

Summer 2020

Staying Strong In Times Of Crisis

Your Support Helps Women Along Their Journeys

While many of us are continuing to adjust to ever-changing challenges in our world, this need to adapt quickly is not new for the women and children of Abby's House. Encountering and navigating crises – the loss of a job, eviction, fleeing from domestic violence – can be the reality for many of the women we serve. **The women of Abby's House have overcome significant trauma and now more than ever, your compassion brings our community hope for a brighter future.**

As the Coronavirus pandemic and its economic consequences continue to impact our daily lives, the recent murder of George Floyd and unjustified killings of Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and other Black people have magnified the systemic racial injustice and prejudice that many Black women and their loved ones face on a regular basis. The need for a space that fosters healing, inclusion, community, and hope is more important than ever. With expertise from the Institute for Health and Recovery, Abby's House staff have created a Trauma-Informed Integration Team, whose recent focus has been on how we can maintain a safe emotional environment for all members of our community during these difficult times. Recognizing that the women we serve may feel less in control of their lives in our current circumstances, the team is using a trauma-informed lens to come up with ways to share reliable, accurate information, have clear and frequent communication with residents and guests, and promote healthy coping strategies.

Some of these coping strategies include virtual activities such as stress management workshops with the Institute of Health and Recovery as well as therapeutic, hands-on activities like arts and crafts and gardening. Advocates are also hosting weekly "House Huddle" calls with residents at our three properties of supportive housing and weekly virtual or in-person



Safely sharing meals together has been a great way for the women to stay connected with one another.

1:1 sessions. Having various opportunities to connect as a community and support one another is critical in helping the women realize that they are not in this alone.

"The women at shelter have formed a family-like bond," said Parlee Jones, Shelter Manager. "They plan and cook meals together and look out for one another. When one of our guests recently started a new job, one of the women cooked her a meal to take with her so she'd have something to eat during her break. Although these have been difficult times, it has been amazing to watch the women come together to take care of each other in simple, yet truly meaningful ways."

Your consistent show of compassion towards the women and children of Abby's House is helping them navigate these unprecedented times. Knowing you are looking out for their health, safety, and well-being - making protective masks, donating food and water to keep them nourished, contributing monetary gifts to support our most urgent needs, and more – has shown that even when times are tough, the Abby's House community bands together to continue to be there for one another.



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Founder

Stephanie Page
Executive Director

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Bright Spot

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Mission Statement

The mission of Abby's House is to provide shelter and affordable housing, as well as advocacy and support services, to homeless, battered, and low-income women, with or without children.

Vision Statement

Abby's House empowers the women we serve to lead self-directed lives filled with dignity and hope.



As Vital Today As The First Day

A Message from Executive Director, Stephanie Page

Happy 44th Anniversary to Abby's House! When Founder, Annette Rafferty, and volunteers first opened the doors to the Abby's House shelter on June 6, 1976, Annette thought that we'd only be open for a few years - that every woman experiencing homelessness in Worcester would secure housing and be one step closer to achieving her dreams. Unfortunately this was not the case, and for 44 years Abby's House has continued to provide a safe and dignified place to stay, meeting the changing needs of women experiencing homelessness throughout the years.



Stephanie Page
Executive Director

Abby's House is as committed today to fulfilling our mission as it ever has been. In the last three months we've faced many unexpected changes due to the current health crisis. Our Thrift Shop had to temporarily close, losing nearly three months of revenue that supports our operating budget. Many in-person activities were put on pause as increased measures were taken to ensure the safety of residents, guests, volunteers, and staff. Continuing to serve our residents and guests during these unprecedented circumstances continues to be our top priority and is requiring new responses, increased expenses, and additional resources. I'm happy to say that we've been able to meet these challenges, and it's thanks in large part to you.

Through your kindness and generosity, the women and children of Abby's House are reminded that you continue to care about them. During this difficult time, we have also witnessed the mass protests over George Floyd's murder and systemic racial injustice. At Abby's House, we are committed to working together to stand up for Black women and their families and advocate for their safety and dignity. Safety, inclusiveness and dignity are at the core of Abby's House values.

As we continue to meet the many challenges of this time, we thank you for being there for all of the women and children at Abby's House. I'm proud to say that Abby's House continues to be here to fulfill our mission and provide housing, shelter and support to women, with or without children, who experience homelessness and housing insecurity, low incomes, trauma and abuse. Together, we will get through this time and be here for the future, and Abby's House will be stronger for it.

With sincere gratitude,

Stephanie

11th Annual Abby's House 5K Run/Walk

*A Virtual Race to Support
the Women & Children of Abby's House*

Thursday, October 1 - Saturday, October 17, 2020

See insert for details!



Register today at abbyshouse.racewire.com

Strong Alone, Unstoppable Together

Partners Answer The Call To Assist Women In Need

Abby's House is proud to collaborate with over 123 organizations and programs throughout Worcester County. It is through this collective effort that Abby's House can ensure that the best resources are available to help women and children along their journeys. During the current health crisis, our partners have stepped up in a big way to assist both the residents and guests of Abby's House.

Saint Paul's Food Pantry

When the Abby's House food pantry program couldn't meet the growing needs of residents due to the current health crisis, Saint Paul's Food Pantry graciously reached out to offer their help. Through this partnership, nearly thirty women have received assistance. The team at Saint Paul's Food Pantry receives referrals from Abby's House staff and safely packages the food that is requested and delivers it to residents through no-contact drop-offs. Thank you to all those at Saint Paul's Food Pantry, run under the direction of Walter Doyle (shown right), who are continuing to help the women of Abby's House with food security during these difficult times.



Regional Environmental Council (REC)

We recently expanded our efforts to partner with Regional Environmental Council (REC) to help women have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Through their programs they are able to provide nutritious foods to individuals who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. By partnering together, we are helping to create access to healthy, affordable and local food for families and individuals who need it most. Abby's House advocates assist women with reserving their produce bags online and arrange for transportation assistance as needed to collect

them. Participants may choose to order a vegetable, fruit, or combination bag. These bags have included: tomatoes, asparagus, potatoes, scallions, lettuce, carrots, onions, apples, oranges, avocados, mangoes, and limes. This opportunity has been wonderful for those trying to stretch their food budget while ensuring they receive nutritious foods!

"Worcester Together" Emergency Shelter Working Group for Women and Families

As the Coronavirus landed in Worcester, those experiencing homelessness were found to be the most susceptible to contracting the virus. In response, local leaders across the community came together to find ways to support the most vulnerable among us. Abby's House was one of the first organizations to join a new working group of providers, organized by Fallon Health, who are most familiar with the needs of women who experience homelessness to plan and coordinate a tailored, trauma-informed overflow shelter response for women, with and without children. Since March, this group has collaborated to expand access to safe, socially distanced, temporary shelter at two sites and case management support for over 42 households to date. This has been made possible by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund and Worcester Together: Central Mass COVID-19 Fund, a partnership between the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the United Way of Central Massachusetts in collaboration with the City of Worcester. This amazing effort truly demonstrates the power of women and community - to build on our collective wisdom, experiences, and resources to serve the greater good.

THANK YOU

For Making Our Annual Fundraising Event, **Spring-Tacular** a Huge Success!

From May 7 - 14, over 300 donors made gifts in support of this year's Spring-Tacular campaign and 104 people participated in our online auction.

When we combine the donations you made, proceeds from the online auction, corporate and individual sponsorships, and the \$25,000 matching grant from The George I. Alden Trust, you helped to raise over \$135,000 to support the essential needs of the women and children who call Abby's House home!

We'd also like to give a special note of thanks to the Spring-Tacular planning committee for their work in making this year's event a success!

Get Involved At Abby's House!



Abby's House relies on the collective contributions of time, talent and treasure from our supporters. Even though the current health crisis has limited ways for us to get together in-person, you can still make a huge impact in the lives of the women and children we serve.

Make A Gift:

Now more than ever, your gift makes it possible for women and children to dream of a hopeful future. Once safely housed, women develop a plan to avoid future homelessness and housing insecurity.

To learn ways to give, visit abbyshouse.org/donate. Set up monthly recurring gifts to multiply your impact.

Volunteer:

We're looking for dedicated individuals to staff our overnight shelter! You'll provide a welcoming and safe place for women and children in the shelter and sleep overnight with shelter guests.

Commitment involves staffing from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m., one night a month or more. Training is provided by Abby's House shelter staff. To learn more or to fill out a volunteer application, visit abbyshouse.org/get-involved/volunteer/

Donate Needed Items:

To fully serve the women who come through our doors each year, Abby's House relies on donated items from the community.

To view the complete list of our most urgent needs, visit abbyshouse.org/get-involved/donate-needed-items

Join the Abby's House Legacy Circle!

The Abby's House Legacy Circle recognizes donors who have named Abby's House in their will or other form of planned gift. Planned gifts are an extraordinary way to leave a lasting impact on the women and children of Abby's House.

If you are in the process of making or revising your will or estate plan, we hope that you consider including Abby's House as a charitable beneficiary. Please contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development at (508) 756-5486 X214 or kelly@abbyshouse.org to discuss ways you may further your commitment.

To learn more, visit abbyshouse.org/get-involved/ways-to-give

The CARES Act

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

There are new tax incentives for charitable giving that were included in the recently enacted Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act.

Donors may deduct 100% of cash contributions to most public charities. For the 2020 tax year only, you may deduct cash contributions to Abby's House and most other public charities up to 100% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) if you itemize your deductions. Ordinarily these deductions would be limited to 60% of your adjusted gross income. This higher limit will allow generous donors to reduce their 2020 federal income tax to zero. Donors can carry forward unused cash contribution deductions for up to five years. For those who don't itemize and therefore take the standard deduction, you are eligible for a \$300 above the line deduction for cash donations.

Please consult with your financial advisor to learn more. To have a personal conversation, contact Director of Development, Kelly Whalen at kelly@abbyshouse.org | (508) 756-5486 x214.

Naming Opportunities Available At 52 High Street Location

Would you like the opportunity to have one of the renovated spaces named in honor or in memory of a loved one? If so, contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development, at kelly@abbyshouse.org or by phone at (508) 756-5486 x214.

Naming opportunities are \$7,500 and above. All gifts provide immediate support to ensure each woman and child has a safe place to heal and thrive.