



Photo courtesy of Amethyst Place

Families in Need Find a Home at Amethyst Place

BY NIKKI SWARTZ

A staggering 2.5 million children are now homeless each year in America. This historic high represents one in every 30 children in the United States, according to the National Center on Family Homelessness.

Today, there are 10.8 million single mothers heading households raising more than 20 million children on their own. The median income for single parent women head of households with children under six years old is roughly one-fourth that of two parent households, data from the National Survey of Families and Households shows. Among all homeless families nationwide, more than three-quarters were headed by single mothers. The poverty rate for single-mother families in 2013 was 39.6 percent, nearly five times more than the rate (7.6 percent) for married-couple families.

One-third (34.4 percent) of single mother families were “food insecure, one-seventh (13 percent) used food pantries, one-third spent more than half their income on housing, which is generally considered the threshold for severe housing cost burden.

In Kansas City, Amethyst Place offers hope. Amethyst Place offers safe, drug-free, recovery housing on a campus of 38 apartments at 27th and Troost that serves more than 100 homeless women and children every day. Amethyst Place has served more than 800 women and children since opening in 2000, successfully reuniting families torn apart by drug and alcohol addictions. The services help reunite and preserve families; increase child safety and well-being; and build the capacity of mothers to create stable homes.

The Amethyst Place mission is to support women recovering

from alcohol and drug addiction and their children by providing safe, drug-free housing and individualized services to promote healthy families. The goal is for families to successfully transition into drug-free, independent housing and healthy community living.

Most of the women and their children helped by Amethyst Place have suffered considerable trauma prior to their residency: 90 percent of clients are dually diagnosed with substance abuse and a severe mental illness, and 70 percent of the children have a history of foster care or other placement not with their mother. Women who have been exploited by sex trafficking, as well as women recently released from prison or on probation make up a significant percentage of Amethyst Place’s population.

Amethyst Place serves 50-60 families each year. The average mother is 30 years old, raising two children under seven years old, with no more than a high school education, living on less than \$10,000 a year. She typically was in foster care and/or was a runaway as a youth, and she grew up in a family with a history of drug and alcohol addiction.

A family who is accepted into the program receives 24-hour supervision, collaboration with community-based case managers, as well as on-site therapy in a supervised drug-free environment. Each resident develops her own individualized treatment plan in conjunction with a treatment team made up of case managers, DSS workers, and therapists and must work, go to school or attend drug treatment at least 20 hours per week. Key services and activities provided by Amethyst Place include:



- Fully furnished apartments
- Basic life and parenting skills programs
- On-site therapy
- Mentoring program (EnCompass)
- Education and technology training
- Open-ended length of stay

More than half of Amethyst Place residents do not have a high school diploma, so the program places a strong emphasis on attaining educational goals. On-site tutors are available for residents working toward their GED or a college degree, as well as Internet access, laptops and a computer lab. The employment program, 100 Jobs for Moms, matches a mom with a business willing to provide on-the-job mentoring and support as she works and furthers her education. Since the program began in 2013, 40 moms have found successful employment with 10 employers.

A mentoring program for moms living at Amethyst Place called EnCompass pairs mentors with two women who are already friends. Meetings take place twice a month where moms and mentors share a meal. Meetings include an activity or a speaker, with a focus on solving personal and family issues to help build long-term economic self-sufficiency.

The good news is that Amethyst Place's successful graduation rate of more than 60 percent is well above the national average for substance abuse programs. A stable and supportive home is key.

To learn more about Amethyst Place's mission, visit www.amethystplace.org.



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Support Amethyst Place

Amethyst Place, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, is funded by donations and grants from the community. There are a number of ways to contribute to Amethyst Place's mission to support the recovery and enhanced quality of life for drug-affected families in Kansas City, including donating goods and services and volunteering your time. Ways you can contribute include:

- Provide childcare during evening programming for moms
- Mentor or tutor a mom and child
- Host a community party for moms and kids
- Donate furniture and household items
- Decorate an apartment
- Collect non-perishable food items
- Make a welcome basket for a mom or child

To volunteer, email lindsay@amethystplace.org or call the main office at 816.231.8782.



Lillian's, a boutique in Briarcliff Village, hosted a fundraising event July 14 and 15 and donated 10 percent of all purchases to Amethyst Place.