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Shelter board names new members at meeting
Members looking to continue Project Hope success

PAINESVILLE – At the annual meeting of the board of trustees of the Ecumenical Shelter Network of Lake County, the governing board behind Project Hope for the Homeless, members voted in 12 area residents to serve on the board. Project Hope for the Homeless, the only emergency homeless shelter in Lake County, has been serving homeless men, women and children for more than 16 years, under the guidance of the Ecumenical Shelter Network.

More than 20 members of the network approved the following as board members for a one-, two-, or three-year term:

Chairperson: Rev. Gerald J. Bednar, Ph.D., J.D., Wickliffe

Vice Chairperson: Robert C. Rader, Concord Township

Treasurer: Evan Francis, Madison Township

Secretary: Carla Cegielski, Perry

At-large: Robert Dawson, Concord Township

At-large: Cate Hearn, Madison Township

At-large: Mary Hofer, Mentor

At-large: Richard Mergen, Concord Township

At-large: Dan Osborne, Madison Township

At-large: Michelle Powers, Concord Township

At-large: Gerald Smrdel, Painesville

At-large: Robert Studer, Willoughby

With a mix of long-time supporters and new board members, the board is excited to move forward and continue working together to better Project Hope, said Chairperson Rev. Gerald Bednar.

“I think we worked together well,” Bednar said of the previous year’s board. “We’ve gotten a lot done in meeting and we’ve enjoyed each other’s company. It’s been a win-win situation.”

Bednar, who served on the initial task force of Project Hope, and returned last year to serve as chairperson, also shared with members of the network many of the board’s accomplishments during the past fiscal year.

“We’ve done quite a few things,” he said. “We’ve had a successful year of operating the shelter.”

This includes:

- revising and updating the bylaws of the board of trustees.

- implementing a rotation of board of trustees members, so that one-third of the board will be re-elected each year for three-year terms.
- establishing policies for the nominating committee, which is used to provide the board with names of potential new board members.
- forming a families and children task force to look into the establishment of a family shelter.
- developing a set of criteria for shelter guest eligibility.
- updating, revising and goal-setting for Project Hope employees.

Treasurer Evan Francis spoke to attendees about the finances of the Ecumenical Shelter Network.

“Project Hope is, in (Business Manager Marian Ruckert’s) words, ‘good shape,’” Francis said. “When you talk to people that deal with non-profits, the guidelines are usually to have 20 to 22 percent earmarked for administration. At Project Hope, we are at now about 14 percent.

“The monies that come into Project Hope are being efficiently used. We’re not putting them in areas that are not being used for the people we serve.”

Of the 2009-2010 budget, which was approved by constituents at the meeting, 81 percent of the budget is used for program services, 14 percent is for administration and five percent is for fundraising and development.

Francis said Project Hope is doing a good job in serving the homeless.

“The world looks at helping the homeless by giving them something and not demanding something back,” he said. “We have people that care so much about them that we’re not just going to give them a hand-out. We’re going to give them help up.”

For more information on supporting Project Hope for the Homeless, visit

www.projecthopeonline.org or call (440) 354-6417.

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PHOTO CUTLINE: Members of the Ecumenical Shelter Network board of trustees who were approved at the June 18 meeting are, left to right: Fr. Gerald Bednar, Michelle Powers, Carla Cegielski, Gerald Smrdel, Mary Hofer, Robert Rader, Cate Hearn, Evan Francis, Robert Dawson and Robert Studer. Not pictured are Richard Mergen and Dan Osborne.