



## WINTER AT LINCOLN CENTER

What a wild ride the last few weeks have been at the Lincoln Center. It has been so intense that we feel compelled to share the thrills and spills with all of you our loyal supporters and benefactors.

As most of you know, our limit for occupancy was 7 persons in December, far short of what is needed to shelter those trapped on the streets during a typical winter. The city was obligated to hold us to those numbers by the terms of our conditional use permit. However the weather didn't cooperate, It turned bitterly cold, Salvation Army had a fire which limited the number of people that they could shelter, 2 low cost hotels closed eliminating the possibility of having four street residents rent a \$40 room and splitting the cost. A ten dollar reprieve from frostbite, now, for many, became impossible. Desperate, shivering, and scared they poured into Place of Hope and Lincoln Center. Every bed was filled, every recliner taken. They were sleeping on the floors and under tables. The city cited us for being over capacity and fined us. We at Homeless Helping Homeless had to make an ethical decision to do what was right, and shelter others who had no other place to escape the pain of frostbite and death. Your letters of support and financial assistance led to a temporary reprieve from the occupancy requirement. Thank you all for that.

During January, our sprinkler system became operational, and we were able to add a third bathroom and shower. Over 250 showers have made life a little more humane and dignified for people living in cramped quarters or soaked by trudging or camping in deep snow. Home Depot contributed \$25,000 in materials and committed 35 workers from over 10 stores to join the students from Saint Cloud Technical College, Habitat for Humanity and local volunteer carpenters in the construction of our long anticipated sleeping areas. A local carpenter framed up our offices and Platinum Finishes voluntarily hung and taped the drywall for our new nurses station, social workers meeting room, and reception area and entry. But all the activity was quite disruptive for our residents. They were all crowded into half the space with four times the numbers. Our staff was constantly challenged to use all the de-escalation methods they were taught during training to maintain order.

Our housing navigator, in conjunction with Outreach workers from all 3 counties, veterans' groups and Catholic Charities found housing or appropriate care facilities such as assisted living, group homes, addiction treatment centers and nursing homes for over 157 people who were formerly unhoused. We have a full-time intern from Capella University and a part time Arhms worker.

January hit! Another blast of super frigid temperatures and wind attacked us bringing in more residents and driving up our heating bills. Our staff of mostly volunteers and minimum wage employees were nearing exhaustion. But with your help we saved lives. No one froze to death;

no limbs were lost. CentraCare provided us with an outreach nurse who tended to the illnesses and afflictions of our residents. January also brought a huge increase in the number of overdoses in St Cloud fentanyl is now more commonly mixed with meth than not. It is a deadly combination. Over 19 people have died of fentanyl overdoses this past year in St. Cloud. Our staff is trained to recognize the signs of overdosing and administers Narcan, the antidote, when needed and promptly sends them to the hospital. As a result of our staff's vigilance lives were saved There has been no fentanyl, other drug or alcohol deaths among those staying at Lincoln. Thank you for the funding you have provided for staff training to make this possible.

Another concern brought up during the month was the affect the Center has on the neighborhood. Concerns about the increased population and security were raised by neighbors and businesses. The city council has recently raised this issue and set up a study session to address these concerns. This was a very productive and constructive meeting where the councilmembers and I could jointly review problem areas and suggest solutions. The number of police calls to the center were analyzed and were determined to be a good thing. Although sometimes calls were made that were trivial, staff cannot legally prevent a resident from calling 911. In the event a situation arises where an out of control individual cannot be calmed by staff both the Police and HHH want staff to be able to call for help, so that no one gets hurt. The new entry will provide more security for our residents and the fewer non-resident visits will reduce drug dealing. The new sleeping Modules will provide more privacy and security for those staying with us, thus reducing overcrowding, thefts, and squabbles.

All these extra people, extra food, additional services, and heating expense has exhausted our operational funds. What is left is dedicated to our construction projects. We are completely dependent on you and currently receive no government money. The State and local grants we have applied for will not be releasing funds until July. So we will need to depend on your generosity once again to pay for heat, rent, and staffing for the balance of the winter and spring. Anything will help. If you could just see the relief on folks' faces when told "Yes you can come in, but you will have to sleep on the floor". Sense how precious a hot cup of coffee can be after combating bitter winds for hours. We had a person come in from below zero temps with no shoes, wearing gloves on his feet. We were only able to give him socks, shoes, and new gloves because of you. We know we can count on you. You and our staff and volunteers have the same heart, the same desire to ensure that no one suffers, the same concern for everyone's dignity regardless of their shortcomings and incomes.

You may send Donations to: Homeless Helping Homeless  
PO Box 475  
Saint Cloud MN 56302  
or on our website: [Homelesshelpinghomeless.org](http://Homelesshelpinghomeless.org)

Harry, Mary and Troy