who share our vision. We have accomplished a great deal of work and hope to accomplish much more in the years ahead. Without you, that work would not be possible.**

**Thank you again! Kimarie Sheppard**