

VINE Diversity Program

The VINE Diversity Program has the goal of helping diverse elders (55+) with services designed to help them navigate life in their new homeland. Included in these services are:

- Learning English as a second language by pairing them with a learning partner. The arrangement allows the learning partner to interact with and get acquainted with their new neighbors. In 2017 they provided over 3,300 hours to 34 students from 9 countries, plus 3 Americans with learning disabilities
- The program has expanded into socialization over a cup of tea, learning to crochet or play games, field trips and encouraging life style changes like walking, exercise classes and healthy eating.
- In addition the program provides advocacy by providing translation for appointments, service coordination, forms assistance, phone contacts and other skills needed for life in their new homeland.

Connections Ministry Homeless Shelter

This interdenominational effort in Mankato offers a shelter for the homeless from October thru May. This is their second year. This shelter, that gives priority to women and children, rotates on a weekly basis from congregation to congregation. Guests are given a cot with warm blankets and a warm meal where volunteers interact with them each night. In addition the program provides people called Connectors who work to connect them to services in the community including housing options. It is the long term goal of this group to provide a day shelter as well.

Last year the shelter was open 164 days and served 178 guests. 102 were men – 45 were women and 31 children. This season the shelter opened October 22nd and by the end of the first week its 25 spaces were full.