

# Meet The Team: Gary & Helen Crevier



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It takes a **team** to provide shelter and affordable housing to people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in our community. The Pillars team includes dedicated **staff**, selfless **volunteers**, and generous **donors** contributing to common goals:

**SHELTER, SUPPORT, SOLUTIONS**

Gary and Helen Crevier come from similar backgrounds. Both grew up in the Green Bay area and remember their parents putting selfless actions of service on display from a young age.

"A lot of it came from my roots at home. We lived on a farm. Back in those days, way back when, individuals experiencing homelessness would come to the door, and my mother would invite them in the house and make a meal for total strangers," said Helen. "That has been part of my roots all along which has been a wonderful heritage and blessing from my parents."

"Attitudes and values weren't taught to me. There were attitudes that I caught. Like maybe Mom and Dad taking in 27 foster kids in our home over the years said something to me," said Gary.

Gary's mother also actively volunteered in the church, the place Gary and Helen devoted years of their adult lives.

### **Living out faith in the mission field**

Helen made the decision to enter ministry at a young age. "When I was about in second grade, I wanted to be a nun, because I thought they were the perfect women. That was my motivation."

She spent almost 11 years living in remote villages in the jungles of Nicaragua. The country experienced war for nine of those years, and Helen describes the perfect day as one with lights, water, and mail - though she admits those days were rare. Despite hardships and challenges, she says that time in her life strengthened her faith, and the people around her gave her inspiration. "Many times we think, 'Oh, we're the good missionaries. We're the ones who are leaving,' but I think anyone who goes into missions and thinks they're the ones with all the answers or they're the ones that are going to convert everybody needs to step back and say, 'Hey, what am I learning? What do I receive from these people?'"

"The poor have a tendency to teach you good things," said Gary.

After running a retreat house on Chambers Island, Gary also spent a decade as a Catholic priest in the Dominican Republic before returning to Northeast Wisconsin. He went on to work at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Neopit once he returned.

The couple left the Catholic Church in 1991 and married the same year.

### **Continued commitment to service**

The work didn't stop for Gary and Helen once leaving ministry. The couple managed low-income housing in the Fox Valley for a

couple of years. Gary also worked at Oshkosh Correctional Institution as a bilingual social worker doing drug treatment facilitation in the prison for more than 13 years.

"I was thinking about my retirement, what I would do once I retired," said Gary.

He knew he didn't want to slow down, so he started looking for ways to become more involved in the community.

"I became involved in the ESTHER organization. I'm the president of the organization now," said Gary. "Also at the time I retired I became a board member of the Fox Valley Warming Shelter and did my bit with that for a couple of years, served as president for a couple of terms."

In fact, Gary was the board president of Fox Valley Warming Shelter when it merged with Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities and Homeless Connections in October 2018 to become Pillars. Today the couple continues to support the organization financially even writing Pillars into their will.

"Everybody's got to find their way through it. If by chance they think contributing to Pillars is their way, great," said Gary.

In addition to supporting Gary's community involvement, Helen volunteered for years as a massage therapist for women at Casa Clare facility through Apricity, an experience she calls "very rewarding."

### **Pushing ahead with no plans to stop**

Along with being the president of ESTHER, Gary plays an active role on the organization's prison reform and immigration task forces. When asked about his service by ESTHER, Gary writes about following his personal convictions: "The first is my strong belief that as long as the dignity and well-being of any human being or any part of creation is being jeopardized or put at risk, so is mine. And secondly, no matter how well intentioned my efforts may be as an individual to address some of the causes of this suffering, alone I can do very little."

**For more information about how to join the Pillars team, visit our website: [www.pillarsinc.org](http://www.pillarsinc.org).**



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