

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH.

Thank you for your interest and investment in Pillars. You help us provide shelter, support, and solutions to people in our community who experience homelessness.

Sincerely,

Joe Mauthe
Executive Director
(920) 734-9192 ext. 116
jmauthe@pillarsinc.org



A MINISTRY OF WELCOME Meet Deb Hetland, Pillars Resource Center Volunteer

You'll find Deb at the Pillars Resource Center (PRC) six to 10 hours a week. She enjoys supporting PRC clients and recruiting new volunteers, especially college kids. "I just love them. Their view of mental health is so different from earlier generations. Nothing really shocks them, and they go with the flow." Deb helps her new recruits acclimate to their role and accompanies them until they get comfortable. (Volunteers always work alongside staff at the PRC, too.)



Deb Hetland

In addition to Pillars, Deb volunteers for a text-only suicide crisis line and has been a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) for children. She is trained in trauma-informed care.

Deb's advice for new or interested Pillars volunteers

Have a compassionate heart, yet a calm, cool temperament, because you will encounter lots of unusual situations and personalities. "Above all, the people I meet are my heroes. They are still here, looking for a job and battling their obstacles. I love their senses of humor and purpose."



Are you a good listener and welcoming companion? You could change the course of someone's day—or life. To learn more about Pillars volunteer opportunities, contact volunteer manager Tony Schneider at tschneider@pillarsinc.org or (920) 419-0928.



pillars

SHELTER. SUPPORT. SOLUTIONS.

Summer 2020 Edition

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE



A Virtual Event
Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020
Evening hour TBD



You Can Stop Homelessness Before It Starts Pillars' Diversion Program is the First in Wisconsin

By Luanne Witthuhn, Pillars Diversion Case Manager

The Pillars Diversion/Prevention Program (DPP) was established in 2018 to help intervene in situations where people are on the verge of becoming homeless. The objective is to offer innovative case management to keep people in their current housing. Our team and our clients understand the impact of traumatizing shelter stays, especially on children. This approach helps divert people from shelters, keeping more beds available for those already on the streets.

As the first homelessness diversion program in Wisconsin, the heart of Pillars' Diversion/Prevention Program is innovation and creativity. This spirit helps us address the threat of homelessness alongside our clients' lived experiences. Together you, our team, and our clients can:

- **Hope.** DPP clients often tell me we offer hope. Our services are both preventive and proactive, like a hand reaching out to catch you right as you are about to fall. We make it a priority to genuinely listen and care about our clients' unique situations so we can keep them upright and taking steps in a helpful—and hopeful—direction.
- **Buy time.** A recent DPP client with multiple sclerosis was being asked to move out of the home he shared with his brother and his brother's girlfriend. We spoke to the man's brother and explained he could be on a waiting list for up to

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About the author:

Luanne Witthuhn is the Pillars diversion case manager, one of a team of 55 Pillars employees. Her life experiences as a single mother who faced significant financial and parenting

challenges has shaped her compassionate outlook. "I laugh and cry with my clients. I know in my heart this program is changing lives." Luanne joined Pillars after a 26-year career at Kimberly-Clark. She holds a degree in communications and IT. You can reach Luanne at lwitthuhn@pillarsinc.org.



Pictured: Client Amanda V. snuggles her daughters.



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Pillars is a non-profit,
United Way Fox Cities
partner agency.



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two years for an accessible, subsidized apartment. The brother and his girlfriend stopped pressuring the man to move out immediately, giving us time to work with our client and avoid a possible shelter stay. We have even had families stay at campgrounds to avoid shelter stays.

- **Take small steps for big change.** A young mother in our program recently saved \$300 in an emergency fund for her and her young son. That \$300 is fantastic, but more importantly, it was that first dollar she saved—a shift in her mindset that sets her family up for a much more stable living situation, now and in the future. DPP is a 90-day program that integrates goal-setting and accountability with financial and social support.

Plans to Double Down on Diversion

Since July 2020, the demand for diversion services at Pillars has skyrocketed as families come up against evictions, unemployment, and utility shut-offs related to COVID-19 and the accompanying economic downturn. The DPP intake numbers have jumped from four to 12 per week, and the caseload is already far exceeding our rolling 30-family capacity.

To help meet this growing need, we plan to double the capacity of our Diversion/Prevention Program for nine months, through June 2021. With your support and generosity, we can raise the necessary additional \$121,650 to make it happen.

NEWS

Jerome Martin Retires

On July 8, **Jerome Martin** retired from his role as senior director of crisis housing. Jerome was one of the visionaries behind Pillars, formed by the merger of Homeless Connections, Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities, and Fox Valley Warming Shelter. Jerome led Homeless Connections as its executive director from 2012 until the Pillars merger in 2018.



Jerome Martin

Shelters Shift to Hotel and Back During COVID-19

On April 16, all clients at Pillars Adult Shelter and many from Pillars Adult & Family Shelter relocated to a local hotel to help ensure proper distancing in the midst of COVID-19. An extraordinary community response, including support from the Salvation Army of the Fox Cities, the COVID-19 Community Response Fund, the J. J. Keller Foundation, hotel management, and many individuals, churches, and businesses made this massive operational shift possible. As of July 1, all clients and staff tested negative for COVID-19 and returned to Pillars shelters amidst procedures to monitor and address issues related to COVID-19.



Lisa Strandberg

New Leaders at Pillars

Lisa Strandberg was named community engagement director on June 22. She brings nonprofit leadership experience that includes positions with InterSector and Samaritan Counseling Center of the Fox Valley. **Betsy Borns** started as Pillars Resource Center manager on June 22. She previously led Project RUSH (Research to Understand and Solve Homelessness), an innovative regional effort to meet housing needs.



Betsy Borns

The Call to Service

Meet Jim St. Pierre, Pillars' New Crisis Housing Director

Greetings, I am Jim St. Pierre, the new crisis housing director. I join Pillars after a long career in the U.S. Marine Corps, the last 15 years as a chief warrant officer who worked primarily in human resources. I served all around the globe, from Okinawa, Japan, to war-torn Iraq and many stateside posts. More than one person has joked about my bringing Marine Corps sensibilities to my new job, and I can honestly say that I do plan to do that — but not in the way you might expect.

The stereotype of a hard, callous Marine is not who I am. Rather, my life experiences have caused me to view the world through a lens of compassion and humanity. I tell my wife, Karen, I've served my country all over the globe. Now it's time to serve my people in my forever home, the Fox Valley.

There are some parts of my job that do fit my zeal for clear

processes and procedures, especially in the age of COVID-19 when safety is paramount. I aspire to lead the crisis housing team with a fresh perspective

funding sources, government agencies, health care providers, and volunteers, all in service to our mission.

Thank you for your warm welcome to Pillars and the Fox Cities. It's good to be home. Let's work together to help others find their way home.

Jim St. Pierre grew up in northeast Wisconsin and was a U.S. Marine just 10 days after graduating from high school. He served in the Marine Corps for 30 years and holds a master's degree in business. He and his wife bought a house in Neenah and are excited to make it their own. You can find them hiking, biking, and kayaking when they are not visiting with their four children and six grandchildren. Reach Jim at jstpierre@pillarsinc.org.



Jim St. Pierre

"I am motivated to help shape Pillars into a shining example — an efficient, compassionate organization that lifts people up and out of homelessness."

that builds on past success. I am motivated to help shape Pillars into a shining example — an efficient, compassionate organization that lifts people up and out of homelessness.

I will also work to further strengthen Pillars' relationships with community partners,



Pictured: Pillars Adult & Family Shelter Operations Coordinator Karlyn Barthel gives a thumbs-up to Pillars' new COVID-19 safety procedures that include daily health assessments, face masks, and plastic barriers (where appropriate) to protect clients, staff, volunteers, and our community.

MEETING THE NEED: DIVERSION/PREVENTION PROGRAM

Amount Needed Now:
\$121,650

The Goal: Keep 525 adults and children safely housed and free of the challenges and expenses of a shelter stay.



Your gift of:

\$1,300 keeps an entire family in their home.

\$550 prevents a shelter stay for a single adult

\$100 gets the ball rolling, funding a family's one-hour assessment