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PABC Newsletter #1 — May 2013

Helping the Homeless in the "Thumb" of Michigan

Why This Newsletter?

This is the first issue of Port Austin Bible Campus Newsletter. Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of service and ministry to homeless people in Michigan's thumb. It hopes to do this through the following objectives:

- To provide accurate information about PABC's capabilities, strengths and weaknesses to organizations and individuals involved in helping people in need.
- To share information that is of general use to all service providers in Michigan's thumb. This includes both positive programs and resources, as well as problems and scams currently circulating.
- To encourage individuals who serve the needs of the poor—which can at times be a tiresome, thankless, and low-paid task. “And whoever gives one of these little

ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”

- Let the needs of this ministry be known to those who would like to help us—whether it is volunteering on a regular basis, or occasionally dropping off extra items.

This newsletter will not be fancy. It uses a single format designed to work reasonably well on both the Internet and in print—with no need for time-consuming conversion between formats. Sending via e-mail will keep our costs down, but if it is more likely to be read if it is sitting on a table somewhere, we will gladly send it in print. We can do both, if you prefer.

We would welcome on-topic questions and comments to be published in future issues.

Progress on Multiple Fronts

From our all-time high of 41 people living at PABC last November, only three remain here. Nearly all of the other 38 people went to long-term housing and are still there. We presently have 15 people on campus, 11 men, 3 women and 1 child. Five of those here now have jobs and should be moving on in a month or two.

PABC began taking homeless people in July 2010. As of this writing, we have provided 15,687 bed-nights (the total number of nights that all of the people stayed) for 76 men, 62 women and 50 children. We have done an "intake" for an additional 107 people, but either they found another place first, or we were able to help them find a better solution.

We have a new Christian man, who arrived directly from

prison, but who plans to stay at PABC as a full time worker after his trial period ends. In the month that he has been here, he has worked out great! While this may sound scary to some, one of the best PABC workers we have had in the past was a man who spent 30 years in prison and then worked at PABC for years. We do not know how we would have survived without him. (He is now in college and has a job.) Remember that even Jesus had “recovered” people as loyal workers (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2).

With the help of our Guests, we are planting a garden again this year. Our gardens have always supplied a lot of food for the staff and guests. We are still eating from the freezers of last year. Thanks to diligent planting and weeding two years ago, we are enjoying fresh asparagus now—it takes that long to get established.

Thumb Housing Resource Summary

We have found these helpful (does not include Marlette, Imlay City, Lapeer or Flint).

HURON COUNTY:	Address	Who They Help	Services Provided
Blue Water Center for Independent Living , Toni Mazure 989-269-5421 f:989-269-5422 tonimazure@bwcil.org	at Michigan Works office 614 N. Port Crescent St P.O. Box 29 Bad Axe, MI 48413	Adults in Huron County.	Access to numerous housing programs, both short and long-term. Help with tenants rights.
Department of Human Services , 989-269-9201; After hours: 800-322-4822	1911 Sand Beach Rd Bad Axe, MI 48413	Everyone in Huron County,	Access to numerous housing programs, medical care, food and cash assistance.
Huron County Homeless Coalition , Kathie Harrison: 989-269-9293 desk:989-269-0373	1108 S Van Dyke Bad Axe, Mi 48413	Anyone in Huron County	A good starting place. Some direct aid and access to most other homeless resources.
Huron County SafePlace , 989-269-5300, 888-849-7233, help@huroncountysafeplace.org	PO Box 8 Bad Axe, Mich. 48413	Abused women & their children only	Housing, food, counseling, case management, household items upon exit.
Port Austin Bible Campus , Norman Edwards, 989-738-7700	8180 Port Drive PO Box 474 Port Austin, Mich. 48467	Anyone 17 and older	Emergency and transitional housing. Stay length based upon continued personal improvement.
SANILAC COUNTY:	Address:	Who They Help	Services Provided
Blue Water Center for Independent Living , 810-664-9098. 810-648-2555.	103 E. Sanilac, Ste. 3 Sandusky, MI 48471	Adults in Sanilac County	Access to numerous housing programs, both short and long-term..
Department of Human Services , 810-648-4420, fax: 810-648-4420	515 S. Sandusky Sandusky, MI 48471	Anyone in Sanilac County	Access to numerous housing programs, medical care, food and cash assistance.
Eva's Place , 810-672-9467, Crisis 866-336-7283	P.O. Box 29 Sandusky, MI 48471	Women, children to 17. Primarily Sanilac County	Domestic violence and homeless shelter. Counseling, case management, etc...
Kid's Connection 810-648-9395.	217 E Sanilac Road #2 Sandusky, MI 48471-1383	Young people	Private social service Welfare Organization
TUSCOLA COUNTY:	Address:	Who They Help	Services Provided
Blue Water Center for Independent Living , 989-673-3678, Tuscola@bwcil.org	1184 Cleaver Caro MI 48723	Any adult in Tuscola county	Access to numerous housing programs, both short and long-term..
Department of Human Services 989-673-9100 fax: 989-673-9209	1365 Cleaver Rd. Caro MI 48723	Anyone in Tuscola County	Access to numerous housing programs, medical care, food and cash assistance.
Thumb Area Assault Crisis Center , Crisis: 800-292-3666	429 Montague Ave Caro, MI 48723	Women and children up to 17 years old.	Domestic violence & homeless shelter, counseling and case management.
Tuscola County Homeless Coalition , 989-672-7674 fax: 989-672-7674	157 N State St PO Box 323 Caro, Michigan 48723	Anyone in need of housing.	A good starting place. Some direct aid and access to most other homeless resources.
Tuscola Peer Center Eric Pinkoski 989-673-0273	146 W. Lincoln PO Box 48 Caro, MI 48723	Mentally challenged referrals from CMH	Provide transitional shelter for up to 30 days, limited availability.
PORT HURON AREA:	Address:	Who They Help	Services Provided
Blue Water Area Rescue Mission , Debbie: 810-956-0768	1920 24 th St Port Huron, MI 48060	St. Clair County residents.	Emergency housing .
Blue Water Safe Horizons & Carolyn's Place , 888-985-5538	PO Box 610247 Port Huron, MI 48061	Women only: DV, homeless	Emergency housing, counseling, recovery services.

The Harbor Sally Currie . 810-982-8584	929 Pine Street, Port Huron, Michigan 48060	St Clair County ages 10-17	Two week stay; See Wings for a long stay.
Pathway Shelter 810-982-1020. (Take calls from 4 p.m. to 8 a.m.)	511 Union Street Port Huron, Mich. 48060	St. Claire and Sanilac county residents	Emergency housing age 18 & up: single men (homeless & DV), couples, families
Thumb Region Prisoner Reentry Program Laura: 819-966-3304.	(In Port Huron, but serves entire thumb.)	Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, St. Clair, Tuscola	Housing and many other services only for parolees leaving prison.
Wings Transitional Living Program , 810-989-9602	1114 Court Street Port Huron, Mich. 48060	homeless youth ages 16-21	18-month shelter, skills training and support services.
BAY CITY & SAGINAW:	Address:	Who They Help	Services Provided
Bay Area Women's Shelter Crisis:800-834-2098 Admin: 989-.686-2251	P.O. Box 1458 3411 E. Midland Rd. Bay City, MI 48706	Women and children, DV and homeless	Emergency and transitional housing, DV & Sexual assault help, legal & housing advocacy
City Rescue Mission of Saginaw , 989-752-6051	1021 Burt St Saginaw, MI 48607	Men & women. One room for a family.	Housing for adults, younger children and older children with same-sex parent.
Cory Place 989-985-5563	581 North Scheurmann Road, Bay City; MI 48708	Homeless and troubled youth up to age 20	Emergency housing, case management, guidance.
Emmaus House of Saginaw 989-755-7538	733 South 14 th St, Saginaw, Michigan 48601	Women from incarceration or substance abuse	14 homes where women stay, with live-in staff or senior guest No specific length of stay.
Good Samaritan Rescue Mission , 989-893-5973	713 9th St Bay City, MI 48708	Mostly Bay County residents	Housing for guests making progress: re-evaluated every 7 days.
HUD-VASH (Housing and Urban Development Veterans Admin. Supported Housing) 989-497-2500, 800-406-5143	Aleda E. Lutz, VA Medical Center 1500 Weiss Saginaw, MI 48602	Veterans in need of housing in the Thumb	Help with housing, job training and other skills necessary to improve quality of life.
Inner Link (Saginaw County Youth Protection Council) Johnny Gibson 989-753-3431 jgibson@innerlinkservices.com .	1110 Howard St Saginaw, MI 48601	17 to 21 years—mostly from Tri-cities area and Tuscola county	Homeless teens stay maximum of 18 month with 6 month aftercare. A short-term program is also available.
Restoration Community Outreach 989-753-1886	1205 Norman St Saginaw, Mi 48601	Homeless, mostly from Saginaw	Emergency and temporary housing. Inspect bags and may breathalyzer test upon entry.

Scheduling System on the Way

We are continually aware of the diversity among our homeless Guests. Many are here for only a few weeks, waiting on government housing programs. Others have complications that slow that process down: past evictions, past due utility bills, domestic legal issues, substance abuse history, medical conditions, felony criminal records, sex offender status, etc. Most need some form of steady monetary inflow to obtain long-term housing. Some are just now entering the work force. Others are waiting for disability or social security to begin paying them.

Their capabilities are diverse also. Some are very good about attending our Bible classes and meetings but are not so responsible with things they need to do on their own. Others don't like to come to classes, but they can keep outside appointments. Some are good at applying for jobs or government assistance—others are fearful of it. Some seek help for their substance abuse problems, others deny

they have them. Some keep their room clean on their own, others will leave trash piled up for weeks—when 10 minutes of work would fix it. Some are in their rooms every night at the proper time; others are often where they do not have permission to be.

From our nearly three years of experience with the great diversity of our Guests, we have realized that a “one size fits all” approach to dealing with them will not work. If we try to monitor everything that everybody does all of the time, we would exhaust our staff and create a lot of animosity in those Guests who handle their own affairs well. At the opposite extreme, if we do not monitor anything, we miss out on helping people in areas where we could make a big difference in their lives.

What is the solution? How do we do all this simply and efficiently? With a customizable automated system! Fortunately, Norman Edwards worked as a computer

analyst/programmer for the first half of his adult life. He is now in the process of developing an automated system to allow for scheduling each Guest and staff function—and to verify that these functions were completed. Items that were not properly completed, as well as their future schedule, will appear on each Guest and staff member's report. Guests that handle their affairs well may receive only one

report per week showing their planned schedule. Guests that are struggling will receive daily reports—which will high-light the events that they have not properly completed. Those who keep up with their responsibilities will be subject to less monitoring. Those who do not keep up with their assigned tasks will be given more monitoring—or eventually asked to leave if they are uncooperative.

In Court over Zoning of Chickens

While PABC continues to extend its service to the people of the Thumb, it is in court defending a criminal offense—having chickens! On Monday, June 11, 2012, Norman Edwards was invited to speak about the Port Austin Bible Campus to a board meeting of the Village of Port Austin. While PABC is outside the Village limits (it is in the Port Austin Township), the Village board asked us to come because we are only 2 miles away and many of the PABC Guests walk into the Village for jobs, shopping and various services. We went to the meeting hoping that we would be able to better understand each other and be able to address their concerns.

Their clear message from the majority of people who spoke at the meetings was that they felt we needed a lot more money for infrastructure and professional people to help homeless people. They said absolutely nothing about helping to raise that money so either we or someone else to do the job. Instead, they made it clear they did not want homeless people, especially those with criminal records, to be anywhere near their Village. They were not concerned with where they might go or whether their families would be able to stay together—as long as it was somewhere else. The Port Austin Township Supervisor commented “Edwards is not educated or qualified to be doing what he is doing and there may be other avenues to go through.”

They did not seem interested in our evidence that everyone is better off when homeless people have somewhere to live—they are not so tempted to live by crime, to squat on other's property or sleep in public places. We wrote a letter to the Port Austin Township, The Village of Port Austin, our county Commissioner and the Huron Daily Tribune asking to meet together so we could further discuss our differences, but never received a reply. The Tribune printed it, but that was all.

Nine days after the village meeting, The Township Zoning Inspector sent a certified letter to us telling us our property was not zoned for “farm animals” and gave us 48 hours to remove them. The approximately 40 chickens we have are fed largely from leftovers and spoiled donated food. They provide a wonderful source of fresh eggs. Some of the homeless Guests help care for the chickens; all the Guests are required to separate usable food from other trash. It is

a good lesson for all: when one does not have a job, one should use one's time to save money. We have had chickens in the same location for the last seven years—and have never had complaints about noise from anyone. Was this letter one of the “other avenues” mentioned above?

On October 10th, a criminal citation was issued, and Huron County 73B District Court case 12-1982-ON began. The penalty for having “farm animals in a business district” is a \$100 fine or 90 days in jail. Indeed, some have advised us to “get rid of the chickens and stay out of court”. But the records from court discovery show that no neighbors have complained about the chickens that have been there for eight years. It is not a matter that they are endangering anybody or anything. Furthermore, it appears that simply moving the chickens to a different part of our property, might satisfy their zoning requirements. It seems to us a matter of the township deciding to enforce one of hundreds of existing zoning violations in the township—one that makes life more difficult for us, a church ministry that appears inconvenient to them.

The New Testament has examples of believers doing good works (much more significant than ours) who were persecuted by their governments (in a much greater way than we are). Nevertheless, the Bible commands us to make courts and appellate systems that are just and fair (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:18-20, 17:8-13). We see numerous examples where the Apostles used those systems—sometimes receiving justice, sometimes not, always knowing that God would render ultimate justice.

We believe it is important to defend our legal rights over chickens, or we will probably have to defend them over much graver issues. The zoning and other ordinances are extensive, and it is probably almost always possible to find something wherein a particular property is in violation. We intend to put up a defence on multiple fronts:

- Zoning does not apply to unincorporated churches such as PABC. The courts have already ruled that zoning is not a right of a county or township, but a power granted by the state legislature. There are entities specifically excepted from zoning by the state legislature—others recognized as exempt by Michigan's courts. The state has authority to regulate church corporations (the

manner in which most churches operate), but does it have authority over unincorporated churches to grant to townships? As we see it, the legislature rarely asserts any jurisdiction over unincorporated churches—and there are virtually no court cases in regard to this.

- Even if the Courts decide that zoning does apply to unincorporated churches, the ordinance, in our case, is not being enforced to fulfill the purpose elsewhere stated in the law. An ordinance should not be enforced contrary to its purpose.
- Huron County has historically had Christian Communities, such as Ora et Labora near Bay Port, that integrated Agricultural, industrial, business, residential, religious and charitable functions. These communities, as PABC is, have never been made illegal by the legislature and they cannot be abolished because townships do not create zones for them.
- This is an example of vindictive prosecution—attempting to deprive a party of a first amendment right through over-broad prosecution.
- The township does not maintain adequate records and procedures sufficient for zoning ordinance enforcement.

You Heard What about PABC?

At times, we are asked some usual questions about our ministry. That is good! Other times, we have been investigated by various government agencies—that is not quite so good—but the investigations have always been over very quickly. Occasionally, we meet somebody who wants nothing to do with us because of some terrible thing they heard. Rarely, these rumors make it into web sites or publications! **Why?**

It is one of the facts of life in ministering to homeless people. The people we serve vary greatly. Some are skilled, competent people who had unfortunate circumstances or who made a single mistake. Others are homeless as a result of their ongoing destructive lifestyle. One such destructive modus operandi is searching for those who have significant resources, then attempting to obtain those resources by flattery, threats or a combination of both. For example, one of our Guests once asked very nicely for some something she wanted. When she was refused, she said, "I don't know who regulates you, but I'm going to find out and file a nasty complaint."

The goal our ministry is to give people who have lost their home a chance to get a new start. We hope they will see and repent of self-destructive ways. When we see these flattering/threatening behavior, we read the book of Proverbs or other literature that explains that these ways do not work in the long-term. When Guests persist in them, we must ask them to leave PABC for the protection of the others who live there. We also hope they will realize this

We have not been a stranger to litigation on these kinds of matters. In 2005, our property tax exemption was denied. Tax assessor training classes only teach about churches that are recognized by the IRS as tax exempt under IRS code section 501(c)(3). It was not until 2007 that we received a hearing in court, but when we did, it took the judge only about half an hour to decide that our property was tax exempt.

The district court judge called a settlement conference in April, but there was no hope of reaching settlement. The Port Austin Township insisted that the case was only about zoning and had nothing to do with wanting PABC to stop its ministry. We believe a church community has a constitutional and legislative right to carry out its mission to help the poor in spite of efforts to stop it through zoning. There will certainly be a lot of controversy over which evidence will be allowed to be presented and the reasons why it should or should not be. While we would like to devote our time to our main mission, we realize that a lot of those legal questions will not be authoritatively answered short of the appeals courts.

difficult behavior cost them a place to stay.

Nevertheless, they usually do not see themselves as the problem. When we do not go along with them, they may carry through with their threats. They may take their creative, negative story to government agencies, lawyers, other homeless service providers, churches or people on the street. Some stories have been: "PABC sent me out for no reason", "PABC has no electricity or running water" or "PABC is extorting from poor people". The few investigating agencies that came spent only a few minutes at PABC and left, realizing it was a hoax.

Sometimes Guests seem unable to apply the golden rule and think about how they would react if they were treated the way they treat others. Years ago, a Guest grandmother was upset with her daughter and reported her for child abuse. The grandchildren were investigated by CPS and no abuse was found. But the grandmother could not understand why her daughter stopped letting her visit her grandchildren! Later we found the woman making serious false accusations against another local Christian leader, and we told her she would need to stop and apologize, or leave. She left, amid a flurry of more false accusations and three false police reports against us!

With this in mind, we encourage you to call, e-mail or visit if you hear some terrible thing about us or our Guests. We are happy to let concerned individuals see our operations, records, etc. We believe that those who are helping Christian ministries have a right to determine if

their efforts are going for a good cause. Most Guests here are very thankful and do not cause trouble. Even the difficult ones sometimes learn and change. We would much

rather people ask us seemingly difficult questions, than fall victim to a false story that is easily disprovable. Thanks for listening!

Things We Could Use if You're Not

The Bible mentions the principle of gleaning—allowing the poor to pick leftovers from other's fields after the owners had finished the main harvest (Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-21; Ruth 2:2, 15). A prosperous farmer did not really need these gleanings, which cost much more per pound to harvest, but they would provide both work and sustenance for the poor. In that spirit, we would like to encourage our friends to give us things that they own but are not using, that we can use to work and provide for ourselves. We have a small truck and trailer we can use to pick up these items when convenient. Just call 989-738-7700.

- **A riding lawn mower.** We have about 15 acres to mow. The mowers we have were left with the property 9 years ago and have numerous major parts nearly worn out.
- **Garden tools.** Shovels, rakes, hoes, etc. We have some,

most were decades old when we got them and have worn or broken over the years.

- **A chest freezer.** It does not need to look good as long as it works efficiently.
- **A working refrigerator.**
- **A good office copier.** Ours is about 17 years old, doesn't feed well, and the toner comes off easily.
- **Older computers and laser printers.** Most job applications are now on-line. Some of our Guests sell on-line and repair computers. We can assemble good computers from broken ones, or sell them as parts.
- **DVD and VHS video players.** We use them for daily class and have them available in Guest living areas.
- **Building materials and supplies.** Wood, nails, screws, shingles, drywall, paint, plumbing parts, electrical parts, etc. to make numerous repairs that are needed here.

Thank you very much for considering our ministry.

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Place
stamp
here

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