March 7, 2019

Dear friends of St. John’s Homeless Shelter,

The leadership, trustees, and directors of St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter, Inc. (SJEHS), along with the Diocese of Green Bay, join together in announcing and celebrating this exciting moment in the life of St. John’s ministries (which includes the Micah Center and Wellspring). Beginning July 1, 2019, St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter, Inc. will become an independent nonprofit and no longer operate as a corporation of the Diocese of Green Bay. This transition comes after more than two years of careful planning to ensure St. John’s ministries will continue to thrive and embody the mission of Jesus by caring for those in greatest need in our community.

The Board of Directors and Trustees, along with the Shelter staff, applaud the many moments in which the Diocese of Green Bay, in word and in action, took a stand for our most vulnerable brothers and sisters. During moments of tension, bias, or opposition, the Diocese steadfastly supported and defended the need to care for the homeless in our community. Over the years, the ministry of SJEHS, Inc., has greatly benefitted from the support of individuals and departments within the Diocese of Green Bay. Many services the shelter could not afford in its early years were graciously provided by the diocese at little or no cost. As an organization, SJEHS, Inc., will always be grateful for diocesan support as their ministry began and continued to grow.

Acknowledging the critical and ongoing role the Diocese of Green Bay has played over the years, the SJEHS, Inc., Board of Directors is pleased Bishop David Ricken will appoint a diocesan representative to its membership. This appointment will allow for a continued partnership between SJEHS, Inc., and the diocese, maintaining the commitment to serving the poor and vulnerable in the very way that Christ served.

This transition also reflects the reality that both SJEHS, Inc., and the Diocese of Green Bay are engaged in a variety of valued partnerships throughout northeast Wisconsin. The diocese has and will continue to be an advocate for ministries that care for the poor and the homeless, including SJEHS, shelters in Appleton and Manitowoc, and other charitable works rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While reverencing its Catholic roots, St. John’s has always relied on and benefitted from the support of houses of worship representing a variety of religious traditions. The ecumenical response to the needs of homeless persons in our community has been a testimony to our desire for unity and the strong faith present in our community.

Today, leaders from the Diocese of Green Bay and SJEHS, Inc., are confident that the shelter and its affiliated ministries have grown to a point where they can flourish independently from the Diocese. St. John’s has become part of the fabric of the community and is a valued contributor to life in the city of Green Bay. This is a significant moment for the Diocese, for St. John’s Shelter and its affiliated ministries, and for all who have supported this important work.

Sincerely,

James O’Neil     Father John Girotti   Alexia Wood
Chairperson, Board of Directors   President     Executive Director

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Talking points regarding St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter transition to independence
2-20-2019

Why is SJEHS moving to independence from the Diocese of Green Bay?

The decision to move to independence for St. John’s has been in discussion for some time. Over the past several years, the shelter has been taking many operational pieces in-house and away from the diocese in the hope of one day moving to complete independence as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, and that time is now. The diocese will always walk with St. John’s. The diocese is a trusted and faithful supporter. This transition opens the door for additional partners to come forward in support of the mission of the shelter.

What does this mean for the ministries of SJEHS?

Simply, it means that St. John Homeless Shelter, the Micah Center, and Wellspring – SJEHS - will now be an independent non-profit organization and no longer a corporation of the Diocese of Green Bay. In terms of immediate impact, the Shelter, Micah Center, and Wellspring will continue operating as usual. In the long term, independence will open up support for additional ecumenical partnerships in the community.

Why now?

As an organization, SJEHS has done its due diligence in assessing its operational and ministerial offerings, and how it is able to generate funds to sustain those programs. It finds that it is in a stable place that will allow it to stand independently, and to open up for support from additional ecumenical partners in the community.

What is meant by additional ecumenical partners?

From its very beginning, St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter has received significant support from the Diocese of Green Bay as well as from Catholic volunteers and donors. Reflecting this fact, the Catholic Foundation has and continues to support the work of SJEHS through financial gifts. It is important to note that the Shelter has also been blessed by people of many faiths who have also heeded the call of Jesus to care for those in need. By SJEHS becoming an ecumenical and independent non-profit corporation, it will become clearer to all of our supporters and to the greater community that we are a united ministry of men and women of faith caring for our homeless brothers and sisters.

Will the shelter continue to be located in the former school of St. John the Evangelist Parish?

Yes! The shelter is currently 5 years into a 20-year lease with the Parish for use of the former school building. SJEHS appreciates the proximity of this building to the services our guests utilize, and it is grateful for the ongoing and supportive relationship it has enjoyed with St. John the Evangelist Parish.
Will the current leadership of the Shelter, Micah Center, and Wellspring be affected by the change?

The current staff has been instrumental in preparing for the transition to independence, and is also integral to future success. All expectations are that the current leadership team will stay in place.

Will independence impact SJEHS’ Catholic and Christian heritage?

“We will look for the face of Jesus in everyone” is a core value of SHEHS. It will continue to follow the Gospel mandate of Matthew 25:40: “Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Currently, SJEHS is overseen by a Board of Directors and Board of Trustees. Will this change?

The Board of Trustees will effectively become the Board of Directors as the bylaws and articles of incorporation are revised to become consistent with an independent, Christian-based, non-profit. After that transition, the Bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay will appoint a representative to serve on the Board. This is another opportunity to maintain our strong relationship and partnership with the Diocese.

How does the SJEHS transition to independence affect the CUP (Conditional Use Permit) which the City of Green Bay grants to SJEHS to operate?

SJEHS will need to request an updated CUP that addresses language related to sponsorship from the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay, as well as several other areas. We are very confident that the city council will find this request favorable, and grant the new CUP. There have been many improvements in operating procedures since the last CUP was approved, improvements which should alleviate past concerns. Many of the city council members also have a better understanding and appreciation of SJEHS’s mission and ministry.

Will the new CUP agreement ask for additional occupancy numbers or an extended season?

At this time, the main issue that is being addressed is language related to sponsorship by the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay. The updated CUP does not address occupancy or an extended season.