



The Journey Home

Connecting people to transformational housing and growth on their journey of recovery

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FEATURE STORY | Trauma-Informed Innovation at Emma Norton

Our organization entered an exciting new chapter when we moved out of Emma Norton Residence in April, and it's been amazing to see our clients and staff rise to the occasion to take advantage of all the opportunities this move brings. Throughout the organization, Emma Norton has been fully living into our new mission statement: **We connect people to transformational housing, growth, and possibility—realized through their own design—in support of their journey of recovery.**

In our Scattered-Site Program, which serves approximately 40 clients, the funding structure has changed. So, now, rather than every client getting the same dollar amount of support regardless of what portion goes to rent, the funds are pooled together to ensure everyone is getting all their needs met. This allows us to purchase household essentials in bulk for our clients, so the funds we receive to support them can go even further.

At Emma's Place there have been big changes too. In the last year, five new families have moved into Emma's Place, presenting unique and new opportunities for community building at our Maplewood site. There often is a lot of fun to community building—Emma's Place has held wonderful events like a Juneteenth Celebration, a Mother's Day Brunch, and the Teen Business Fair. A new activity this year was a Talent Show, which was a wonderful opportunity for both kids and adults to show off their creativity! Community building is also hard work—one of the most effective examples of this at Emma's Place is the monthly parent meetings.

These meetings have been critical in helping the EP parents build connections with each other and work through conflicts while facilitating new friendships and opportunities to support each other's families. "I never see kiddos with freezies or ice cream that isn't shared with the community," shared Emma's Place Program Manager Nicque Mabrey as an example of this inter-community support. "We're someplace really special. We're someplace where people want to look out for each other."

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Jennifer Stevenson (left), counsels Amy, an Emma Norton scattered-site client.

"I can honestly say no two of our clients in our program have ever been exactly the same," said Stevenson, explaining how they helped clients through the anxiety of a changing purchase system. Now that clients are familiar with the new system, things are running smoothly. "If we're doing things right, it's very independent," she explained about the support provided to scattered-site clients. "The goal is stability, healing, and ultimately, graduation from the program."

—Jennifer Stevenson, Scattered-Site Supervisor

LETTER FROM
OUR EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

TONYA BROWNLOW



“Ten years at any organization is a major milestone—for me that was highlighted by the huge achievement of opening Restoring Waters. It has been quite a journey since I started in 2014!”

Emma Norton continues to lean into defining itself as a unique nonprofit offering trauma-informed services throughout all our programs. The move to Restoring Waters means the core program at Emma Norton Services now offers support to people in their own apartments with a formal lease agreement, like Emma’s Place and the Scattered Site Housing programs operate. Although our services are still rooted in serving women and children, we have intentionally begun to use more gender inclusive language because we also work with men, as well as transgender and non-binary people in our programs.

To that end, the board and staff met in the fall of 2023 to start the critical work of updating our mission and core values, facilitated by our partners at the Prouty Project. A theme emerged in our conversations; not only do we offer transformational housing—we also honor every person and their right to determine their own future.

We connect people to transformational housing, growth and possibility—realized through their own design—in support of their journey of recovery. Our new mission statement expands on the past mission, recognizing that our role is about creating opportunities for people and empowering them to live out their life aspirations.

I’m also thrilled to present our new core values: **Embracing Humanity, Cultivating Community, Sparking Creativity** and **Inspiring Joy**. Emma Norton has always been about people—and recognizing that all of us act and behave in ways that are centered on being human. Our goal is to truly see every unique individual who we encounter, and to cultivate community and responsibility for each other. Sparking creativity was incredibly important because it honors the constant creativity and problem solving that our staff and clients use to scale the barriers and challenges within societal systems. It also reflects the innovative program changes over the years to Housing First and Harm Reduction, creating Restoring Waters and The Living Room—our newly launched drop-in mental health service.

And Inspiring Joy—the joy of empowerment has been a part of our story since we began in 1917. But at this moment of time, it holds an importance that goes beyond our daily experiences and speaks to our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The majority of folks served at Emma Norton identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC). We have seen the shift in our communities to recognize discrimination, oppression, and disparities that exist in Minnesota. To truly reshape the narrative, we must also create and celebrate a world where people don’t only survive—they thrive!

This is the work that Emma Norton has always done, and will continue to do, and the work we are asking you to join in. I am currently taking a short sabbatical to rest and renew, and I look forward to continuing with the launch of our new strategic plan in early 2025. We welcome Amy Brendmoen, Interim Executive Director and former St. Paul City Council President, while I am away. Thank you for allowing me to be part of the history we are making and for joining us on this journey!



Emma Norton
The Journey Home Begins Here

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

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EMMA NORTON

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SPOTLIGHT | Restoring Waters Home + Healing Campaign—91% Complete



In last year's Fall Newsletter, we were counting down the days to the move into Restoring Waters—eagerly awaiting the monthly construction updates from Ryan Companies. Just six months after its publication, we began moving staff and residents from Emma Norton Residence to Restoring Waters, and in May we said our final goodbyes to the old building.



We held the Grand Opening in May—hundreds of people, who had parts big and small to play in the journey to Restoring Waters, came to experience the new building in person, and celebrate its opening. Many residents volunteered to help with the Grand Opening, and shared how glad they were to have a home they could proudly show people.

We are also thrilled to share that *the Living Room* is open seven days a week, Noon to 8 p.m. to provide drop-in mental health care to our residents and the broader community. **All are welcome!**

Over the past several months, we've continued the Comprehensive Campaign to put the finishing touches on Restoring Waters.

The building is open—residents are living there, and staff are working there—but there are still elements we need to make it the truly healing and empowering space we've been celebrating. **We have reached \$3.4 million raised for this building, which means we only have \$350,000 left to go!** Closing this final gap will have an incredible impact on our residents—filling the fitness room with equipment, the art annex with supplies, the community kitchen with cookware, and even hiring additional staff so residents can access more support services. ***Can you help close the gap?***



CAMPAIGN GOAL
\$3.75 MILLION

\$350,000 GAP

\$3.4 MILLION
Raised to Date

91%
Of Goal

JOIN US!

Please consider a first-time or additional gift to help close out our Campaign goal.

Through the generosity of our Board, **we currently have a \$10,000 matching grant** in place for all Campaign gifts.



NEW VIDEO ALERT

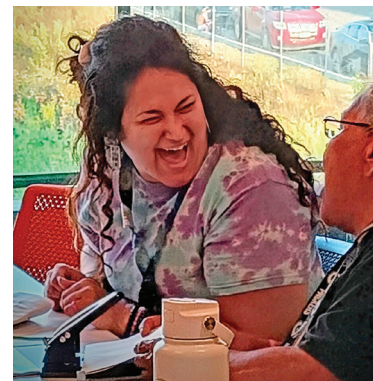
Watch ***Welcome to Restoring Waters*** at emmanorton.org/media/videos.

RESTORING WATERS | Art to Change the World Partnership

One of the most exciting partnerships we forged in the move to Restoring Waters is that with Art to Change the World (ACW). In the lead up to moving, ACW put out an RFP for local artists to create original works for Restoring Waters, enough so that everyone in the first group of residents would be able to have an original art piece for their homes. We ended up with more than 90 pieces of healing artwork by 23 local artists—including two current residents and two Emma Norton alumni!

“It was really meaningful to create healing art for women who were in a similar situation to what I had been in,” said Cynthia Mauleon, an alumna from 1992, who created two large photograph prints and two paintings for the Heart + Home: Artwork that Heals project.

In August, ACW helped stock and organize the art room and in September, several ACW artists who participated in the project began hosting weekly art classes for the residents at Restoring Waters. Bi-monthly art classes will continue in 2025.



ACW artist Sam St. John enjoys a laugh with a resident during her class on personalizing journals. ACW artists have offered other art classes on landscape and animal paintings, card and jewelry making, and more!

GINNY VANDERVEST & EARLY LEGACY GIVING



Ginny Vandervest began volunteering for Emma Norton Services in the 1980s, after a mentor at Hastings United Methodist Church introduced her to the organization. Since then, Ginny has been a consistent supporter of Emma Norton, making a major impact on the mission. Not only has she volunteered and spread the word for decades, she also served on the Board of Directors for six years, during which time Emma's Place was built.

Ginny has also served on the Development, Opening Doors, and Planned Giving Committees—and because of this, she knows how important Legacy Giving is to our organization. With that in mind, she had a conversation with her and her husband's financial advisor about giving her Legacy Gift early—especially with the unique opportunity of giving to the Home + Healing Campaign for Restoring Waters. "Our financial advisor said that because we had extra money sitting here, that it would behoove us to go ahead and give now, rather than waiting," said Ginny. "He said it wouldn't hurt our financial situation at all, and in fact it would greatly benefit." We are grateful for Ginny's continued support, and forward thinking in her early giving that will provide trauma-informed housing and services for generations to come.

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



Restoring Waters provides not only trauma-informed design with beautiful common areas and healing programming spaces, but provides each resident with their own apartment with private bedroom area, kitchen, and personal bath.

Continued from front page

Of course, the biggest change has been the move from ENR to Restoring Waters. Restoring Waters Program Manager Sonia Gracescott says the independence of having their own space is building empowerment among the residents, and changing how staff support them as well. "Pretty much they are their own community leaders," Gracescott explained. "We're helping them through those moments of impostor syndrome, when they feel like they can't do it, and coaching them in those areas." She says one of the most amazing things about the community at Restoring Waters is that the residents constantly inspire each other. One resident asked for signage to be made about the opportunity to make monthly trips to Joseph's Coat with her. This inspired another resident to begin teaching bi-weekly yoga classes.

At ENR, the monthly movie nights were organized by staff and volunteers—at Restoring Waters, movie nights are twice a month, organized by the Resident Council. "It's kind of cool. It's snowballs," said Gracescott. "It changes our role in how we help them build internal resources. It shifts what they believe about themselves—about how they see themselves as having value. It changes how they believe that they have a voice or not. It changes all potentials for their future so that they can make more confident decisions based on what they want for themselves."

Across all of Emma Norton's programming—strengthened by a solid foundation of housing and supportive services—we are seeing residents form their own pathways to stability, growth, and transformation.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE | 2023

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

313

Individuals and children were served by Emma Norton

90+

Children and teens participated in youth programming

50%

of our clients are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

92%

of Scattered-Site clients successfully completed their initial apartment lease period

87%

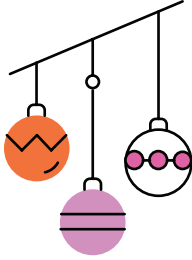
of clients across programs completed at least one stability plan goal



GIVE BACK
& GET INVOLVED

Seasonal Giving and Volunteering

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



INTERESTED IN HOLDING A GIFT DRIVE
OR FOR QUESTIONS,
CONTACT VICTORIA VIRASY-ERTELT AT
VVIRASY@EMMANORTON.ORG
OR CALL 651.251.2662
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Holiday Gift Drive

With the move to Restoring Waters completed, all our clients are now living more independently. To that end, we want to empower them 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 our clients. 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.
- Putting together gift bags or a toy drive for our residents and families or organizing a holiday activity.
- Gift wrapping supplies—gift wrap, gift bags, ribbons, tape, etc.
- A direct gift to help fund our holiday parties, last minute gift needs, and other miscellaneous holiday needs for our residents.

DROP OFF YOUR HOLIDAY DONATIONS BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6.

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

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Volunteer Opportunities | Seasonal and Ongoing

Volunteer support is key to helping our residents feel seen and loved by the community around them. Volunteer activities also bring joy to our residents and build community. Here are some ways you can support our clients through the holidays, and all year long:

- **Activities:** Residents are interested in a variety of activities—bingo, crafts, spa/self-care sessions, cookie decorating, and more—both for the holidays, and all year long.
- **Community Kitchen Lessons:** Come to the community kitchen at Restoring Waters to share a recipe or cooking skills with our residents.
- **Emma's Corner:** Pick up a weekly shift working as a cashier at our internal store, Emma's Corner to assist residents making purchases, or help during Emma's Corner's off-hours by volunteering to help manage inventory and re-stock the store.

LEARN MORE OR SCHEDULE YOUR VOLUNTEERING

Contact Maureen Mayberry at mmayberry@emmanorton.org or 612-889-6887.





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

Giving started Nov. 1



Save the Date!
Thursday • **April 24** • 2025
5 p.m. • St. Paul, MN

**Opening
DoorsGala**
Emma Norton Annual Event & Silent Auction