

Subject: Report on visit to St. Anne's Place, Haven Housing

Date: Mon, 22 Jul 2019 23:00:17 -0500

From: Harriet McCleary <mcclary@stolaf.edu>

To: Inez Bergquist <bergq003@umn.edu>

Dear Inez,

This is a report of the visit Barbara Hanson and I made last Friday, 7/19/19.

Thanks for the opportunity,
Harriet

7/22/19 Report on Visitation to St. Anne's Place, Haven Housing

On 7/19/19 Barbara Hanson and I visited St. Anne's Place, which is under the umbrella of Haven Housing. The hour-long visit was very informative, and I came away with a clearer understanding of how St. Anne's operates. We were with three of St. Anne's Place staff: Sesany Fennie-Jones, Program Director of St. Anne's Place, Haven Housing, Amy Murnan, Community Outreach and Grant Coordinator, Haven Housing and Julie Kelley, Executive Director, Haven Housing. All three women were well informed and communicative. They talked with us in a conference room and then gave us a tour.

St. Anne's Place (SAP) is a house that takes in approximately 16 families of women with children who have no place to live due to many reasons: spousal abuse, divorce, loss of job, medical issues and such. Many of the women and children have experienced trauma of some kind. Each family is given a place to sleep together, three meals a day and counseling. The children are cared for in a play room/ground while the mothers are busy. Laundry facilities are present, much to the families' delight. The women receive SAP dollars for helping with tasks and for achieving goals. They are then allowed to go to the SAP Room, where they can exchange their "dollars" for things in the room. At any one time, there might be sheets and towels, play toys, hair products, books, jewelry and the like. There is no time limit on how long they can stay at SAP. Generally, the families stay around two years.

The staff takes the families on field trips to see museums, movies, swimming and other activities. The staff are careful to establish community so that the women learn trust of other people and themselves. The children also receive counseling appropriate to their needs. The house is clean and well cared for and is welcoming. They serve meals in shifts, since the dining room cannot accommodate everyone at the same time.

With all the positive actions going on at SAP, there is one negative, not of SAP's making. Apparently the Mpls. Dept. of Human Resources is in chaos. As reported by our three guides, workers there have tunnel vision and do only what is required of their jobs. The person in charge does not strive to make the department helpful to the organizations that are in its charge. They make rules that actually are unfriendly to families, and when the staff try to correct the problem, they get no support. I felt this was an extremely sad situation where a good staff is getting results but no support, support which would enable them to get even better results. The staff seem to me to be well qualified, friendly and knowledgeable. I was impressed with everything they achieve.

Harriet McCleary

Grantee Visited: Haven Housing – St. Anne’s Place – 2634 Russell Ave No, Mpls
Date/Time of Visit: Friday, July 19, 2019; 1:00 p.m.
Wells Fdn. Reps: Harriet McCleary, Barbara Hanson

Haven Housing Representatives:

Julie Kelley, Executive Director

Amy Murnan, Community Outreach and Grant Coordinator

Sesany Fennie-Jones, Program Director, St. Anne’s Place

St. Anne’s Place is one of three locations run by Haven Housing. It is the first stop for women and children coming from abusive homes or who are homeless. Care and counseling are provided by Haven Housing staff and volunteers. Children are given the opportunity to play outdoors and can be tutored in reading by volunteers. Clients can earn SAP (St. Anne’s Place) coins for doing various jobs and can spend them in a “store” which offers toys for children and necessities for the adults. The “store” is stocked with monies received from grants and with donations of new items.

The next stop, Ascension Place, provides transitional housing and comprehensive individualized support. It offers a safe and structured environment in which women can stabilize, heal and work to overcome their barriers – chemical dependency, mental health issues, histories of abuse, homelessness, incarceration, etc.

Next Step Housing is the third location of Haven Housing. It provides permanent supportive housing to women and women-led families. The City of Minneapolis regularly refers women to this location, presumably in an attempt to reduce their homeless numbers. This seriously impacts Haven Housing’s ability to transition their clients to Next Step because of lack of room. It was very clear in our meeting that this situation is very frustrating to the staff, but they seem to have no control over it. The City makes the decisions.

My impression of Haven Housing is that it offers a safe environment to women-led families who are in distress, and each staff member we met is truly dedicated to their mission. St. Anne’s Place is a very nice facility, offering three meals per day, laundry facilities and activities for both women and children. Field trips are common to the zoo, the Science Museum, and other locations.

The staff’s frustration is with the City of Minneapolis. What is difficult to understand is why the City can dictate who goes into a facility run by Haven Housing.