Remembering Gary Haggart
A TRIBUTE TO FORMER SHELTER OF FLINT DIRECTOR

Sometimes a person comes along that makes a contribution so great that when removed it leaves a void in the wake of their absence. Here, at Shelter of Flint, we had that kind of person who went by the name of Gary Haggart. Gary, a Flint native, who graduated from Central High School and later Albion College, touched countless lives in our community. His love and devotion to Flint was evident, so much so that he chose to spend his entire career in the nonprofit sector.

He began with Flint’s Probate Court for Youth Offenders, then moved on to the Flint Downtown Development Authority. A bulk of his career was spent with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Flint. There he extended services to include high school mentors, though his greatest gift, one that will keep giving to the organization for many years to come, was the creation of the Bowling Challenge (now Bowl for Kids’ Sake), the organization’s largest fundraiser. It’s hard to get through the month of February without someone asking you to sponsor them to bowl!

Finally, he joined Shelter of Flint, where he spent the remainder of his career – including some of his retirement! He served as the Development Director, Executive Director, and later Housing Specialist. Anne Grantner, President and CEO of the Shelter remembers Gary fondly. She describes Gary as having deliberate, focused forward movement. “Gary was a connector,” says Anne, “through his many relationships within the community he was able to further the mission of the Shelter and was instrumental in affecting great change”. She remembers meeting Gary in the most unusual way in 2000 at the Bowling Challenge, where they (and a few others) shared a karaoke song. That would certainly leave an impression on anyone!

Many remember Gary using humor to connect with people, but sometimes he was an outright practical joker. In fact, some of his practical jokes are legend! It’s hard for people not to laugh when they think of the time he jumped out of a recycle bin, much to the depositor’s dismay, or when he “relocated” someone’s office to an elevator. Perhaps his most elaborate scheme was one he played on a coworker with a new car – this car was touted to get the best gas mileage around. Gary added gas to the car daily, dramatically increasing its miles per gallon, only to later take it away. This sent the owner straight to the dealership thinking they’d purchased a lemon! Humor was a key ingredient to his success, in addition to, thoughtful planning and execution!

Jody Pringle, Finance Manager, remembers that, “Gary made coming to work fun.” She goes on to share that Gary would frequently say, “If going to work isn’t fun, it’s time to start looking for a new job.” “He always made sure the work got done but, he also made sure that we had fun every day, whether it was with practical jokes, field trips, or even just an average day.” From the “fireside chats” he led, he motivated and he helped others by connecting with them on their level. He removed barriers so that people felt comfortable with him and they could get the help they needed, without fear of judgment. Jody remembers, “He genuinely liked everyone and made (them) feel like a special part of the team.” For many Gary was an inspiration. Whether you needed advice, mentoring, or a door opened, he was there.

Everything Gary did had a purpose and at the end of the day it was all about the people being served. Kelli Irwin, Director of Human Resources, recalls Gary as “having a selflessness and overall outlook on humanity” that was inspiring. Kelli goes on to say that, “his heart didn’t allow

“We gratefully acknowledge Gary’s tireless support, devotion, and dedication to Shelter of Flint and its programs. Even beyond his days as its director, you could find Gary engaged to further the mission of the Shelter. We need more people like him, working tirelessly, in our community.”

Eric Gasper, Board Chair

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Clients We Serve

Homelessness doesn’t have any one particular face, nor does it affect any one segment of our community. It is a complicated situation and can begin with a variety of causes that include unemployment, low-paying jobs, large medical bills, or the increasing cost of living that affect so many living in our community.

To some, the average age of a person coming into our emergency shelter can be shocking because that age is just 10 years old. Imagine what you think a child at 10 years old should be thinking about. Hopefully, most kids are just focused on being a kid, maybe they are beginning to exercise some independence, some might be working on adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing multi-digit numbers, while others might already be dreaming about what it will be like to go to middle school; certainly not where are they going to stay tomorrow to get out of the cold or heat.

We work tirelessly to provide stability and balance, so that a family doesn’t have to worry about where they are going to live next. This support, through comprehensive case management, is what sets us apart from other emergency shelters.

Many ask what it looks like to be a client at Shelter of Flint.

Our success in helping people begins with the initial phone call. Holding to the principle that housing is a right, and not a reward, Shelter of Flint completes a lengthy interview with each prospective client. This interview helps determine a variety of things, including what programs are right for the individual and their family’s needs. It uncovers potential barriers to housing and identifies what other services/agencies need to be involved to open the door to permanent housing.

When a client comes in they are already overwhelmed and exhausted. Imagine how hard it has been for them to be without permanent housing, maybe they have been moving around from day to day staying with different friends and relatives. It creates a level of stress that is often unbearable. Individuals and families in our emergency shelter are generally with us for 30 days, during which time we are working with them to resolve the issues that brought about their homelessness.

During the initial interview, the barriers to housing were identified and once in shelter they are now on the clock to fix those obstacles so they can move forward. This is where Shelter case managers come in; they help identify the services they qualify for and facilitate the connection. Still at the end of the day, the client must do the work.

When a client leaves the shelter, they have worked hard to find safe, affordable, and sustainable housing. In addition, many times they have found employment and have referrals to partner agencies to set up their household.

Shelter of Flint consistently reports 90% success in positive housing destinations for clients. Former clients are always welcome to come back to the Shelter to use resources, such as the computer lab and internet, as well as the medical clinic.

Remembering Gary Haggart

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for negativity. There wasn’t a person that crossed his path that he didn’t leave a lasting impression on. He never sought out credit for his great successes; he was a true unsung hero.”

Gary’s legacy is one of love, courage, optimism, humor and generosity. There isn’t a client he didn’t connect with - the glass was always half full with Gary.

Often you would see him in on a weekend, he would come in to socialize with clients and have coffee. That was the essence of Gary, connecting people and forging partnerships all for the greater good. Even into retirement, Gary couldn’t stay away, frequently volunteering his time to help keep his eye on the many properties within the Shelter’s scope. It would be impossible to count the number of smiles and laughs he provided to those facing a turbulent time of their lives along his journey.

Gary’s contributions to the Flint community were significant and lifelong. While at Shelter of Flint, Gary was nominated and subsequently won the 2009 Sybyl Award, which honors those in the community who exhibit energy, outlook and dedication to helping others. The Sybyl Award was originally created to honor Sybyl Atwood, a tireless devotee to the Flint Community.

Though we’ve said goodbye to him too early, his compassion, humor, and dedication to the people of our community lives on through those that he touched. Gary you will be missed, but never forgotten.
Medical Clinic at Shelter of Flint

Shelter of Flint is excited to welcome a medical clinic to its facility. The medical clinic provides primary care, behavioral health, and addiction recovery services to current and former clients of the Shelter, helping them to overcome barriers to medical services.

The clinic officially opened on October 14, 2014 and is a partnership between the Shelter and the Genesee Community Health Center (GCHC), which is part of the Genesee Health System. The focus of GCHC is to provide care to anyone in need, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay.

Two of the larger challenges that Shelter clients face are a lack of transportation and childcare — these two barriers might keep them from seeking care from a physician until the need is emergent. Through this partnership, Shelter clients are able to receive comprehensive services and preventative care.

Currently the clinic is open two afternoons a week, and in the coming months, the hours will be expanded to increase capacity.

Monthly Tours

We have this big, beautiful building that allows us to provide a larger amount of emergency services, so now what? How about a tour!

On the first Wednesday of each month, from 12-1pm we invite you to join us for a tour of the Shelter. The tour will include the building and grounds, after which, we invite you to stay for lunch and conversation. Some comments from previous tour goers, “I had no idea how much it looked like a home.” “As long time supporters, we never knew the extent of the services provided once a client is out of emergency services.”

To join a monthly tour or arrange a visit at another time, please contact, Meg Sprecher at 810.238.4711, ext. 305 or msprecher@shelterofflint.org.

Caterpillar Clubhouse

Through a grant from the Child Welfare Society, in 2015 Shelter of Flint will add supportive services to develop the academic and social needs of children during their time in our housing programs.

The Caterpillar Clubhouse will incorporate music, photography, arts & crafts, fitness, cooking & nutrition, personal care and smart money for teens. Programs will include activities like Snack and Chat – which gives children an opportunity to participate in a guided discussion around topics such as their hopes and dreams. Teen Time – allows teens the time to relax, play board games and time to be teens! Family Fun Night – weekly family-friendly activities or entertainment allows families to relax together.

This enrichment program will be designed to help children overcome barriers that unstable housing creates and will allow them to build a stable foundation for their future.
Volunteer Projects

Adopt-A-Family
Each year we want to ensure that our clients have the ability to exchange gifts for the holidays. This year was no exception, though we had more clients than usual and had to reach out to additional volunteers to fulfill the need. For that we are immensely grateful and proud to say that our gracious volunteers enabled 92 families to celebrate the holiday with gifts to their loved ones. We truly could not accomplish this feat without your generosity and support.

Thank you to everyone who supported our Adopt-A-Family program and holiday appeal, and made the end of the year a success for the Shelter and our clients!

Garden Project
This fall the ladies of the Junior League of Flint came to plant over 300 tulips, crocus, hyacinth, and daffodils in various parts of the back yard. We look forward to seeing them pop up through the snow, once we get through this winter of course!

Support Shelter of Flint
As always, we appreciate your continued support of the Shelter and its many programs. Our capacity to serve our community is 24 hours day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Every day, we are serving over 1,000 individuals throughout our housing programs and properties. Your generosity makes this possible.

To give online, visit www.shelterofflint.org.