

GENNESARET FREE CLINIC

Volunteer Medical Services for the Homeless

"And all those who touched Him were healed." Mark 6:56

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Mental Illness amongst Homeless

Recent surveys show a higher incidence of mental illness in homeless persons surveyed in 21 U.S. cities. A 1988 study revealed that 20% of the people in shelters in Chicago and Indianapolis had previously been hospitalized for mental illness. In results this November from the U.S. conference of Mayor's Task force on Hunger and Homelessness, that number averaged 33% (and being up to 70% in Boston). Analysts believe the large percentage of homeless mentally ill stems from poor family support, stress, inpatient facilities reducing services, and poor understanding of the needs of the mentally ill. The increase may be from better reporting and surveying, fewer inpatient and outpatient services secondary to state budget cuts, and fewer persons being able to obtain or afford psychiatric care. 90% of cities responding expected the percentage to increase next year. Many of those turned away from inpatient mental health facilities end up in shelters or "on the street" according to James Scheibel, mayor of St. Paul, Minn.

In Indianapolis, tragedy struck twice this year to mentally ill homeless persons. Mental illness can be fatal when lack of self-regard is coupled with the extremes of exposure and deprivation found on the street. In order to prevent similar tragedies, GFC providers can contact the

Midtown Mobile Health Team for 24 hour intervention at 630-7791. Your action may truly save a life this winter.

GFC Budget Needs

Generally, 1991 has seen a growing number of homeless persons as well as shrinking financial support. Government partial funding, reduced donations, and increasing expenses has made it difficult to provide needed services to the poor. Specifically, GFC has been hit by the budget crunch too. Our expenses exceeded income for the last 6 months. Furthermore, our need to hire a full-time secretary (to coordinate services, see to daily GFC needs, and provide constant phone availability) makes our financial drain even more pressing. Our budget for 1992 is \$29,000 (without including pay for a full time secretary).

In spite of this gloomy outlook, there have been some pleasant surprises. A few persons committed their United Way contributions to GFC. (United Way contacted us, asked what we did, and encouraged us to submit an application.) Yet confirmation classes, businesses, and other small donations are still the main sources of revenue for GFC.

Please consider the homeless and indigent we serve if you can make a charitable donation. Gennesaret Free Clinic, a tax-deferred charitable organization, needs your support.

NEWS... NEWS... NEWS

+ Persons wishing to serve GEC as a 1992-3 Board of Directors member are requested to contact Dr. Jim Trippi at 924-5444. The Board meets every other month, there are approximately 2 committee meetings each month and members are asked to lend their talents in guiding our clinic over two years. We are looking for persons of vision who are dedicated to improving the health care of the homeless and indigent. Please consider this; your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

+ Prescriptions have been requested several times over the years. Unfortunately, GEC can not provide them because of security concerns. However, GEC tries to provide medications of most major types for patients. Most of our patients come to us because they cannot purchase medications and find these free prescription medications indispensable (pun intended). Prescriptions will have to come from private doctors' offices. An alternative may be programs like the Searle Company Patients in Need program where prescriptions are accompanied by coupons that can be obtained by calling 1-800-542-2526. GEC will try to stock items in proper amounts now that our move to new storage facilities at the INDPS Labor Unions offices has been completed. Please be patient in that this is work done by volunteers who try to keep up with the tremendous demand and complexity of our de-centralized clinic system.

+ Next months GEC Newsletter will be the start of a new format for our communication. With new layout and

appearance we hope to dress up our "voice." More importantly each issue will include medical topics, patient case histories, and news about the homeless and indigent locally and nationally. If you would like to help or have suggestions, please call Dr. Jim Trippi.

Sincere apologies to all those receiving last months' newsletter late. Our mailing was caught in post office slow downs as well as being mailed late.

Reflection

This morning on the GEC mobile unit parked at Flag Park downtown many destitute persons lined up for free hygiene items. Men were calling out, "Got any soap?" "How about any shampoo?" Men were crowding around, poking their faces into the boxes trying to see to their most basic needs. "I need deodorant" "Sorry, we ran out." "Hey man got any tooth brushes". "Skin lotion, I need skin lotion." "I see chap stick in there, gimme some." Then from the back of the crowd pushing closer and closer, the voice of a middle age homeless man asks, "Have you got any cologne?" The place erupts into bent over laughter. Another from the crowd answers, "Hey, man, what do you think this is anyway?"

In some ways GEC is like those three kings of ancient times who brought gifts to a peasant baby in a stable. Their faith moved them to depart from daily routine to bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Christ child. This Christmas when you hear about frankincense remember those we serve and have a smile about bringing cologne to the homeless.