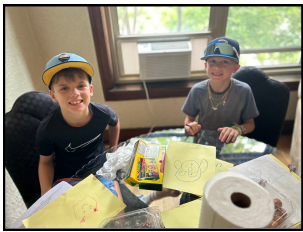


“I need help”

Three words you won't often hear me utter. It's not a pride thing, it's more that I don't want to be a burden on others. Yet, as we have found ourselves short on staff (small pitch to check out our openings on our website), I have found myself back in the daily details alongside managing my normal tasks and I have needed help to make it through the day.

If you have been around, you have undoubtedly heard me say “just show up” a time or two when it comes to how you can volunteer and spend your time with us. That can look like a lot of different things, but one important and helpful way is showing up to help clean and stage an apartment for a new family. Fall is upon us and with a new season comes an influx in applications that we see for new members at Homes at Hope Street. People are looking for stability and a sure place for their family to reside as a new school year begins. This last month we had four units to prepare in a short window of time. I am grateful for the people who responded to a social media request and



showed up to clean, stage and pray over these spaces. We welcomed four new families and were only able to do that because people responded to a need. What does this look like? It is a deep clean of an apartment unit, painting, staging the space and sometimes light handiwork (if this is your skill). We even have a task for kids which often includes leaving a welcome note(s) for the family or individual moving into the space.

With setting up a new apartment, comes assessing the state of the items left behind by the previous member. Sometimes items have surpassed their life, no longer fitting within our standard and therefore must be removed. It doesn't take long for a pile of junk to accrue by our dumpster. Our garbage collection service charges us \$30 per piece (minimum) to toss out these items. One way people have stepped in and helped us is by using their trailer to take items to the dump. Adam is one of our faithful volunteers who does just that.



The old goes out, and so we need new to come back in. I sent a text to a friend, who loves to shop at thrift stores. Even more than that, she loves to shop for furniture. She stopped at a ReStore and found us a gorgeous couch. She purchased it, put it on hold, while I messaged another friend who has a truck and willingly stopped to pick it up and bring it down in time for a new member to move in. We are always looking for gently used or new furniture items to make our apartments feel like home. In the same breath, people don't often have the proper vehicles for transporting those items to Hope Street. If you have a truck and/or trailer and are willing to help us pick items up this would be a huge help!

Recently, as we were setting up apartments we realized we are low on decor and items to make the spaces feel like home. Michelle stopped at Hobby Lobby to find some wall hangings. This is another tangible way you can step in and show up for our community - whether you like to personally find items or are willing to pick up a gift card to Hobby Lobby, Home Goods, Target or Walmart.

We have an Amazon and Target wishlist that you can find on our website if you prefer to shop for items. We are always in need of mattress protectors, twin size sheets and comforters, kitchen items (dishes, pots and pans, silverware etc) and cleaning supplies.




Last but not least, when each new member moves in we like to leave a welcome basket. This is one way we say, “we are expecting you”. It is a way to tangibly set someone up to succeed by providing basic household necessities. This includes: toiletry items, cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, a journal/devotional and an encouraging note. We accept donations that we can use to make the baskets ourselves - or you, a group of friends or family - could assemble some ready made baskets that we can gift to members when they move in.



In the midst of the frenzy, I had the honor of giving each of the new families the grand tour of our facility. Each time I opened the door to a family’s new home, the smiles, gratitude, and excitement were beautiful reminders of why we do what we do. One 5 year old exclaimed, “this is the best day ever,” as he hugged a black panther pillow that was intentionally put on his new bed. A mom with tears in her eyes, asked if she could take photos to share with her friends - and said, “I’ve never had something I’m proud of to share with others. This actually feels like home.” One of our new teenage boys made his way down to The Vine to enjoy a homemade cookie from Helen, one of our volunteers and told his mom, “I have a feeling I’m going to love it here.” Place matters. Our spaces speak louder than we ever could the love of Christ, and His desire to give us

good things. We rely on our community of supporters to help us communicate that on a consistent basis.

I have been so encouraged over the last few weeks at how people have stepped in when called upon, and it made me realize that maybe people don’t know how they can step in to best support us on a regular basis. I hope this letter helps. There are very tangible ways to help us at Hope Street, from the comforts of your home or out in the community through shopping. These are a few specific ways we can be best supported in this season:

-  **Sign up to be notified when we have a unit that needs to be cleaned and put back together for a new family or individuals.**
-  **Check out our wishlist on the website and help stock our closet with items that we use and go through on a regular basis.**
-  **Be willing to show up and step into areas where our community could use your help. There is always something to do, and it’s encouraging to know we have people who are willing to support us when we say “I need help”.**



Would you please pray for us? It is a great privilege to get to do the work we do, but it is also challenging. Please pray for endurance, patience, grace and love - His love which transforms all things.

Grateful,
Ash

Ashley N. Thomas
Executive Director