



The Journey Home

Providing transformational housing for individuals and families on their journey of recovery

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FEATURE STORY

Collaborative Care Throughout Emma Norton



One of the most impactful expansions in recent years at Emma Norton is in-house and on-site clinical support. Case managers can now include meeting with a Licensed Clinical Social Worker as part of the intake process for new clients to complete the documentation needed, such as the Professional Statement of Need, to qualify for our programs. In the past this had to be done separately through the state or by appointment at another housing resource, but with in-house clinicians, new clients in our programs can access housing much faster. **This is just the beginning of how staff throughout ENS collaborate to deliver the most holistic support possible.**

While Emma Norton previously had an on-call clinical staff person who was able to provide consultations and assessments, having clinical support in-house facilitates deeper engagement and understanding. “I think the biggest difference having me in house has been just having a different understanding and knowledge of the clients that we serve,” explained Lauren Daniel, who joined Emma Norton as the Clinical Director in 2023. Like all staff at Emma Norton, Lauren and her team jump in to help with big programming lifts like holiday events, as well as crisis moments for clients. Being there for all of this doesn’t just give unique insight for direct clinical support; more hands on deck allows for greater staff collaboration and for problem-solving to be more efficient and human-centered.

The supportive relationships between peer supports, case managers, resource and housing navigators, the Clinical Director, and the support staff within each of those roles give to others on their team is a key part of how the Sanctuary Model is used at Emma Norton to provide trauma-informed care. Lauren explained that a large part of how this functions is through staff modeling self-care and self-awareness for clients, which is only possible with the support of a team. “Being able to be aware of our own stuff and our own triggers and how to handle it makes it easier to move through those tough moments with clients,” said Lauren.

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Matt Cady, Resource Navigator, and Lauren Daniel, Clinical Director, work together regularly to coordinate referrals and resources for clients.

“I think the biggest difference in having me in-house is the deeper understanding and knowledge I have of the clients we serve, since I interact with many of them directly. That connection allows me to provide more in-depth clinical oversight and feedback, because I’ve met many of these clients myself.”

—Lauren Daniel, Clinical Director

LETTER FROM
OUR EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

TONYA BROWNLOW



Home is more than a roof—it's safety, belonging, and being valued for who you are. In a world that can feel frightening and dismissive, we're building spaces and relationships that help people heal, feel welcome, and know they matter.

Dear Friends,

In today's world many of us are feeling the onslaught of constant challenges to our mental and emotional health. It doesn't matter where you fall politically—our current society feels chaotic, divisive, and uncertain as we try to make sense of rapid changes to many of our societal institutions. And for certain segments of the population, our society feels dangerous and scary—with people's core safety threatened depending on their identity, and the persistent narrative that certain people don't belong and aren't valued for who they are. I know the visceral reaction I had to statements made about euthanizing people who are homeless and refuse to get "help"—yet I can't even begin to grasp how existentially frightening that might feel to someone currently living in a homeless shelter, in a tent, in their car, or even couch hopping.

What we have always known at Emma Norton Services is that people who have experienced homelessness often come into their new homes with invisible but significant impacts on their mental and emotional health. It is why we continue to invest in physical spaces that create welcoming environments as well as increasing our mental health knowledge and capacity within our programs and staff skills. For a little over two years, we have had a clinical director on staff to implement our newest program, *The Living Room*, which focuses on delivering trauma informed mental health services to any adult (18 years or older) in the Twin Cities community. In May of 2025 the service area expanded to statewide through the launching of our telehealth service. The Living Room has achieved its official one-year anniversary of being open—and every day we see more people in need of mental health support reaching out for this unique service we offer.

This work gives us hope and allows all of us to see how we make a difference every day. **And we couldn't do it without a community around us that supports the work—not only through your donations, but also through your presence in your communities and in the wider world.** I leave you with this—if you have moments when you are feeling powerless and overwhelmed, remember that *who you are in this world matters*. When you can, focus on listening actively when talking with others, express appreciation for others, provide encouragement, or ask someone what they need for support. There are so many big and small ways that each of us can give back to others in the world—and it is good for each of us personally as well as others.

With gratitude and care,



Emma Norton

The Journey Home Begins Here

MANAGEMENT STAFF

Tonya Brownlow Executive Director
Mbemba Camara Program Director
Lauren Daniel Clinical Director
Kevin Heil Finance Director
Gina McCullough Executive Assistant
Shawna Nelsen-Wills Advancement Director
Emma Strub Operations Director

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EMMA NORTON

2265 HILLCREST AVENUE
SAINT PAUL | MN 55116
emmanorton.org | 651.224.1329

SPOTLIGHT | Living Room One-Year Anniversary



Case Managers like Rose Lennard (pictured left) and Peer Supports like Amy Walsh (pictured right) are able to leverage their combined skills, relationships, and experience to provide person-centered care

550+ VISITS SINCE OPENING IN 2024 **190+** DIVERSIONS FROM EMERGENCY SERVICES

SO FAR THE MAJORITY OF LIVING ROOM VISITORS ARE ALREADY EMMA NORTON CLIENTS, BUT IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS WE HAVE SEEN AN EXPONENTIAL INCREASE IN VISITORS FROM THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

IN OVER 550 VISITS, ONLY 2 HAVE ENDED IN THE VISITOR BEING HOSPITALIZED! BOTH TIMES LIVING ROOM STAFF WERE ABLE TO WORK WITH THE HOSPITAL TO GET THE CLIENT A BED, SKIPPING THE TIME AND CHAOS OF AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT WAITING ROOM.

In the first year of service the Living Room has begun to establish itself as a trusted resource in the Twin Cities and beyond! Soft launched in August of 2024 with a Grand Opening two months later, the Living Room is a free mental health drop-in service for anyone 18 years or older in Minnesota.

This innovative approach seeks to offer an alternative to emergency services for addressing mental health crises, as well as making mental health care more accessible in general. Peer support specialists provide nonjudgemental support from the unique perspective of lived experience, and work

with visitors to connect with resources to help them manage the challenges they are facing.

This diversion away from emergency services is good for both individuals and the wider community. Research shows that people who engage with a service like the Living Room while in crisis are less likely to be hospitalized for mental health symptoms in the near future than those who were hospitalized—and unlike a hospital stay, the Living Room is free. At the same time, by diverting people who can be deescalated to non-emergency resources alleviates the burden on often overwhelmed emergency services.



HOURS

7 DAYS A WEEK
NOON TO 8 P.M.

LOCATION

2265 HILLCREST AVE
ST. PAUL MN 55116

CONTACT

PH 651.251.2629
LIVINGROOM@EMMANORTON.ORG

SPECIAL PARTNERSHIPS | Nature-Based Therapeutics

Not long after Restoring Waters Opened, Nature Based Therapy classes began through the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. This allowed us to immediately begin utilizing the gardening room and rooftop garden spaces. In the last year the program has blossomed into classes covering a variety of topics including houseplant care, herb and vegetable gardening, eagle watching, and budget-friendly and from-scratch cooking.

Our Nature Based Therapy teacher, Cindy Berlovitz, has also worked with residents to embed nature throughout the building, with plants in common spaces that are cared for by the residents of Restoring Waters. Looking to the future of our partnership, we're finding ways we can be more in harmony with nature, such as using barrels to collect rain for watering plants. We are so grateful for this unique educational partnership, and for all it brings to the community!



The Nature-Based Therapeutics class ensures the gardening room and rooftop deck are rich with both decorative and nutritious plants.



Melinda Kohrt Faith and Service in Action

For more than 15 years, Melinda Kohrt has been a steady presence in the Emma Norton community. Her journey began with her UWF group, organizing Birthday Bingo for residents at Emma Norton Residence. That first step led to deeper involvement—and a growing appreciation for how faith and service intertwine.

As president of the UMW Twin Cities District in the early 2010s, and later as a member of the ENS Board of Directors, Melinda helped guide early planning for Restoring Waters and contributed to the capital campaign.

“Serving on the board helped me truly understand what Emma Norton does, who it serves, and why it matters,” she said. “I learned so much about the importance of creating safe spaces for people to heal. My faith tells me this is what I should do—be out there helping others.” Today, Melinda is a sustaining donor, volunteer, and champion for Emma Norton.



Nelda Rhoades Clark A Legacy of Leadership

When a longtime donor recently toured Restoring Waters, they were pleased to see former Executive Director Nelda Rhoades Clark featured in the history mural (showing her tabling at a UMW event, pictured above). They also shared the sad news that Nelda passed in 2023, prompting reflection on her lasting legacy. For nearly 20 years, from 1990 through the early 2000s, Nelda led Emma Norton through transformative change.

With the Board and UMW partners, she guided the organization's shift to focus on women recovering from homelessness and to serve those facing additional challenges of mental illness, substance abuse, or other disability. Under her leadership, Emma's Place was created—a milestone that continues to provide supportive housing to large families to this day. Nelda was a long-standing champion for Emma Norton and proud of what was accomplished during her tenure. We are deeply grateful for Nelda's bold leadership and enduring legacy.

Current and past giving from leaders like Melinda and Nelda make our work possible.

Interested in making a sustaining or legacy gift? Contact Shawna at snelsen@emmanorton.org or 651-251-2632.



Continued from front page

As an example, Lauren explained how having two peer supports at the Living Room means that if someone comes in seeking support with an issue that is triggering for a particular peer support, they can have their colleague take over. “That’s where that emotional intelligence and emotional awareness comes in. And it’s also really good modeling for clients of it’s OK to set boundaries, it’s OK to step away.”

Peer Supports Improve Care Team Throughout Emma Norton

The Peer Support Specialist team has grown significantly at ENS in the last few years, and there are even bigger plans and ideas going forward. “Peer supports are rolling out a new individual caseload plan where they’re able to work with clients across all programs,” said Lauren. There are already peer support groups that meet regularly, and Lauren has dreams of embedded therapists in each program to expand those groups into providing trauma care, and of opening up more locations of the Living Room in areas with higher need.



“This is our first foray into mental health services, and I think it’s just the tip of the iceberg in terms of where we go with it.”

— Lauren Daniel

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE | 2024

A view of Emma Norton's residents and services over the past year.

364

Individuals and children were served by Emma Norton.

95+

Children and teens participated in youth programming.

65%

of our clients are people of color.

87%

of all clients maintained their housing for six months or more or exited to safe, affordable housing.

100%

of Scattered-Site clients with a crisis affecting their stability received services to resolve the crisis.



EASY WAYS TO GIVE BACK
& GET INVOLVED

The Season of Giving with Emma Norton

Holiday Gift Drive

A DONATION OF A GIFT CARD HELPS
PUT OUR CLIENTS IN CONTROL!

The holidays are approaching, and Emma Norton Services staff and clients hope for your support to make the season special. Here are a few ways you can help bring joy and empower residents to create their own holiday memories!

- **\$25 gift cards** to the following locations: Target, Walmart, Dollar Tree, Aldi, Cub, Hy-Vee, Lunds & Byerlys, or general Visa/Mastercard gift cards.
- **Gift wrapping supplies**—gift wrap, gift bags, ribbons, tape, etc.
- **Holiday Decorations**—all kinds for all holidays, to allow clients to spread the holiday spirit around their apartments and common spaces.
- **A direct gift** to help fund our holiday parties, last minute gift needs, and other miscellaneous holiday needs for our residents.

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT DONATION
DROP OFF OR HOSTING AN EVENT
CONTACT VICTORIA VIRASY-ERTELT
AT VVIRASY@EMMANORTON.ORG
OR CALL 651.251.2662
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

SCHEDULE A DROP-OFF OF YOUR HOLIDAY DONATIONS BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5.

Emma Norton Attn: *Holiday Drive* | 2265 Hillcrest Avenue | Saint Paul, MN | 55116

STAY CURRENT WITH US

Current volunteer opportunities
emmanorton.org/volunteer
or bit.ly/3FRDZB8

Subscribe to our E-News
Sign up at emmanorton.org

Like us on Social Media
Facebook@emmanortonservices
Instagram@emmanortonservices

Donate Your Time & Talents & Create Some Holiday Magic!

If you'd like to volunteer this holiday season, visit the "Holiday Season at Emma Norton Services" opportunity on our Bloomerang page (bit.ly/3FRDZB8) and click "Become a Holiday Volunteer!"

You'll be the first to hear about upcoming events and ways to get involved—whether you're a pro gift-wrapper, holiday baker, or simply have time to share.

Have your own festive idea, like a cookie decorating or card making activity, or a favorite recipe or craft to share? Join the opportunity and click "Contact Manager" to chat with Mo about it or email mmayberry@emmanorton.org





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PERMIT No. 21

Help Emma Norton
raise **\$25K+** for
supportive housing!

Giving started Nov. 1



Save the Date!
Thursday • April 23 • 2026
5 p.m. • St. Paul, MN

