



BLANCHET HOUSE

FEB. 2021

NEWSLETTER



"When I first got here, I was scared. Erik said not to be and that he was just a man like me. He was a very humble, funny, and inspiring man. I will never forget him."

—Maury, resident.

"You shared your caring and unique self that always brought sunshine on a rainy day. You showed great respect to me that I will never forget. You understood the life I lived without judgment."

—Bradford, resident

"I remember being nervous as a new employee. Erik was patient and kind. He eased my nerves immediately."

—Shannon, staff

"I will remember his easy friendship. I loved working with him to pull off a great Christmas for the men."

—Kristi, staff

REMEMBERING ERIK SCHRAM

Erik Schram, age 31, died on Jan. 19, 2021. He was employed as the Residential Program Manager at Blanchet House of Hospitality where he offered guidance and empathy that comes only from lived experience.

Originally from Ft. Wayne, Indiana, he found his way to Blanchet's door when he was once in need of food, shelter, and support himself.

He was a passionate advocate for Blanchet House's services to those

with nowhere else to turn. Erik always showed great respect to the people he served and always followed his own advice to "just be a good person."

Erik's leadership, laughter, and spirit will be so missed. He set an example for all of us of how to live and serve with compassion and dignity.

On Jan. 31, residents and staff came together to share memories of Erik and what he meant to them. We are sharing a few here.

Staff and residents are grieving and are grateful for your prayers. Please consider sending an encouraging card to the men Erik mentored. We will display the cards. You can also donate to the Resident Recreation Fund in honor of Erik. He understood the importance of recreation to building a new life.



YOUR IMPACT IN 2020

517,026
meals prepared and served at Blanchet House and partner shelters

140
men given life-saving shelter and support

20,000
volunteer hours

2020 was a year of incredible need and generosity. As always our mission is to offer aid and hope to people going through difficult times. Taking care of someone's most basic needs helps them on the long path to life change. This is ALL possible because of your support. Thank you for caring for others.

650,000 lbs
of fresh food rescued from grocery stores and restaurants then prepared into nutritious meals or shared with partner organizations



Ways to Help

BY LAUREN SAY

Our staff offer suggestions on helpful ways you can support someone experiencing homelessness.

1. Better Understand Homelessness

Our neighbors experiencing homelessness share our essential humanity. Knowing their individual stories and struggles is essential to serving with compassion and dignity. Their paths to homelessness are unique, but they often share similar experiences such as:

- **Abuse or abandonment.** Many people experiencing homelessness have suffered abuse or domestic violence that forced them to flee to the streets for safety or led to mental illness, trauma, and/or addiction.
- **Addiction and Mental Health** A life-long support system is necessary to overcome the obstacles of addiction or mental illness.
- **Cost of Housing.** Affordable housing is limited and someone on a waitlist must bide their time in a shelter or on the street.
- **Employment.** A job can be difficult to find and keep if you have unad-



dressed mental or physical health issues, a criminal record, no driver's license, and no address.

2. Simply Acknowledge Them

People experiencing homelessness often feel invisible. Saying "hi" or offering a smile or nod to show that you "see" and acknowledge them can be very meaningful. If you want to offer assistance, avoid actions that can make that person feel embarrassed or judged. For example, it is kinder to say, "Would you like a blanket?" than "Your blanket is worn and dirty. Here's a new one."

Many people keep items on hand in their cars to give out, such as bottled water, snacks, or even grocery store gift cards.

"Look at what you can provide," says Debra Fresh, Case Manager at Blanchet Farm. "Listen to people, we are going to have to get uncomfortable to help."

3. Volunteer

Direct service can be the best way to better understand people experiencing homelessness while meeting the needs of others. There's a lot of waiting when you're homeless. While someone waits months on a housing list, waits for paperwork, waits for disability income, or a job to come through they need help getting their basic needs met.

Blanchet House has created many ways for you to volunteer at our facility and from home. See our website for more details and to sign up.

4. Donate Clothing or Money

"There is a large population of homeless working people, many living paycheck to paycheck," says Debra Fresh. "It's best to donate."

- The most needed clothing items are:
- Waterproof jackets, rain suits, & boots
 - Blankets, tarps, and tents

Finally, it's important to ask ourselves why we sometimes hold such high expectations and judgments about people we know nothing about? To seriously make a difference in the lives of people suffering, we must work together.

As always, thank you for taking the time to care and understand.

Help Us Celebrate 70 Years!



Our history lives in every person who has volunteered, donated, worked, or been a guest of Blanchet House and Farm. Help us preserve this history by sharing a story.

Write a memory below and return in the enclosed envelope or share online at www.BlanchetHouse.org/70Years.



Lend a Hand With Me on March 7

BY SCOTT KERMAN, EXEC. DIRECTOR

"Some days we need a hand. Some days we're called to lend a hand." - President Joe Biden at his inaugural address

In 2020, Blanchet House was called upon to lend a hand in ways like never before. We served more than 500,000 meals last year. Half-a-million meals. That is an astounding number.



I am proud of this number because of what it represents. Despite unprecedented circumstances, we successfully carried out our mission to alleviate suffering. This number reflects the dedication of volunteers and donors, who made our service possible.

At the same time, this enormous number saddens me. Half-a-million meals show the extraordinary need for food in our community. We are in a crisis.

The hunger we see daily is not only for food. There is a significant need for clothing, living essentials, and clean water—all of which Blanchet House provided in 2020.

There also is a hunger for compassion and companionship. We provide this by affirming the essential humanity and dignity of those we nourish.

The number of meals served is also a statement that you care! You cared enough to volunteer, give, and donate.

You keep me hopeful because I know you will be there to lend a hand. When Blanchet House needed a hand ourselves, you responded. Every day our staff marvels at your compassion. Our gratitude for you is boundless.

That's why I invite you to join me on March 7, for the annual Lend a Helping Hand Brunch. This year's virtual event will recognize the achievements we shared while staying mindful of the suffering of those who need our service.

The funds raised at the Brunch give Blanchet House the means necessary to offer another year of services to the people coming to our doors in desperate need of help.

Half-a-million meals are indeed incredible. And while I pray we never have to come close to that milestone again, I know that this crisis is far from over for the people we serve.

But I am hopeful because I know you will be there to lend a hand.



Join Us From Home For a Special Virtual Event

We hope to see you at the annual Lend A Helping Hand Brunch on Sunday, March 7 at 11:00 am with pre-show at 10:30 am!

RSVP and sign up to attend on our website at BlanchetHouse.org/Brunch2021.

2021 HONOREES



Jim Christianson and Ed O'Hanlon will receive the AI Riley Award. This award recognizes their lifetime of volunteer service and stewardship of our mission.



Alaska Airlines employees will receive the Fr. Kennard Award. Their service during the pandemic was critical to us being able to meet the need for meals.



Katy Fackler will receive the Service Award. She built a therapeutic beekeeping program to benefit the residents of Blanchet Farm for years to come.



Jesuit High School will receive the Founders Award for coming together to help meet the need for to-go meals by holding sack lunch drives and so much more.

Contact Brenda Ray Scott, CFRE at 503-241-4340 x103 or brscott@blanchethouse.org about sponsoring this event.



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Ways to Help Someone Experiencing Homelessness

SUGGESTIONS FROM OUR STAFF INSIDE >>

Lanterns Save Lives

Sadly a person sleeping in a tent along the I-405 freeway this past December died when a candle they were using for light and heat caused a fire. This horrific news inspired us to find a way to help our guests avoid a similar fate. Our staff did some research and found portable hand-cranked rechargeable battery-powered lanterns that can be used for light and will charge USB devices like personal heaters.

NEW
SERVICE

Blanchet House put the word out on social media asking for people to purchase lanterns and send them to us. We began offering the lanterns to our meal and clothing guests within days. So far, we have handed out more than 400 lanterns! Our guests are so appreciative of the special and valuable item.

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“Please thank the people that donated these,” said Adam. He stopped by our Saturday clothing closet looking for a sleeping bag and was so glad to also receive a hand-crank rechargeable lantern.

You can purchase a lantern on our Amazon wish list or from a local vendor for about \$17. Visit our website at BlanchetHouse.org for more information and links. Thank you.



Adam holds a rechargeable lantern that he received at Blanchet House.