

SHORE/ICARE: Our 2021 Charity Partner

As we shared with you in our September Membership meeting, this year's Quilt Raffle charity recipient is SHORE/ICARE. I had a chance to interview Pierre Poux, a founding member and current co-president of SHORE (Sheltering the Homeless is Our Responsibility, Inc.), to hear more about their history and mission.

How did SHORE get started?

SHORE was established in 1985 in White Plains, NY, initially to provide food and shelter for homeless men dealing with the ravages of a particularly brutal winter. Men were literally freezing to death and the early organizers, members of churches and synagogues in lower Westchester, came together to provide temporary overnight shelter. At first, the shelter rotated nightly through churches and synagogues and they found a temporary home with 25 cots in the old White Plains Post Office. Later, a permanent shelter was established by SHORE in White Plains and was able to assist 38 men at any one time.

How did the work of SHORE change over time?

News reports brought to life that families were also in need of more permanent housing and SHORE felt compelled to broaden the mission to include providing permanent rental apartments for needy families referred by qualified social agencies. To take on this new work, SHORE was able to turn the running of the men's shelter to another organization (currently Lifting Up Westchester, also in White Plains). That freed up the organization to begin to acquire and rehab properties into apartments for families.

How does SHORE find families, and where do they come from?

There are many families in need of more permanent housing – many come from transient hotels, and domestic violence shelters. Clients are almost exclusively single mothers with children and their circumstances might include, escaping abusive relationships, homeless due to a fire, needing to move due to their apartment being sold/rent raised, or that a living situation with a relative has changed.

A related organization, The Housing Action Council, works with County agencies to identify families that could benefit from permanent, safe housing and the support for the basic skills to be successful in a more independent living situation. Applications are completed by the family and a county social worker and then reviewed by a committee of SHORE members. Currently, 23 families benefit from SHORE's provision of safe, warm, non-transient apartments distributed across the villages of Westchester County and we are the only agency in the county that builds and renovates homes to provide permanent housing for homeless families.

Can you share a success story of one of your families?

About 10 years ago, a family came to SHORE's attention because the mother and 2 small children were in hiding from an abusive husband/father. They had moved into a domestic violence shelter and then interviewed for an apartment. The family fit SHORE's criteria – ready for apartment living, basic skills to live independently, and had some income from the county. After moving into the apartment, the mother was able to work with a lawyer doing Spanish translation, and the children attended schools in the community. Eventually, one child graduated from High School and went into the army, and the other graduated high

school and was awarded a college scholarship. All of this was possible because of the support network provided by SHORE – support for budgeting, support for the housing costs, good housing stock and stability for the family. The mother was grateful to SHORE for providing a secure and safe environment for her family to flourish.

SHORE has been in existence for 35 years. What has changed and what is the same?

Although the specific needs have not changed over time, as I mentioned before, SHORE broadened its mission to include housing for families in 1990 and has been acquiring, renovating, and maintaining properties since then. Also, in 2018, SHORE merged with ICARE (Interfaith Council for Affordable Residences) to serve the homeless community of Westchester more widely.

In terms of staying the same, adding to the housing stock, to have more apartments available to families, is a slow process because funding from the government is required to buy and rehab the properties. Our budget is used largely for administration and operation of the organization, including the maintenance of the properties - keeping them safe and functional living spaces for families. We fundraise throughout the year to carry out our mission and are happy to be the beneficiary of your raffle this year.

What personally keeps you involved with SHORE/ICARE?

The calling to do this work – initiated by the harsh winter crisis and as a person no longer able to ignore what was going on around me – has kept me engaged all these years. That calling has also been enhanced by my faith and the guidance of religious leaders (in and out of the SHORE organization) along the way. To this day, SHORE/ICARE considers itself a faith-based organization as the Board represents many churches and synagogues in Westchester. Partnership with the Housing Action Council keeps us focused for the long haul as this important work is not going away. The housing crisis – particularly in Westchester - keeps our mission vital.

Anne Poux MacDonald



Photo 1



Photo 2

Photo 1: Pierre Poux, Founding Member and Co-President of SHORE/ICARE

Photo 2: Pierre talking with a White Plains Post Office Shelter resident in winter of 1988