



## Summer 2020 Newsletter

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### Tamar's Center Serves as Lifeline During Turbulent Times

As the COVID-19 restrictions started to affect most aspects of daily life, it was clear that – for many – the impact would be far greater than disruption of normal routines.

“People who are experiencing homelessness are very vulnerable to this pandemic,” states Elaine Ward, executive director for Franciscan Ministries.

She explains, “There is almost no place where they can wash their hands or use the toilet. They don’t have the means to buy hand sanitizers or wipes. However, they know they can come to Tamar’s Center to get a bag of food and supplies. In fact, through March and April, we saw an almost daily increase in the number of people coming to the Center for assistance.”

For ten years, Tamar’s Center, a program of Franciscan Ministries, has been a day shelter and entry point for help for women who are homeless, suffer from addiction, and/or are trafficked for sex. While the COVID-19 outbreak forced Tamar’s Center to close the day shelter program, staff continued to serve women in need by distributing basic food and hygiene items to a population desperately in need.

“While the lock down caused us to serve in new ways, we continue to embrace our mission of assisting some of the most vulnerable populations,” explains Estelle McNair, director of Tamar’s Center. For example, an outside hand-washing station was installed in conjunction with the Greater Cincinnati Water Works, making hand-washing more convenient for those living on the streets.

Since pandemic restrictions began, more than 500 people came to Tamar’s Center seeking assistance.

***“Because our clients know they can trust us, they are spreading the word to others in need,” says McNair. “People feel safe coming here and know they will be helped.”***

Such help is possible, thanks to a recent donation by **Greater Cincinnati Foundation** and **United Way of Greater Cincinnati**. The \$10,000 donation was made through the **COVID-19 Regional Response Fund**, which is supported by numerous local funders through GCF and UW.

Other support has come through **Matthew 25 Ministries** and donations by numerous local companies and individuals.

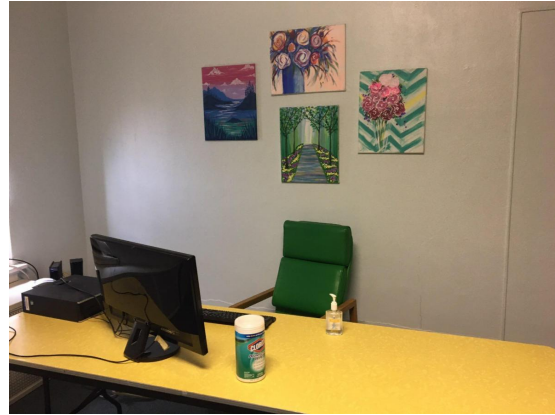
In addition to food and other physical necessities, Tamar’s is providing another lifeline – a literal connection to facilitate tele-health and mental health assistance. As the staff ready the shelter for re-opening, a private area with computer and internet has been established so client can more readily access medical, mental health and other providers.

“The pandemic has caused added hardship for many of our clients,” states McNair. “We have seen



increases in the physical risk our clients are facing. Many women are being raped or assaulted, so we assist them with obtaining medical care or trying to find safe housing.”

McNair adds, “For many of those we serve just knowing that they have a place where they can contact their doctor or counselor helps alleviate some of the stress.”



Photos:

Top right - Estelle McNair, director of Tamar's Center, stuffs bags with food and hygiene items for the homeless.

Above, left - Greater Cincinnati Water Works personnel install an outside hand-washing station.

Above right - The new tele-health area at Tamar's Center provides privacy for medical and counseling sessions.

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## Message from the Executive Director: Needs Continue as Services Change

To be successful, non-profits must be adaptable to the environment, always evaluating programs to ensure they are efficiently meeting the needs of clients and the organization's mission. Changes in funding – such as receiving a large grant or the loss of an event sponsor – can have far-reaching repercussions.



The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be beyond what most individuals, business and organizations could have envisioned. Currently, not much is “business as usual” as Franciscan Ministries continues to respond to the ever-changing situation. Starting in early March, we began taking precautionary measures to protect our clients, staff and the public; as the restrictions and state mandates changed, so have our responses.

In short, every one of our programs has been impacted in some way. For most of March, April and May, our only programs in operation were the Community Garden and Tamar's Center, which continued to distribute food and supplies in a restricted fashion.

At this time, our **Tamar's Center**, **Haircuts from the Heart** and **Community Garden** have re-opened and each have implemented precautions in order to serve clients.

These changes have ripple effects. For example, the income from groups staying at **Tau House** is now eliminated for the year, while profits from our social enterprise **Centennial Barn** also have been slashed. These two programs - along with support from the Franciscan Peddler Thrift Shop - are a large chunk of our revenue, thus we have had to reduce expenses across the budget in order to remain fiscally responsible.

While the past few months have been turbulent, I'm proud to share that we were able to continue fulfilling our mission. Creative thinking, adaptability, support from our donors and partners - all were crucial in enabling us to continue helping the most vulnerable and under-served.

Saint Francis of Assisi has been cited as saying, “A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows.” May we continue to be a light to those we serve during these stressful, dark times.

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## Andrew Gomez Foundation Donates \$10,000 to Haircuts from the Heart

The Andrew Gomez Dream Foundation recently made a \$10,000 gift to Franciscan Ministries, in support of the organization's Haircuts from the Heart program. The gift is the most recent of ongoing support the Foundation has made to the non-profit, dating back to 2006.

"We are so very thankful for this gift, as it enables us to continue providing haircuts for people who are homeless or who are unable to afford or access basic hair care," states Executive Director Elaine Ward. "Having access to free haircare truly makes a difference, boosting the self-esteem and dignity of participants and allowing children to better 'fit in' at school."



***Haircuts from the Heart services are offered through a mini-salon and a mobile program delivered onsite at partner agencies. In 2019, more than 3,450 haircuts were provided.***

This past year, Franciscan Ministries launched a pilot voucher program for students, which included partnering with Catholic Inner-city Schools Education Fund (CISE) along with local social services agencies. Students were given a voucher to be used at a participating salon; because the salon is reimbursed by Franciscan Ministries, there is no cost to the student or family.

The Andrew Gomez Foundation was founded to honor a successful Paul Mitchell School graduate whose struggle against mental illness ended tragically in suicide. The foundation helps cosmetology students, graduates, their families, and cosmetology-related enterprises.

***Since 2006, the Andrew Gomez Foundation has contributed \$320,000 to the Haircuts from the Heart program, including this most recent gift.***



Inspired by the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, we are a non-profit human service organization that addresses the unmet needs of people who are underserved, vulnerable, and overlooked. We are a presence of healing, respecting the dignity of each person through a personal approach and diverse services. Visit us at [www.FranciscanMinistriesinc.org](http://www.FranciscanMinistriesinc.org)