Dear Siena/Francis House Friends,

Late last night, a tired mother sought shelter here at the Siena/Francis House. What is particularly interesting about her story is that she had her SIX children in tow. Since our shelter was operating at 140% of capacity, when this family arrived, we put mom and kids in a small conference room for the night, with as many mattresses, sets of linens, blankets, and pillows as we could find. This morning, we were able to move the family into a couple of guest rooms in our women’s and children’s shelter. Later today, our case management staff will begin the process of helping this mom find affordable and appropriate housing somewhere out in the community.

The number of homeless families and individuals seeking shelter, food and clothing can, at times, be overwhelming for our staff. Each and every night, the Siena/Francis House provides overnight stays to over 500 people. And, over the course of this year, our organization will provide overnight stays to nearly 4,000 unique men, women and children.

The challenges we face in serving the enormous amount of people who seek assistance at the Siena/Francis House are nothing compared to the challenges of being homeless. Every day I chat with homeless guests who have been the victims of domestic violence, or who have lost their jobs or had their work hours reduced, or who have experienced a family medical calamity which exhausted all of their savings. I hear heartbreaking stories from military veterans who served our country proudly, but who now struggle with trauma and/or chronic addiction. The list of reasons how and why people become homeless goes on and on. But each guest also shares with me how thankful they are for our help. As is always the case, each story is different.

That change began when Ashlee met her Siena/Francis House case manager. These staff members work with our homeless guests to help them access resources and overcome obstacles to housing. They motivate and challenge our guests and help them navigate through the social service system. Ashlee’s case manager was Robyn Matheny.

“I owe that woman so much,” Ashlee said. “Robyn helped me from day one.”

Robyn and Ashlee quickly discovered they had something in common – both had autistic daughters.

Robyn connected Ashlee with the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s Munroe-Meyer Institute, which provides assessment, education and services for children with autism, and for their families. Robyn also helped Ashlee learn about respite care providers, so Ashlee could take some breaks from caring for Ava, while leaving her in informed, qualified hands.

“Robyn helped me advocate for Ava. She taught me perseverance and showed me that someone cared and loved us even when we didn’t feel it,” Ashlee said. “She fought for a place for us to live, a place of safety and she helped me find a voice for Ava and me.”

In the midst of hope, this little family still had challenges at our women and children’s shelter. Executive Director Mike Saklar remembers a day when Ava ran out the Siena/Francis House front gate, leading several adults on a short chase. “She was fast!” he said. But all ended well.

From Homelessness to a Home on their Own: Ashlee and Ava’s Story

When Ashlee and her three-year-old daughter Ava arrived at the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter a year ago, they had nowhere else to go. To make matters worse, Ava had just been diagnosed with autism, and Ashlee was overwhelmed and unsure of what to do for her daughter.

Ashlee grew up in Alabama, but had always planned to leave the South. After high school, she moved to Kansas City, Missouri. “I was chasing a boyfriend who was no good, and that ended badly,” Ashlee recalls. “I went through some trials and errors and struggled with substance abuse for years, but in the end, I wound up at Siena/Francis House with my daughter, and that changed everything in my life.”

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Executive Director
Mike Saklar
With gratitude,

Mike’s letter cont’d...

Below are some important points of information, related to the Siena/Francis House, which may be of interest to you:

- Through the first eight months of this year, the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter is on pace to provide overnight stays to more families and individuals than at any point in the 41-year history of our organization. To date, in 2016, our organization has provided overnight stays to 2,905 unique men, women and children, up from the 2,815 persons to whom we provided overnight stays through this point last year.
- The vast majority of this increase in unique numbers of people provided shelter in 2016 relates to the fact that the number of homeless children has increased by 25 percent, compared to 2015. And, the number of homeless women increased by almost 10%, compared to last year.
- Domestic violence continues to be a major factor in why women and women with kids end up at the Siena/Francis House.
- The average length of stay for the homeless families and individuals to whom we have provided shelter in 2016 is 39.5 days. That number is up, slightly, from this point in 2015, when it was 38.8 days.
- It continues to be the case that the majority of all homeless families and individuals who have stayed at the Siena/Francis House in 2016 have never been homeless, previously.
- Our shelters continue to be grossly overcrowded. Through these first eight months of 2016, the average number of persons who stayed at Siena/Francis House each night is 510, in our facilities that have a total of 391 beds; (anyone who does not get a bed sleeps on a mat on the floor, or in a chair).
- As is the case each year, the Siena/Francis House will honor the many homeless veterans staying here through a post-Veterans Day luncheon cook-out celebration on Sunday, November 13 at our shelter. Please know that providing our services to homeless veterans remains a top priority for the Siena/Francis House, as our organization continues to house the majority of all homeless veterans in Omaha.
- As our homeless shelter readies for the upcoming cold Nebraska winter months, please consider donating one or more of the items from our current needs list on the last page of this newsletter. You can deliver any in-kind donation items to our loading dock, located at 1111 North 17th Street, which is open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day of the year. All in-kind donations are tax deductible, and you will be issued a receipt when you make your donation.
- We continue to move forward on the capital campaign to fund our campus expansion plans. These plans include the construction of a new men’s emergency shelter and daytime shelter, along with a renovation and repurposing of the current men’s shelter. We also plan to create additional outdoor “green space.”

In closing, please know that I am continually grateful to you for providing our organization the ability to offer our services to all who show up at our door; needing assistance. Regardless of how grossly overcrowded our shelters may continue to be – the Siena/Francis House will do our best to never turn away any person or family who comes to us in need. Please know that your support makes a real and meaningful difference to the thousands of homeless families and individuals we serve each year.

With gratitude,

Mike Saklar
Executive Director

Ashlee and Ava cont’d...

Ashlee also struggled with post-traumatic stress from her past, and met with counselor Frank Bailey to help her move forward. “Frank is the best counselor anyone could ask for,” Ashlee said. “He treats everyone with such compassion and understanding, it is almost impossible to not walk out of his office with tears of happiness, tears of relief and tears of gratitude.”

After about 4 months working with Robyn and Frank at Siena/Francis House, Ashlee and Ava moved to Restored Hope, a transitional program for women and children, here in Omaha. At Restored Hope, Ashlee and Ava had their own apartment, and Ashlee attended educational classes on things like budgeting, cooking and other life skills. A few months later, Ashlee and Ava moved to their very own apartment in Elkhorn, Nebraska.

Ashlee now has a positive outlook on her future. She hopes to continue stopping in at Siena/Francis House to talk with guests, so she can inspire others in the way she was inspired.

“The Siena/Francis House changed everything in my life. It changed who I was and who I wanted to be. I started believing that, maybe one day, I would find a way out of the hole I kept getting myself into.”

Ava is also doing well. The now four-year-old loves to read, write, watch cartoons, visit the park and spend time with her mom and dad. “Without the Siena/Francis House, she wouldn’t have any of that today,” Ashlee said. “When you have a disability like hers, it can be overwhelming to be in an environment where you are not understood, or picked on because you are different. Everyone at Siena treated her with compassion, love and acceptance. Ava loves Siena/Francis House. She thinks of the guests and staff like family.”

Siena/Francis House guests and staff hold a special place in Ashlee’s heart too. “I am thankful for the staff at Siena/Francis House, especially Mike Saklar, Robyn and Frank, who are always there when I need them,” she said. “I am not the same person that I was walking into the shelter, and I am glad.”
Kevin Nordhagen (aka “Superman”)

Not all super heroes wear capes, but some do.
U.S. Army veteran Kevin Nordhagen recently served the homeless a hot meal in full Superman attire on the Siena/Francis House Campus, but his acts of heroism to the homeless in our community don’t end there.

“Five years ago, I was unemployed and facing becoming homeless,” Kevin said. “I was not getting the help I needed as a veteran, so I told myself the moment I was back on top, I was going to create a program that helps vets in all the places that I needed help.”

Kevin got his first opportunity to realize his dream in December 2015. He met a veteran in a park, and asked if he could help. Kevin encouraged the man to contact Veterans Affairs (VA) for housing help, and was able to secure a one bedroom apartment for the vet through the property management company where Kevin works. Kevin then leaned on his contacts to get the vet a job at a local construction company. He helped the man furnish the apartment through donations.

As Kevin continued to spread the word of his work with friends and social media, he gained enough support to start serving meals to the homeless. On June 19, 2016, Kevin and his Vethelp1 volunteers served 80 hot meals in the Siena/Francis House parking lot.

“It was a great day to get in touch with people in need,” Kevin said.

Since Kevin started providing meals that day, he has served 1,615 meals to the homeless in the Omaha area. His program is 100 percent volunteer-based. “They are family and friends that support the cause of Vethelp1,” Kevin said. “They are normally nervous at first, but after a little bit of volunteering and talking to the people, they absolutely love it. The biggest comment I hear is ‘Wow, you really opened our eyes.’”

Some of Kevin’s helpers are homeless vets themselves. “Lawrence is a gentleman who came to me for help. He said he had family back in California and if he could get there he would no longer be homeless. I said OK let’s do it,” Kevin explained.

“Lawrence didn’t want money from me which stumped me on how we were going to tackle this mission. He told me that he wanted to work for it. He helped me serve 160 hot dogs and then went down to the American Legion Post #1 to work as a dishwasher that night. We made enough money in donations that night to buy Lawrence a bus ticket.

“Since it was only 6 p.m., and the bus did not leave until 10 p.m., Lawrence helped me shop for all the items I would need for the following week. I sat with him at the bus station and even waved goodbye. I talked to Lawrence every few days to make sure he is sticking to the plan. He is now in northern California working through all the steps at the VA, in order to be placed on housing assistance,” Kevin shared.

In addition to providing meals to the homeless, Kevin does a lot of networking in the community to help people get access to housing. He teaches vets computer skills, like how to set up an email account, how basic word processing programs work, and how to create a general resume. “I will not do it for them,” Kevin said. “I have created a general resume and help them go through it, but they do all the typing.”

Kevin collects furniture and stores it until an individual gets housing, and then he delivers it. He also collects books and magazines to hand out at the meals he serves. “I feel education is the best tool,” he notes.

Kevin is also a veteran volunteer with hospice, as well as serves as the Vice Commander of American Legion Post #1. He frequently visits vets at the VA hospital, too.

Starting Vethelp1 changed Kevin’s outlook on life, he said. “I did not realize how many people I could help on such a small budget. I didn’t realize how polite the people would be to me, always asking to help load or unload. But most of all I didn’t realize how many people I could get to look at homeless people without judgement and have them understand that they are people just like us.”

The Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter is grateful to Kevin and all Vethelp1 volunteers for their service to the homeless in our community.

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Please send your gift to the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter today. Your gift will immediately help provide food, shelter, and clothing to homeless individuals and families in our community in their hour of need.

Thank you, and God bless you.
**2016 WALK/RUN**

The Siena/Francis House held our 22nd Annual Walk/Run at Stinson Park in Aksarben Village on Saturday, August 27, 2016. 387 runners and walkers participated in one of two events: the 5K Run and the 5K Walk. The weather was beautiful, and both events went off without a hitch. We would like to thank all of the Walk/Run participants for turning out this year. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the caring corporate sponsors of this year’s event, including: Wells Fargo; Kiewit Companies; First Data; Baxter Toyota of La Vista; Bank of the West; Tenaska, Inc.; EMCommunity; Fuhrman, Smolsky & Furey, P.C.; American National Bank; Merrill Lynch-Ambrose/Lighthart Group; US Bank; Village Pointe Pediatrics; Frankel Zacharia; Dundee Bank; Eyeoptics; Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture; Pediatric Ophthalmology Association - Sebastian Troia; Werner Enterprises; Sirius Computer Solutions; Optiv; OneNeck IT Solutions; Cisco; Miller Electric; TSYS Merchant Solutions; Security National Bank; VMware; Hutcheson Engineering Products, Inc.; Continuum Security Solutions; CenturyLink; DLR Group; Borsheim’s; HDR; Peak Performance and Great Harvest Bread Company.

All proceeds from the Walk/Run go directly to help the Siena/Francis House provide emergency overnight shelter and food to Omaha’s homeless men, women, and children.

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**So, You Love Seafood?**

Four Omaha seafood restaurants will make the holiday season a brighter one by donating a portion of their sales on the first Tuesday in December to the Siena/Francis House homeless shelter. On Tuesday, December 6th, 10% of all food and drink sales at the three local Shuck’s Fish House & Oyster Bars (located at 119th & Pacific Street, the southwest corner of 168th & Center Street, and at 19th & Leavenworth Street) – as well as at Bailey’s Breakfast & Lunch (located at 120 & Pacific Street) – will be donated to the Siena/Francis House.

Please consider stopping by one of these four restaurants on Tuesday, December 6th for a bite to eat…and support the Siena/Francis House at the same time!

A big thank you goes to the restaurants’ owner, Greg Lindberg, for his generosity!

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**Did You Know?**

- Did you know that the Siena/Francis House is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt, charitable organization, and that your gift to our shelter is tax deductible, to the full extent of the law? The Siena/Francis House’s federal tax identification number is 47-0601005.

- Did you know that many businesses and companies match financial gifts given to the Siena/Francis House by its employees? Help make your gift go further by inquiring about whether the organization for which you or your spouse works has a Matching Gift Program.

- Did you know that companies, businesses, and other employers can support the mission of the Siena/Francis House by sponsoring a periodic Casual Dress Day or Jeans Day? Ask your employer about selecting a day when employees can dress casually – for a small fee (usually between $2 and $5) – with the proceeds going to the Siena/Francis House. Boost morale at work while supporting a good cause by “dressing down” for a day.

- Did you know that you may include the Siena/Francis House as a beneficiary in your estate planning? Please take a moment to review the “Estate Planning” item later in this newsletter.

- Did you know that you can make an online donation to Siena/Francis House? Please visit our website at www.sienafrancis.org to make a secure, online donation. You can also make your gift a recurring one through the same website. Please contact Dawn Olijnek (dawn@sienafrancis.org) or Kristi Miskimins (kmiskimins@sienafrancis.org) or Tim Sully (tsully@sienafrancis.org) – or by phone at 402-341-1821 – for information regarding online donation opportunities.
Meet Chris Eynon

On a very cold morning on January 3, 2008, Chris Eynon, currently the Coordinator for the Siena/ Francis House’s residential Miracles Treatment Program, uttered a prayer of despair: “Lord, I can’t do this anymore. I’m helpless. Please help me.”

Chris – who had been struggling with addiction for much of his adult life – was basically homeless, and had lost all hope that he might ever be free of his disease. He also had resigned himself to the fact that he would likely never have a happy and productive life. Thoughts of suicide were often on his mind. He often prayed that he would go to sleep and not wake up.

Amazingly, within minutes of Chris’ self-admission of his powerlessness over his addiction and his cry for help, the phone rang – it was his mom. Being in recovery for 24 years herself, she asked him a basic question: “Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired?” A tearful Chris said yes. The next day, Chris’ mom picked him up and brought him to the Siena/Francis House.

As background, Chris is originally from a small town in western Nebraska, and grew up in a broken family. Chris was a very good student and athlete in high school. He lettered in football, basketball and track, and was inducted into the National Honor Society. He was Salutatorian of his high school graduating class. Despite these achievements, Chris always felt alone and empty, even among his classmates. He never felt like he fit in in any crowd.

While in high school, Chris was offered a beer at a party. He liked the way it made him feel, so he had another…and another. Chris drank often during his high school years. When he was drinking, Chris finally felt like he fit in. And, when intoxicated, that emptiness that Chris always felt was gone, at least temporarily.

Upon graduation, Chris was awarded a Regents Scholarship from the University of Nebraska/Lincoln, which meant that all tuition was paid all four years, as long as he maintained a high grade point average. Unfortunately, Chris continued drinking in college, and almost always binging until he blacked out. He also experimented with marijuana. He didn’t attend classes regularly and rarely did assigned homework. His GPA was extremely low. After one year at Lincoln, Chris flunked out.

Not knowing what to do, Chris took a line job at an industrial production company in Kearney, Nebraska, and quickly moved into sales, eventually to National Sales Representative. Despite his success at work, Chris’ addiction to alcohol and drugs was worsening.

When he was 21, Chris entered an addiction treatment center in Grand Island. After finishing that program, Chris didn’t drink for six years, although he still used marijuana. He eventually got married, and had a baby girl. But after four years, Chris’ marriage fell apart.

For the next seven years after his divorce, Chris’ addiction and related behavior made his life spiral out of control. Chris was drinking, smoking marijuana, doing cocaine, using meth intravenously, and selling drugs. He was eventually arrested for DUI and for possession of drug paraphernalia. Not surprisingly, Chris was fired from work, and, soon after, evicted.

It was at this lowest of low times – in early January of 2008 – when Chris realized he had hit bottom, and decided to kill himself. But first, Chris uttered his prayer of despair, and within 24 hours was sitting on a bed in the Siena/Francis House’s Homeless Shelter.

Shortly after his arrival, Chris realized that not taking a drink or using a drug was only the first step to sobriety. The real “heavy lifting” of addiction recovery is to take a good, long look at yourself and to know that you need to change. Slowly, painfully, Chris began the process of transforming his life.

Chris stayed in our men’s homeless shelter for quite some time. In order to demonstrate to our staff that he was serious about his desire to get into our residential Miracles Treatment Center, he was required to volunteer at the homeless shelter. His jobs included cleaning the bathrooms, making up bedrolls, doing laundry, and handing out soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste and other personal care items to our guests. All of this was very humbling to Chris.

“By working with our homeless guests, I learned that we all are pretty much the same,” he reflected. “Time and again I was reminded that our homeless guests are real people who eat really food, who sleep in real beds. This may be the only place where they feel truly welcome today or any day. This is their house, not mine, and they need to be treated with respect. I learned that there are good people in ALL situations, regardless of race, socio-economic status, addiction, mental illness, etc.”

Nearly 40 days after Chris arrived at the Siena/Francis House, he was accepted into our residential “Miracles” Treatment Center, and continued on the long road to recovery. Chris was assigned a job in our in-house employment training program. He worked the men’s shelter front desk, rotated through the donation dock and maintenance, and eventually was promoted to men’s shelter assistant manager.

“While serving the guests, I found joy and satisfaction in doing something positive in other people’s lives. I was SO destructive to others, while I was using. I also learned to appreciate the small things in life. In the morning, guys would knock on the staff’s door, and they would want a pair of socks. At first, I thought it was a distraction from my job. But, after reflection and prayer, I began to realize that that WAS my job - to ease the suffering of my fellow man,” Chris said. “That eventually became the highlight of my day…to give a pair of socks to a homeless guy who not only truly needed them, but was also grateful for them. It was very humbling for me.”

Chris’ dedication to his recovery program and his work paid off. He graduated from the Miracles program in 2010.

“In Miracles, I learned that I suffer from a disease, and that all of my failures are related to this disease of alcohol and addiction…and that they can be addressed,” Chris said. “I was so grateful to learn this. I thought, ‘Thank God I found out what was
Wrong with me.’”

After graduation, Chris was hired for the professional staff position of Men’s Shelter Manager. In 2014, Chris was promoted to Program Coordinator for the Siena/Francis House’s residential Miracles Treatment Center, the position he holds today. He says two things help him stay sober – the grace of God, and working in and for the recovery community.

“And I am thankful for the grace of God. The best thing I do here is to help those who are early in recovery – and their family members – know that there is hope that things can be better. I used to be in their shoes. Sharing my own personal experience and knowledge with them – and what this program did for me – helps them realize that there may be a solution to their hopelessness,” Chris said.

“I hardly ever have thoughts of drinking or using anymore. I realized that doing those things were not going to solve my problems. What did help me address them was having a relationship with God. And, eventually, I came to the realization that the emptiness I used to feel was no longer there, as it really had been filled back up with God’s grace.”

Chris’ final gratitude summed it up: “I’m grateful that God kept me alive long enough to have a second chance at being a son, a father and a friend. And, He’s giving me a new purpose in life…which is to bring hope to those still suffering from this horrible disease.”

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**memo**

DATE: Calendar Year 2016 (and beyond)

TO: Siena/Francis House Supporters

FROM: Mike Saklar, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Important Tax Legislation Regarding Donating Directly From IRAs

In December of last year, the United States Congress passed legislation commonly referred to as the "Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015." A provision of this legislation MAKES PERMANENT benefits available to individuals aged 70 1/2 and older who make direct transfers of up to $100,000 from their IRAs to qualified charities such as the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter.

This law – which allows you to make tax-free transfers from your IRA or Roth-IRA assets to the Siena/Francis House - can provide you with a number of planning benefits this year, including:

- Direct tax-free transfers of IRA assets to Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter can be counted against your required minimum distribution (RMD).
- Direct tax-free transfers of IRA assets to Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter will not increase your adjusted gross income for your 2016 federal income tax purposes.
- Non-itemizers can utilize the assets in their IRAs for charitable purposes.

**How does this work? You may make tax-free, 2016 transfers from your IRA or Roth-IRA if:**

- You are 70 1/2 years old or older.
- Your tax-free transfers do not exceed $100,000, and are made by December 31st.
- Your tax-free transfers are made directly from your IRA or Roth-IRA to a qualified public charity, like the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter, and not to donor-advised funds, charitable remainder trusts or charitable gift annuities.

Transfers completed by December 31, 2016 will be free of federal income tax this year, and the gift qualifies for the donor's 2016 required minimum distribution.

NOTE: If you wish to take advantage of this opportunity, but hold retirement assets outside of an IRA or Roth-IRA, you will need to convert your current assets to a Rollover IRA, prior to initiating a gift.

Please act now to support the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter – and to fulfill your own charitable goals – by taking advantage of the planning options available to you from this significant legislation. Or, if you would like us to coordinate with your fund custodian a direct transfer of funds from your IRA or Roth-IRA to the Siena/Francis House, please contact our Development Director, Tim Sully, at 402-341-1821 or by e-mail at tsully@sienafrancis.org.

Thank you very much for considering taking advantage of this excellent charitable-giving opportunity!
MEET THE TRAUTMAN FAMILY! – Todd & Angie Trautman, and five of their six children, conducted a fundraiser to benefit the Siena/Francis House, selling refreshments and snacks from their front yard to patrons of this year’s Nebraska State High School Track & Field Meet, held on May 20 and 21. The Trautmans — long-time friends and supporters of our shelter, and who live right next to Burke High School Stadium – battled the rain and cold in conducting this terrific volunteer service project/fundraiser. The Trautman kids, from left to right, are Charlie (4), Grace (14), Maria (12), Joe (10), and Peter (7).

Many thanks to the Trautmans for their generosity!

The Vietnamese Alliance Church of Omaha brought and served an authentic Vietnamese lunch to the homeless guests at Siena/Francis House on Saturday, August 27th. Our guests loved this special lunch, which our Kitchen Manager, Harold Patsios, described as “most excellent”. At right is a group photo of members of Vietnamese Alliance Church and Siena/Francis House employment training program participants, in back of just some of the food they served that day.

Siena/Francis House would like to send a BIG thank you to Vietnamese Alliance Church for this wonderful lunch!

Another 4-Star Rating by Charity Navigator!

Donors to charitable organizations are appropriately interested in knowing that their financial support is used efficiently, ethically and responsibly. Please know that the Siena/Francis House is absolutely committed to these principles, as well. Please take a moment to review Charity Navigator’s – America’s largest independent charity evaluator – recent evaluation of the Siena/Francis House. Just go to: http://www.charitynavigator.org to read why the Siena/Francis House has once again earned their highest – 4-Star – rating for fiscal responsibility. Type in “Siena/Francis House” in their charity search box to learn the details of why Charity Navigator has the confidence to award our shelter with their highest, “exceptional” designation.

Local Businesses Help Siena/Francis House With Landscaping Project

Two local businesses teamed up this summer to improve the landscaping at the 1702 Nicholas building. “We thought working with Siena Francis House and its residents would be a great way for NatureHills.com to give back to the community, so we reached out to our friends at King Green Landscaping to see if they would be interested in helping out as well,” said Jeff Dinslage, President of Nature Hills. “We would provide the plants and King Green Landscaping would provide man-power and expertise on how to get this project done the right way.”

When talking to the staff at Siena Francis House, Nature Hills Nursery and King Green Landscaping both thought that an edible landscape would be a nice addition for the residents, especially since fresh fruits and vegetables are not typically donated to the shelter. It was also decided that planting a butterfly pollinating garden would be good for the environment. So King Green came up with a plan to combine both gardens.

As a first step, the volunteer crew had to remove the grass from the site chosen for the garden. (There was another crew on the roof putting on new shingles today, so it was a very busy work day at Siena/Francis House.) Then the crew dug holes for the plants donated by NatureHills.com. By the end of the day, nearly 100 plants were installed, including 5 blueberry bushes, 5 raspberry bushes, 5 blackberry bushes, 17 butterfly milkweed plants, 12 salvia, 9 goldenrod, 9 rudbeckia, 3 sand cherry, 3 currant, 3 compact cranberry 3 standing ovation serviceberries, 4 Joe Pye weed, and 9 strawberry plants.

“We were overwhelmed by the generosity and spirit of the work team,” Siena/Francis House Volunteer Coordinator Stephanie Beister said. The new garden will be a gift to our residents for years to come.”
BOARD OF DIRECTOR’S SPOTLIGHT . . .

HECTOR RIVERA

My name is Hector Rivera, and I’m honored to have served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter since May of 2015. I was introduced to the Siena/Francis House through my church - Saint Robert Bellarmine - where my children attended school, and I also served the parish and school as the Chair of the Technology Committee. In addition, I learned more about the Siena/Francis House through my employment at First Data, where our owner-associates conduct annual supply drives, collecting and donating “mission critical materials” to the shelter.

During my time on the board, I’ve come to know that the Siena/Francis House provides a miraculous amount of service and support for the growing, and often complicated, needs of our community’s homeless families and individuals. I am so impressed with how well the Siena/Francis House and its caring staff offer solutions for the homeless guests who come to them, especially those suffering from mental illness and/or drug addiction. The work performed by the Siena/Francis House team for this growing need is amazing to witness. And, while I’ve helped organize support for the Siena/Francis House – whether it be through volunteering expeditions to the Siena/Francis House campus or assisting with fundraising activities – I have to admit that it’s more the case that the Siena/Francis House has helped me. Let me explain.

My role at First Data requires that I travel throughout the United States and, at times, globally. There is no shortage of need for others to help the homeless, and I’ve discovered that this need is worldwide. During my travels, I always try to set aside time to organize community service activities with our First Data staff members to aid the homeless, wherever we are. This global expansion of my perspective on community service was inspired by the selfless people that work at the Siena/Francis House, and who stand beside the homeless, assisting them, serving them with respect and dignity, and providing them hope.

This awakening within me is what I hope to spread to others. It is my honor to support the Siena/Francis House and carry their mission wherever I may be.

FIRST DATA – A TRUE FRIEND OF OUR SHELTER

In early summer 2010, the Siena/Francis House had only enough toilet paper in stock to last a week. The owner-associates at First Data heard about our critical need, and wanted to help. First Data’s Vice President, Payment Acceptance, Ginger Smith, contacted Siena/Francis House to let us know that they were planning to conduct a friendly inter-office competition to gather toilet paper to donate to our shelter. A few weeks later, Ginger informed us that the First Data owner-associates had gathered more than 39,000 rolls of TP – an incredible amount! At the time, that donation represented the single largest drive of that nature in the 35-year history of the Siena/Francis House.

What we didn’t know back in 2010 was that First Data wasn’t done. In fact, they were just getting started.

Every summer since that time, First Data owner-associates have taken it upon themselves to conduct a supply drive of our most critically-needed items, donating all to the Siena/Francis House. During these drives, First Data has also collected other items for our shelter, like jeans, laundry detergent, and socks. And, their annual toilet paper donation continues to be amazingly large, generous, and important to our mission of serving Omaha’s homeless.

In 2016, First Data teamed up with Outlook Nebraska – which manufactures toilet paper and other paper products for government agencies – and provided 56,438 rolls of toilet paper. Over the years, the employees of First Data have donated over 220,000 rolls of toilet paper to the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter.

For this article, we asked First Data’s Ginger Smith about why she, First Data and the company’s owner-associates are so heavily involved in supporting our mission of serving the homeless, as well as what satisfaction she and the First Data owner-associates gain from this conducting this annual supply drive. Below is Ginger Smith’s response:

“I have been invested in the First Data and Siena/Francis House partnership and annual supply drive because I see the direct and immediate positive impact that it has within our community. The services that the Siena/Francis House provides to thousands of men, women and children are critical to helping those less fortunate find opportunities to get back on their feet and into the workforce; this is good for them, for our community and for our collective futures. I have cont’d on next pg.
had the privilege of working for First Data for more than 22 years, and I am proud of our long-standing commitment to helping the community prosper through charitable programs where we share our time, our talent and the generosity of our 5,000 owner-associates in the Omaha metro area.

I thoroughly enjoy sharing my passion for community service with my fellow owner-associates, and challenging them to find creative ways to engage each other in the spirit of collaboration (and a little healthy competition) to achieve great outcomes! I also cherish the opportunity to teach my son about the value of helping others, reinforcing the value of experiences over material things.

First Data owner-associates are really involved in the toilet paper drive. Not only does it give them a way to help the shelter’s mission of providing your guests one of the most basic needs, it creates an opportunity for team building through the various interoffice contests and fundraising events. At First Data, we are guided at our core by an ethical compass to do the right thing. As leaders in our industry and in our community, we are motivated by the positive outcomes that follow a job well done and the pride in knowing we’re doing the right thing."

The Siena/Francis House is especially grateful for the sustained support provided by the partnership with First Data and their caring owner-associates.

**SFH Programs Receive Funding**

Several Siena/Francis House programs were recently awarded funding by local organizations.

**United Way of the Midlands**

The Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter is pleased to announce it was recently awarded a $307,100 grant from United Way of the Midlands. The grant will fund three programs – Emergency Shelter for Men, Women and Children, the Meal Program, and the Rehousing and Reintegration Services Program.

**Mutual of Omaha Foundation**

The Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter received a $7,500 grant from the Mutual of Omaha Foundation to support the Rehousing and Reintegration Services Program.

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) awarded a $10,000 Fearless Grant to the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter for our Miracles Addiction Recovery and Mental Health Services Program.

“The community’s support for our programs is greatly appreciated by Siena/Francis House, and many lives will change in a positive way, thanks to all who made a contribution,” Mike Saklar, Executive Director/CEO of Siena/Francis House, said.

**SIENA/FRANCIS HOUSE**

**DONOR BILL OF RIGHTS**

Philanthropy is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life of our community. To assure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in our organization, the Siena/Francis House declares that all donors have these rights:

1. To be informed of the Siena/Francis House’s mission, of the way our organization intends to use donated resources, and of our capacity to use donations effectively and efficiently for their intended purposes;
2. To be informed of the identity of those serving on the Siena/Francis House’s Board of Directors, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgement in its stewardship responsibilities;
3. To have access to the Siena/Francis House’s most recent financial statements;
4. To receive appropriate acknowledgment and recognition;
5. To expect that all relationships with individuals representing the Siena/Francis House will be professional in nature, and that information about your donations is handled with respect and confidentiality;
6. To be assured that donor information will never be shared with any other organization;
7. To be assured that those seeking donations for the Siena/Francis House are not hired solicitors, and that 100% of your donations are utilized by the Siena/Francis House;
8. To be assured your gifts will be used for the purpose of furthering our mission of providing food, shelter, clothing, outreach, and addiction recovery to those most in need in our community.
9. To have the opportunity for your name to be deleted from our mailing list;
10. To feel free to ask questions when making a donation, and to receive prompt, truthful, and forthright answers.

Adapted from the American Association of Fundraising Counsel, Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, Council for Advancement and Support of Education, Association of Fundraising Professionals

Updated: September 2016
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Deceased members of the Walter L. High
Family
Cathy High

Freya
Mary Adams

Gracie
Debra Rost

Mom and Dad
Liz Dundis

Mother Mary Angelica
W. Henry Looby

Our Parents and Grandparents
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Poor Souls in Purgatory
Jerome Loos

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Kathleen Nemitz
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Carol Reynek
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Wendelin Richter
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Joanne Roberts
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John and Bonnie Rohan
Larry and Louise Lowe
Rosemary Rolf
Robert and Karen Plagge
Eugene Rossi
Helen Juelsgaard
Miles Ross
Monica Perkins

Ronald Rosso
Aksarben Dental
Kathleen Bartels
James Becker
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Jenny Wiltsehnehn

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Stanley and Ruth Saklar
Sally Saklar Schoening
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Michael Salisbury
Shari Palmer
Polly P. Sanders
Denie Ann Nesvan
Lawrence “Sandy” Sandoz
Irene Sandoz
William Scott Scarborough
William and Karen Scarborough
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Elizabeth Laverne (Meier) Stephens
Patty Wilderman
Leroy Sternberg
Denis Cuka
Msgr. Gerald Stessman
Mary Ellen Stessman
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Robert and Rosemary Gross
Mary Kay Stockton
Michael and Sue Mooney
Carolyn Ann Stolarzkyj
Alex Stolarzkyj
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Raymond and Bette Zdan
Jerry G. Zywiec
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In Honor Of...
#snOMAhog
Tom Rosencrans
Alpha Delta Kappa
Joyce France
Angel
Fastframe
Carson
John and Margaret Vecera
Children Needing Help
Delores Fricke
Children of God
Jeff and Lauren Green
Dining In for Siena/Francis House
John and Carol Brown
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Gerald and Barbara Sack
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Norbert Harms Farms
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Jesus
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Meg & Dillion
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Our Grandchildren
Bernard and Patricia Kobza
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Jamie Siciliano-Pepin
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Joe Beardsley
Denise Hatcher
Beau and Missy
Norma Harrow
Gerald Brit
Brian Brit
Joe and Larri Caniglia - Wedding Anniversary
Mike and Phyllis Langenfeld
Julie Costello - Commitment to nursing and care of vets
Michael and Janet Brannen
Westside Community Schools
Marian DeFontaine - 99th Birthday
Jerold and Cheri Pilant
Patrick Dempsey
Beverly Dempsey
Jaime Dobson
Thomas and Susan Bizzarri
Beth Doty
Suzanne Doty
Judith Douglas
Kathy Villafane
Bridget and Ian Fallon’s Wedding
Kevin Kuehl
Craig Giles
Steven and Debi Giles
Eric and Allison Grandgenett
Richard and Lynda Grandgenett
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Joanne Kolenda
Mr. and Mrs. James Heaton
Raymond and Bette Zdan
Robert and Anita Hicks
William and Lesa Lindsay
Tery Hover
Patty Jane Hover
Steve & Moe Janinsky
Tamara Parks
Mrs. Martie Jaworski’s Birthday
Lucretia Danielson
Johnson Wedding
Marilyn Cain
Bob and Kay Johnson
Michael and Mary Parizek
Fr. Walter Jong-A-Kiem-Service to Community
Ralph and Yasmin Hauke
Father Owen Korte
Joanne Kolenda
Claudia Larsen
Michael and Mary Parizek
Lt. Brent and Jesse Lowe
Larry and Louise Lowe
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Carmen Mattes
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Pamela McNamara
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Woodmenlife Nebraska Jurisdiction
Sharon Nelsen
Bridget Goin
New Bethel Church
Sondra Clifton McSwain
Sondra Clifton McSwain
New Bethel Church
Bridget Goin
Sharon Nelsen
Sondra Clifton McSwain
New Bethel Church
Bridget Goin
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Sondra Clifton McSwain
New Bethel Church
Bridget Goin
Sondra Clifton McSwain
New Bethel Church
Bridget Goin

Living Tributes & Memorials

Mary Jane O’Donnell - in gratitude for her care as a mother and single parent
Ralph O’Donnell
Pastors Korte and Harrison
Joanne Koleenda
Heidi Moser and Greg Peitz
Drew Anderson
Lori Haar
Mitch Klein
Jolene Pluta
M. Eugene Williams
Randy Rosenthal
Zack Rupiper
Reverend Eliot Schwer
Brooke Pischke
Father James Schwertley
Ronald and Linda Van Oeveren
Edna Shimerda
Rosalie Shimerda
Rev. Clifford Stevens - 90th Birthday
W. Henry Looby and Steven Kotlarz
Beckett Stevens
Stephen and Carol Lim
John McHugh
William Ramon
Cillian Rochling
Tommy Sewell
Kay Stevens
Father Clifford Stevens
W. Henry Looby
Richard & Jeanette Stevens
Dennis Stevens
William Strohbehn
Beth Katz
Zoe Strohbehn
Beth Katz
Gloria Thomas
Patricia Bryant
Linda Vacanti, wedding anniversary
Charles and Linda Vacanti
Jeanette Vansickle
Sarah Vansickle
Patricia Walter for their 6 month wedding anniversary
John Grandfield
Clarence L. Werner
Gary and Becky Werner
Mrs. Stephanie Lakin White
Marc and Danielle Talkington

Special Siena/Francis House Tributes:

Family of Staff
Dorothy "Dot" Garrotto - Mother of Kristi Miskimins, Database Admin.
Cecilia Hald - Mother of Frank Bailey, Miracles Treatment Program Coord.
Cathy Agosta - Sister of Cindy Goodrich, Miracles Treatment Program Counselor

Former Siena/Francis House staff
Godwill Mock - Siena/Francis House Dayhouse Manager
Rich Koeppen - long-time local homeless service provider and advocate

Estate Planning

You have the ability to make a lasting gift to support the homeless of our community by including the Siena/Francis House in your estate, as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy, or as a beneficiary of a retirement account. Please consider a planned gift to the Siena/Francis House. If you already have a will, you can include the Siena/Francis House as a beneficiary through the use of a short, separate document called a codicil. Our legal name is “Siena/Francis House” and our federal tax identification number is 47-060105. These types of “legacy” gifts will go a long way in helping our organization provide food, shelter, and clothing services that so many in our community desperately need.

Please contact Siena/Francis House Development Director, Tim Sully, at tsully@sienafrancis.org or at 402-341-1821 – or consult your estate planner or tax attorney – for more information about how to make such an important gift in support of those in our community who are most in need.

Omaha Gives 2016!

From midnight until midnight on May 25th of this year, the Omaha Community Foundation sponsored their 4th annual Omaha Gives!, a 24-hour, online charitable giving event, designed to grow philanthropy in our community…and to support the good work of organizations like the Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter. We are delighted to report that 860 unique donors gave to our organization during that 24-hour online charitable challenge. And, among the 789 total non-profit organizations that participated in the 2016 Omaha Gives! – the Siena/Francis House finished the day with the 2nd highest number of unique donors. And, with all of our matching and prize monies factored in, the Siena/Francis House also finished the 2016 Omaha Gives! with the 3rd highest donation amount – $234,750! The Siena/Francis House would like to thank everyone who donated that day, which made this year’s Omaha Gives! the single largest fundraising day in the 41-year history of our homeless shelter.

A big thank you also goes to the Omaha Community Foundation for coordinating this event, and to the many local foundations and businesses that provided funds to enhance and amplify the gifts to charity that day. Complete information regarding the Omaha Gives! event can be found at https://omahagives24.org.
Volunteer Corner

All Ages Events!!!!

Get registered for one of our all ages events this fall/winter. No age restrictions and no orientation necessary. Limited spaces available per event, so the time to register is now.

- November 6th, making Veterans Day cards.
- December 4th, creating ornaments for campus holiday trees.
- December 18th, share your holiday spirit while making holiday cards for our guests.

Want to get engaged in service?

Attend one of our monthly Volunteer Service orientations to find out more about the Siena/Francis House and the opportunities available to you. *Registration Required.

Did you know?

You can find information about upcoming volunteer events on Facebook, JustServe.org and United Way of the Midlands!

Contact Stephanie Beister, Community Engagement Specialist at 402-637-5063 (I text also) or stephanie@sienafrancis.org for more info.

Spread the joy this Holiday Season by Caroling

We are seeking groups to sing to our guests while they eat their evening meal. Volunteers must provide own set list and accompaniment (acapella groups favored). Groups of 10 or less preferred.

Sign up available at United Way of the Midlands! Uway.org/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities.
Christmas Celebration
at the
Siena/Francis House Homeless Shelter

The Siena/Francis House has much to be thankful for this year. And, at the top of our gratitude list are our wonderful donors and volunteers who have been so generous in supporting our mission of serving the nearly 4,000 homeless men, women and children who sought assistance this past year.

As Christmas Day approaches, the Siena/Francis House is asking for your assistance in helping make it a truly special one for the hundreds of homeless children and adults who will wake up in our shelter that morning... and for their family members. Will you please consider purchasing an extra Christmas item or items to donate to the Siena/Francis House? These items will become presents for our homeless guests and their family members this Christmas season.

Please know that it will take the combined effort of many, many individuals, organizations, schools, businesses, and families in order to bring smiles, cheer, and Christmas gifts to over 1,400 children, women and men during the Christmas Season.

Below are some helpful hints for you regarding this request for donated Christmas gifts:

• In this newsletter is a list of Christmas gift ideas and suggestions for all age groups. We also welcome gift certificates to various retail stores, which we provide to those “hard-to-buy-for” teens and young adults.

• We ask that all gifts be unwrapped when you deliver them.

• Please deliver your gifts to the loading dock of our Baright Shelter, located at 1111 North 17th Street. The dock is open from 8 am until 5 pm every day. You will be given a receipt for your donation at the time you deliver your gift(s).

• We would appreciate it if all gifts could be delivered to the Siena/Francis House's loading dock by no later than Sunday, December 11, 2016.

• Please email or call Siena/Francis House staff member, Beth Haig, if you would like an update of the “most needed” items, or for further information. Beth can be reached at BHaig@sienafrancis.org or via her office phone at 402-341-182, extension 1166.

Thank you for considering this request.... ....and Merry Christmas from our house to yours!

Do you have friends who may be interested in knowing more about the Siena/Francis House? We would be happy to send them the twice-yearly Siena/Francis House newsletter. Please feel free to contact Kristi Miskimins (kmiskimins@sienafrancis.org), Dawn Olijnek (dawn@sienafrancis.org) or Tim Sully at (tsully@sienafrancis.org) – or by phone at 402-341-1821 – for more information. Please also contact Kristi, Dawn or Tim if you wish to only receive Siena/Francis House information toward the end of the calendar year, or to be removed from our database.
**NEWBORNS**
- blankets or quilts
- sleepers & onsies (size newborn to 24 months)
- basic clothing, socks
- interactive toys

**BOYS: Toddlers - Grade School**
- action figures
- cars and trucks
- footballs, soccer balls, basketballs, baseballs & gloves
- models, Magnetics & Legos
- (no guns, knives or swords please)
- games and puzzles
- coloring and activity books, markers and colors
- art, craft and activity sets

**GIRLS: Toddlers - Grade School**
- dolls, clothing and accessories
- jewelry, play makeup, hair accessories
- stuffed animals (huggable!)
- art, craft and activity sets
- coloring and activity books, markers and colors
- games and puzzles

**JR. HIGH - HIGH SCHOOL**
- MP3 players, iPods
- watches and jewelry
- wallets and billfolds
- art, craft and activity sets
- games and puzzles
- baseballs, gloves, footballs, basketballs, soccer balls
- hooded sweatshirts, flannel and fleece

**ADULT MEN & WOMEN**
- watches and jewelry
- wallets and billfolds
- manicure sets and nail clippers
- cologne and perfume
- hooded sweatshirts, fleece and flannel (sizes small to 5X)
- MP3 players, iPods
- Flat irons and blow dryers

**CHILDREN, WOMEN & MEN**
- socks, underwear, long johns
- gloves and hats
- backpacks and sports bags
- batteries (AA, AAA, D, 9 Volt)

Another terrific gift option is to donate gift certificate(s) to retail stores, such as: Department Stores; Discount Stores; Specialty Clothing or Shoe Stores; Athletic Stores; Restaurants; Grocery Stores, Book & Music Stores and Pharmacies.

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR CONSIDERING PURCHASING CHRISTMAS GIFTS AND/OR GIFT CERTIFICATES FOR OUR HOMELESS GUESTS AND THEIR FAMILIES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!**

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**DONATE USED AUTOMOBILES**

Do you have an old car, truck, or van that you’re not sure what to do with? You may wish to consider donating it to the Siena/Francis House.

Through this donation, you will provide a “hand up” to a person in our addiction recovery program who is graduating and moving out of the House and onto his or her own. Besides the satisfaction you will get for helping this graduate to become a contributing member of our community, you will also receive a letter of receipt, allowing you to claim a “fair market value” deduction for this vehicle donation on your 2015 taxes. Please contact Siena/Francis House Development Director, Tim Sully at tsully@sienafrancis.org or at 402-341-1821 if you have any questions regarding making a vehicle donation.

On behalf of the graduate who will greatly benefit from your donation, thank you, in advance, for your thoughtful consideration.
WILL YOU PLEASE HELP STOCK OUR SHELVES? WE NEED:

PERSONAL HYGIENE
- deodorant
- shampoo, conditioner
- bath soap
- disposable razors
- shaving cream
- shower gel
- hand & body lotion
- lip balms
- toothbrushes/toothpaste
- combs & brushes
- foot powder
- perfume
- men’s cologne
- adhesive bandages
- antiseptic cream
- antacids
- pain relievers
- Q-Tips

PAPER/PLASTIC
- toilet paper
- feminine hygiene products
- tissues
- napkins
- paper towels
- trash can liners (13 & 55 gallon)
- aluminum foil
- plastic wrap
- 8 oz. styrofoam cups
- paper plates
- sandwich bags
- brown paper lunch bags
- rubber gloves
  (for cleaning, Large, XL)
- plastic gloves (serving in kitchen)

KITCHEN
- silverware
- cooking/serving utensils
- dinner plates, bowls
- coffee cups
- sheet pans – commercial size

LINENS
- bath towels
- wash cloths
- sheets (for twin/single beds, only)
- blankets (for twin/single beds, only)
- pillows/pillow cases

BABY ITEMS
- disposable diapers
- bottles
- formula
- baby food
- bibs
- diaper bags
- t-shirts
- sleepers
- socks
- powder
- baby oil & lotion

CLEANING PRODUCTS
- dish soap
- laundry soap (powdered)
- liquid bleach
- liquid disinfectant
  (e.g. Pine Sol)
- oven cleaner
- powdered cleaners/cleansers
- brooms & dustpans
- sink & tub disinfectant cleaner
- mops, buckets, squeegees

CLOTHING (FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF ALL AGES)
- coats
- sweatsuits
- hoodies
- jackets
- pants
- shorts
- shirts
- tops/blouses
- underwear & other
- undergarments
- long johns
- socks
- shoes
- boots
- gloves
- mittens
- scarves
- handkerchiefs
- belts
- shower shoes/flip flops

FOOD
- canned fruits & vegetable
  (larger, #10 cans preferred)
- frozen meat (professionally-processed)
- lunch “deli” meats (for sack lunches)
- chips/treats (for sack lunches)
- bottled water
- coffee (caffeinated, non-flavored)
- coffee creamer
- eggs
- butter/margarine
- peanut butter
- jelly
- cheese
- parmesan cheese
- milk
- pasta/egg noodles
- pasta sauce
- tomato sauce
- tomato paste
- pancake mix (larger bags or boxes preferred)
- syrup
- ketchup
- mustard
- mayonnaise
- salad dressing
- tartar sauce
- vinegar
- cooking oil
- spices (especially chili powder, oregano, granulated garlic, sweet basil, parsley, cumin powder)
- salt & pepper packets
- sugar
- fruit juice
- salsa
- instant potatoes
- rice
- flour
- soup (larger, #10 cans preferred)
- fresh produce (in season)

MISCELLANEOUS
- MAT bus ticket books
- batteries (AA, AAA, C, D, 9-volt)
- masking tape
- pens, pencils, markers, crayons
- spiral notebooks
- folders (for schoolwork)
- 3-ring binders
- copier paper
- maintenance tools
- backpacks
- duffel bags

All in-kind donations can be delivered to our loading dock, located at
1111 North 17th Street, open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day of the year.