

Housewife of Ramsey County

Elaine*’s story is far from TV’s *Housewives of Orange County*, but like some celebrities, she has a riches-to-rags story of her own. In 2006, she was happily married, working and celebrating her daughter’s college admission. Diagnosed with depression in her early 20’s, medication helped her to maintain mental health. Following the death of her husband that year, Elaine plummeted into a deep depression. Unable to get out of bed, Elaine lost her job. Without health insurance, she could no longer afford medication and instead turned to alcohol. Eventually, the family’s home went into foreclosure and Elaine was homeless. Just two years later, Elaine could no longer recognize herself in the mirror. Widowed, depressed, addicted to alcohol and living in her car, Elaine’s daughter, Sarah*, quit school to rent an apartment and care for her mom. Elaine found alcohol could

no longer tame the guilt, shame and depression she felt and she tried crystal meth. Elaine said meth did give her brief glimpses of happiness, but were always followed by bouts of severe depression. To stave off the inevitable

and get her the mental health help she needed. Today, Elaine beams with pride when asked how long she’s been sober, “I’ll be celebrating two years this Dec. 4th.” When Elaine moved into Emma Norton Residence, Sarah returned to college but still talks to her mom at least once a day. Elaine’s case manager reports that Elaine is close to graduating from the 5-Phase program, a program designed to achieve stability and build resources to get out of poverty. Elaine frequently speaks about ENS at AA and other ENS and community support service groups, “I count Emma Norton Services in my blessings every day. I got sober on my own, but this place gave me a home and a place to figure my life out so I didn’t go right back to using [alcohol and drugs] again to fix my problems. I’m very, very lucky.”

**names changed at request*



depression, she increased in the intervals of use until, she recalls, “I didn’t do anything but get high after high.” On Dec. 3, 2008 in her and Sarah’s apartment bathroom, Elaine’s battered body finally gave out and, near death, she was rushed to the hospital. Sarah worked with social services to enroll her mother in a substance abuse treatment program

Women’s Division Gives ENS a ‘Lift’

The Women’s Division of the United Methodist Church has generously given Emma Norton Services more than \$100,000 to repair the elevator. Many residents

with accessibility needs or injuries rely on the elevator every day to move independently between the four stories at the Residence. Everyone at ENS is grateful for the

Women’s Division’s life-long partnership and commitment. ENS is proud to have a partner in the United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Church.

What Can a Dollar Do?

\$50 supplies 14 roundtrip bus passes to work, appointments and support services

\$100 gives power to Emma Norton Residence for one day

\$250 provides meals for one woman for one month

\$500 pays for clean water for drinking, bathing and cooking to the 45 women at Emma Norton Residence

\$750 provides nursing staff to care for women and families for one month

\$1500 allows 10 of the 59 children at Emma's Place to participate in sports, after-school programs and summer camp

\$2500 will provide housing, food and support services to one woman for a month

'Big' Bigelow Renovation Underway

The first floor of Emma Norton Services was turned upside down and back again for a week of re-flooring. A new, hospital-grade, wood laminate floor replaced



Old, soiled carpet is replaced in the dining room.

worn and soiled carpet in the dining room, visitor room and in the hallways. The Bigelow Foundation generously donated \$55,000 to Emma Norton Services to replace unhealthy carpeting, improve safety and security at the front desk and offices, to bring drainage



New and more sanitary flooring helps prevent bedbugs and germs.

systems up to code, and to create a cleaner, brighter more welcoming environment. Construction is scheduled to wrap up mid-December.



Annual Dinner Success!

October 11 was not only a gorgeous day, but one for the record books at Emma Norton Services. More than 350 people came together for an evening of fun, excitement and philanthropy at the 2010 Annual Dinner & Silent Auction in Minneapolis. The room was packed, but silent as Verneita, of the Residence, and Robin, of Emma's Place, shared their moving

stories of struggles in poverty and triumphs on journey out. Board member and long-time volunteer, Mary Gates, was honored for her 18 years of support. The retired St. Paul teachers of Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority were also recognized as the Volunteer Team of the Year for their years of monthly volunteerism. Those giving \$100+ per month annually in the



Guests peruse auction items.

Emma's 100 Club, as well as the 18 members of the Daisy

Erbes Society (\$2500+), and the Partner Churches (annual gifts of \$2 per member) were celebrated and recognized. More than 200 items from hockey tickets to biscotti raised \$7,790 for ENS. The auction together with generous donations totaled a record \$44,000. These funds and the many other contributions raised this year will help fulfill the mission of ENS.

Rail Comes to ENS Doorstep



Quite literally, Light Rail Transportation (LRT) is coming to Emma Norton Residence's doorstep – as you know if you've tried to enter our front door in the past month! ENR residents will enjoy an LRT stop just blocks from the front door on Robert Street. Construction began this summer and will continue through 2013. Running from downtown St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis on University Avenue, LRT will provide easy and inexpensive transportation for our residents to work, appointments, social services, community resources and to 5 Phase and other classes.

Resident Gives Back

In a moving letter telling her story, Verneita describes a life of constant abuse, drugs, alcohol and prostitution that eventually led her to Emma Norton Residence. "I was tired of the street life that had consumed me for over 25 years," she said. "I wanted my life back." In May 2010, she moved from Atlanta to St. Paul to reconnect with her daughter. "For the first time in over a year, I felt relief." Verneita's daughter, a former resident, had followed in her mother's footsteps and had been living the same type of lifestyle when she decided to make a change, get sober and begin anew at Emma Norton Residence. For the first time in 20 years, Verneita saw her daughter upon arrival in Minnesota. "My son died in gang violence and I had nothing left to hold onto except my daughter. I wanted to get back the love that I had lost from her." Today, five months into her stay at the Residence, Verneita recently graduated from the 5 Phase program – a

program that teaches residents how to build and sustain stability, life skills and independence. Before graduation from the program, a



Verneita sews in her room at ENS.

woman learns that she can have an impact on her community by giving back. Verneita found an opportunity to 'give back' while on scholarship at the United Methodist Women's (UMW) School of Christian Missions in July. The conference focuses on spiritual growth and missions, like Emma Norton Services. The UMW also sew school uniform for girls in impoverished Sierra Leone. As an avid seamstress,

Verneita immediately volunteered to help sew. To date, Verneita has sewn more than 100 uniforms with more on the way. "I am so grateful that I am able to share a piece of my life by serving and helping others."



Verneita (with ENS Board Pres., Judy Phillips) recently won an award for her service.

Saying Goodbye to Gwen Ellis

Gwen Ellis, or better known to the children at Emma's Place as 'Ms. Gwen,' has been the Youth Program Coordinator extraordinaire for the past three years. Gwen has made sure the kids have received the support, tutoring, lessons and sense of community they've needed. Most recently, Gwen held a class to teach the kids table manners and meal time etiquette. Gwen's coordination of youth programs, like 4-H, and her ability to cultivate relationships with the district schools has created an 'open door' relationship with administrators and teachers. Gwen has helped to educate the surrounding community on poverty and the effects it has on children in poverty. Gwen, a

care-giver by nature, is leaving to care for her elderly mother. In a recent article about family and leadership on InsightNews.com, Gwen said of her five children, "what you plant is what you harvest." Gwen has been a strong role model to her own children as well as countless other children during her tenure. Thank you to Gwen for her hard work, dedication and compassion. She's left a lasting mark on the ENS community and will be missed by all the children, teens, mothers, volunteers and staff at ENS.

We're excited to announce Mogos Tesfagiorgis, former front desk staffer, as the new Youth Coordinator at Emma's Place

Resident's Forum: An Open Letter

"My family and I have been living here since August 2010 because of a series of things that pushed me back. I found that I couldn't hold everything alone. I lost my home of 14 years in foreclosure. It was originally my parents home and the home I was raised in. I lost it when the recession fell upon us and I was laid off from my job. The feeling of hurt – that I had let everyone down including my children and myself – when I lost our home was huge. And then I was diagnosed with colon cancer. My children and I resorted to living in a shelter for homeless families. In a span of three months, my family had been through a whirlwind. But I thank God for giving me the strength to move on, be healed of cancer and for showing me the way to Emma's Place. Emma's Place has opened the door for me and my children to have a place we can call home."

Jumpin' Jehosafats!

Jumpin' Jehosafats, a local jazz, blues and Dixieland band, generously donated their time to an August



Emma Norton Services fund-raiser and played for a delighted crowd at the White Bear United Methodist Church. Ladies from Emma Norton Residence joined the crowd to enjoy music and ice cream.

Trip to the Ordway

Several residents from the Residence and Emma's Place (EP) as well as many young women from EP received complimentary tickets to see a performance from *Bridgman Packer Dance Company of New York* at the Ordway in St. Paul on October 12. The young women at EP had the opportunity to showcase what they had learned at a recent etiquette class. Judy, a resident at the Residence, said "It was really unique. I had a lot of fun." The Ordway is has been a long-standing and generous partner of ENS, offering a door into the arts for our residents.

Nothing But Angels

I had a chance to sit down with DeBorah, a former resident, last week. I simply wanted to get a few quotes to write an article about a success story at Emma Norton Residence. What I ended up hearing was the journey of a phoenix. DeBorah moved into Emma Norton Residence in November 2009 after her AA group assisted her in moving from a shelter where she was concerned about relapsing in an environment filled with current users. At ENS, she says she learned responsibility and how to care about herself and others. Coming from the chaos of the streets – sleeping in cars and empty garages at night – she said she simply needed a place to "be" so she could get herself back in order and get back out there. She attributes the Getting Ahead program (part of *5 Phase*) at ENS as just that – an opportunity to get ahead. Since

moving on, DeBorah still faithfully takes the bus back to ENS every Tuesday and Thursday to attend a *5 Phase* class to continue her work to maintain everything she has worked so hard to achieve. "The people who come to ENS haven't been cared about at all. ENS cares. The people who help this organization are guardian angels. Nothing but angels."

DeBorah said that when she hit rock bottom in life, she was ready to walk to the Mississippi and jump in.

Thank goodness this strong, vibrant woman went the opposite direction from the river and found Emma Norton Services instead.

When she left my office, I wrote a check for \$100 to ENS. You continue getting ahead, Deborah.
-Anna Taff, ENS Development Director

Spreading Cheer this Holiday Season



*On the first day of Christmas,
the donors sent to me...*

12 paper napkins
11 paper towels
10 Lady Speedsticks®
9 kitchen trash bags
8 Swiffers® swiffing
7 Windex® cleaners
6 liquid Softsoaps®
5 Target® gift cards
4 Colgate® brushes
3 knit gloves
2 Lysol® cleaners
*...and a gift basket for
October Tenth*!*



ENS Volunteer Coordinator, Lucille Prinsen, reports that the current and biggest needs include deodorant, paper towels, paper napkins, cleaning supplies (glass, surface, bathroom & floors) and garbage bags. As everyone deserves to feel special at the holidays, ENS is once again putting together holiday gift bags for the residents (sometimes, the only gifts they receive.) If you would like to contribute to the holiday gift for the residents, we are still in need of 50 pairs of inexpensive knit gloves, alarms clocks and holiday mugs. For more information, please contact Lucille at (651) 224-1329 or Lprinsen@emmanorton.org.

**Save the Date! 2011 Annual Dinner & Silent Auction*

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