

September 30, 2020

Mary Hilgers
Church of St. Rita's Mission Outreach
8694 80th Street S.
Cottage Grove, MN 55016

Dear Mary:

"Love means never having to say you're sorry" - Erich Segal: Love Story

Listening House has been serving people who are lonely, disadvantaged, or experiencing homelessness for nearly 37 years. For even longer, the meaning and truth of the quote "Love means never having to say you're sorry" has been debated in university and college Psychology classes across the country.

That quote came to mind after one of our caring staff members, Christopher, shared an experience he had with a Listening House guest I'll call "Mike." Mike would preface every request with "Sorry to bother you," whether he was asking for a bar of soap, a razor, a cup of coffee, a snack bag, some clean underwear – whatever it was that he needed. Christopher knows that Mike is presently without a home. Because Christopher is a listener and observer of people, he noticed Mike's tendencies not to say much, not to ask for much, and apologize when he did. At one point, Christopher stopped Mike. He told Mike he didn't have to say he was sorry when he needed something. Mike explained he did not want to be a pest. He also shared with Christopher that sometimes, when he has requested assistance from others (including other service providers) the way he was treated made him feel that not only was his asking a burden, *he* was a burden. Christopher listened. He understood. Then, he told Mike outright that he is not a burden. He is a person. He has needs. No one needs to apologize for being human, and that he deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. That is how we treat everyone at Listening House.

Christopher has noticed Mike's demeanor change since he first started coming in a few weeks ago. He talks more, and has opened up to Christopher about his life. I believe that Christopher showed Mike the sort of love that lets Mike know he does not need to say he's sorry.

Thank you for your recent gift of snack packs and clothing. Listening House counts on the support of donors such as yourself to support the work we do in the community with adults experiencing homelessness or who are disadvantaged or lonely. Your generosity says, "Everything will be OK and together we will get through this!"

Sincerely,

Cheryl Peterson
Executive Director

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