



# The Journey Home

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

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 02** | Letter from Our Executive Director
- 03** | *Restoring Waters* Update
- 04** | Numbers at a Glance
- 05** | Season of Giving
- 06** | Save the Date | Opening Doors 2023

## FEATURE STORY | Fierce Community at Emma's Place

If you are a parent, you're likely familiar with the frenetic energy of back-to-school season—Emma's Place in late August was practically buzzing with the excitement of nearly 60 kids ready for the school year to start. With new shoes from a Good in the 'Hood event, new backpacks from United Way, fresh haircuts thanks to S.H.I.N.E., and fun school supplies from dozens of generous individual donors, the atmosphere heading into the school year was especially jovial this time around.

On the morning of the first day of school, Emma's Place staff were outside the community building at 7 a.m. sharp, ready to hand out snacks and take back to school pictures. Each year youth staff plan a Back-to-School sendoff for the kids, with breakfast to go, and pictures. "We had music going, we just wanted to get the kids pumped", said Nicque Mabrey, the Supportive Housing Manager. One of the boys, who has become quite the resident photographer at Emma's Place, brought the event to the next level by snapping pictures with a Polaroid. "Kids are excited for school again in a different way," said Nicque, who noted record highs in school attendance for the kids at Emma's Place.

Nicque started working at Emma Norton Services in March, and immediately saw how special and unique the Emma's Place community is. "This is a community that supports each other fiercely," said Nicque. "We're someplace where people look out for each other."

There is a severe shortage of affordable housing for larger families, which means that some families have had to choose between staying together and having shelter, which further compounds their trauma. Emma's Place is made specifically to serve families with three or more children, and that kind of shared experience among the families is one of many things that make it such a strong community.

[Continued on page 4](#)



Stephanie and her four kids are finding stability, support, and community at Emma's Place.

"The healing that happens at Emma's Place isn't just individual, it's also generational. Families are concerned about making sure that the kind of stuff that their generation had to struggle with, their kids don't have to. Meeting people in a moment where they are breaking the generational cycles that exist in our bones, in our DNA, in systems that came way before we did...that's heavy and hard work. And that our families invite us in to be alongside them in that heavy and hard work...there's not words enough for the amount of respect I have for them."

—Nicque Mabrey, Supportive Housing Manager

LETTER FROM  
OUR EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

TONYA BROWNLOW



“As we anticipate the groundbreaking for our new building, Restoring Waters, I’m even more deeply inspired by the work we’re doing now. We will have more dedicated spaces to engage with volunteers, hold events, and foster community. Our clients will gain empowerment to keep striving for and achieving their goals. We’re honored to work alongside them to transform and heal our community and look forward to continue more connections and growth next year.”

Dear Friends,

After the past few years, it is with gratitude and relief that I can finally write to you about connection and community—and the ways in which we are all showing up after so much time away. While we couldn’t be in person, we always knew we were supported and uplifted by the virtual connections, phone calls, and donations made, but what we really missed was the presence of each other. I’m excited to share with you how 2022 has been about engaging with each other and re-connection.

The staff this year have put in a tremendous effort to foster more community connections between the residents. We know that recovery isn’t just an individual journey, but rather requires the support and energy of people around you to bolster and encourage growth, healing, and transformation. This year, at Emma’s Place, parents organized an Easter egg hunt in the spring and a bonfire and s’mores night in the early summer. In July we opened the Sensory Room at Emma’s Place, a place for adults and kids to practice mindfulness—the inspiring mural on the wall was collaboratively made with the youth at Emma’s Place, and artists from *Art to Change the World*. Now there is a regular community dinner at Emma’s Place where all the families can eat together and connect.

Those living at Emma Norton Residence have also been working together to foster community growth. Thanks to some thoughtful donations, and some creative labor on the part of our residents, there are now two well-decorated outside areas at Emma Norton Residence which are almost always in use. With plants and flowers and cheerful chalk art, the back entrance has become a bustling place for staff and residents alike to enjoy one another’s company and get some fresh air. They also recently hosted their own bonfire and s’mores night to celebrate the return of fall!

**All of this wouldn’t be possible without all of you.** Your generosity and commitment create the support we need for others to manifest community in their lives. Last October, we had our first bingo group in nearly 2 years, and now bingo night is back to being a monthly event at Emma Norton Residence. In April, we finally returned to an in-person Gala. We were blown away by the generosity and kindness displayed that night. For us, this shows that in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, our community has become stronger, and even more committed to this important work.



**Emma Norton**  
The Journey Home Begins Here

**MANAGEMENT STAFF**

**Tonya Brownlow** Executive Director  
**Gina McCullough** Executive Assistant  
**Shawna Nelsen-Wills** Advancement Director  
**Pat Westad** Finance Manager  
**Mbemba Camara** Program Director  
**Sonia Gracescott** ENR Program Manager  
**Ethan Allen** Property Manager  
**Nicque Mabrey** Supportive Housing Manager

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President  
**Tariq Malik** | Target Corporation  
Vice President  
**Susan Martin** | Allianz  
Treasurer  
**Ben Oertel** | Miller Milling  
Secretary  
**Katie Kelley** | Figg, a Chase Company  
**Laura Bednarski**  
**Jennifer Bessinger** | PROCare HR  
**Ann Girres**  
**Kim Harris** | UWF National PAG Rep  
**Shirley Jackson** | UWF Twin Cities Rep  
**Dan Johnson** | UMC Twin Cities District Superintendent  
**Jessica Kedrowicz** | Miller Milling  
**Melinda Kohrt** | UWF Twin Cities President  
**Laura Pittner** | Aspen Waste Systems Inc.  
**Alexi Rouhani** | Target Corporation  
**Cindy Saufferer** | UWF State President

**UMW DISTRICT REPS**

**Barbara Payne** | River Valley District  
**Marilyn Nickel** | Southern Prairie District  
**Myrna Kuehl** | Big Waters District  
**Shirley Jackson** | Twin Cities District

**EMMA NORTON**

670 ROBERT STREET NORTH  
SAINT PAUL | MN 55101  
emmanorton.org | 651.224.1329

## SPOTLIGHT | Restoring Waters to Break Ground in December



Staff from Emma Norton's Restoring Waters Committee toured the future site of Restoring Waters this past summer.

We are thrilled to report that Emma Norton's Restoring Waters project will be closing and breaking ground in early December 2022. This keeps us on track to open in early 2024. Restoring Waters will provide truly transformational housing and healing to 60+ women, individuals, and small families in the new Highland Bridge development in Saint Paul. The building will provide a welcoming environment through trauma-informed principles and healing design to promote calm, safety, dignity, empowerment, and well-being for all who live and work there.

To date, we have raised over \$1.6 million through foundation support, corporate gifts, individual donations and pledges, and through our church partners. Thanks to this generosity, we are over halfway to our \$3 million goal! This summer, several of our staff and Board and Committee members had a chance to tour the site and see first-hand the many surrounding amenities, including a beautiful new water feature, skating park, retail, mixed housing, transportation, and much more! We are so excited to be a part of this vibrant and supportive community.

"These past years have revealed more than ever the inequities in our community. Many people struggled...worried they couldn't pay their rent...or deciding between buying groceries for their kids or heating their house...we are blessed not to worry about those things. It felt essential for us to respond now in a personal way to be part of steps forward to addressing these inequities. We wanted to make a gift big enough to be a game changer for this project & which would stretch us. We never imagined making a gift like this before. But big dreams need people like us and others who believe in Emma Norton to help make those dreams become real."

—Anonymous Donor

We need your help to reach our goal and make sure Restoring Waters is the best it can be! **Please join us in investing in this bold vision of hope and healing through our Home + Healing: A Campaign for Restoring Waters.**

A few ways to get involved in both big and small ways:

- Make a donation or a multi-year pledge to the Campaign. (See matching grant info below!)
- Host a speaker from Emma Norton to your workplace, community group, or church.
- Create a match, organize a fundraiser, or hold a special offering for the Campaign.
- Include Campaign information in newsletters, bulletins, etc. & talk up the project!
- Organize a volunteer group to get better connected with Emma Norton now.
- Other | **Contact Shawna at [snelsen@emmanorton.org](mailto:snelsen@emmanorton.org)** to brainstorm ideas together!

# HOME+ HEALING challenge grant

2022 Donate now to double your impact!

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER

We are excited to announce a new **\$10,000 Matching Grant from the Schulze Family Foundation** to help support Home + Healing: A Campaign for Restoring Waters. This grant applies to all new

and increased donations received during November and December of 2022. Make a qualifying donation between November 1 and December 31 to help us make the most of this donation!

**Special thanks to the Schulze Family Foundation! Give today and double your gift!**



# LEAVE A LEGACY

Legacy gifts of any amount can have a significant impact on our budget and help prevent homelessness for women and families for generations to come.

To learn more about simple ways to include Emma Norton in your planned giving, please contact Shawna Nelsen-Wills at [snelsen@emmanorton.org](mailto:snelsen@emmanorton.org) or 651-251-2632.

Are you interested in serving on our Legacy Giving Committee? Please reach out to Shawna to learn more!

*Continued from front page*

At Emma’s Place there’s an understanding among both staff and residents that things don’t magically get better overnight just because a formerly homeless family now has housing. Mentally, physically, and emotionally, the experience of being homeless is a shock to one’s system, and it takes time for one’s mind and body to adjust to living in a safe and stable space. The work doesn’t stop once a family is out of the crisis of homelessness—that’s actually just the beginning.

Once the immediate crisis of housing is handled, that is often when symptoms of mental health problems start to become more visible, especially for parents. During crisis, parents have to force their feelings and traumas down, so they can prioritize the needs of their children. After the crisis, all those feelings can come to the surface in unexpected ways. How service providers respond to those feelings can make a huge difference. “When that stuff is coming to the surface, like that’s this incredible opportunity for healing,” said Nicque earnestly. “Trauma doesn’t look gentle.”

Over the last year, there have been more and more activities and events organized by the parents at Emma’s Place. Staff continue to organize and expand after school activities, homework help, community dinners, giveaways, teen space, and more. But things like Easter egg hunts, patio hang outs, and barbecues have been almost completely put together by the parents themselves. Parents feeling empowered to plan events for their community is part of healing from the trauma of homelessness. Reflecting on the Juneteenth barbecue at Emma’s Place, Nicque said, “It was completely grassroots. I pulled up with my DJ equipment and staff grabbed some groceries and that was all we had to do. Parents really help that space. And I think that’s kind of how things are supposed to be.”

It’s this “alongside” approach that really makes their staff uniquely equipped to help the families that call Emma’s Place home. “I couldn’t be prouder of our staff—they meet families and clients where they are at in extraordinary ways. None of this happens without them.”

—Nicque Mabrey



Supportive Housing Manager Nicque Mabrey always has a smile for their staff and residents.

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE | 2021

Emma Norton has experienced tremendous growth and expanded services over the past decade.

**533**

Individuals and children were served by Emma Norton.

**27**

Families housed at one time at Emma’s Place and through the new Family Scattered-Site Housing Program.

**65%**

of our clients are people of color.

**90+**

Children and youth were housed and served at Emma’s Place and Scattered-Site Housing.

**91%**

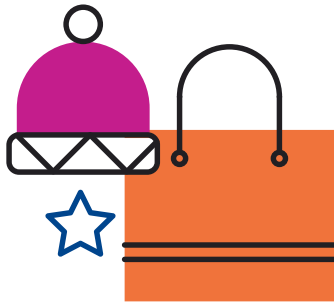
of all eligible kids took part in youth programming.



THREE EASY WAYS TO GIVE BACK  
& GET INVOLVED

## The Season of Giving with Emma Norton

CONSIDER SUPPORTING EMMA  
NORTON'S IN-KIND NEEDS  
WHILE OUT SHOPPING  
IN STORES OR ONLINE



### Holiday Sales

The holidays are in full swing, and there are deals to be found to help support our residents. Here is a general list of items our families and residents are looking for:

- Bedsheets/Bed-in-a-bag sets (twin, full, and queen size)
- Towel sets (bath towel, hand towel, and washcloth)
- Vacuums and Swiffer sets
- Bathrobes, slippers, and pajama sets
- New everyday socks
- Cookware sets
- Coffee makers
- Food storage sets
- Board and card games
- Art and crafting kits/supplies, Beading tools and jewelry making supplies
- Essential oil diffusers/wax melters/plug-in air fresheners

### DROP OFF OR MAIL DONATIONS

Emma Norton *Attn: Advancement* | 670 North Robert Street | Saint Paul, MN | 55101

### Holiday Gift Drive

After two years without holiday parties, we're excited for a holiday season that can finally be celebrated together. **All holiday donations should be mailed or dropped off by Friday, December 16 if possible.** Here are a few ways to help:

- \$25 gift cards to the following locations: Target, Walmart, Dollar Tree, Aldi, Cub, Hy-Vee, Lunds & Byerlys, or general Visa/Mastercard gift cards.
- Gifts for youth such as personal grooming kits, makeup/skin care sets, fast food/fast casual gift cards, movie theater gift cards, earbuds/headphones, card/board games, water bottles, room décor, toys/plushies, etc.
- A direct gift to help fund our holiday parties, last minute gift needs, and other miscellaneous holiday needs for our residents.
- Clients use gift cards for something special for themselves or necessities—food or basic clothing—or to buy gifts for loved ones.

### DROP OFF YOUR HOLIDAY DONATIONS.

Emma Norton *Attn: Holiday Drive* | 670 North Robert Street | Saint Paul, MN | 55101

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

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

### STAY CURRENT WITH US

Subscribe to our E-News  
Sign up at [emmanorton.org](http://emmanorton.org)

Like us on Social Media  
[Facebook@emmanortonservices](https://www.facebook.com/emmanortonservices)  
[Twitter@emmanortons](https://twitter.com/emmanortons)  
[Instagram@emmanortonservices](https://www.instagram.com/emmanortonservices)

### Host an Activity at Emma Norton Residence or Emma's Place

Volunteer-led activities help us build community and bring joy to our residents throughout the year. We are looking for groups or individuals interested in hosting activities such as Bingo, holiday crafts, spa/self-care sessions, cookie decorating, and more from December and into the next year at either site.

### HOST AN ACTIVITY FOR RESIDENTS OR FAMILIES/YOUTH.

Contact Victoria Virasy-Ertelt at [vvirasy@emmanorton.org](mailto:vvirasy@emmanorton.org) or 651-251-2662.



**Emma Norton**  
The Journey Home Begins Here

670 ROBERT STREET N  
SAINT PAUL | MN 55101  
emmanorton.org

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
FARIBAULT | MN  
PERMIT No. 21

# Opening DoorsDinner

## Save the Date

Thursday, April 27, 2023

InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront

Join us for an evening of fun, philanthropy,  
and community in Saint Paul or online!



**Emma Norton**  
The Journey Home Begins Here

