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Building Threat to Children and Clients Worries Staffers

Detroit, Mich- For forty years, Crossroads of Michigan has been a beacon in the darkness for more than 100,000 needy Detroiters who had nowhere else to turn for emergency assistance. Today, however, Crossroads is asking for help from the city it has served so faithfully.

A burned out, vacant, wide open house has the staff and volunteers at Crossroads Main Office extremely concerned. Although their own safety is an issue, they also believe that dozens of children who visit the Soup Kitchen face a serious risk. Located at 2424 West Grand Boulevard, Crossroads operates a children's summer lunch program Monday through Friday in conjunction with the organization's daily outreach ministry. The lunch program is attended by dozens of children each day. The burned out hulk next door looms over Crossroads' parking lot and entryways, threatening clients who pass by its dark and crumbling presence.

Dr. Virginia Rice, who is a regular volunteer with the lunch program at Crossroads, says, "We serve lunch to more than forty school-aged children daily and many of them walk alone to participate in the program. They are so happy to have a place where they can get a nutritious meal at no cost."

Crossroads is a 501 (c) 3, non-profit social service outreach agency with two locations in Detroit. Since 1971, it has served the poorest of the poor in the metropolitan area providing food, clothing, prescription medication, employment assistance, and help accessing transportation, identification, and many other things. The Main Office on West Grand Boulevard also operates the Crossroads Soup Kitchen every Sunday, as well as the summer lunch program for school aged children every weekday during the summer months. Crossroads provides a vital service to the citizens of the Detroit community. In



four decades, 103,000 individuals have found assistance in the two Social Service Units, and many, many tens of thousands more have enjoyed hot lunches in the Soup Kitchen.

Mary Honsel, Crossroads' Executive Director, adds, "The building next door needs to be demolished now. The safety of volunteers, staff, and everyone else entering our building is being threatened. We do not have the available funds to pay for something like this; hopefully the City of Detroit will recognize the urgency of this request and make the demolition of this property a priority."

For most of this year, Crossroads has been in touch with attorneys and City of Detroit department heads in an effort to expedite a tear down of this house. Unfortunately, we have made very little progress. On the day of the fire in 2008, the home's owners, Lewis and Rose Reno, were taken to a hospital emergency room with injuries sustained in the blaze. Subsequently, they never returned to the home, which was unlivable. Since then, the home has been classified as abandoned and the city has assumed ownership. As of this writing, our hands are tied and the only option that has been offered to us it to continue waiting. Frankly, that just is not acceptable. The safety of Crossroads' staff and clients should be of paramount concern to the city of Detroit. This organization has served the city and its residents well for forty years, asking nothing in return – until now. For all our sakes, this building needs to come down.

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