

## HOMELESS IN THE HEAT

Before it gets excruciatingly hot in Charleston, there are those early days of summer when the warm sun hits our faces and we know the chilly winter is finally behind us. This is an exciting and happy time for many of us – children are out of school, long evenings provide for fun outdoors and our long-awaited vacations are finally here. As the summer wears on, we grow just a little weary from the extreme heat and humidity a Charleston summer brings. The outdoor fun seems a little less so and we seek relief in the comfort of our air-conditioned homes or on our porches with the fans whirring to keep us cool.

Imagine now, that you had nowhere to go to beat the heat. For those struggling to survive without a home, summertime does not bring outdoor fun, vacations or a cool place to retreat when the hot summer sun

gets to be too much. In many places, and especially in Charleston, homeless individuals are at a greater risk in the summer than during the winter. While homelessness often receives significant attention during the colder months and around the holidays, the number of people without a home actually increases during the summer.

During an unusually cold winter this past year, Crisis Ministries brought in anyone who had nowhere else to go. As the temperatures rise, we must do the same this summer. Staffing a full building during the day and an air conditioner that never stops running puts a strain on resources. Like most of you, we will look wide-eyed at our next electric bill, but only for a fleeting moment because we know no matter the cost, the price is worth it. So, as we approach these dog days of summer,

let's remember those that rely on Crisis Ministries to provide a safe place and the necessities they need to survive the heat including access to water and a cool place to be during the hottest part of the day. Consider a gift this summer to help us help those in need beat the heat. ❄

### How You Can Help

In addition to monetary support to continue providing a safe haven from the heat, Crisis Ministries could also use sunscreen and powdered sports drink mix, i.e. Gatorade or Powerade. To conduct a Summer Supply Drive, contact Brad Cashman at [bcashman@charlestonhomeless.org](mailto:bcashman@charlestonhomeless.org) or (843) 723-9477.



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*Crisis Ministries provides food, shelter and hope to end homelessness and hunger one person at a time, one family at a time.*

# at the SHELTER

**Crisis Ministries**  
food • shelter • hope

SUMMER 2010

## ONE VETERAN'S STORY

Although the Vietnam War ended 35 years ago, the effects on those who served can be seen every day at Crisis Ministries. Each year, over 50 veterans who served during the Vietnam era find themselves at Crisis Ministries – homeless: in need of help, in need of hope.

Thomas Williams served in the United States Army from 1968 to 1971 and earned a Purple Heart for wounds he suffered during hostile fire in Vietnam. For the next 38 years, Thomas struggled with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and a number of chronic conditions. Thomas often turned to drugs and alcohol to ease his mental anguish and physical pain.

In 2009, Thomas hit an all time low. After being released from the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston for emergency medical treatment, Thomas found himself with no place to go. Thomas spent his first night at Crisis Ministries on May 10, 2009. As is often the case, an individual's veteran status is discovered during Crisis Ministries' Intake and Orientation process. Once Thomas' Veteran status was confirmed, he was placed in Crisis Ministries' Transitional Program and moved from the emergency

shelter into the Veterans Dorm where he could begin to heal and rebuild his life.

Thomas did not immediately accept the help being offered. He had survived for so long using drugs and alcohol, he was in a state of denial about the negative impact his use had on his life. Reluctantly, Thomas went through the steps required for participation in the Transitional Program. He received intense counseling and was given many chances to "fit in" with the program. Thomas' Case Manager, Willie Collier, knew Thomas could stay clean and sober if he would just commit to the program. Willie worked diligently to help Thomas come to terms with the root causes of his self-destructive behaviors and negative attitude. Willie knew that helping Thomas see a brighter future for himself was critical to keeping him sober.

One technique used to help Veterans and others battling addiction is the Life in Pictures exercise. Life in Pictures requires each Veteran to search through magazines and newspapers to locate pictures that show his or her life – past, present and future. After participating in the Life in Pictures exercise, Thomas began to see how alcohol and drugs were affecting his life. Thomas presented his



Life in Pictures to his fellow Veterans living in the dorm. The pictures he used brought back painful memories. With the support of his peers, Thomas was able to face those memories without turning to drugs or alcohol.

After six months at Crisis Ministries, Thomas became a leader and mentor for others in the dorm. He stayed clean and sober, began saving money and volunteered at the VA Medical Center. In June 2010, Thomas moved into an apartment. He had saved over three months of rent and maintained his sobriety for 11 months. ❄

## 2010 Summer Statistics

- ⬆ 27% Soup Kitchen Attendance
- ⬆ 76% Calls for Homeless Prevention assistance
- ⬆ 34% Homeless Children
- 🌡 92° Average Temperature in June

## EXECUTIVE'S CORNER



Stacey W. Denaux  
CEO  
Crisis Ministries

### WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

*If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please send an e-mail to us at [info@charlestonhomeless.org](mailto:info@charlestonhomeless.org) and put "Newsletter Response" in the title.*

*We will respond as soon as possible and will also be featuring a question in our next newsletter edition.*

If you have been to Crisis Ministries this summer, you have probably noticed a significant increase in the number of families with children staying in our Family Center. The "summer surge" happens just about every year. The reasons are varied but simple. Landlords who are reluctant to evict during winter are less hesitant when it is warmer. Parents who have endured poor housing conditions to spare their children anxiety and humiliation at school, finally pack up and leave. And relatives who have taken in families in cramped quarters lose patience when children are suddenly underfoot all day long.

Not only does summer bring an increase in homeless families, but our Soup Kitchen sees more visitors each day for lunch. Children living within walking distance of Crisis Ministries, who typically receive lunch at school, must rely on the Soup Kitchen to replace at least one meal per day. Attendance at the Soup Kitchen increased 27% from May to June. Those who volunteer in the Soup Kitchen often comment on how startling it is to see such young faces on weekdays.

Thankfully, summer also brings an increase in fresh fruits and vegetables along with young volunteers looking for meaningful ways to spend some of their summer vacation. Summer is also a time when our dedicated volunteers develop fun camp-like activities to keep children active. Going to the beach or the water park provides a great break from life in the Shelter and a sense of normalcy in an otherwise unsettled life.

Being homeless in the summer, whether an adult or a child, brings unique challenges. This issue of our newsletter is focused on some of the challenges of summer and how our community can help those in need stay safe from the heat and begin their journey back to self-sufficiency.

Stacey W. Denaux

## HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS

Poor health can contribute to being homeless, and being homeless can lead to poor health. Limited access to health care can make it worse. Countless studies have shown that the health of homeless people in the United States is much worse than that of the general population. It is also no secret that poor diet and nutrition are the primary contributors to many chronic conditions found in American society. These conditions are even more prevalent among the homeless population.

All guests of Crisis Ministries receive a complete medical screening during their first week of stay. These screenings indicate chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. Conditions that can be better managed through proper nutrition, diet and exercise.

"Healthy eating should be something that we encourage for all of our clients, not just those suffering from chronic conditions," says Lisa Cobin, Crisis Ministries' Registered Nurse.

In Soup Kitchens across America, the choices of what to eat typically depend on food donated through the generosity of grocery stores, restaurants and food drives. At Crisis Ministries, food is often plentiful and in the summer months, fresh fruits and vegetables are readily available for almost every meal.

Catering to certain dietary needs can pose a challenge to Soup Kitchen volunteers. Often, healthier options might not be available or are more costly. However, slight modifications such as cooking with herbs and spices instead of high sodium seasonings can make a big difference.

Any nutritionist will tell you "a colorful plate is a healthy plate." Vegetables such as celery, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, beets and tomatoes are great for everyone especially those managing high blood pressure. Replacing white bread with whole grains helps those with diabetes better control their blood sugar. Skipping sugary desserts and adding fresh fruit adds essential vitamins needed for every diet.

We encourage you to join our Crisis Ministries' staff and volunteers in offering our guests nutritional meals. Together we can make sure healthy options are available for those who must rely on the Soup Kitchen for their meals. If you or your volunteer group have suggestions on how to provide nutritionally balanced meals through the Soup Kitchen, please share them with us – [info@charlestonhomeless.org](mailto:info@charlestonhomeless.org) or 843-723-9477x24.



▲ On the walls in Crisis Ministries' Soup Kitchen are pictures of foods that promote a healthy diet. The pictures were part of a semester-long nutrition project conducted by nursing students from the Medical University of South Carolina. The project was designed to educate both guests and volunteers about the importance of proper nutrition. Look inside for more on our healthy eating initiatives!

### TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY OFFERS HEALTHY SOUP KITCHEN OPTIONS

A group of graduate students studying nutrition at Texas Tech University conducted their own study on how to provide healthy options in local soup kitchens. As a result of the study, the students have published the Soup Kitchen Cookbook. The purpose of the cookbook is to give soup kitchens and mass feeding programs additional options for nutritious recipes that can be served in soup kitchens and homeless shelters.

Crisis Ministries has been given permission to circulate recipes and ideas from the Soup Kitchen Cookbook to our volunteers. For more information on providing healthy meal options, contact Brad Cashman at [bcashman@charlestonhomeless.org](mailto:bcashman@charlestonhomeless.org) or (843) 723-9477, ext. 124. ✕

### Portion Control – Divide Your Plate

At every meal, aim for the following:

- ½ vegetables
- ¼ starch
- ¼ meat or protein
- 1 piece of fruit and 8 oz skim milk

