



WORD ON THE STREET

Housecalls for the Homeless is a street medicine program of Upstate Medical University, providing medical, psychiatric, and addiction care services for men and women experiencing homelessness in Syracuse and Onondaga County.

SUMMER 2022

FOSTERING DIGNITY THROUGH STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

One critical aspect of the Housecalls for the Homeless (Housecalls) mission is to bring dignity to our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness by providing nonjudgmental medical care. Through responsible planning and management of assets, we carefully steward our resources to support our mission.

Having a sense of dignity is dependent on how we are viewed and treated by others, as well as our own self-image. People experiencing homelessness often struggle to see their self-worth. Their dignity has been eroded over time and homelessness can create social isolation and the feeling of being dehumanized.

For people to experience dignity they must have interactions with people in their environment that validate their worth. Dr. David Lehmann and his team of medical students focus on fostering dignity during every interaction. They realize dignity can be promoted or undermined in every encounter they have with a person experiencing homelessness. Providing medical care without promoting dignity reduces the benefit



of the resources being offered. Conversely, paying close attention to our brothers' and sisters' needs, and responding to those needs in a caring and respectful manner helps to affirm their sense of self-worth.

An initiative that highlights Housecalls' careful stewardship of resources to promote better health and dignity is our dental care program. Lack of access to dental services can have a profound impact on the quality of life of a person experiencing homelessness. Poor oral health and poor general health go hand-in-hand. Through generous donor

support, we have been able to fund care from a local dentist, Dr. Michael Romano. This initiative has had a profound positive affect on the physical health and sense of self-worth of our patients.

Promoting dignity through the responsible management of assets is a Housecalls priority. Treating patients where they are currently — in a nonjudgmental way — heals their bodies, while nourishing their souls.

HOUSECALLS FOR THE HOMELESS INSPIRES YOUNG MEDICAL STUDENT

Hallie Buddendeck is a second-year medical student at Upstate Medical University and volunteers her time to work with Housecalls.

Hallie grew up in Webster, NY, a suburb of Rochester. When she was just 9 years old, she was diagnosed with Crohn's

disease, a painful inflammatory disease of the gastrointestinal system. Sadly, the first doctor her parents took her to was very dismissive of her symptoms. Fortunately, Hallie's parents advocated for her and ultimately found her an extremely

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A SHARED FAMILY TRAGEDY

By Dr. David Lehmann, Co-founder Housecalls for the Homeless

Addiction is the robber who strips us of our clothing of joy, that leaves our spirit half-dead, deeply wounding our sense of self-worth. Addiction steals our very soul. Yet this theft can never be complete, it can never eradicate the inherent goodness and our innate human dignity that lies deeply inside each one of us.

Let me introduce you to Darryl and Dennis, two family members struggling with the demon of addiction.

Despite his profound struggles with his own inner, spiritual demons – which, in turn, sapped his physical strength — Darryl introduced Dennis to John Tumino, founder of In My Father's Kitchen, saying "Dennis is looking for a job and really needs a sturdy new pair of shoes. I love my nephew. Please take care of him for me."

When John met Dennis and gave him that first pair of shoes, it was apparent that Dennis had the same innate goodness inside of him as Darryl — his concern for his Uncle Darryl shone brightly from within Dennis.

Like us, Dennis was deeply troubled seeing his Uncle Darryl waste away from lung



Steve Lucas (student) with Darryl

disease and chronic substance abuse. This tore at Dennis' heart, while he battled his own demons.

Despite the need for food, clothing and medicine, Dennis was concerned that we try to help his beloved uncle. Indeed, with each subsequent encounter we had with Dennis on the street, this concern, this

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PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TODAY!

Your Housecalls donation helps fund medical supplies, medications, vision and dental care, personal care items and emergent program needs.

Heartfelt thanks to all of our Housecalls donors, including G&C Foods; Upstate's electronic medical record system provider, Epic; the Amos Family Foundation; and the Alden Street Foundation.

We appreciate you!

- Donate online at www.UpstateFoundation.org/Housecalls OR make your check payable to Upstate Foundation with "Housecalls" in the memo and mail to Upstate Foundation, 750 E. Adams Street, Syracuse, NY 13210. For more information, call 315-464-4416.
- Host a Facebook fundraiser. For details, <https://www.upstatefoundation.org/facebook-fundraisers>

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: MIA RUIZ-SALVADOR

Meet Mia Ruiz-Salvador, co-founder and program coordinator for Housecalls. (Or as we lovingly refer to her, the “queen behind the scenes!”)

Mia has a BA in geography-anthropology from the University of Southern Maine, though it did not lead her into the teaching profession as her professors had suggested it would. It has, however, led Mia down pathways of engaging with indigent people from all walks of life: from a women’s craft cooperative in a poverty-ridden sector of Guatemala City to a neighborhood advocacy organization in Portland, Maine, promoting its focus on educational programs as a pathway out of poverty.

These experiences eventually led Mia to work side-by-side with Dr. David Lehmann, whom she admires for his compassion, ingenuity and drive to work outside of the box. (It was Dr. Lehmann who inspired Mia to get involved in the world of street medicine – when she accompanied a group from



Upstate to provide healthcare on the streets of Ecuador and recognized homelessness in Ecuador paralleled homelessness on the streets of Syracuse.)

“I am grateful to be part of this ever-growing initiative, to help mold it, complementing Dave’s straightforward approach and caring touch to our underserved friends,” said Mia recently. “Dave’s

enthusiasm for teaching, combined with my proficiency for building strong working relationships with other community resources, our own Upstate departments, and our dedicated student body, have provided a unique chemistry that has allowed Housecalls to grow in its mission.”

Mia’s hope for the future is that Housecalls will be able to continue to expand its breadth of services to those most in need, and to create a new generation of providers who will drive the program forward in the future.

“KEVIN” REMINDS US IT’S ALWAYS SOMEONE’S FAMILY OUT THERE

Kevin was an avid snowmobiler and ATVer when, at 19 years old, he rolled his vehicle over and suffered a traumatic brain injury, requiring an extensive rehabilitation period after his accident.

Although Kevin was surrounded by a nurturing and loving family, he succumbed to a downward spiral of events that culminated in a prolonged period of homelessness. His path crossed with that of In My Father’s Kitchen (IMFK) and the Housecalls team in the summer of 2018.

Now in his mid-20s, Kevin came to the IMFK van for nourishment, but voiced concerns over the development of intermittent unilateral facial numbness. Dr. Lehmann performed

a thorough neurological examination, which revealed no abnormal neurological findings – and reassured Kevin he was not suffering a recurrence or progression of his traumatic brain injury.

Later that day, IMFK’s John Tumino uploaded a photo and brief vignette of Kevin to the IMFK Facebook page. A few days later, John received a Facebook message from Kevin’s mother that read: “I had lost touch with Kevin over the past years since he was on the streets. I was afraid he was dead. He is alive! Thank you!”

This is just another example that no one is invisible. It is always someone’s family member out there!

A SHARED FAMILY TRAGEDY, CONTD.

faithful friend, this good Samaritan that lay within Dennis shone forth from his soul to be the advocate for his uncle.

Dennis and Darryl were from the highways and the hedge-rows. Regardless of their circumstances, they were kind

and compassionate men who deeply cared for each other. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, they both succumbed to their demons, and died from opioid overdoses six months apart.

HOUSECALLS FOR THE HOMELESS INSPIRES...

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compassionate doctor. This doctor became a role model for Hallie and her primary inspiration to attend medical school.

While studying at Upstate, Hallie attended a club fair and was introduced to the Street Medicine Club and Housecalls. After hearing Dr. Lehmann speak about his experience, she was excited about the work and immediately signed up.



Although medical school is extremely demanding and students do not have much time outside of textbook and lecture studies, Hallie knew that she wanted to devote her free time to this program. Hallie explained, "It is easy to make time for things that make you happy. Our friends experiencing homelessness are amazing people, and it is an honor to hear their stories and serve them in any way possible. Dr. Lehmann is an amazing mentor. He has taught me that it is okay to be wrong. When he presents a case to me, he asks many questions to lead me to a diagnosis and treatment. Some questions I simply don't know the answers to and that's okay. I used to not guess the answers for fear of being wrong, but I've gotten a lot better about making educated guesses. I have also seen a lot of clinical manifestations, including ethanol toxicity in Wernicke encephalopathy, trench foot and serous otitis media."

Volunteering with Housecalls has not only provided Hallie with the opportunity to practice medicine and expand her medical

knowledge, it also helped her realize how much she enjoys longitudinal healthcare. While Hallie is currently unsure what area of medicine she wants to specialize in, Housecalls has helped her to identify specialties that she does not want to pursue. Working with Dr. Lehmann has also helped her to realize that people are not fragile and it is hard to solve patients' problems if someone is timid.

Hallie was surprised at how grateful the people she treats are for the care they are receiving. "Every time, I am astounded at how thankful our friends who come to In My Father's Kitchen are. I did some simple foot care on a gentleman, and he was unbelievably appreciative. It made me realize how little things we take for granted are so important," she said. "Taking a minute to listen to the frustrations of the people you are caring for goes a lot further than a diagnosis and some medication."

Hallie highly recommends volunteering with Housecalls to her fellow medical school students. She believes that when you move to a new city, especially if you are expected to care for the people of that city, you should interact with all communities. "This is the only way to know how to improve the systems we are part of," she said, "Students volunteering with Housecalls should expect to confront and appreciate how privileged we are. They also should expect to learn about a new disease or differential diagnosis with Dr. Lehmann every time! There is always something new to learn."

The Syracuse community is very fortunate to have such bright, compassionate and talented medical students, like Hallie, volunteering their time to serve our friends experiencing homelessness. Hallie, along with more than twenty of her peers who volunteer with the Housecalls team, is well on her way to becoming a compassionate physician.

HeARTS FOR THE HOMELESS FUNDRAISER – OCTOBER 13, 2022

Those familiar with fundraising know it's often as much work as it is fun, but those who organized and attended the first FUNdraiser for Housecalls in 2019 really did have FUN! Featuring custom-designed chairs from local artists and other U.S. cities, our silent auction CHAIR-ity event was festive, artsy, and tasteful – thanks to food provided by Carrabba's of Fayetteville. Best of all, we were able to raise \$26,000 for Housecalls!

Planning is underway for our HeARTS for the Homeless fundraiser - an evening of appetizers, wine and beer followed by an auction of artwork donated by local and national artists. The event will take place on October 13, 2022 at St. Lucy's Auditorium, 421 Gifford St., Syracuse. Artists interested in donating work should contact Dina DeSorbo at (315) 682-0339 or email vitraser5@aol.com. All proceeds will help Dr. David Lehmann and his volunteers provide valuable healthcare to our friends experiencing homelessness.