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Summer 2021 Newsletter

Shenandoah
 Alliance for Shelter

Message from our New Director:

It's been a busy summer here at SAS. We wrapped up another successful year of *Front Porch Friday* Music Events in Strasburg and tried our hand at running a car show--with much assistance from "The Car Guy", Freddie Cheshire. To our surprise and delight, we have been asked to come back again for the *Vintage in The Valley Car Show* on April 2nd, 2022.

We also started the journey of saying our final farewells to Sheila Orndorff who has been a constant for so many in the community for the past 21 years. She ends her time here at SAS officially on Thursday, September 30th. Although we wish her well as she cruises off into retirement it's a hard goodbye. Especially for me! We've worked together for the past 5+ years and I feel as I have only just scratched the surface of her knowledge!

I started with SAS a little over 5 years ago as the Centralized Housing Intake Counselor after a 12 year career in Mental Health. I stepped into the role of Housing Counselor when long time counselor Whitney Hamrick left to pursue new goals. The opportunity to learn from such experienced staff such as Sheila, Whitney, Janice and Danny has helped me to feel confident in taking on this new role. However, it is still a daunting task so please bear with me as I move forward as Executive Director without Sheila and her wealth of knowledge down the hall!

I look forward to serving you all as Executive Director and continuing Sheila's legacy of positive community connections!

Please read on to hear about an exciting new project we have started in partnership with Family Promise, new information on utility assistance, eviction moratoriums, and more!

Kath.



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Scattered Site Shelter

In 1989 the need for shelter was so evident that the community came together, and Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter was formed as one of two shelters in the County, the other being Response which serves those experiencing domestic violence. We operated as a Shelter, serving those in need of temporary housing for 25 years until 2014 when the Shelter tragically burned down. Under Sheila's leadership SAS was able to move forward and switch gears from shelter services to providing temporary assistance to help households access and maintain permanent housing.

The void of shelter that was left when the County Farm burned down was quickly filled in 2016 when Family Promise officially opened their doors as a transitional shelter for families with children, providing overnight shelter utilizing a network of churches. From that day forward, Family Promise and SAS have worked in informal partnership to help aid households in Shenandoah County.

With the rise of COVID and safety concerns with traditional shelters, both SAS and Family Promise have had to re-evaluate how we can best assist households experiencing a housing crisis. What we have come up with is a joint project that we are calling "Scattered Site Shelter". We have been blessed to receive a short-term grant to get up and running, and are continuing to move forward with

further grant/ community funding opportunities as we will this model will provide our consumers with the best opportunity for long term stability.

You might be wondering, what does Scattered Site mean? A Scattered Site Shelter is an individual housing unit, think apartment or house, where one family unit can live and function as a family while receiving supportive services and case management that will allow them to better integrate back into stability and release the stigma of being "homeless".

Family Promise and SAS are building a network of these shelter units in which to house households in need. These units are spread out within the county, thus the term "scattered".

Our goal is to make sure each unit is fully furnished with everything a family/individual would need. We are furnishing these units with donations of both gently used items and physical labor!

Do you know someone, or a group of someone's that would like to help move furniture? Do you have some gently used household items that need a new home? Would your organization like to sponsor a unit and help with meals or hygiene supplies when a new household moves in?

Reach out to Sherry
sherryarey@shenandoahfamilypromise.org
or Katie katiefurneisen@shenandoahallianceforshelter.org

SAS Staff from left: Megan, Janice, Katie, & BJ after cleaning and decorating a unit.



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Information Corner:

Utility Updates:

The State of Virginia's moratorium on utility shut offs ended August 30th for smaller water, gas, electric and wastewater providers.

However, state lawmakers did approve \$120 million in American Rescue Plan relief for residential utility customers. Accounts over 60 days in debt as of Aug. 31, 2021 are eligible, though this federal assistance is not available for Dominion Energy customers.

For households in the county with Dominion Energy accounts, certain customers will continue to be protected by a ban on service disconnections until March 1, 2022. The moratorium applies to those who...

- Previously received federal, state, nonprofit entity, or utility payment assistance at any time between January 1, 2019 and July 31, 2021
- Have a qualified medical account designation with the utility as of July 31, 2021
- Certified by the Virginia Department of Social Services as being a recipient of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC); or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits at any time between January 1, 2019 and July 31, 2021

Both Shenandoah Valley Electric and Dominion are offering payment plans for all customers in need of assistance.

Eviction Moratorium Updates:

With so many changes to the eviction process during the last year, it can be hard for even us to keep up! At present, the CDC eviction moratorium has been extended until October 2021, with Governor Ralph Northam signing a budget bill extending eviction protection until June 30, 2022.

The Virginia Rent Relief Program was created in July of 2020 and has paid out more than \$311 million to over 48,000 households. Additionally, the Commonwealth is distributing \$524 million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance funding through the Virginia Rent Relief Program. With this funding, landlords are able to get paid directly up to 18 months in back rent. Payments can go as far back as April 2020.

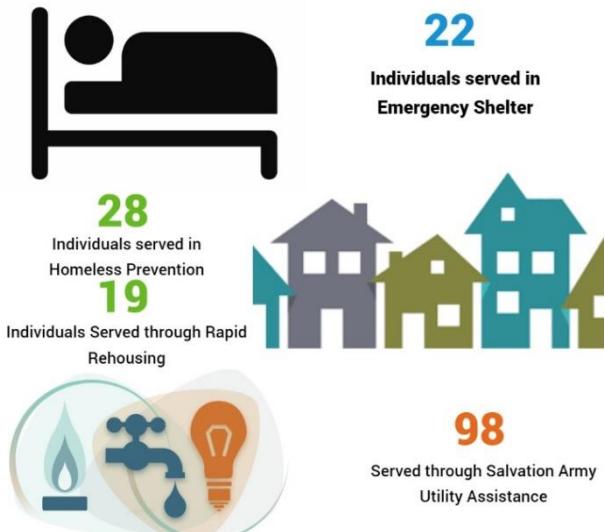
For more detailed information, including eligibility information, check out the following resources:

Virginia Poverty Law Center: <https://housing.vplc.org/covid-19/>

Virginia Rental Relief Program <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp>

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Our Impact:



Fiscal Year 2021 Impact (July 2020-June 2021)



Fiscal Year 2022 Impact, So far.... (July 2021-June 2022)



Our Next Newsletter Installment will be an **Empty Bowl Special Edition!**
It will Include:

- *Pottery Information
- *Soup Choices
- *Pick Up Location/Times
- *Silent Auction Details