About the Good Samaritan Shelter

Good Samaritan Shelter provides safe, comfortable housing for homeless men, women and women with children in the greater Phoenixville and Ephrata areas. GSS also collaborates with local health and social service agencies to help our residents regain stability in their lives and address the issues surrounding their homelessness.

Our work is based on Christian principles and though we gladly accept men of all faiths, we ascribe God’s power to help the men through their struggles and to allow us to help them as best as we can.

We offer residents a variety of programs including computer training, resume writing, smoking cessation, budgeting and financial planning.

We are committed to having a long lasting impact on our residents. Our work demonstrates that we are committed to addressing the root causes of poverty and homelessness.
Mental Illness and Homelessness

There is a significant level of prevalence in how mental illness causes and perpetuates homelessness. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 20 to 25% of the homeless population in the United States suffers from some form of severe mental illness. In comparison, only 6% of Americans are severely mentally ill (National Institute of Mental Health, 2009). In a 2008 survey performed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 25 cities were asked for the three largest causes of homelessness in their communities. Mental illness was the third largest cause of homelessness for single adults (mentioned by 48% of cities).

Mental illness can have a very direct relationship to an individual’s inability to obtain and maintain permanent housing. Serious mental illnesses disrupt people’s ability to carry out essential aspects of daily life, such as self care and household management.

Mental illnesses may also prevent people from forming and maintaining stable relationships or cause people to misinterpret others’ guidance and react irrationally. This often results in pushing away caregivers, family, and friends who may be the force keeping that person from becoming homeless. As a result of these factors and the stresses of living with a mental disorder, people with mentally illnesses are much more likely to become homeless than the general population. Patients with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder are particularly vulnerable.

Poor mental health may also affect physical health, especially for people who are homeless. Mental illness may cause people to neglect taking the necessary precautions against disease. When combined with inadequate hygiene due to homelessness, this may lead to physical problems such as respiratory infections, skin diseases, or exposure to tuberculosis or HIV. In addition, half of the mentally ill homeless population in the United States also suffers from substance abuse and dependence (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). Some mentally ill people self-medicate using street drugs. This combination of mental illness, substance abuse, and poor physical health makes it very difficult for people to obtain employment and residential stability.

Moving forward, better mental health services would combat not only mental illness, but homelessness as well. In a survey by the United States Conference of Mayors (2008), 20% of cities listed better coordination with mental health service providers as one of the top three items needed to combat homelessness. Contrary to popular belief, many homeless people with severe mental illnesses are willing to accept treatment and services. Outreach programs are more successful when workers establish a trusting relationship.

Mission: The Good Samaritan Shelter is a Christian ministry that provides transitional housing and supportive services to homeless men, women and women with children in the communities we serve.

GOOD SAMARITAN SHELTER, INC.
PO Box 551
Phoenixville, PA 19460

Phone: 610-933-9305
Fax: 610-917-9815
Web: www.goodsamshelter.org