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PADS LAKE COUNTY FALL NEWSLETTER



Updates from our Executive Director

Our world and community are experiencing a tremendous amount of change, uncertainty, and trauma. We are all living through a global pandemic, social and political unrest, families trying to figure out how to best educate their children, and navigating a new normal as we seek to keep ourselves and our families healthy and safe. The clients we serve are being impacted—perhaps more than most—by these realities every day.

The Black Lives Matter movement continues to shed light on the discrimination in our institutions and systems—and the barriers these systems create—including housing where we know that Black and Brown community members continue to make up a disproportionate share of the homeless population. Additionally, a global pandemic has laid bare the sizeable health inequity and resource gaps in our system with more people of color contracting COVID-19 and feeling the economic impacts of the virus.

Additionally, as many families are struggling to determine how—or if—their children should be returning to school, our families are struggling with not having a choice. Their children rely on the resources that can only be found in their schools, and most of the parents we see in our programs are working during school hours and are unable to afford alternative childcare. They find themselves faced with the impossible choice of working to move their families out of

homelessness and the health and safety of their children.

At PADS, we have dedicated staff who understand the additional barriers and trauma that the people we serve are experiencing. We are working hard to ensure that our clients continue to receive the same level of services that were available before the pandemic. Now more than ever it is clear that housing is health care and healthcare is housing. The most effective way of keeping anyone experiencing homelessness safe is to provide safe, affordable, permanent housing.

As this pandemic continues to unfold, we work to balance the need for shelter, available funding, and planning for a future full of unknowns. In addition, we're balancing the need to pivot our services quickly to meet ever-changing needs and providing stability for the community we serve.

If there is anything these past five months has taught us is that change is inevitable and that the ability to be flexible, accepting, and kind are paramount to our work. Thank you for your continued support as we navigate these uncharted waters. It means the world to us and the clients we serve.

Meghan Powell-Filler
Executive Director

A New Shelter Season

Typically, this is the time of year that we're working with our fantastic volunteers at our rotating shelter sites to prepare for another Shelter Season. As has been the case with so much the past few months, these services will be adjusting significantly to accommodate the moment and account for the safety of our clients as well as our staff, volunteers, and community members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many unknowns and our plan is ever-evolving, but as of this writing we are not planning on opening any of our rotating shelter sites due to volunteer staffing, health and safety concerns.

We will be working to provide individual accommodations to who is in need of emergency shelter. Our clients will continue to work with their Case Managers to find long-term housing solutions.

We thank everyone for their understanding as we continue to pivot our services to meet the ever-changing needs of our community and work to provide the best possible services for our clients.

Interested in helping? Contact our Shelter Operations Manager, Nicole Harris, at nharris@padslakecounty.org to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

Client Spotlights

Navigating Homelessness During a Pandemic

We're proud and humbled to share some of the strides are clients are continuing to make in the midst of a global pandemic. Their tenacity, hopefulness, and drive inspire us each day.

Support from our community has provided an opportunity for some of our clients to shed the worry about where they will sleep at night during COVID-19 so that they can focus instead on getting out of the shelter system and into long-term housing. *Michael had been in our shelter system for about 9 months when we were able to offer him a hotel room in order to safely Shelter in Place. With the logistics and stress of finding his way to different shelter sites each night alleviated, Michael was able to dedicate the time, focus, and energy necessary to creating and implementing a housing plan with his Case Manager. Because he had a safe, consistent place to sleep each night in the short-term, he has successfully moved out of the shelter system and into his own apartment!

*Cory began utilizing PADS' hotel accommodations at the beginning of Shelter-in-Place and had not been to a doctor in over 35 years. When our Homeless Healthcare Access Case Manager, Somya, first got in contact with him, Cory was hesitant and quite fearful about seeing a doctor since it had been so long since his last visit. Somya provided him with health education over the course of 3 appointments and she was eventually able to connect him with a Primary Care Physician and schedule an appointment for a visit. Cory reported that the visit went better than he expected, and he was prescribed with medications necessary to managing a chronic health condition. He has since reported that he has also begun to watch his diet and exercise more based on his learnings and that he feels healthier and more energetic!

With the stress of having to figure out where he was staying each night being alleviated, Cory was able to prioritize his health and we are hopeful that he will continue on this positive trajectory and make it into long-term housing.

**Names changed to protect client confidentiality*

Community Resources

From unexpected loss of income to finding childcare for essential workers, it's a challenging time for many of us. If you or your family need help finding any social service, including resources for finding food, healthcare, paying your utility bills, mental health services, etc., please reach out to United Way of Lake County's free, confidential 211 service through any of the following:

- Call 211 from your phone
- Text your zip code to 898211
- Visit 211lakecounty.org

Join our Team

We're looking for a Community Case Manager

Are you looking for an opportunity to join a collaborative team making an impact in our community? You might be a great fit for our Community Case Manager opening! The Case Manager will be a part of our Supportive Housing program and work to move anyone at risk or literally homeless to housing stability while providing wrap-around services for their mental health through therapy, peer support, and employment assistance.

Learn more: padslakecounty.org/employment

Team Spotlight

Nicole Harris | Shelter Operations Manager



I am the Shelter Operations Manager here at PADS. I oversee our current hotel program and our rotating shelter sites. I work very closely with our site managers and our shelter volunteers as well as our day resource center volunteers.

I always enjoyed volunteering when I was younger and helping others. I went to school for psychology and sociology and then landed my first case management job as a shelter case manager for another county. I then got a job as our Community Case Manager here at PADS and worked with clients on finding housing and working with them once they were in housing to maintain their homes. I enjoyed working with my clients but wanted to move back into shelter and saw a great opportunity in the Shelter Operations Manager position.

I always say that I'm working to put myself out of a job. I think the joy that comes with seeing a client get their first place and coming back to PADS to tell us about it is my favorite thing. That, and the wonderful team that I work with. Everyone working together to service our clients.

The biggest challenge I've seen our clients face since the COVID-19 outbreak is not having access to a place to go during the day. Typically, our office would be a space that clients are able to spend time during the day, attend groups, and take shelter from the elements. Unfortunately, this just isn't an option in the current environment. Additionally, our shelters have done a complete 180 since the outbreak. Our shelter model went from rotating overnight sites to staffing at motels and doing case management in hotels.

While it's been challenging working during the pandemic, the massive support that we have had from our community partners and our volunteer base makes me so hopeful. They have come through time and time again with donations, time, and anything that PADS could need to service our clients.

Outside of PADS I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and spoiling my dog, Mona. I really enjoy hiking through forest preserves and (pre-COVID) going to the movies.

I'm looking forward to the future of PADS and what our shelter model will look like in the upcoming year. I'm not sure what shelter will look like in a year or two but I'm confident that our community members will be up for the challenge and our volunteers will be there every step of the way!