

A PAD OF THEIR OWN

By Ashley South

April Specht Redzic, MNA, CFRE, CEO of DuPage Pads. Her vast and formal training is helping make a measurable and meaningful impact on homelessness in our area.

She shared a story with us about coming into work six months ago and finding a mom with toddler twins in a stroller walking up the building ramp to April's office. The woman had no place to go and no food or diapers for her children. As a mother herself, April felt for her. She and her staff took the woman in and found a hotel room and provided them with the things they needed immediately.

April's goal during the pandemic was not to stand by while the health department shut down their congregate model of housing their clients. The risk of spread was too great as the model had clients sleeping in a large room on cots. Also, people would previously arrive in evening and leave during the day. With day locations like the library and coffeehouses shut down during the lockdown, most clients did not have any options for day shelter. DuPage Pads developed a new hotel model of service.

Clients are now there for the day. One individual or family is in one location. Hotel rooms are the best for each client's and family's wellness. Now, instead of being in emergency mode all of the time, clients are able to focus more on solutions.

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perspective, case management for a typical year prior to 2020 was about 2000. From July to October 2020, DuPage Pads had 2,500 case management meetings. That increase was over 500%. Increased services and the new hotel model helped with overall health of their clients. They saw the number of cases in respiratory illness decrease by 75%! She tracks all data and trends in order to do fair analysis of business operations and of people. April shares her metrics-based approach with other non-profits to help with their models.

April is enthusiastic about helping families that are homeless. She enjoys helping people and finds joy in giving. She believes in having fun at work and bringing clients joy in the day to day, not just at special events. She wants every child to have the same opportunities that her own children have. For every dollar taken in, 89 cents is given back to the clients via resources for them.

A client's or family's duration can be a night or over a year, depending on their circumstances. DuPage Pads helps roughly 200 clients per night. For many, it has been difficult to find affordable apartments. So, the organization applies for housing vouchers on behalf of their clients. They also provide permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities.

How can you get involved? Visit their website to review what is needed from volunteers; options include dropping off a meal, sponsoring a client, and donating items for the "Resource Room." The



Mulching the office garden
April Specht Redzic (grey)
DuPage Pads



Organizing supplies for distribution
April and volunteers,
DuPage Pads

Resource Room is at one of Pads' hotel-based sites where clients are welcome to pick up toiletries, laundry detergent, and extra clothing. If you are a property owner, they are always looking for affordable 2- or 3- bedroom apartments for families. And, if you have a local company and are hiring, please reach out.

DuPage Pads is our featured 501(c)(3) this month. You may directly donate through our website or theirs.



www.dupagepads.org



Fall clean up
April Specht Redzic
DuPage Pads



Letting loose
DuPage Pads staff