

**furnishing homes** with a little help from our friends!

**HOURS**

Tuesdays & Thursdays  
1:30-4:00pm

Occasional hours by appointment

**theExchange**  
LA CROSSE AREA FURNITURE BANK

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# theExchange Newsletter

April  
2021

## Welcome New Executive Director

### OUR MISSION

Through the effective reuse of donated items, theExchange collaborates with local organizations to provide home essentials for community members in need.

### IMPACT DATA Year to Date

Recipients: 111  
Donor Drop-Offs: 148  
Donation Pickups: 73  
Deliveries: 70

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS Shelter Development Inc.

Chuck Berendes, Pres  
Craig Sacia, Vice-Pres  
Annie Berendes  
Isaac Hoffman  
Mary Ann Gerrard  
Nancy Gerrard  
Rebecca Naugler  
Kelly Oliver  
Sheila Riley  
Andrew Sahlstrom  
Thomas Schlesinger  
S. Kathy Stuttgen

Spring is a time of hope and renewal and we have that in abundance at theExchange. With the arrival on March 1<sup>st</sup> of our first-ever, awesome Executive Director Julie McDermid we are more energized than ever about the future of theExchange and our ability to serve the common good in our community.

Cindy, Joan, Mary and Sheila will continue to coordinate the day-to-day work of operating theExchange to include assisting clients and caseworkers, collecting and organizing donations, and transporting large items. Julie will be a daily presence, helping where needed, while leading fundraising, grant writing, marketing/PR, community relationship building, and general administrative/technology efforts. (*Whew!!*) Julie possesses vast experience and wisdom on the subject of homelessness, and a sincere and personal interest in each individual struggling to overcome it. Welcome Julie! We are thrilled to have you leading theExchange!



Coordinators: Cindy, Mary, Joan & Sheila



### Executive Director Update Julie McDermid

Greetings Everyone!

In 2016 I was working as a Housing Specialist with Independent Living Resources when I was invited to be a part of the new Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness' (CCEH) first effort - ending veteran homelessness in La Crosse. Staff and volunteers from across the community worked in teams to find apartments and financial resources to assist 16 veterans in 100 days transition from emergency shelter and the streets to stable housing. But we

knew that it would take more than just help with a rent payment to make a new apartment a sustainable home. One of the Collaborative teams worked to secure donated furniture and other household items, find space to store them, and deliver client-selected items to the new apartments where they would provide not only function and comfort but also, most importantly, dignity – pride in one's home and dignity of choice.

Over the last three and a half years I was a part of the Collaborative's growth having been hired as their first Project Manager in 2017. During that time, I watched as theExchange grew right alongside – continuing to serve and provide dignity to households that CCEH assisted in transitioning out of homelessness as well as others in need. And all of this fueled by the passion, creativity and energy of an extraordinary group of dedicated volunteers – **ALL OF YOU!** (cont on p 2)

## Schedule Changes Begin May 1

- ◆ Beginning in May theExchange will be **open for drop off donations Monday-Thursday**. Fridays will be closed.
- ◆ **Monday & Wednesdays 1-3** p.m. volunteers will fill orders, sort products and handle donations.
- ◆ **Tuesdays & Thursdays 1-4** p.m. volunteers will continue to handle appointments with clients and drop off donations.
- ◆ **VOLUNTEERS:** Watch SignUp Genius for open slots. And **SAVE THE DATE of June 23** for a special Volunteer Appreciation meal.



## Making the News

Click to watch:

**Econo Lodge Donation on Channel 8**

**Jefferson Award Winner:**  
**Jim Bagniewski**

## Send Ideas or Feedback

[ktyser@me.com](mailto:ktyser@me.com)  
Kathie Tyser  
Volunteer Editor

It's been so exciting to get to meet so many of you over these first weeks in my new position as Executive Director! The office door is always open so feel free to drop on by if we haven't had a chance to meet yet. Truly I have never felt more welcome in any new position! Your bright, warm enthusiasm for the work you have built together is inspiring to me. Together I know we are going to take theExchange to amazing new heights of success! Julie

## A Sweet Donation for sure!



by Sheila Riley

The regular donations of a toaster here, a recliner there are the bread and butter of theExchange. Our program's success is built on the cumulative good of everyday generosity. But the donation of a large quantity of furniture from a hotel is like eating cake for breakfast – it doesn't happen often but it is sweet when it does!

This winter the Courtyard by Marriott La Crosse and the Econo Lodge donated more than (*drumroll please!*) 170 pieces of essential furniture including beds, tables, dressers and chairs. The staff at the Marriott and the owners of the Econo Lodge were excited to support our mission. Our dedicated movers loaded and reloaded trucks and trailers to transport the furniture to our warehouse and to overflow space provided by Nancy Gerrard, board member, and Rick Staff (thank you!). For now, we can say yes to every client request for a small dining table or dresser. Thank you Courtyard by Marriott and Econo Lodge for sweetening our winter!

## Meet Jerry: 'a perfect fit'

by Joan Waniger

Everybody needs a Jerry in their life - if you like a warm smile, a helping hand, or just a clean door step - Jerry's the guy you want to have around.

Meet Jerry Rockwell, our resident janitor and all around useful handyman who has been serving up smiles at theExchange for the last 2 years. Jerry was referred to us through Nancy Gerrard (one of our founding Board Members) who describes him as "a super good guy with a big heart and a hard worker". Over the course of the last 25 years, Jerry has worked for Nancy primarily painting, lawn mowing and cleaning. He had tried other jobs like working a punch press in Metallics, but said he hated sitting still all day and much preferred to be out and about doing a variety of jobs. He has pretty much become a mainstay of the Gerrard family. When retirement age found Jerry wanting to stay busy, Nancy felt like theExchange would be a perfect fit.

Indeed, when I interviewed Jerry and asked what he liked most about working at theExchange, without missing a beat he said it "made his heart flutter to see the faces of people when they get the things they need!"

Given that Jerry cleans our bathrooms, floors, furniture, wipes the spiders away from our doorsteps, and breaks down endless amounts of cardboard boxes - I asked what was the worst part of his job at the Exchange. With a wink of the eye he said "there is no worst - I love it here and love you all!" Well, we love you too Jerry. Thanks for bringing your cheerful nature, strong work ethic, and generous spirit to theExchange!

