

Tamar's Agency Report

November 6, 2023

Throughout the last year and a half, it has been clear that the location of Tamar's Center in Lower Price Hill is not bringing in the same clientele as the previous location. Through outreach and organizational connections, we have taken time to learn about the neighborhood around us. Although there have been some women who are homeless, most women in this neighborhood are housed or have a safe place to stay. If they are employed, it is usually a low-paying job that often disqualifies them from other forms of assistance. The history of Lower Price Hill proves to be one where there are generational connections, where family (by blood or by fierce friendship bonds) offers protection from the street.

The lack of higher education, mental health, physical disabilities, and history of trauma, coupled with rising rents, increased living expenses and low wages, have increased our understanding of what the needs in this neighborhood are. We find that the majority of women are housed, but barely making ends meet. They are juggling bills, and trying to be creative in ensuring they stay housed and keep the electric on. Many are not eligible for food stamps, or receive so little it is not enough. All of the women know about social service organizations, where they are, and how to apply. The issue is not being able to connect with these agencies, but rather not being approved for enough that makes a difference. There are also many women who are undocumented immigrants, are fearful of applying, and do not want to even give their name for data collection at some of the agencies that might require even this seemingly simple required request.

It is after this discovery, and through the ability to expand our assistance through the PNC grant, that we have discovered additional ways to help this community. The fact is, women who are the “traditional client” are not willing to come from downtown, or they are using other agencies such as Weightless Anchor or Women of Alabaster, both in the prime locations where women who are trafficked are living.

However, all is not lost in this neighborhood. With a few changes, in the past few months and hopefully the future, Tamar’s Center still has the ability to help women who are in desperate need of assistance. These women still have years of trauma, have had to partner and stay with abusive men in order to survive, have family history of addiction, suffered addiction themselves, and struggle with mental illness. Many of these women have not had the “cash exchange” of sex trafficking, but have had to trade sex and intimacy in unhealthy relationships in order to survive, resulting in babies at young ages, an underlying of past or current shame, and unresolved trauma.

We believe that this population is underserved in the community. These are invisible women who qualify for minimal services, or those who are fearful to apply for services. Some women just need a moment of relief in knowing a basic need is met, such as a little extra food, a small gift card to buy groceries, or new underwear or socks.

We have been able to pay rent and utilities with our PNC grant, which has been wonderful. Our PNC grant is coming to a close, and it is not yet known if we will receive more funding. However, our close relationships with partners at La Soupe, Meiser’s grocery, Master Provisions, and Bombas socks, can still allow us to be creative to help women in need. Our cooks continue to volunteer on Tuesdays, and this has provided food to many women, including some who have families.

We are in the process of adopting the notion of a “Turquoise Table” (“The Turquoise Table” by Kristin Schell). We plan to have a turquoise table in our front yard on Tuesdays, (***THE TURQUOISE TABLE ON TUESDAYS AT TAMARS- SAY THAT 10 TIMES! 😊***) offering meals, socks, hygiene, blankets, food, and any other donations that are available. This table represents community, and reaching even further out in the neighborhood to be a support to all women.

We are making the best of a situation that has had some challenging issues and many changes in the past six months. We are working hard to sustain the Franciscan Ministries’ mission in a neighborhood that is incredibly different from the past location. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Erin Zinicola

Julie Mulcahey

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