



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.

SPRING 2023

THANK YOU – HEARTS FOR THE HOMELESS

In the fall of 2022, we held a successful art auction that raised over \$30,000 to support our work with people experiencing homelessness. Whether you purchased a ticket to the event, bid on a piece of art, donated art, or were one of our many generous sponsors, your donation has had a profound impact on the work that we are able to do. Because of your support we are able to provide lifesaving dental work, medical care, psychiatric and addiction safety-net services to our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness in Central New York.

Fundraising is an important and necessary part of what we do at Housecalls for the Homeless. In addition to raising funds to help support our mission, it gives us the opportunity to bring people together who have a shared interest in providing care for some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We are acutely aware that we cannot do the work that we do



without the support of our donors. Thank you for your generosity and directly impacting our ability to carry out our mission.

NEW ENDOWMENT HELPS SECURE THE FUTURE OF HOUSECALLS FOR THE HOMELESS

by Carolyn Hendrickson

Ensuring that medical, psychiatric and addiction care services are available today and into the future for men and women experiencing homelessness in Syracuse and Onondaga County has always been a focus of David Lehmann, MD, and his team. That reality is closer than ever, now that the Housecalls for the Homeless Endowment has been established at the Upstate Foundation. The endowment was created with a generous gift from an

anonymous donor, as well as support from Lehmann and several additional donors.

"This is exciting news for Housecalls for the Homeless," explained Carolyn Hendrickson, director of planned giving at

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PROGRAM STAFF

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information, contact
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WELCOME OLIVIA – PROGRAM COORDINATOR

We are thrilled to welcome Olivia Tanner as our program coordinator!

David Lehmann, MD, first met Olivia a couple of years ago while she was volunteering at the Poverello Health Center, on North Salina Street in Syracuse. Despite being a wife and busy mother of three children, Olivia is passionate about pursuing a career in medicine. This passion stems directly from her desire to serve the needs of the most marginalized people living in our community.

Olivia is completing a master's program through the Commonwealth-Geisinger School of Medicine. She will be taking the MCATs this year in anticipation of applying to medical school.

Her experience as our program coordinator will provide her with additional practical experience as she prepares for medical school. It will also provide Housecalls with an enthusiastic, hardworking, and loving partner to advance our mission of serving our sisters and brothers experiencing homelessness.



Olivia Tanner, program coordinator.

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TODAY!

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

A heartfelt thanks to the Alden Street Foundation for your faithful and generous partnership.

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>

THE HARDSHIPS OF ONE, THROUGH THE EYES OF A PSYCHIATRIC INTERN

by Dr. Matthew Rebel

When I first met Mark, he was sad but resolute. He had not had a safe place to sleep in months. He had been threatened at the local shelter by other attendees and been further threatened away from the camp he made underneath a nearby bridge.

Mark wore the effects of years of hardship on his face. The practical everyday realities of being homeless weighed on him. He hated that he was filthy, tired, constantly scared, and he hated having to rely on others. He wanted nothing more than to have somewhere to sleep at night, a shower and a cup of coffee in the morning. Mark was willing to work for a better life, but Multiple Sclerosis, multiple heart attacks and strokes left him physically disabled. The self-perpetuating cycle of homelessness, the lack of an address, transportation, and a series of bad personal choices, including some prison time, left him unemployable, desperate, and depressed. He pleaded with us to find him somewhere to stay. It was heartbreaking not to be able to provide him with basic necessities needed to turn his life around.

The next time I saw Mark he was actively suicidal with a plan and intent. He had taken an entire bottle of pills, but fortunately had chosen a medication with little danger of overdose. He stated he desperately wanted to jump off the nearby bridge and drown. He threatened to take all his prescription medications at once to end his life. He was no longer hopeful for a better future; he just wanted the pain to stop. We convinced Mark to go to the hospital with us. Even if they could not help him with therapy or medications, a few days of inpatient care would give him a bed, a shower, and some hot meals. Just as importantly, it also provided us with some time to try to fix his housing situation.

I called ahead to the hospital, so they were prepared for his arrival. I warned them about putting him in an observation room given his past prison trauma. I waited with him in the Emergency Department for hours. I wanted to make sure he would not give up. When he was finally brought back, it was to an observation room. Mark would not go near it. He felt betrayed and immediately demanded to leave. I was devastated and felt like a villain and a failure.

I ran into Mark two days later. He did not hold a grudge, but he looked terrible. He had been mugged and had a massive



Matthew Rebel, MD.

bruise on his head from a pipe wrench. Mark's bank cards and phone had been stolen. We were nearly ready with his housing, but he no longer had access to his money to pay for it. I agreed to take him to the bank to try to fix the situation, but he did not show up. A week later I learned that Mark had suffered a series of massive strokes, likely due to being robbed of his medications.

Even though Mark's prognosis is poor, I try to look at this experience as a blessing. I tried to relieve his suffering, and in the process he taught me about the challenges this patient population faces, and the resilience that practitioners, like me, need to have to help them. These are lessons I will carry with me throughout my career.

WE ARE GOING TO NEW PLACES IN OUTREACH

by Mia Ruiz-Salvador

The new van is almost complete.

Housecalls for the Homeless was founded in the Spring of 2018. As a means to reach the people we needed to help, David Lehmann, MD, and I were lucky enough to make a wonderful connection with John Tumino and his team at In My Father's Kitchen. They introduced us to individuals living on the streets and in places not fit for human habitation, who relied on the services provided by IMFK and also needed medical attention.

We found that In My Father's Kitchen and Housecalls for the Homeless have common ground: Hearts to serve the homeless in the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County, and over time, that our programs very nicely complemented each other.

In the Fall of 2022, In My Father's Kitchen received federal funding from HUD that was



allocated through the City of Syracuse, Office of the Mayor, allowing our program to move forward with a new medical van.

The van will be built-out for street outreach services as well as making it more comfortable for our friends receiving medical treatment by the Housecalls for the Homeless team.

While we have provided some amazing care in our current van, it was never intended to house a medical component with medical students and doctors riding along. This new mobile medical outreach van will not only serve to bring dignity and quality care to our friends outdoors, but it will provide a safer more specialized environment for the medical team.

Stay tuned, as we will be introducing the new van in a more public space once the build is complete!

NEW ENDOWMENT, CONT'D

the Upstate Foundation. "Having an endowment represents permanency and long-term thinking by Dr. Lehmann and other leaders of the program."

Endowments are lifelong funds in which the principal sum (consisting of all donations made over the lifetime of the fund) remains permanently invested and generates investment returns that can be spent for the purpose of the endowment, or reinvested. The purpose of the fund is to support the work of Housecalls for the Homeless in Syracuse and Onondaga County.

Working with the Upstate Foundation, its board of directors and investment fund managers gives confidence to Lehmann that the endowment will grow over time and into perpetuity, thus continuing his legacy of caring for a vulnerable population and the program for which he so deeply cares.

If you would like to invest in the future of this program for the sake of the homeless in our community, please use the enclosed envelope or go online to <https://www.upstatefoundation.org/page.aspx?pid=298> Anyone interested in supporting the Housecalls for the Homeless Endowment with a gift from his or her estate should contact Carolyn Hendrickson at HendricC@upstate.edu or 315-464-6490.



Housecalls for the Homeless board Chair Dina DeSorbo, left, David Lehmann, MD, and Carolyn Hendrickson, director of planned giving at the Upstate Foundation, announcing the newly established Housecalls for the Homeless endowment at the Upstate Foundation.