

Let Us Continue to be A Critical Difference

Charles came to my office today saying, “David came to my apartment and told me you wanted to see me; so here I am.” Charles moved to his new apartment this past March—part of the Griswold Building Apartments “relocation” effort for those in residence. He is just one of over sixty seniors that we have attempted to stay in contact with since the move; but Charles is hard to reach—he doesn’t answer his phone. He barely ventures out of his apartment anymore. When he came to the St. Aloysius offices today, it was sadly obvious that he is struggling—he has lost noticeable weight, his knee-length bed shirt was with small tears in it, and he came into the office and began to cry. “I just don’t care anymore—and no, I am not going to see *any* doctor—I am done with it all.” No words could be offered that would change his mind. A phone call to a family member revealed that there is no one that can offer the care and relationship that he needs. For his protection, a second report was made to Adult Protective Services (the first was made before he moved to his new apartment). What is going to happen to Charles?

It is with this great concern of *what is going to happen to Charles, his former Griswold neighbors, and senior residents of Downtown Detroit* that the St. Aloysius Health and Wholeness Ministry, Wayne State University School of Social Work, and the United Community Housing Coalition have become partners in a qualitative research study focused on “Relocation Amidst Revitalization: Recreating Social Worlds for Older Adults.”

Through detailed records of the St. Aloysius Grocery Ministry to Griswold, the Health & Wholeness Ministry was able to promise each person on record that we would stay in touch with them—before and right after they moved—and now, phone calls and letters are being placed and sent to the relocated seniors by the University of Detroit Mercy nursing students who are completing their community health clinical at St. Aloysius! These contacts are the preparation phase of the study that will launch the research in the fall. Recruitment and data collection will commence October through December 2014.

As HUD subsidized units are being converted to market rate in Downtown Detroit, seniors are going to be relocated. Through this research, we will be examining the emotional, spiritual, health-related, financial, and logistical supports needed for low-income seniors making a housing transition. Through our findings, it is hoped that we will be able to bring awareness of the issues to city officials in order to support seniors affected.

From the article “A Critical Difference” found in the spring 2014 issue of St. Aloysius’ Neighborhood Services Newsletter, Pope Francis is quoted: “A society that doesn’t care for its elderly has no future.” Although we do not know for sure what will happen to Charles, we trust in the wisdom and gifts God has given us to care for him right now through this ministry.

Let us all continue to be a *critical difference* in the wellbeing of the seniors in downtown Detroit!