

The Coloradoan

Help us help our neighbors

12:32 AM, Nov. 10, 2011 |

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Comments

Let's talk. I want to take just a few moments to introduce you to a lean, grass-roots nonprofit that is making a big difference in your community: HPI, or Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

This year marks a birthday of sorts for us; for the past 10 years, HPI has been efficiently and compassionately working to prevent homelessness in the Fort Collins area. Over this past decade, HPI has been able to help keep more than 6,000 families in their homes by providing emergency rental assistance; that translates to almost 18,000 individuals, 11,000 of whom are children. HPI serves through your investment in our local families.

Think about it: A donation of \$276 has the power to keep one household from being evicted, while saving taxpayers more than \$5,000 in the services required when families become homeless. A good investment, don't you agree?

I have the privilege of presiding over the HPI Board of Directors during this 10th year of service. It has become clear to me that this nonprofit may be one of the best-kept secrets in our community. Do you know us? Have you heard of us from a neighbor or friend who needed help? Maybe your church is one that supports our mission. Perhaps you attended our first annual Gourmet Soup Supper, or plan to support us during the Nov. 17 Bas Bleu ticketed event, or even join Fort Collins youth as they participate in the public vigil to eradicate homelessness, Clothing the Cold, Warming the World, on Dec. 3 at Plymouth Congregational Church. If you don't know us, now is the time to get acquainted. Our role is to keep families all around you from falling into homelessness, but that job is getting harder and harder to do.

Our community, like many others, is struggling to help family, friends and neighbors who are less fortunate. In our school district, during this school year alone, approximately 1,021 children are receiving McKinney-Vento services for displaced children. Stimulus funds are no longer available to us to help these students, their families and others, yet the consistent and rising need for such help remains relentless. As an educator and one

who cares for children and their families, I know without a doubt that homelessness creates enormous barriers to hope, learning and believing in a future.

During this anniversary time we, at HPI, want to thank you for your many kindnesses and for the privilege of serving you and your neighbors these past 10 years. We are passionate about our mission; we're excited about moving into another decade of service but know we cannot do it without you . . . starting today. HPI can no longer afford to be one of the best-kept secrets for preventing homelessness in this community.

We need you to find us and to join in our work. Learning more about us is easy: come to an event; call our office, (970) 407-7021; check out our website at www.HomelessnessPrevention.net; inquire about becoming a volunteer friend of HPI; ask your church if it partners with us; or talk to friends who know us.

I invite you to embrace us as a charity of choice, for by doing so you will be embracing your neighbors and your community while helping HPI to continue catching families before they fall.

Jane Nicolet lives in Fort Collins.