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Our entire team extends our most sincere thanks to Warren Township Center and Township Supervisor Sue Simpson for opening their doors for us to create a 24/7 emergency shelter site in March to help keep our clients sheltered, safe & healthy during this pandemic.

Our clients, staff, volunteers & community are so grateful for their partnership.

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PADS LAKE COUNTY SPRING NEWSLETTER



COVID-19 Response

As we move through this moment of acute crisis, we lift up our shared values and use them as a guide for how to handle the immediate needs of our community and to plan for what comes next. The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly impacted our day-to-day operations, but we are proud to report that we have remained 100% operational while adjusting and expanding our services in order to meet the increased demand for shelter and programs. In order to continue to serve individuals and families experiencing housing crises in our community, we have changed some of our basic operating procedures in order to account for the safety of our clients as well as our staff, volunteers, and community members. Fortunately, we have been able to continue to provide the same level of service as we have in the past. In order to do this, we have made several notable adjustments:

- We are currently housing 133 clients in individual accommodations in local hotels and motels in order to follow the CDC's recommendations for social distancing and the statewide Shelter-in-Place order. We are prioritizing families and individuals who meet the following high-risk categories: 65 and older, and/or have a chronic health condition and have no other options for safe shelter. This measure helps to ensure that our clients remain as safe as possible and that we do our part

to contain the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

- Intake continues at our Day Resource Center in Waukegan. Should someone require outreach in the community, we continue to meet them where they are, assess their needs, and determine if their current location is safe. All clients receive a health screening daily. Clients in ill health will be referred to an appropriate healthcare professional to receive care.

- All clients, volunteers, donors, and staff complete the health screening as well as a temperature check before entering the building.

- We are in the process of adding an additional member to our Outreach team in order to engage more vulnerable members of our community in services.

In addition to short-term measures, we are anticipating that our services will be an essential part of rebuilding the physical, financial, and social well-being that the pandemic is weakening and are working to plan for an increased demand for services longer-term.

It is the support of committed community members who make it possible for us to provide these life-saving services for some of the most vulnerable people in Lake County. We are eternally grateful for our many generous partners.

A note from our Executive Director

Like you, we're thinking about how our loved ones, staff, and the people we serve will be affected by the spread of COVID-19. As the state steels itself against the spread of a global pandemic, our clients remain particularly vulnerable to this virus.

A lot has happened in the past few weeks, and I couldn't be more proud of how PADS Lake County's dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners have responded to the COVID-19 outbreak. As we've ramped up our services to meet the needs of our community, we reflect on the core of what has made our work possible: neighbors coming together in a time of need.

This moment calls us to reflect on the kind of world we want to build as we move ahead. We've seen how deeply we all need each other, and how easy it is to fall into a housing crisis. From unexpected medical bills to unexpectedly losing a job, it has become even more clear how important it is to provide support to our neighbors.

We are thankful for the many partners who continue to support us and make it possible for our staff to provide life-saving services for the most vulnerable among us. Thank you for your continued support. Please stay safe & healthy.

With gratitude,

Meghan Powell-Filler

Program Spotlight

Homeless Healthcare Access Program

This moment makes it clear that each and every person's health is intertwined. To stop the spread of COVID-19, we can't afford to leave anyone out of our containment measures—we must ensure that action extends to our neighbors experiencing homelessness. This means not only providing safe, adequate shelter, but also ensuring that everyone in our community has access to adequate healthcare. Our Homeless Healthcare Access Program (HHAP) continues to provide critical services to the clients we serve. HHAP's primary goals are to ensure that anyone in our community experiencing homelessness is:

- aware of their healthcare options;
- proactive in their wellness to remain healthy;
- able to access needed services, including prescription medication and mental health services.

Homelessness is a traumatic experience – when one is not sure where they will spend the night, where their next meal might come from, one is often not concerned with one's health and well-being. Even during the current pandemic, the clients we see are forced to prioritize finding a place to sleep over their health—meaning that even if someone is symptomatic, they will likely neglect those symptoms as long as possible as they search for safe housing.

Our HHAP Case Manager, Somya Sinha, MPH, notes that, “the outbreak has caused tremendous anxiety for the clients we serve. We're seeing many people who have lost their jobs, and subsequently their health insurance. Our clients struggling with mental health issues and addiction have been severely impacted by the outbreak since all mental health counselling and addiction treatment facilities have been forced to close. While we are working with them to access services virtually, a lack of access to internet or a computer paired with the new service-delivery format has proven to be a barrier for many of the people we see.”

Prior to establishing this program, persons experiencing homelessness would often rely on emergency rooms to provide their healthcare. There were no controls in place to determine actual need, services were impersonal and perpetuated clients' fears and/or their refusal of necessary assistance. Now, Somya works with clients one-on-one, providing assistance, easing fears, and ensuring appropriate care.

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

You can also find a comprehensive list of Lake County resources at lakecountyil.gov/4414/how-to-get-help.

Team Spotlight

Xiomara Otero
Family Outreach Case Manager



I serve as the Family Outreach Case Manager. In this capacity, I work with families at our Day Resource Center and the rotating shelter sites in the evenings so that I have a chance to meet one-on-one with parents while our volunteers provide

activities for their children. I work to provide families with basic supports with a targeted focus on the specific needs of each family. I enjoy working with all the clients helping them with whatever they need, even if sometimes it's just sitting down with them and having a conversation.

One of the biggest challenges I've seen for the families during the COVID-19 outbreak is keeping the kids busy – like all kids, they get bored being indoors all day. With schools being closed some students from the Waukegan District were given laptops to access remote learning, but it can still be difficult to focus on schoolwork when you're sharing a hotel room with your siblings.

While there have been a lot of challenges with the pandemic, I'm hopeful for the future. I'm happy and proud not only with how we've responded at PADS, but also with other agencies within the community for coming up with creative ways to continue to serve our clients while still following all recommended safety protocols.

Outside of PADS I love to scrapbook for my two boys so they have a lot of pictures to look back on from their childhood. I also enjoy watching movies with the family!

We are honored to have Xiomara on our team, and look forward to the great work she will continue to do with our clients.

You Make Our Work Possible



We have been blown away by the generosity of our neighbors during the COVID-19 outbreak. From volunteering to providing emergency funding and needed supplies, our network of supporters has come out in a big way to make sure we can provide the emergency provisions necessary without sacrificing our other programs & services.

A special thank you to Warren Township for providing a 24/7 emergency shelter site before we were able to move our clients into individual accommodations.

From the bottom of our hearts – thank you!

Support Our Neighbors Experiencing Homelessness Today

As COVID-19 continues to spread, the future has never felt so unpredictable. These are difficult times for us all, and we hope you're in good spirits and health! Right now, we're doing everything possible to sustain daily operations and provide services to our community. While there's a lot of uncertainty, we know that we need to adapt quickly to our changing reality. Now, more than ever, the individuals and families experiencing homelessness in our community need us. And we need you.

If you're able, please consider making a donation to help support our work. If you're unable to donate at this time, there are many other ways you can support us! You can advocate for us by sharing our mission with a family member or friend. Even a quick mention on your social media would mean the world to us.

In the toughest times, we do the toughest work. When it's time to restore and repair our communities, we are equipped to do that as well. Thank you for being part of our community. Without you, none of it is possible.

Stay safe and well!

You can make a gift online at padslakecounty.org/donate or via the envelope in this newsletter.