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**High Plains August Report**

***“Tikkun olam” literally means to repair the world. It is a call for social justice and action, to help with those who may be disadvantaged and in conditions without power.***

The work and service of **Capitol Hill United Ministries (CHUM) and The Women’s Homelessness Initiative (WHI) Team** can best be described as serving our beloved community through education, engagement, and service, including clothing those in need, feeding the hungry, inviting in the stranger, and supporting local unhoused agencies and their guests.

**The Women’s Homelessness Initiative (WHI),** coordinated through Capitol Hill United Ministries, was created by CHUM to meet the need for more shelter space for women in a safe and welcoming environment. This successful ministry consisted of a consortium of congregations, agencies, organizations, and approximately 1,000 volunteers that offered overnight sanctuary every night for approximately 90,000 women who were unhoused. That sanctuary included a clean, safe environment for rest, socialization with volunteers, and meals – a nutritious evening meal and a to-go breakfast bag. Also offered were other supportive programs and activities to help move the guests towards housing. This was done in coordination with our partner agency, the St. Francis Center. Many of our guests were able to find permanent housing. When COVID came and changed the unhoused landscape, a change that continues to this day, CHUM WHI quickly responded to the new developing community needs. **CHUM** **WHI’s goals continue to be: to serve those in need, educate our community, and create opportunities for advocacy for the community for those who are without homes.**

You might have heard this old Yiddish adage***, “We plan and God laughs!”*** As CHUM WHI has for the last 14 years, **we planned** to continue our work with the unhoused community and supportive agencies and hope to reopen the overnight sanctuary for those women who are unhoused.

***We planned...*** to deliver lunches, breakfasts, and needs from agencies, working with both the unhoused and the newcomers.

**And, Yes!** Each day, we continue to supply breakfasts or lunches, covering nine agencies every week. That is over 450 meals every week, or nearly 2,000 lunches each month, with hundreds of people in our volunteer community donating the cost of the food; making and delivering meals to feed those in need.  This interaction provides those serving with a real and new experience in meeting **and seeing** those who tend to be invisible. It provides our volunteers with a new understanding of what it is like to be homeless and the challenges they must face every day.

One of our newer volunteers told us recently how surprised she was on her first delivery of lunches, that when she arrived at 10:30 in the morning, there were lines of people patiently waiting for the food. Our volunteer’s experience sparked a change in her attitude about who the homeless population is, and the effects of the economy on those who can no longer afford housing - who live in their cars, or tents on the streets. Because of her experience working with CHUM WHI, her heart was changed, and she has subsequently signed up to do monthly deliveries. And, she recently thanked us for bringing this opportunity to her attention. Another advocate is born. A story that is consistently repeated.

A hand holding a brass door handle

Description automatically generated**And, Yes!**  We continue our monthly deliveries to partner agencies, who are working with those in need. CHUM WHI provides hundreds of dollars’ worth of donated supplies, non-perishable food, clothing, personal care items, water, etc. since the pandemic with the numbers of unhoused on Denver’s streets, including migrants, continuing to increase. A van full of boxes and stuff

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We conservatively estimate that the amount of money spent by our amazing and dedicated team of volunteers and CHUM WHI is approximately $6,000 monthly.

In addition, our community gives thousands of hours of volunteer “work” in addition to food and supplies from their own resources.

***Then God laughed***...and there was a knock on the door... ***my door!***

A group of people posing for a selfie

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There, stood a family who asked if I needed any help.

They did some yard work for me... and ***while the Divine laughter continued...*** I made them lunch, sat with them, and heard about their harrowing journey from Peru. The mother had been brutally abused by her husband. With three of her children, they traveled for months through many countries in South and Central American, on top of a trainA group of people lying on a rail

Description automatically generatedA person holding a child

Description automatically generated, through the Darien Gap, and faced many frightening experiences. They arrived in Denver, hoping to find asylum and a new life.

***No, the laugher did not stop!*** As our CHUM WHI team always does, we responded to a new need, creating **Circles of Care**, another CHUM WHI program to support the Newcomers. As you can see by the included diagram, we are creating a prototype for a comprehensive program to support Newcomer family units. It has been a steep and challenging learning curve. As we create our prototype, we are also supporting this family around the issues of housing, legal issues, school/before and after school programs/ transportation for the 9-year-old, work and finances, ESL, medical, food, etc. (see photos below). The CHUM WHI team through Circles of Care has created another volunteer/mentor group and presented various programs on this vexing issue to our community.

Newcomer family making CHUM WHI volunteers donated

tamales for money to live furniture, kitchen and bedding needs,

Taking a bus to school bicycles and so much more to support

this family of Newcomers.

A tray of tamales on a table

Description automatically generated A child and child sitting in a bus

Description automatically generated A living room with a couch and a coffee table

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**Circles of Care (CC),** coordinated through **Capitol Hill United Ministries**, is a compassionate cadre of dedicated community members offering a wholistic network of support to assist Newcomers by providing opportunities toward self-sufficiency and integration into society. With information from an intake interview, our team of mentors, in collaboration with the Newcomers and the Core Team, create systems of communication, tracking milestones, resource distribution, and agreements around specific needs. These include, but are not limited to, areas such as: housing, education, work, medical care, financial literacy, cultural norms, legal issues, etc. It follows the mission of CHUM WHI to serve, because we are called and able to do so; to educate ourselves, our communities, and our Newcomers on this journey; and to advocate where we can. We will support the Newcomers to the best of our abilities, within a time-limited agreement, and celebrate accomplishments.

**Intergenerational Forum on Homelessness**: To add to our accomplishments this year, our CHUM WHI team created an intergenerational forum October 20 on the issue of the unhoused. Approximately 150 older adults, younger adults (high school students and college age students), and those who were living the experience of being unhoused participated in a full day of education, sharing their thoughts on how we might better work with this issue of homelessness. Speakers for this forum included: Mayor Mike Johnston, former at-large City Councilwoman Robin Kniech, Jamie Rife from Metro Denver Homelessness Initiative (who is now with Mayor Johnston’s homelessness effort with the city), executive directors of the St. Francis Center, Urban Peak, and CHUM WHI, a panel of those representing the unhoused community, and others. This exciting and informative program was held at Montview Presbyterian Church. A white paper is being created regarding the ideas and outcomes that were learned, recorded, and shared.

**Capitol Hill United Ministries (CHUM)** was founded over 30 years ago as an interfaith organization comprised of over 50 congregations and service agencies operating in the heart of Denver, with the purpose of creating collegiality among various congregations and nonprofit organizations, to share information, celebrate together, and educate and advocate for our neighbors in need, especially around issues affecting those who are marginalized. Our mission is to be a spiritual presence and resource in the inner city of Denver, and to strengthen and sustain our member communities, particularly through effective communication and cooperation.

**CHUM WHI** continues to move with the needs of the community, by innovating and gathering the resources to respond.

**CHUM WHI has served those who are marginalized. And we have served those who have a need and desire to serve and make a difference.**

To summarize, the received funding is used to support feeding those in need, contributing to our partner agencies with supplies, and responding to other new needs that arise, such as with the Newcomers, which we can support. We are presently supporting the work of The Gathering Place, St. Francis Center, the Delores Project, Network Coffee House, St. Francis Outreach, Warren Residences, the Denver Public Library, Urban Peak, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, EarthLinks, the new congregant shelter at the Comfort Inn, the Colorado Village Collaborative (SOS) and the Circles of Care. We are able to accomplish the above by recruiting congregations, community groups, families, and individuals to join our cause.

**The High Plains funds we receive are used for continuing the work of serving lunches and breakfasts and bringing needed supplies to those in the unhoused community and the community at-large. Funds also support our new Circles of Care initiative that serves the Newcomer.**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**CHUM WHI Mid-Year Report regarding the funding from High Plains**

**This is submitted by the CHUM WHI Treasurer – Charlie Fiser**

**Through July, 2024**

**High Plains Contributions: $4,375.00**

**Expenses:**

**CHUM WHI – Deliveries $4,477.00**

**Circle of Care Expenses: $8,699.00**

**Housing/ Rental Support:  $ 3,070**

**Legal Consultation: $ 2,650**

**Transportation/Bus   610**

**Food Support:  $ 1,111**

**General/Misc:  $ 1,258**

***Diana J. Flahive***

***Executive Director CHUM and WHI***

***(303) 257-8588 - cell***[***www.chumdenver.org***](http://www.chumdenver.org/)

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A diagram of the circles of care

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