

For Release Tuesday October 6

A Beacon for Our Community

(Bloomington) It was a cold day in January 2000 when the basement of First United Methodist Church opened to people without homes.

Guests were offered coffee, a few newspapers, a single telephone, and a warm, safe, loving place to be. It was named “Shalom,” which means “welcome” and “peace be upon you.”



SHALOM CENTER
PHIL'S KITCHEN
FRIEND'S PLACE
STREET OUTREACH
RAPID RE-HOUSING
CRAWFORD HOMES

Twenty years later, that spark of welcome has blazed into one of the largest social service agencies in South Central Indiana with forty-five employees and six major programs. Phil's Kitchen at Shalom has provided more than 1.2 million meals to those in need in Bloomington over those two decades. Our fifty-bed emergency shelter (“A Friend's Place,” formerly “Martha's House”) provided more than 14,000 nights of shelter last year. Crawford Homes provides 110 apartments of permanent supportive housing for adults and children once struggling with long-term homelessness due to disabilities. Our Street Outreach team extends into the woods and alleyways to engage those so hard to reach and the Rapid Rehousing program lifts hundreds of working families up as they move out of shelter and back into homes.

These programs now house or prevent homelessness for more than 700 people per year and continue to expand their reach. The spark has grown into a beacon of hope and hospitality in Bloomington, and so the name “Beacon” was chosen to represent this organization and its many programs.

“Our capacity to care has grown so significantly that we needed a new way to express that,” says executive director Rev. Forrest Gilmore, “Once, a Day Center providing basic needs, now we've added so much more to help people not only survive but get back home. In addition to emergency supports, Beacon provides solutions for people in poverty. All our efforts work together to be the light that guides you home.”

Just as Friends Place and Crawford Homes have their own names, Shalom Center will remain the name of our day center at 620 S Walnut, providing meals, clothing, laundry, showers, case management, and more.

Like an umbrella, “Beacon” names all the efforts together: the Shalom Center, Friend's Place, Rapid Rehousing, Phil's Kitchen, Street Outreach, and Crawford Homes, plus

through the duration of COVID, the Monroe County Isolation Shelter and the COVID-19 Homeless Prevention Project.

“I like it,” says Kenny Garrison, who used to receive services at Shalom and now returns to volunteer in a variety of capacities, “Beacon means hope. And that’s a way home.”

The national crisis caused by COVID-19, both the illness and the recession, has directly affected the struggling poor of South Central Indiana. Those who wish to support the work of Beacon are encouraged to visit www.beaconinc.org and attend their annual (and, this year, virtual) Gala event on Tuesday Oct 27.

Quotes:

- “Our capacity to care has grown so significantly that we needed a new way to express that. Once, a Day Center providing basic needs, now we’ve added so much more to help people not only survive but get back home. In addition to emergency supports, Beacon provides solutions for people in poverty. All our efforts work together to be the light that guides you home.” - Executive Director Rev. Forrest Gilmore.
- “I like it. Beacon means hope. And that’s a way home” - Kenny Garrison, who used to receive services at Shalom and now returns to volunteer.

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New Website (active in late October):

www.beaconinc.org

(www.shalomcommunitycenter.org will remain active for the time being and redirect people when beaconinc.org goes live.)

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