



HOW THE

SEE BLOOMINGTON

By Carmen Siering

Photographs taken by indigent men and women in our town



Even in the richest country in the world, homelessness can happen to anyone.

The causes are many — illness, addiction, job loss, foreclosure, eviction, depression, mental illness, injury, bad luck. In the recent recession, through no fault of their own, hundreds of thousands of wage earners lost their jobs, and families lost their homes. Today, there are people on the street who have jobs paying so little they cannot afford a place to live.

We read about movie stars, professional athletes, and Wall Street tycoons who squander their fortunes and end up in poverty. But we rarely gain insight into the average Joes and Josephines we see on Kirkwood, in Seminary Square Park, or gathered outside Shalom Community Center on South Walnut.

“Homeless people are just people without homes,” one formerly homeless person told us. “We’re the same as you.”

We gave cameras to poor and homeless men and women and asked them to take pictures of Bloomington as they see our town.

In all, 11 photographers took more than 5,000 images — of trees and flowers, sunrises and sunsets, buildings and street life, people and pets, and the ordinary and not-so-ordinary happenings of typical days.

We hope their pictures and their stories help you get to know some of our fellow citizens who have fallen on hard times. —the editor

ACCOMPANYING EXHIBIT



WHAT DOES BLOOMINGTON LOOK LIKE TO ME?

by artists from Shalom and New Hope

Pictura Brick Gallery
January 8 – February 27, 2016

Gallery Walk Opening:
Friday, January 8, 5 – 8 p.m.

The photographers, who will be invited to the opening, will receive 50 percent of the proceeds of all sales. Shalom Community Center will receive the other 50 percent.



The *STORY* BEHIND the *PICTURES*

“They had a job to do and a sense of responsibility.”

On Saturday, March 14, *The New York Times* reported on a photography exhibition in Paris, France. The photographers, all homeless men and women, took pictures that were later displayed outside the mayor’s offices. The idea so intrigued Malcolm Abrams, *Bloom*’s editor, that by 9 a.m. he was sending emails to

people he thought might be interested in doing something similar here — publishing the photographs in *Bloom Magazine* and possibly showing the work at Pictura Gallery.

A group of professionals involved with the homeless and interested in the idea met for an early morning breakfast in April. “Before we did anything, I wanted to be certain that what we were proposing would be beneficial to the homeless and not exploitive,” says

Abrams.

Coincidentally, caseworkers at Shalom Community Center were already involved in a photo project with several homeless men and women using disposable cameras and they enthusiastically embraced this more expansive project.

Assured of the project’s positivity, the team met three times in all. The plan that evolved was to supply 12 homeless or recently homeless people with cameras. (A note from that first meeting states there was “the expectation of at least five completing the project.”) Three children from New Hope for Families would also be supplied cameras.

The theme would be: “How Do You See Bloomington?”

David and Martha Moore, owners of Pictura Gallery, became involved, committed to building awareness of issues of poverty and homelessness in Bloomington. “These are serious issues that can’t be ignored,” says Martha. The couple researched and purchased the cameras — small, lightweight Canon PowerShot SX700HS models — and agreed to host a show of the photographs. “This project is an illustrative example of how important it is that we address poverty and homelessness in a positive way,” she says.

Bloomington Police Department Officer Amy Romoser, one of six volunteer officers working with the homeless, and the Reverend Joe Emerson, a longtime Shalom board member, also attended the meetings and offered valuable insights.

Two groups of photographers were selected by caseworkers from Shalom Community Center under the direction of Virginia Hall, street outreach caseworker. One group was coached at Shalom by photographers John and Peggy Woodcock, the other by photographer Sarah Wilson at Crawford Apartments. Elaine Guinn, executive director of New Hope for Families, supervised the children. The photography coaches provided basic instruction on how to use the cameras and how to take photographs at the first meeting at both locations. Critiques and more instruction were given at follow-up meetings.

The photographers were selected, Hall says, because the caseworkers

saw in each an element of commitment. “We picked people we thought would participate and take it seriously.” Still, she says, it’s interesting to look back on the project and see that the team had some of the same assumptions about the poor and homeless as many others in the community. “We had this idea that they wouldn’t follow through. We also struggled with giving them the cameras. It felt like we were taking a risk giving them something so valuable.”

Despite the reservations, the project far exceeded the initial plans and expectations. It was supposed to last three weeks, but an additional week was added at the request of the instructors and their students. And while a couple of the original photographers dropped out, there were others eager to take up the cameras. In the end, 11 photographers finished the project, producing more than 5,000 images of Bloomington.

“I can’t tell you what just handing them the cameras did for them,” says Hall. “It meant we were trusting them; we valued them. And for many of those involved, that doesn’t happen very often.

“They were given a task and told if they were faithful to it they would receive a reward,” she says. “The fact that they did what they were asked to do and then, in the end, they did receive that reward? That’s huge. These are people who don’t get many rewards in life.”

Peggy Woodcock and her husband, John, worked with the largest group of photographers at Shalom. “When they got the cameras, that was a real confidence builder. They had a job to

do and a sense of responsibility,” she says. “They saw they could give something back to the community and, at the same time, get back rewards they couldn’t get any other way.”

Of the monetary rewards provided to participants, the most immediate was that *Bloom* paid each of the photographers \$75 for completing the assignment and returning the camera. Later, they would be paid the standard rate by the magazine for each of their photographs chosen for publication. Pictura Gallery would also pay them its standard percentage for any of their photographs sold during the exhibition at the gallery.

Sarah Wilson, who worked with the new photographers at Crawford Apartments, spoke of the intangible benefits of the project. “This allows their stories to be told and for them to be recognized,” she says. “The world tells them they’re not special, and they are special. We’re all special. I worked at Genesis Shelter, and I used to think about the guests there. What were they like when they were boys and girls? And I knew that when they were dreaming of their futures, no one dreamt of being homeless.”

(opposite page) Amelia Dixon examines her new camera at the first instructional meeting at Shalom Community Center. Photo by Ray Jordan

(left) Virginia Hall, Shalom street outreach caseworker. Photo by Mike Meadows (center) Photographers John and Peggy Woodcock, who worked with the new photographers at Shalom Community Center. Photo by Erin Stephenson (right) Professional photographer Sarah Wilson, who instructed the new photographers at Crawford Apartments. Photo by Erin Stephenson



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I was an amateur photographer in the '70s and '80s, and I had forgotten how much I enjoyed it. When we got done with the project, I went through some stuff I had in storage and found a point-and-shoot. It's about three notches down from the cameras we got from Bloom, but it's a Canon, and I carry it with me all the time.

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Ray Jordan



Ray Jordan. Photo by Peggy Woodcock

(opposite page) Early morning at Sample Gates. (below) A Shalom volunteer after a long day. (bottom) A man drinks a hot cup of coffee at Community Kitchen of Monroe County.



Ray Jordan is a veteran. He moved to Bloomington in 1965 after serving in the United States Air Force. “And then,” he says, “the rug got pulled out from under me, both emotionally and economically.” He was a newly recovered alcoholic who had sought treatment, but that didn’t stop his wife from seeking a divorce. Then in 1983, he was fired after 16 years as a postal worker.

“Not long after that, I became homeless,” Jordan says. “At first I couldn’t believe it. My whole world just flipped. It was one way and then it was another way. I found I was all by myself,” he says. “I’d call someone up,

just to say ‘hi,’ and the first thing you know, they would be telling me how they couldn’t help me out. I wasn’t looking for that. I was just looking to say hello.”

In the three decades since he first experienced homelessness, Jordan says he has had housing, but never for long. He’s also had some work. “But the economy would

interfere,” he says. “Then I would look for another job, and there would be 300 applicants.”

He’s homeless now. “I’m sleeping in my truck,” he says. “I’ve done it lots of times before. It’s not a big deal.” Having the truck, however, is a big deal. Jordan has COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease],

and needs his truck to get to the Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center in Indianapolis for treatment when things get serious. It’s also part of his long-term plan. “If I get to where I’m too feeble to take care of myself, I know I can go to the VA, but I don’t want to do that,” he says. “I try to take care of myself.”





(above) Photos from an article about people experiencing homelessness. "These photos were lined up to make it look like the police are coming to get poor Dan, who is sleeping on the porch, and send him off to rehab," Copeland says.

Isaac Copeland

Isaac Copeland has a message for those who think homelessness couldn't possibly happen to them: Homelessness doesn't discriminate. "You can do everything right, but it can still happen," he says. "It doesn't matter if you are black or white. You can go to school; you can plan. And you can have everything snatched away from you in a minute."

Copeland, 40, is originally from Phoenix, Arizona. He came to Bloomington "by way of Detroit" at the urging of his mother. "My mom was worried about me bouncing around, and the rest of my family had moved here, so I came here in 1998," he says. His family isn't here now, and he doesn't have a support network, so like so many others, losing a job meant losing his home. "I've had quite a few good jobs, but then, somehow or

other, I got terminated, and then there I was," he says.

Copeland says he isn't really sure how he became homeless. "Things just started unraveling. I've had apartments, but then I end up losing my job, so I lose the apartment. Or I'm living with someone, and we get in a fight and I get put out," he says. "People are sometimes just a paycheck away from being homeless."



Isaac Copeland. Photo by Peggy Woodcock

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I didn't really know how it was going to work out, but I liked doing the project. My pictures may not be for everybody, but I take pictures of things that speak to me in a certain way.
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(above) Diego, a cat in the neighborhood where Copeland lived for a time. "He was in the wheel well, but jumped down, so the shot I got was in mid-motion," Copeland says. (left) A hot evening in Peoples Park; Copeland saw the couple feeding each other ice cream, but missed that shot as he scrambled to get his camera.

“
I had so much fun doing this photo project. I have something like 10 photo apps on my phone and, really, those are cheaters. I appreciated having a real camera.
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Brandi Trisler



Brandi Trisler. Photo by Peggy Woodcock



Though she's been housed for more than a year, Brandi Trisler still visits Shalom Community Center frequently, checking in with Executive Director Forrest Gilmore, caseworkers, and others who supported her while she was homeless. "Without this place, I wouldn't have been able to eat, take a shower, get mail," she says. "It's comforting here because everyone is in the same situation. This was my home for three years."

A Bloomington native, Trisler, 30, never experienced homelessness until 2012. That's when her marriage fell apart and, as she put it, she lost the will to keep going. She says she learned a lot while homeless, met a lot of interesting



(opposite page, top) Near The Project School. (opposite page, bottom) Monroe County Courthouse taken from Indiana University's Atwater Parking Garage. (above) Trisler says she found this flower fascinating because "you could see it was dying, yet it was still blooming."

people, and found God during that time. "It can be very liberating in some ways," she says. "But I like having a home and working for things."

Even while she was without a home she had a job working at Macy's. She would walk to work after sleeping outside. "Imagine — everyone is in a suit and tie and there you are with grass in your hair."

Trisler works in catering now, and says she hopes to get a second job soon. "Having a home opens up a lot of doors as far as being employed," she says. "It's a lot harder if you don't have a place to rest and shower and eat. Even if you do, it's on someone else's schedule. They tell you when you can shower, when you can eat, when you can sleep. So having your own home is a blessing."

Trisler says before she was homeless she might not have been as accepting of the people she now knows as friends. "It humbled me a bit to go through that experience." And she learned from it. "I want people to realize that homeless people are just people without homes. We're the same as you," she says. "It's a form of prejudice to think otherwise."



(opposite page) Railroad trestle at Clear Creek Trail. (right) The mural at Le Petit Café. Several photographers included the mural among their photographs. "Anybody can get the painting," Pheylán says. "I wanted to get the artist." (below) Pheylán says he talked to this man for some time, but waited until he walked away to take the shot to add dramatic effect.



Galin Pheylán. Photo by Peggy Woodcock

Galin Pheylán

As a certified nursing assistant, Galin Pheylán enjoyed regular employment and the knowledge that he was helping others. He most recently worked as an assistant manager at a group home in Bedford, Indiana, where he says things went well and he enjoyed a reputation for being a good employee. He says it was his caring nature that led to his current situation.

"I've been homeless for nearly three years, ever since I quit work to take care of my mom when she was ill," he says. "When she passed, I found myself jobless, homeless, and penniless." Pheylán was living in Mitchell, Indiana, at the time. "There's no place for homeless men there, so the police brought me to Bloomington, dropped me off at Walmart, and said, 'Have a good life.'"

Pheylán is truly homeless, living on the street during the day, sleeping in a tent at night. He's careful not to reveal where he camps, but says it isn't in town. "Being homeless is a stigma," he says. "I don't want more of a stigma placed on me by hanging around those who are alcoholic or drug users, so I don't sleep in town." →



He's tried to get another job, tried to get more training. "I stayed for a year with Catholic Workers and did two semesters at Ivy Tech while I was there. I was going for phlebotomy [Phlebotomists are medical professionals who draw blood from patients.]," he says. His old job as a group home manager is a possibility. "But they say they want me to get a job and be stable before they will rehire me," Pheylán says. "I don't really understand that. Everything is good on paper."

Being a part of this project gave me hope. It might open something up for me in the future.

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Once I started the photo project, I started paying attention. I walk everywhere, and I'd see stuff, but I'd never notice anything. You see things differently in pictures ... you have time to sit and think.

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Deidre Roach



Deidre Roach. Photo by John Woodcock

Deidre Roach is quick to explain that she isn't homeless right now and hasn't been homeless much. She knows part of the reason is that she is a woman and a mother. "I've never been on the street," she says. "There are usually places for mothers with kids, so I've been lucky that way. I know a lot of homeless people and they haven't been so lucky, and I feel sorry for them."

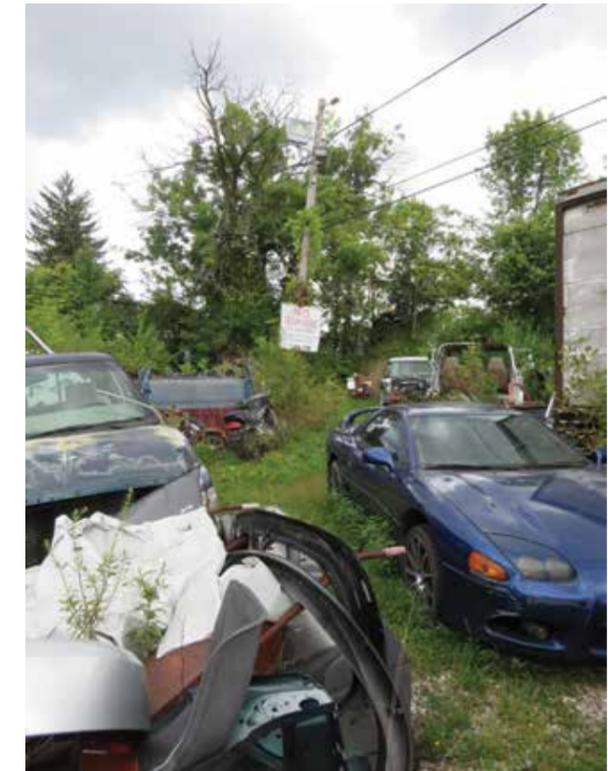
Roach, 32, grew up in Bloomington. Her mother, a nurse at Bloomington Hospital, home-schooled her. Roach says when she was 14, her mother got sick. When she was 15, her mother died. "Then I was in seven foster homes in a year," she recalls. She was emancipated at 17. "And it was sink or swim. I had some money from my mom's death and a trustee who gave me an allowance, but

I was on my own." At 19 she got the remainder of the money through a court order, but in retrospect wishes she hadn't. "I'd still have money now if I hadn't done that," she says.

Her life hasn't been easy. She's been in Middle Way House, been homeless for a time, and lived at The Rise!, a housing project operated by Middle Way that serves women and children who have experienced domestic violence, homelessness, and poverty. Without a high school diploma, employment is difficult. But she's optimistic. "Right now I'm housed and do some odd jobs for people," she says. "And I'm working on my GED."



(left) Sunday evening at Bloomington Transit. (below top) Off the B-Line Trail near Family Video. "I'd walked by here a million times and I'd never seen this before," Roach says. "I looked in the fence and saw all these cars and had to take the picture." (below bottom) Abandoned building off the B-Line Trail.



“

I've always been into photography, so I would really like to keep taking pictures. Besides, being a part of the photo project gave me something to do. And when people see my photos, it will give them my perspective on things.

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Jerald Cribbs



Jerald Cribbs. Photo by Sarah Wilson

Jerald Cribbs had always had a job; he'd worked as a trucker for 22 years. But, as he puts it, his health “went south.” As a commercial truck driver, Cribbs had to pass regular physicals; as a diabetic, he struggled to keep his blood sugar under control. A few years ago, he had his physical, then left to drive his route, unaware his blood sugar was elevated and he was driving without a license. At a stop in Tennessee, Cribbs was arrested.

“My license had been suspended, but I didn't know it,” he says. “My truck was impounded, and I was thrown in jail.” Although his employer bailed him out, his days as a truck driver were over. Cribbs was 40 years old and driving a truck was all he'd ever known. Without a job, he soon found himself homeless.

As a homeless diabetic, Cribbs faced special challenges. “My first year I did okay,” he says. He

still had his medication and tried to stay on it. “The drawback was, being on the street, people would see you take something and then they would steal it.” Cribbs says that after awhile, it wasn't worth the effort of getting his medication only to have it stolen.

“For two years I didn't take anything,” he says. “The diabetes just ate me up, and my weight went from 230 pounds to 165. And I have severe neuropathy; three-quarters of my feet are numb, so that I only have feeling in my heels.”

Homeless for almost five years, Cribbs has been in Crawford Apartments for more than a year now. He says having his own home has given him a sense of pride. “You can hold your head up a little more,” he says. “It's pretty cool. I've got everything now. And I know I never want to be homeless again.”



(opposite page) Sunset, just after a rainstorm. “I took maybe 20 shots just to get it right,” Cribbs says. (left) A house on 4th Street. “I was trying to take night pictures, things that stood out to me,” Cribbs says. “It was work. When it was too dark, the camera wouldn't take the picture at all.”

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There are a lot of things around us that people don't stop to look at. Pictures are like time capsules that slow things down so we can appreciate the details.”

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Ron Shuler



Ron Shuler. Photo by Peggy Woodcock



Being back in south-central Indiana is something of a homecoming for Ron Shuler. The 47-year-old is a self-described Army brat who joined the service himself, so he's lived all over, but he was born in Martinsville, Indiana. He came to Bloomington from Carlsbad, New Mexico, in 2013 hoping for the best. Instead, he found himself without a job and without a place to live.

“When I first got here, I was on the street, in a tent,” Shuler says. “Even though I was at WorkOne, job searching, I spent all summer there. And I went through the winter shelter.”

Through WorkOne and word of mouth, Shuler learned about ESG Security and Event Services, a firm

that hires part-time employees. He felt his military background would be an asset, so he applied. “It’s a job I’ve tried to get since I moved here,” he says. It took two years, but he fulfilled that goal; in October, Shuler began working for ESG. He also got an apartment.

“I thought I would never get where I am now,” he says of being employed and housed. “I started doubting I would ever get to this point.”

Shuler’s experiences have given him insight into the needs of those who don’t have a place to call home, especially those who are sick or injured. “Last winter I fell.

(clockwise from above) Shuler was amazed at the number of birds in this one small bush; At Monroe County Public Library, Shuler set this shot up carefully on an overcast day. Note the reflection of the windows behind him under the canister lights; Symbiosis—the chickens are eating mites off the cucumbers, the dog is guarding the chickens.



I got cellulitis, and the skin started peeling off my feet,” he says. “This is what I went through all winter going from shelter to shelter.”

Shuler would like to see a place where the sick and injured can rest and recover. “A place where

they can just stay,” he explains. “Someplace they don’t have to get up and leave.”



Amelia Dixon. Photo by Peggy Woodcock

Amelia Dixon

Amelia Dixon, 44, took this photo of friends in Seminary Square Park near Shalom Community Center. "I've been hanging with Shalom since 2005," says Dixon, who's been housed for about a year. "I still go there to see my friends — the staff and other people I know."



Mike Meadows. Photo by Peggy Woodcock

Mike Meadows

Mike Meadows, 33, calls himself a drifter. He's been drifting for more than five years now. He says after he took this photo, he realized there were a lot of people sleeping around town during the day, something he hadn't noticed before taking part in the project.



Teddy James. Photo by Sarah Wilson

Teddy James

Teddy James, 42, has been housed for a year at Crawford Apartments, something he says he truly appreciates after being what he calls "off and on homeless" for the past 15 years. He took this photo of Craig, another Crawford resident, early one morning in August.



Missie Sexton. Photo by Peggy Woodcock

Missie Sexton

Missie Sexton, 34, says she likes to take photos of natural things, such as this flower near her home. She's been housed for more than a year now and says she's proud of what she's accomplished in the four years since recovering from drug addiction — from earning her GED to starting a degree program at Ivy Tech.



(l-r) Alivia, Darla, and Shelby at New Hope for Families. Photo by Erin Stephenson

Alivia

Alivia took this photo of New Hope for Families Executive Director Elaine Guinn when she was 4 years old. "I coached her and she got really excited about being a photographer like Sarah (Wilson)," Guinn says of teaching Alivia to use the camera. "The incentive was we could go to Griffy Lake and take a picture of a chipmunk."



Kid Photographers from New Hope for Families

When the homeless photo project first began, no one thought to include children — except Elaine Guinn, executive director of New Hope for Families. Not only did she think it would add an extra dimension to the project by allowing *Bloom* readers to see the city through the eyes of children, she also wanted to give some-

thing to the children staying at the shelter.

"I wanted them to feel proud of themselves during what can be a really difficult time," Guinn says. "It's important that they see they are valued and have worth, that they are part of the community, and that they have gifts to share."

The youngest photographer was Alivia, who was 4 when she took her photographs. She's 5 now and living with her grand-

mother. Shelby, 17, and Darla, 9, sisters, were also given cameras for the project. They stayed at New Hope with their mother. All three now have a home at The Rise!

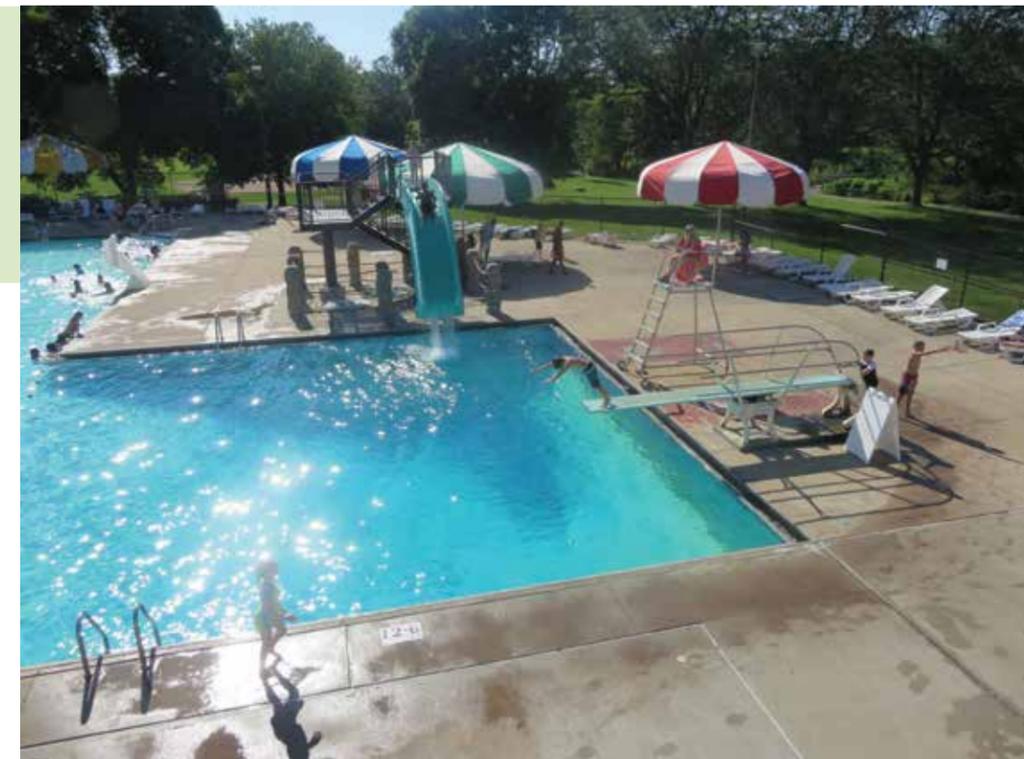
Although its official name is New Hope Family Shelter, new signage and materials will simply list the group of homes on West 2nd Street as New Hope for Families. "Language is important, and we're trying to change the view of homeless-

ness," Guinn says. "We want people to know us as more than a shelter. We really are a place that gives new hope to families."

Guinn says offering parents and children a sense of continuity and normalcy during what can be a traumatic time is the goal. "Birthdays happen here, kids learn to ride bikes here," she says. "Life continues at New Hope — especially for the kids. They don't see it as a shelter. They see it as home." ✨

Shelby

(right) Shelby, 17, took this selfie on an outing with one of New Hope's art directors, Tara Kirkpatrick. "I want to work on photography while I get a nursing degree," Shelby says. "Right now I don't have a camera, so this was fantastic!"



Darla

(left) The kids had the cameras for two weeks. "It was fun going around and finding stuff to take pictures of, like the picture of the pool," says Darla, 9. "I was up high, and it was at my favorite pool at Bryan Park."