

April 2, 2019

Dear Volunteers,

The Falls Church Homeless Shelter opened its doors on a cold and snowy November evening and closed them on a chilly and blustery April morning. In between those bookends, our guests were provided with warm beds, warm showers, and warm evening meals. They also had the opportunity to share in thoughtful conversations and interactions with YOU--our cadre of devoted volunteers--over the last four and a half months. Those precious hours spent at the shelter often meant more to our guests than you will ever know. For some, their stay at our shelter was the first time they had ever sought help, but somehow you and the New Hope Housing staff, working together, were able to break through barriers to change minds, habits and hearts and to start our guests on the path to a brighter future. There's nothing like seeing the broad smile of a guest holding the key to his or her new apartment for the first time. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I'd add it takes a village to help lift someone out of homelessness and despair. In the same way, it takes more than a board, staff and a physical building to make a homeless shelter; it takes the dedication of volunteers like you to make it all come together.

Twice a season, we conduct a survey asking guests what we can do to improve the shelter. The main suggestion we heard from them this year was to keep the shelter open more hours each day and more months each year. One guest wrote "This shelter is so good you should keep it open all year." They appreciate the home-cooked meals that so many of you lovingly prepared, the gift bags filled with toiletries and words of encouragement, the special treats you brought in like Breyers ice cream or organic teas, and the occasional homemade breakfasts of pancakes and sausage that started their day off with an extra smile. Other small acts of great kindness we witnessed this year were a group of neighbors and friends taking the time to talk to and go shopping for each guest so that everyone would receive a personalized gift at Christmas; a local resident who knitted hats and scarves for our guests while still others bought requested items from the Amazon wishlist. Volunteers shopped for groceries and supplies each week, picked up and delivered the pizza donated by Ledo's Pizza each Saturday night, and still others picked up, dropped off and brought back the laundry every single Tuesday and Thursday the shelter was open. Faith communities cleaned the shelter prior to the opening day and after the closing. The list goes on and on, but I think you get the picture: our shelter couldn't accomplish its goals without you--our awesome team of volunteers.

Truly, we can't thank you enough for your devotion to the shelter and the community and we look forward to partnering with you again in the future.

All the best,

Hannah Jordan, executive director