



# 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 | Helen Shore Profile
- 05 | Season of Giving
- 06 | Give to the Max 2023

## FEATURE STORY

### Building Community: From Emma Norton Residence to Restoring Waters

If you visit Emma Norton Residence on the second or fourth Tuesday morning of the month, you'll find nearly every seat taken in the dining room, as residents gather for the biweekly community meeting. Sonia Gracescott, the Program Manager for ENR, stands at the front of the room, keeping everyone on track with the agenda, while leaving room for residents to lead the conversation.

"When decisions need to be made or things need to be dealt with, it's a conversation together," Sonia explains. Sometimes those decisions are fun, like discussing what they'll request for bingo prizes, or deciding what film will be shown for the monthly movie night. Sometimes they're more serious, such as when an ongoing conflict needs to be addressed. Sonia wants residents to learn through experience that conflict isn't necessarily a bad thing—it can be an opportunity for individual and community growth.

This kind of empowerment is key to building community in a space like Emma Norton Residence (ENR). Most of the people who live there have experienced significant trauma, including situations that robbed them of their ability to voice their needs, and make choices for themselves. Giving them a safe space to shape what their lives look like at ENR helps heal that trauma, and teaches independent living skills through practice. Sometimes it happens in community meetings, but sometimes it happens organically.



ENR Program Manager Sonia Gracescott speaking at the Restoring Waters Land Blessing Ceremony.

"There were residents that were complaining about visitors, so I allowed them to come in and make decisions. As a community they looked over the visitor policy and discussed what changes people wanted, then voted on the changes. It's been incredibly empowering for them. They created this [policy] and so they feel ownership over it....It's their home; I want to give them that power back. That's the most important piece really, that's what causes the stability, self-acceptance, and empowerment."

—Sonia Gracescott, ENR Program Manager

There are also ongoing resident activities that happen on a regular basis, like Bible Study on Wednesday mornings, and art club Friday afternoons. "It begins with a bit of confidence experienced by painting or gardening, that confidence grows into leadership which we see during our community meetings and in day-to-day living," says former Peer Support Specialist, now Case Manager, Jacki Yellowflower. "With support, encouragement and validation, women embrace their confidence in themselves and their abilities."

Continued on page 4

LETTER FROM  
OUR EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

TONYA BROWNLOW



**‘It’s go time!’** is a phrase currently echoing through the halls of Emma Norton. We continue to push forward to improve our programs and physical spaces in pursuit of our mission. Now, after years of dreaming and planning, our vision is becoming real. It’s amazing to see Restoring Waters on track to open in April 2024—less than six months from now!

Dear Friends,

I am so thankful for the supporters who have stepped up to support this important project. Over the last year, we have heard from so many congregations and donors that want to support Restoring Waters in exciting and unique ways. At this point, we have raised nearly \$2.75 million out of our \$3.75 million target—and just like climbing a mountain—as you get closer to the top, the climb becomes steeper. One of the greatest joys in my work right now is telling people about this exciting milestone in Emma Norton’s history, and spreading the word about who we are and our mission to bring transformational housing and growth to as many people as possible. Are you considering a special gift for Restoring Waters? Please reach out to Advancement Director Shawna Nelsen-Wills at [snelsen@emmanorton.org](mailto:snelsen@emmanorton.org) or 651-251-2632.

This is all on top of the daily tasks needed to run Emma Norton Residence, Emma’s Place, and our Scattered Site Housing programs—which together support over 250 people every single day. Emma Norton Residence has been focusing on patio beautification and tenant expectations for living in their own apartments. The Scattered Site program moved four people in the last few months—and for three of those it was moving from homelessness into their own apartments. Summer is always a busy time of year at Emma’s Place, and this summer was no different. We welcomed four new families to the community and held a Juneteenth celebration and a Community Dinner. We expanded our youth program to include a youth case manager who held a coffee and social hour for guidance counselors at the schools attended by Emma’s Place youth. We want to continue to build up those valuable relationships that support those youth to be successful in school and life.

**We also need it to be “go time” from all of our Emma Norton supporters.**

As a part of our preparation for moving to Restoring Waters, we must reduce the number of people living at Emma Norton Residence. This severely cuts into the general operations funding we receive through our government contracts, which help pay for staff time, building operations, and client services like meals and nursing care. We have made some important changes to reduce our expenses, but many of those expenses don’t go down even when we have less people living in the building. It is critical that we continue receiving support from valuable donors like you that will help us bridge from one building to the next. **During this vital “go time”, can you increase your donation to Emma Norton this fall and share our mission with others?** Your gifts and advocacy for Emma Norton make a huge difference in the lives of the women, individuals, and families we serve each day!



**Emma Norton**

The Journey Home Begins Here

**MANAGEMENT STAFF**

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

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President  
**Stacy Childers** | PFM Asset Management LLC  
Vice President  
**Ann Girres**  
Treasurer  
**Ben Oertel** | Miller Milling  
Secretary  
**Katie Anstett** | Figg, a Chase Company  
**Kathy Arnold** | St. Thomas University  
**Laura Bednarski**  
**Jennifer Bessinger** | PROCare HR  
**Kim Harris** | UWF National PAG Rep  
**Shirley Jackson**  
**Melinda Kohrt** | UWF Twin Cities President  
**Beth Lyons** | PwC  
**Michelle Ma**  
**Tariq Malik** | Securian Financial  
**Susan Martin** | Allianz  
**Shakilah Parker** | PM Logistics  
**Laura Pittner** | Aspen Waste Systems Inc.  
**Alexi Rouhani** | Target  
**Cindy Saufferer** | UWF State President  
**Rev. Cynthia Williams** | UMC Twin Cities District Superintendent

**UWF DISTRICT REPS**

**Ann Girres** | River Valley District (Acting Rep)  
**Shirley Jackson** | Twin Cities District  
**Marilyn Nickel** | Southern Prairie District  
**Kathy Hulsebus** | Big Waters District

**EMMA NORTON**

670 ROBERT STREET NORTH  
SAINT PAUL | MN 55101  
[emmanorton.org](http://emmanorton.org) | 651.224.1329

**SPOTLIGHT** | Restoring Waters is Over 50% Complete



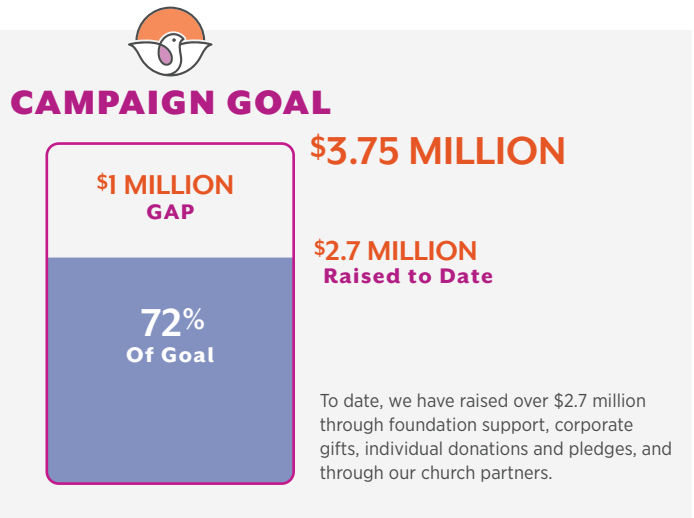
The main structure of Restoring Waters is complete—now Ryan Companies is working on installing windows, staircases, electrical systems and more.

We are elated to share that the construction is over halfway done! If you visit the Highland Bridge neighborhood you can now see all five stories of Restoring Waters on the corner of Woodlawn Ave. and Mt. Curve Blvd. Restoring Waters will provide truly transformational housing and healing to 60+ women, individuals, and small families in the innovative Highland Bridge development in Saint Paul. This 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.

We are counting down the days to when we get to officially join this wonderful community. With the move to Restoring Waters fast approaching in Spring of 2024, we need your help now more than ever to make sure Restoring Waters is the best it can be! If you are able to give or help organize a fundraiser, now is the time! Please join us in investing in this bold vision of hope and healing through Home + Healing: A Campaign for Restoring Waters. **Learn more and give at [www.emmanorton.org/restoring-waters](http://www.emmanorton.org/restoring-waters).**

**STAY TUNED** A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION AND GRAND OPENING FOR RESTORING WATERS WILL TAKE PLACE IN LATE SPRING OF 2024. DUE TO THIS TIMING, THE 2024 OPENING DOORS GALA IS BEING MOVED TO FALL 2024. MORE INFORMATION AND DATES WILL BE SHARED IN THE COMING MONTHS. WE CAN'T WAIT TO CELEBRATE WITH YOU!

Over the last year, the Highland Bridge neighborhood has truly blossomed. In August, several staff tabled at an outdoor community event in the Highland Bridge Plaza, and heard over and over how excited people are to be our new neighbors! Within a short walking distance of Restoring Waters are multiple parks, a variety of retail, public transportation, and a beautiful view of the Mississippi River.



**Want to get involved?**

Contact Shawna Nelsen-Wills, Advancement Director at [snelsen@emmanorton.org](mailto:snelsen@emmanorton.org) or 651-251-2632 to make a gift, schedule a speaker, or find out other ways to help today!

**HOME + HEALING**

Restoring Waters is being designed with trauma-informed principles to create a welcoming environment that acknowledges and addresses ongoing trauma and promotes a sense of calm, safety, dignity, empowerment, and well-being for all.



**Collaboration & Mutuality**



**Empowerment & Choice**



**Cultural & Gender**



**Safety**



**Trust & Transparency**



**Peer Support**

## Helen Mae Shore | 1944–2022 Her Legacy of Philanthropy Lives On



Helen Shore, age 77, passed away on July 4, 2022. She was known by many as a generous volunteer and a dedicated member of the United Methodist Church and United Methodist Women in Owatonna, MN. Helen served in many leadership roles and was a strong supporter of Emma Norton Services—volunteering on boards, committees, events, and more. “I just adored her and loved how honest and unabashed she was...she cared deeply for women’s causes,” said Pastor Lisa Vick, Owatonna UMC.

Helen passed on her generous spirit and commitment to community to her two daughters, Rosalind Shore and Shelly Forrest. Knowing their mother’s desire to help women and families in need, they left a legacy gift to Emma Norton in memory of their Mom. This gift provided critical funds to our programs and a major boost to our Restoring Waters Campaign.

*Interested in leaving a legacy gift? Contact Shawna at [snelsen@emmanorton.org](mailto:snelsen@emmanorton.org) or 651-251-2632.*

**Thank you Helen— your legacy of giving will forever live on with Emma Norton!**

*Continued from front page*

There have been several resident-led painting and decorating projects such as creating a quiet meditation room on the third floor, working with volunteers to paint a floral mural in the second floor bathroom, and redecorating the basement lounge and kitchenette.



Facilitating this kind of empowerment among residents is setting them up to be community leaders when we move to Restoring Waters. “Staff are going to be there to help with the things that need to happen, but that developing and fostering community is going to come from the people who live here now,” says Sonia. “I see a lot more resident-led activities in that new space and I think that all it takes is a few people.”

While Emma Norton Residence offers dorm-style living, Restoring Waters will provide much more private and independent living spaces, including everyone having their own private kitchen. At the same time, there will be a shared kitchen space that can be used for resident gatherings or cooking classes. “There’s going to be an opportunity for a lot of teaching in that kitchen. My goal is to make sure that the kitchen is used at least twice a week for cooking classes,” says Sonia. She hopes that some of these classes will be led by residents, but also that the new building will attract new volunteers to connect with the residents. Her goal in all this is for residents to feel ownership over their space and community.



**“It begins with a bit of confidence experienced by painting or gardening, that confidence grows into leadership which we see during our community meetings and in day-to-day living.”**

*— Jacki Yellowflower*

Case Manager Jacki Yellowflower meeting St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter January at the groundbreaking ceremony in Highland Bridge.

### NUMBERS AT A GLANCE | 2022 A view of Emma Norton’s residents and services over the past year.

**387**  
Individuals and children were served by Emma Norton.

**25**  
Families housed at one time at Emma’s Place and through the Family Scattered-Site Housing Program.

**64%**  
of our clients are people of color.

**106**  
Children and youth were housed and served at Emma’s Place and Scattered-Site Housing.

**88%**  
of all eligible kids took part in youth programming.



THREE 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!**

With the move to Restoring Waters fast approaching, our focus this holiday season will be on supporting and empowering our residents to make their own holiday magic. A donation of a gift card helps put our clients in control and allows our program teams to continue to provide culturally inclusive supportive services to all of our residents. Here are a few ways to support Emma Norton this holiday season:

- \$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, ribbons, tape, etc.
- 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](mailto:VVIRASY@EMMANORTON.ORG)  
OR CALL 651.251.2662  
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**

### **DROP OFF YOUR HOLIDAY DONATIONS BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8.**

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

### 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 do more than build community and bring joy to our residents; they also help our residents feel seen and loved by the community around them.

We are looking for groups or individuals interested in hosting activities such as Bingo, 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

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

**Giving starts November 1**

**give**  
TO THE  
**MAX**  
  
**Nov. 16, 2023**

