

2008 Annual Report
Multidisciplinary UnSheltered Homeless Relief Outreach of
Morgantown
MUSHROOM

“ Putting a face on homelessness with programs such as the Mushroom Project allows us to see that homelessness can result from a turn of luck as small as an unfortunate injury, an expensive medical bill, a broken down car, or lack of access to psychiatric care or a detoxification program. So, in fact, homelessness is closer to each of us than we normally care to realize. By having the privilege to get to know and care for the homeless, I was able to see beyond the hardships, health needs, and obstacles into the face of humanity, one not unlike my own.”

Tara Newcomb, WVU School of Medicine, First Year Medical Student
December 11, 2007



“ Up until now I would have said that the gift determined how bright the day, but now I think I would say that an individual’s need determines the brightness. A sandwich can change a person’s outlook, socks can lift their spirits, and a pair of boots can help them walk their way into a new job and a whole new life. As a future physician it is very important to know that the small things matter, something as small as socks can provide a path to someone’s trust. Becoming a physician is all about gaining the tools to help our patients; MUSHROOM has really inspired me to rededicate myself to using those tools to help those in need.

Matthew Colt Legg, WVU School of Medicine First Year Medical Student
February 5, 2008

“I could not imagine what it would be like to have everything I own fit into one small backpack. The MUSHROOM project was a real eye opener for me. It made me realize just how much we take for granted in our lives and I would like to thank you for that dose of reality.”

Greg Morris, Premedical Student, Concord University, Athens, WV June 10, 2008

Introduction

For more than three years, MUSHROOM has served the needs of the unsheltered homeless on the streets of Morgantown. Our mission has been one of both service and education. Our service has been defined by a holistic approach to meeting not just the medical needs of our clients, but the social, emotional, temporal, and spiritual needs as well. Our mission of education touches the lives of volunteers, donors, and community members. As evidenced by the quotes above, involvement in MUSHROOM is transformative. MUSHROOM changes people in a way that is intimate, powerful, and sustaining. The 2008 Annual Report highlights the multifaceted impact that MUSHROOM has had upon the issue of homelessness in the Morgantown area.

Advocacy

One of the defining missions of MUSHROOM has been advocacy. Advocacy involves actions that are intended to influence a person’s or group’s attitude toward a particular issue. With regard to homelessness, MUSHROOM has propelled this issue into mainstream conversation amongst not only medical students, but among undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of social work, political science, nursing and pharmacy. University administrators and educators, municipal leaders, faith communities, and the general public now know more about homelessness in Morgantown because of MUSHROOM’s consistent and comprehensive outreach. Through media

interviews, civic group presentations, and classroom curriculum, MUSHROOM has demonstrated its ability to both advocate for and educate about homeless issues.

For the third year in a row, MUSHROOM has worked collaboratively with West Virginia University's Department of Political Science to provide its senior capstone students with civic engagement experiences related to homework. In 2008, these students assisted MUSHROOM by researching state laws and city ordinances that have direct impact upon homeless clients. In March 2008, these same students hosted a community forum that brought together the mayor of Morgantown, the WVU director of public safety, and homeless advocates in a discussion that educated the public about issues facing people living on the streets.

For a second year in a row, MUSHROOM joined forces with the West Virginia University's Division of Social Work and assisted graduate and undergraduate students in that discipline host a symposium entitled "Dignity Without a Home Address: National and Local Perspectives on Homelessness". This symposium drew service providers and interested parties from a four state region. Speakers included Shelia Crowley, Ph.D., President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Sharon McDonald, Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst for the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and Cory Yarbrough, Emerson National Hunger Fellow and staff member of the National Coalition for the Homeless.

From action on the streets to headlines in the newspaper, MUSHROOM has continued to be the leading advocate for homeless issues in North Central West Virginia.

Peer and Professional Education

In addition to the formal educational and advocacy programs noted above, MUSHROOM continues to be a constant source of information about homelessness to health professional students, resident physicians, and faculty at West Virginia University School of Medicine. On every Street Rounds that MUSHROOM conducts, volunteers are taught the essential elements of caring for the homeless. Barriers to care, threats to health, environmental hazards, substance abuse, mental health issues, and local resource allocation are all addressed in a way that is relevant and focused. First time volunteers are asked to provide a written self-reflection after Street Rounds, a technique that helps individuals process the meaning and impact of their outreach experience.

In November 2007, MUSHROOM sent one faculty member and three medical students to Houston, Texas to attend the 3rd Annual International Street Medicine Symposium. This meeting brought together Street Medicine providers from around the world in a spirit of collaborative learning and support. MUSHROOM presented its innovative success of service learning, holistic care and multidisciplinary outreach to an audience of more than 70 individuals from countries including Chile, Nepal, India, The Netherlands, Sweden and Great Britain.

Direct Client Service

MUSHROOM has held faithful to its commitment of providing direct medical and social services to clients in a consistent and predictable manner. In spite of adverse weather, scheduling demands, and holidays, MUSHROOM conducted 26 Street Rounds for the reporting period. As resources and needs have grown, MUSHROOM has expanded the range of items provided in the field. During this past winter, clients in need were given sub-zero sleeping bags, insulated snow boots, blankets, and wool clothing in an attempt to protect them from the elements and the risk of frostbite or hypothermia. As warm weather approached, rain gear, insect repellent, and sunblocker began filling the backpacks of our volunteers.

MUSHROOM continues to have a central medical outreach focus. Medical surveillance, triage, first aid, acute care treatment and medical referral are the key services provided. MUSHROOM links directly with the Homeless Care Clinic, a grant-funded program of the Department of Family Medicine at West Virginia University and hosted at the Milan Puskar Free Medical Clinic. Clients with chronic care needs or those needing diagnostic testing have next-day access to primary care, social services, and mental health resources. In essence, MUSHROOM has become the first link in a seamless chain of healthcare for those living on the streets of Morgantown.

The need for services continues to be in high demand. The following contains a summary of encounters and services provided during the period July 1, 2007 through June 30 2008:

Client encounters:	722
Medical service treatment encounters	167
Student/Resident/Community Volunteer Hours	735
Number of street rounds volunteers	132
Value of distributed goods	\$5,442.05
Value of medical service treatment	\$19,225.00
Value of professional volunteer hours	\$21,625.00



Financial Report

MUSHROOM continues to receive ongoing financial support from individuals as well as organizational groups. MUSHROOM remains under the financial umbrella of the West Virginia University School of Medicine Foundation. This arrangement allows for utilization of the Foundation's tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations written to the Foundation in the name of MUSHROOM are tax deductible.

In kind donations of socks, sandwiches, blankets, thermal underwear and beverages continue to support the ongoing efforts of MUSHROOM's street rounds. These donations have allowed MUSHROOM to utilize monetary funds to purchase medical supplies, medications, boots, shoes, tents, sleeping bags, and other durable goods for clients.

The following summarizes financial activity for MUSHROOM during the past year.

Monetary donations – individual/business/organizations	\$ 6,124.00
Jenco Foundation Award	5,000.00
Total income	11,124.00
Total expenses	(3,837.57)
Net income	<u>7,286.43</u>
Total Account Balance	\$23,744.84
Checking	Account balance 7/1/07 5,458.41
	Account balance 6/30/08 7,744.84
Foundation	Account balance 7/1/07 11,000.00
	Account balance 6/30/08 <u>16,000.00</u>
Total Account Balance	\$23,744.84

Annual Growth

The following table summarizes statistics monitored regularly by MUSHROOM. As noted, there has been a modest rise in client services, matched by significant increases in volunteer hours, value of medical services, and client-based expenditures. Number of hours and value of professional time also increased greatly. Monetary donations and other sources of income were stable in 2008.

MUSHROOM Comparison Figures 2006-2007-2008

	2006	2007	2008	%change 2007-2008
Client encounters	434	626	722	+15.3
Medical service encounters	42	171	167	-2.4
Student/community volunteer hours	543	663	735	+10.9
Professional volunteer hours	109	213	265	+24.4
Value distributed goods	\$1,362.40	\$3,364.18	\$5,442.05	+61.8
Value of professional time	\$16,100.00	\$29,850.00	\$41,625.00	+39.4
Value of medical services	\$6,216.00	\$14,752.00	\$19,225.00	+30.3
Total Income	\$5,560.00	\$11,970.00	\$11,124.00	-7.1
Total expenses	\$823.41	\$2,063.13	\$3,837.57	+86.0

Volunteer Recognition

Hundreds of individuals from both the West Virginia University and Morgantown communities have contributed to the success of MUSHROOM over the past year. Without their time, talents, and generous donations, the work of MUSHROOM would not have been accomplished. Several people served consistently as the foundation of our volunteer efforts over this past year. Special recognition goes out to:

Joshua Cusick-Lewis - medical student leader
 Joanna Adkins – medical student leader
 Lola Burke – medical student leader
 Loriann Sonntag, MSW – social worker
 Brian Lehman – student graduate and community volunteer
 John Smith – community volunteer
 Ward Worth – community volunteer
 Michael McCauley, PhD – Community Medicine faculty volunteer

Cherie Germain – School of Medicine faculty volunteer
Russ Manley – School of Medicine administration volunteer
Missy Hartsell, RN, - community volunteer
Kate Ziesenheim – Valley Health System Homeless Outreach Coordinator
David M. Deci, M.D. – School of Medicine faculty advisor
Holly Turner – administrative assistant and volunteer support staff

Future Direction

New student leadership will meet in mid-August 2008 to map out the direction for MUSHROOM over the course of the next year. In keeping with the above stated missions, it is expected that MUSHROOM will continue to expand client services, while at the same time, creatively look for ways to advocate for homelessness issues through health professional education, public outreach, and media coverage. Faculty recruitment will continue to be a high priority.

