How many times have you been homeless? For most of us, that answer would be never. We have never experienced the fear of not knowing where we'll sleep at night. We'll never understand the shame of experiencing something that is as surrounded by stigma as the loss of a home is.

Tika has experienced that three times. Three times she has found herself with no place to call home.

Tika could choose to be bitter because of what life continues to throw at her. Instead, she has chosen empowerment. By raising her voice, and the voices of those in similar situations, through the written word, Tika has created change. She started with a simple letter, which turned into a newsletter, which will, hopefully, someday turn into a newspaper. She wants this newspaper to be a resource for all individuals experiencing homelessness. Tika understands how hard it is to find the right resources when you don’t know where to look. She understands the fear of not knowing what kinds of help are even available. She wants to take that fear away. By publishing a newspaper, Tika would provide something for men and women that would help them know that they are not alone, that what they are experiencing is not permanent or wrong.

The first time Tika found herself without a home, she had two young boys. She described that experience as very frightening and embarrassing. First, because she had two children who were forced to experience homelessness with her. Second, because she didn’t know what her options were. Having never been homeless before, Tika did not know anything about the programs or resources available to her. She didn’t know where to go and she had no connections to other people in her new, if unwanted, community.

That’s why she cares so much about spreading knowledge. If she can help just a few people be less afraid of their situation, Tika will be happy. Her mission is just to provide the resource.

“I can’t be mad if I don’t say anything. I can’t complain if I don’t do anything. I can’t expect anything to be done if I don’t do something.”

What matters is that Tika is using her voice, her skills, her passion to create change. And because she has experienced, and is still experiencing, homelessness right along with them, people are
MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your gift has a profound and immediate impact on people like Tika.

Just $45 provides supportive housing for someone in need.

Enclosed is my gift of $_____________ to help feed, house, and empower as many people as possible. Please make checks payable to House of Charity. Feel free to use the envelope provided.

To make a credit card donation, please visit www.houseofcharity.org

☐ I am interested in leaving a gift to House of Charity in my will. Please contact me.
  Phone: (_____) __________________________

☐ My gift is in memory/honor (circle one) of: ________________________________

  Name: ________________________________
  Email: ________________________________

☐ Check here and provide your email above if you would like to receive only our e-correspondence!

EXCITING PROGRESS ON OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

House of Charity has raised $11 million, enough funds to begin construction of the housing building as soon as fall of 2018!

With the October 2017 approval of $8 million in funds from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency restricted to housing, we have the funds to build 61 studio apartments for people experiencing long-term homelessness, the foundation of our ambitious expansion.

We are thrilled to receive the full housing funding for construction of the first building of our new facilities! Because the funds were restricted to housing, we are taking some time to redesign the second phase which will include the Food Centre, outpatient addiction and mental health program, and new offices for our case managers and administration.

On March 6, a team of 18 people from House of Charity joined over 1,000 other individuals at the state Capitol to advocate for affordable housing. Staff, clients (a first for us), and board members met with their legislators to talk about the importance of supporting Minnesota’s housing continuum by emphasizing the importance of funds that will provide:

- Matching funds for communities to create and resource a Local Housing Trust Fund
- Funding for Homework Starts at Home to support students of homeless and highly mobile families
- Investments to prevent homelessness through rental assistance
- Preservation and building of over 3,000 units of housing for the lowest income Minnesotans

It is so important that we raise our voices to advocate for those who cannot.

To read the entirety of the 2018 MN Coalition for the Homeless Legislative Agenda, visit: www.mnhomelesscoalition.org

Our team at the Capitol on March 6.

// Tika's Story: continued from page 2

“...we're going to make it the best we can while we're here.”

Tika is in the midst of her third struggle with homelessness. As is it with so many individuals, homelessness doesn’t discriminate. It doesn’t matter if you have a car. It doesn’t even always matter if you have a job. Sometimes, the cost of living is just too high and you lose your home.

Recently, Tika was denied SSI and disability support, something she had been counting on despite always believing a person should have a ‘plan B’. But she refuses to wallow in her disappointment. That is why she started the newsletter for other clients, and that’s why she will eventually start a newspaper.

The work we do, every moment spent providing food and housing and treatment for our neighbors, it all means so much less if we don’t also empower the men and women we work with. Tika saw a need, she realized that the people in her community, while being cared for, weren’t being empowered. By starting her newsletter, and hopefully a streets newspaper, Tika is giving the power back to those from whom it has been taken. She is giving the voices back to the silent sufferers. Will you help us empower people like Tika, who is making far more change in the community that we could even dream up?
HOUSE OF CHARITY HIGHLIGHTS

Since the last newsletter, hundreds of people have volunteered in the Food Centre including NFL player Luke Kuechle and Timberwolves players Karl-Anthony Towns, Jamal Crawford and Jimmy Butler. HoC staff and clients have advocated at the capitol and have participated in events like the Walk for Recovery. The Mobile Menders (see right) have donated their time and skills on many occasions. The inaugural Super Ball Gala was hosted by business women from the Twin Cities and supported five different non-profits in Minnesota, House of Charity being one of those.

If you want to join the fun, visit: www.houseofcharity.org/volunteer to volunteer or advocate

THE POWER OF A BUTTON
Written by Michelle Ooley, founder of Mobile Menders

The power of a purple button. You’re probably wondering how a simple purple button would have any power. I witnessed first-hand how two purple buttons brought a grown man, named Tony, to tears. Tears of joy because his favorite shirt, that he’d had for years and was missing two purple buttons, was finally repaired. He had held on to that shirt hoping he would once again be able to wear it. A few months ago was that night.

The power of two purple buttons turned this man’s whole day around. I knew nothing of his struggles, but I knew that shirt mattered to him greatly. I did learn he had worked in the automobile industry and was a proud veteran. A table full of volunteer sewers that night saw nothing but a man who had proudly served his country and so desperately wanted to wear his favorite shirt again.

I realized a long time ago that clothing evoked an emotional connection for people. Especially when someone is struggling with overcoming an addiction or battling mental health issues. Sometimes a favorite shirt can get you through a tough day.

We mend more than clothes at Mobile Menders. We help mend the soul. We let people know that they matter and their clothes matter. We allow them to share their stories with us and vice versa. We’re building community and sharing stories and there’s an important conversation going on.

So, if you think one person can’t make a difference, I beg you to think again, because I witnessed it first-hand that night.

After founder Michelle Ooley realized there was a dire need for clothes mending in the homeless community, she organized a group of volunteers to hold events offering their skills and time to repair clothes for those in need. Since its founding in June of 2017, the Mobile Menders have grown to more than 200 volunteers and have served countless individuals. The change they have made in such a short time is enormous. They served 151 people in the first three months of 2018 and repaired 287 items.

We are reminded time and again of the power of one person who is willing to give generously of their times and skills and Michelle and her crew demonstrate that so clearly.

We are so grateful for the Mobile Menders and are continually amazed at the HUGE impact they have on our clients and, in turn, on us as we watch them give so generously to the people we serve.

Learn more about the Mobile Menders on Facebook or their website: mobilemenders.weebly.com
A NOTE FROM TODD
// Why I Chose House of Charity

Todd joined House of Charity as our Chief Program Officer in February. Before that, he worked at Pride Institute for 11 years, the last five of which he served as the Director of Clinical Services.

I’ve been asked by many people, “Why do you want to work at House of Charity?” The answer is deeply personal, and until now, I haven’t shared this with many people. During the summer of 2017, I received news that my younger sister’s cancer had returned after almost four years of remission. There was nothing else that could be done for her; she needed to prepare for her death. Throughout her dying process, she demonstrated dignity, courage, integrity, and she never gave up hope that she would beat her cancer. As a person in recovery from substance abuse and mental health issues, she never compromised her recovery, even during this overwhelming time. On November 16, 2017, she passed quietly in the early morning with her two sons and our parents at her side.

When she passed, she had eight years of recovery and, through that journey, touched many lives. My sister’s journey inspired me to evaluate my own life. I knew that I needed to re-establish and renew my sense of meaning and purpose in all areas of my life, including my vocation. My sister is truly the person that gave me the courage to “take a leap of faith” and leave my job of over 11 years where I was well established.

“Feed those in need, house those experiencing homelessness and empower individuals to achieve independence.” The HoC mission statement resonated with me and profoundly moved me. It is a mission statement so basic, yet filled with hope and the potential for changing lives. When human beings don’t have their basic needs met, life feels hostile, unsafe, and, at times, hopeless. Life becomes a matter of survival. And I believe all people deserve not just to survive but to thrive. I knew I had to be a part of something bigger than myself, where I believed my skills and talents would be utilized for the good of humankind.

My hopes and goals as a part of House of Charity are to continue to provide outstanding, person-centered and trauma responsive services to the men and women we serve. House of Charity is an expert in the field and I want to build upon this expertise. I want the world to know who House of Charity is and what we do! This includes increasing and expanding services, developing housing and finding creative ways to find housing for clients, and reaching more people who can benefit from involvement with House of Charity. Additionally, I want to continue to build collaborative relationships with our community so that we can all work together to effect change and inspire hope on an individual, organizational, community, and societal level. I am thrilled to be a part of the House of Charity family where hope and change is created and lived every day!