

HOMELESSNESS IN OUR HOMETOWN

THE COURIER ISSUE 4 2018-19

(In)visible

Homelessness in Appleton

WRITTEN BY
ISABEL DEBRUIN

Want to learn more about homelessness in the Fox Valley? Visit the *(In)visible Homelessness in Appleton* traveling museum. This exhibit features photographs taken by people in our community who are homeless or living on the edge of homelessness. Taken from November 2015 to April 2016, these photographs and journals provide a glimpse into the struggle for stable housing in the Fox Cities. Visit the museum in the Appleton East LMC from March 1-15.

Mrs. Bend, East library media specialist, welcomes teachers and their classes to visit the exhibit.

"I invite you and your students to stop by the LMC sometime during the next two weeks to see a display on loan from the Appleton History Museum. Appleton East LMC is hosting the History Museum's traveling exhibit [\(In\)visible Homelessness in Appleton](#). This exhibit features 'photographs taken by people in our community who are homeless or living on the edge of homelessness. Taken from November 2015 to April 2016, their photographs and journals provide a glimpse into the struggle for stable housing in the Fox Cities. (In)visible also covers the history of homelessness and poverty in Appleton, as well as statistics from Project RUSH in 2015.' Some of the displays feature QR codes with links to interviews, more photographs, and information. The exhibit is moving and informative. If the topics of home insecurity, mental illness, chronic illness, or urban history complement your curriculum, please bring your classes. Let me know if you plan to come or if I can help with your class's visit."

The display is traveling to promote awareness of homelessness in conjunction with this year's Fox Cities Reads book—***Evicted* by Matthew Desmond**. This "heartbreaking book takes us into the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee to tell the stories of eight families on the edge of homelessness." It's an eye-opening book. If you're interested in reading a copy, contact Mrs. Bend. As part of Fox Cities Reads, the author will be presenting a lecture on **April 11 at Menasha High School at 6:30 P.M.**





BY KADEN VAN DE LOO AND
NATHANIEL WOLTMAN

Pillars was founded in October when Homeless Connections, Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities, and the Fox Valley Warming Shelter combined. With a number of shelters and programs, Pillars helps homelessness in the area by offering places to eat, sleep, receive mental support, and find new homes. Homeless Connections, now Pillars Adult & Family Shelter, was founded in 1981 and focuses on helping the homeless find confidence and independence. The Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities, now simply called Pillars, has been working to find new homes and offer help services for homeless families since 1986, and the Pillars Adult Shelter, formerly the Fox Valley Warming Shelter, utilizes a 55-bed space for adult men and women. Ascend, another assistance program, is a Neenah-based housing facility teaching young adults aged 18-25 important life and job skills. Aside from shelters, Pillars also has a number of programs to assist the homeless for specific purposes. Pillars Resource Center helps the homeless find new homes, and Pillars Street Outreach Program focuses on those struggling with homelessness and mental illness or substance abuse. Pillars Diversion Program aims to help avoid the need for staying in a shelter through offering alternate ideas for the homeless, and Pillars Case Management Program focuses on one-on-one assistance with those finding jobs and new homes.

High school students have a number of

opportunities available to them in terms of volunteering. The most accessible opportunity is to donate money or supplies to a shelter. Additionally, students could volunteer to work in a building and help with specific jobs such as serving food, greeting people at the front desk, or doing laundry.

By combining shelters, Pillars is a more united force with one mission statement: "From homelessness to coming home, Pillars provides shelter, support, and solutions to address the housing needs in our community." When it comes to the new name itself, the group describes its meaning beautifully - "Architecturally, pillars are a solid structure, made to stand the test of time. They rarely stand alone and are stronger together. The main function of pillars is to support something larger than itself - just as our agencies support the community." In 2018, the group served around 300 people per day and over two thousand over the course of the year. In the future, Pillars has many plans; one of which is to form a housing program in which four to six adults could live in an affordable home. Overall, the program aims to continue doing the best it can within the community by helping those in need and never backing down.



RUSHing to Help the Homeless

by Isabel DeBruin

Project RUSH is a program started by the Fox Cities Housing Coalition (now merged into Pillars). RUSH stands for Research to Understand and Solve Homelessness. This project is focused specifically on, what experts call, the “hidden homeless” or individuals and families who are in unstable housing conditions and therefore on the brink of homelessness. The hope is that by helping these people to avoid homelessness the community will be able to stunt the growing population in poverty.

“The data has helped us to change our understanding of homelessness,” said Betsy Borns, a Project RUSH manager. The data gathered during the research has helped the community to come to terms with some of the difficulties of being homeless. Borns explained that when living without a home to return to every night, one's priorities change. Finding food and a place to sleep comes

first. Then one can worry about getting a job or health care.

The research also inspired Pillars to open a day place. A place for people to go, just to get out of the weather and to receive counseling. The data has also helped to develop the eight strategic focus areas for our community to work on. “We are constantly learning more,” said Burns. Pillars is always using new information in order to better support the community.

Want to help? The first step is to educate yourself about homelessness; it is not the stereotype that you are imagining, and the Project RUSH stats prove that. One great way to help is to donate to the Appleton East toiletry drive. If you would rather take a hands on approach, the Pillars Adult and Family shelter is always looking for help to serve food. Another opportunity is to help clean out Pillars Apartments. Help is needed to rip up carpets, paint walls, and much more.

Homelessness is a larger problem than most people realize, it is growing, and it needs to be dealt with now. What are you going to do about it?



Betsy Borns



AN UNFORGETTABLE ENCOUNTER

by Lauren Gilmeister

Last summer, I went on a mission trip to serve with Jesus People USA, an intentional living community in Chicago. An intentional living community is a group of people who choose to live together, usually in a singular building or group of buildings, with a common purpose. They pursue a lifestyle that reflects their shared values. I had an amazing time learning about JPUSA's way of life and devotion to the homeless community. Cornerstone Community Outreach, Chicago's second largest homeless shelter, offers three meals a day, a food pantry once a week, and lodging for singles as well as families. On this trip, I had the opportunity to help prepare meals at this shelter. I enjoyed my experience so much that I decided to go back this past October with middle school students. On our last day, a few of us volunteered to wake up early and serve breakfast at the shelter.

It was a gloomy morning, and the sun had yet to rise. It was only 6:30 A.M., and I hadn't had my caffeine yet. A light mist descended from the sky; puddles were scattered throughout the streets. I was tired and cold.

It was pretty cold outside. We stayed close together as we walked the familiar route. I inhaled the brisk morning air as we began the trek to the homeless shelter. Tired and cold: that's all I could think about. I considered commenting on the cold temperature just to make conversation with those around me. We were all tired, but I thought maybe I could lighten the mood. Just as I was about to speak, I looked ahead and saw a homeless man. He was walking in the opposite direction, stepping clumsily through puddles. He had one bare foot and one sock. It was probably less than forty degrees out, and this man didn't even have shoes. I closed my mouth and said nothing about how cold I was feeling at the moment.

The image of that man stuck with me. I had a winter coat, warm clothes, dry socks, and shoes. That man had much less than I; I felt bad for even thinking about complaining. Homelessness is a devastating condition. This experience expanded my heart for the homeless, and since then, I have cultivated a desire to help with this problem, even in the smallest way.

EVICTED: HOME, POVERTY, AND HARDSHIP

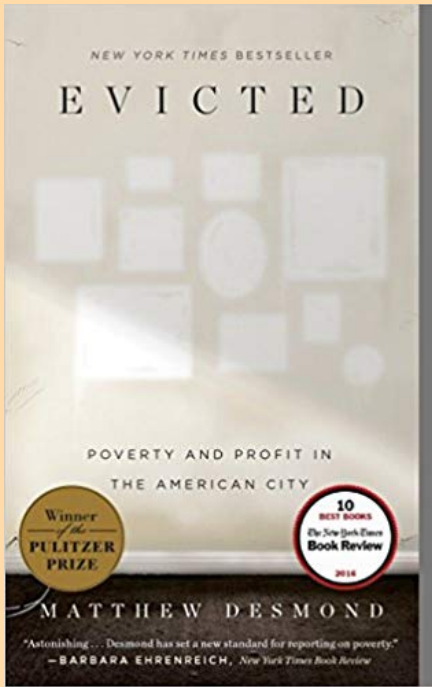
BY BRANDON SALVESON-
KREPLINE

Desmond also looks at the other side. He follows landlords who run some of the worst locations in Milwaukee. One evicted a tenant who didn't pay half her rent because she paid for a plumber because the landlord ignored her requests for repair. Another landlord almost got his license taken away. However, after the tenants rally behind him, over fear they would have to move to the north side, he gets his license renewed on the condition he cleans up the park. He immediately begins evictions for those same people who stood by him.

Desmond highlights the importance of a home on a family's or person's well-being and identity. He also argues that the right to housing is part of "Life, Liberty, and the

Tragedy, struggle, poverty, devastating, and unsettling. All describe the book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. The book written by Matthew Desmond, a professor of sociology at Princeton University, follows his journey along with eight poverty-stricken families in the city of **Milwaukee**. These families struggle not only paying the high rent in the city neighborhoods but also with wages that do not support them and their families. This makes the event of eviction almost routine. The majority of poor renters spend over half of their income on housing. One in four spends more than 70% of their income in rent and utilities.

In one household a mother has to try to survive with as little as \$20 a month. This is all that remains after she pays her rent. In another, a man struggles with drug addiction. This makes him unhireable for most jobs. His only source of income is doing odd jobs for his landlord, for which he sometimes is not compensated.



Awards:

2017 Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction
Winner

Kirkus Prize for Nonfiction Finalist

Winner of the 2017 Robert F. Kennedy
Book Award

Winner of the 800-CEO-READ Book
Award — Current Events & Public
Affairs

Winner of the American Bar
Association's 2017 Silver Gavel Award

Shortlisted for the 2017 Andrew
Carnegie Medal for Excellence in
Nonfiction

One of The Los Angeles Times' 10 Most
Important Books of 2016

A New York Times Editors' Choice

One of Wall Street Journal's Hottest
Spring Nonfiction Books

One of O: The Oprah Magazine's 10
Titles to Pick Up Now

One of Vulture's 8 Books You Need to
Read This Month

One of BuzzFeed's 14 Most Buzzed
About Books of 2016

One of The Guardian's Best Holiday
Reads 2016

Google Play Best Book of Spring

Pursuit of Happiness” because without a stable home, none of the latter rights are possible. The final two chapters look into Desmond's journey, project, and proposed solutions to this crisis, including expanding the housing voucher system to the people in the bottom 30% of income level.

Mrs. Bend read this book cover to cover. Her review is published on Good Reads:

“Insightful, impassioned, eloquent, and humane. *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond gives close look at how home insecurity creates cycles of poverty that take heroic efforts and more than a little luck to break free of.

Through the book we meet people from Milwaukee neighborhoods who shared their lives and stories with Desmond. His portraits combined with scholarly research reveal families stuck or falling into poverty, shame, and desperation. We see how decent jobs, good schooling, emotional well-being, freedom, pride, community--all the good and nurturing things of life are connected to having a secure and safe place to live. I wish that community leaders and anyone with influence would read this book to have their hearts and minds opened to the needless waste and suffering of millions of people in our own rich country. We can be better and more fair.”

THE FOX CITIES BOOK FESTIVAL

by Logan Hash

The Fox Cities Book Festival is held every fall in the Fox Valley. The goal of the festival is “Bringing readers and writers together.” It does this by putting on more than 100 events across 14 venues in a seven-day period. This October, thousands of readers will join dozens of authors in this annual celebration of literature.

This spring, however, the Fox Cities Book Festival will partner with area public libraries for Fox Cities Reads, an event “with the goal of building a larger sense of community to promote literacy.” The idea is to have many people in the Fox Valley read the same book about an important social issue. Then in the spring, the author of the book comes to the Fox Cities. Various events having to do with the book take place: book clubs, community discussions, author presentations and other events. Previously featured books include *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio, *Stella By Starlight* by Sharon Draper, and *Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys. This year, headlining the event is Matthew Desmond with his book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Desmond is a professor of sociology at Princeton University, and a contributor for New York Times Magazine. In 2017, *Evicted* won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction. Desmond will speak at 6:30 p.m. on April 11 at Menasha High School and 10 a.m. on April 12 at the Lawrence Memorial Chapel in Appleton.

READ - THINK - TALK - LISTEN - GROW
FOX
CITIES
READS

FOX CITIES
BOOK
FESTIVAL
2019



HOMELESSNESS HITS HOME AT EAST

BY ERIN GRETZINGER



Homelessness is often perceived as some distant issue, a reality of the world that doesn't impact our day-to-day lives or interactions in Appleton, Wisconsin. We know homelessness is a major problem in big cities like Chicago and New York, but in our community, this issue is overlooked. In the Appleton Area School District alone, there are 240 documented homeless students this year. By the end of the 2017-18 school year, AASD counted 336 documented homeless students. One East student, Shawn (this name is a pseudonym; the student wishes to remain anonymous), shared his experience with homelessness and how it has impacted his life.

The definition of homelessness expands beyond the generally conceived notion of living on the streets; homelessness is defined as people who are not in a stable housing situation often because of financial reasons. This encompasses people living in shelters, cars, hotels/motels, a relative or friend's house, and a multitude of other scenarios. Shawn has been facing homelessness in Appleton since November, and his mom has been struggling with homelessness for over a year. Shawn stated, "Although we have a roof over our head, we cannot pay for our own rent or home because of my mom's income." Shawn and his mother have been living with his aunt and many other people since they became homeless. This situation is known as "doubling up," according to the AASD Homeless Student Services, and is a very common form of homelessness. Shawn explained the need for people to understand the different dimensions of homelessness. "It bothers me when people judge me," Shawn said. "They think I am not really homeless because I have a roof over my head."

Facing homelessness while in high school has

been a challenge for Shawn. While they have not accepted much help from the community, East provides services to Shawn and his mother, the main one being that East gives them food to take home each week. Another challenge for Shawn is building relationships outside of school. "People want to hang out with me, but they cannot come over because I don't have my own house," Shawn explained.

The stigmas surrounding homelessness are another big issue. Shawn hears people often say that homeless people are in their situation because they are "bad people" or that they didn't "try hard enough." Shawn knows that's not the truth.

"My mom was working two jobs for a while and we still could not afford our own place; she recently quit one of her jobs so that she could be with us more."

Shawn suggested that students could help by volunteering at various organizations or by donating food, although his biggest wish is that people would dismiss the stigmas around homelessness and know that people "don't have to be living on the streets to be considered homeless." He hopes society can start to evaluate people who are homeless as simply that: people.

AASD HOMELESS RESOURCES

BY COURTNEY SALVESON KREPLINE

Homelessness is a prevalent issue in Appleton that doesn't only affect adults. Many students in the Appleton Area School District (AASD) experience homelessness. Being classified as homeless does not mean a person lives on the street; the AASD classifies someone as being homeless when:

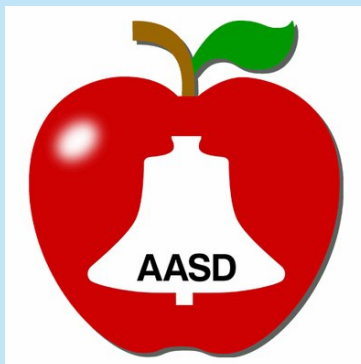
- They are living in an emergency shelter, living in abandoned hospitals or waiting for foster care
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- "Doubled up" living with friends or family due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- "Unaccompanied youth" under the age of 18 living without a parent or guardian
- Migratory children living in these conditions.

Many resources are available for students who experience homelessness. Special services provided for students experiencing homelessness include free breakfast and lunch programs and free transportation services. Removing economic stress away from a student's family can aid the family in getting back on their feet. Some other helpful services the AASD provides for homeless students are special education programs, tutoring programs, programs to help homeless children learn English, and gifted and talented programs. These programs are designed to help homeless children get the education they deserve when they may be at a disadvantage due to their situation. Further, with these programs, a college education becomes a

possibility. Additional services and programs for homeless children in the AASD include before- and after-school programs, where children are being provided with adequate shelter and supervision, which can help parents work longer hours to earn more income.

If you are homeless or know someone who needs assistance, contact Lisa Hunt, AASD Homeless Liaison. Students identified as homeless they are entitled to all of the programs and resources listed above. When a student who is homeless receives

the assistance they need, they have the chance to focus on their learning. It gives them the chance to have the same opportunities as a regular student, and it gives them a chance to feel like any other regular student.



AND THE PATRIOT AWARD GOES TO...



Every year, Appleton East awards the Patriot Award to an East alum who has done notable work following graduation. This year, it was awarded to 1987 grad Gary Arndt. Arndt runs a travel blog called "Everything Everywhere," which was named one of *Time Magazine's* top 25 blogs of 2010. He sold his house in 2007 in order to travel the world and has since achieved many milestones, including visiting all seven continents, all 50 US states, and every Canadian province. He has visited 198 countries and territories in total. He has won numerous photography awards, such as the 2014 Society of American Travel Writers Photographer of the Year and the 2013 and 2015 North American Travel Journalists Association Travel Photographer of the Year awards. He was also the



debate/forensics coach at Appleton East prior to starting Everything Everywhere, where he coached the third-best team in the nation in 1994—the team's highest finish in school history. Arndt, a debater himself, finished in the nation's top 10 at the National Speech & Debate Tournament in 1990 and 1991 while studying at Macalester College in Minnesota. Among his journeys while writing and photographing for Everything Everywhere are bungee jumping in New Zealand, riding in a Formula 1 car in Spain, diving in the ruins of the Great Lighthouse in Egypt, and swimming with great white sharks in South Africa. His blog can be found at everything-everywhere.com.

BY JACK PINGEL