

Spring 2022

Finding a Place to Call Home

After catastrophic loss, she found renewed hope at Abby's House

"Fire!" Peggy's daughter yelled as she ran into her mother's room after 2:30 a.m. on a July evening. Peggy bolted awake and they escaped through the back door of their first floor, triple decker apartment, yelling loudly to alert their neighbors. Firefighters arrived and the blaze was out by 6:00 a.m., but Peggy's home was completely destroyed.

Before moving to that apartment, Peggy lived in another from 2013 to 2020. Leaks began causing water damage and the walls expanded, while bed bugs infested everything. Two days before her planned move-out, the fire marshal knocked on the door. "Everyone out, now. We're condemning the building," Peggy grabbed what little she could carry in the haste and confusion.

Peggy is elderly with a limited income, and relies on a housing voucher to help pay her rent and help from her daughter to pay some expenses. As you get older, it's hard to find a safe place to live on a fixed income, and even with a housing voucher, it was difficult to find places that accepted it.

She remembered the first weeks after the fire—she had nightmares, and at one point completely broke down. "I lost one place due to it being condemned then this one burns to the ground. I didn't know what I was going to do," she recalled. After the fire, a few local nonprofits gave assistance, her landlord returned her security deposit and a small insurance payment, and a few neighbors gave her money. She was homeless, and every bit of help she received went directly to a hotel. "It was very pricey...but I had to do what I had to do to stay off of the streets," she explained. When her finances were exhausted, she became desperate and called the mayor's office, where she was connected with Abby's House.

After interviewing with Shelter Manager Parlee



After losing her apartment in Worcester to a fire, Peggy found shelter at Abby's House and received support in finding a new home

Jones, Peggy moved into the Abby's House Shelter. She wasn't sure what awaited her at 23 Crown Street, but as Parlee compassionately welcomed Peggy, she thought, "Wow, this is like a home!" Peggy enjoyed the camaraderie and hospitality, and befriended two older women with similar traumatic stories—they were lovingly referred to as the Three Amigas.

Peggy took full advantage of the programs at Abby's House. She worked with an advocate, who empowered her to move forward and helped break down barriers to finding housing. She enjoyed hot meals in the Annette Rafferty Women's Empowerment Center with friends and accessed special programs. In addition to finding a warm place to lay her head, she found healing and hope after catastrophic loss.

Peggy's bravery and perseverance in the face of tragedy paid off when she found an affordable apartment that accepted her voucher. **After 5 months of homelessness, Peggy opened the door to her new home, thanks to Abby's House supporters like you.** Your support gives women like Peggy safety and hope when they need it most.



Annette Rafferty
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.



Your Impact at Abby's House

A Message from Executive Director, Stephanie Page

As we mark two years since the Covid-19 pandemic first began, we look back on the many ways that we are grateful despite the difficulties. With each new obstacle and changing health guidelines, all of us came together to not only survive, but to thrive despite it. Your support of the women and children of Abby's House, and the resilience we have seen, ensured that the doors stayed open, the lights stayed lit, and connections were still made.



Stephanie Page
Executive Director

Your support allowed Abby's House to continue to welcome women and children while providing empowerment and support to each person living here. Here are just some of the ways your impact was felt in 2021:

- 100% of women received COVID updates, PPE supplies, access to on-site vaccination clinics, and continued support from staff during the pandemic
- 13 women and 3 children were welcomed as new residents into supportive housing, bringing the total to 98 women and 10 children residing at Abby's House
- 28 women were welcomed into Shelter
- 21 residents and shelter guests moved into permanent housing, independent from Abby's House
- 1,154 women who called or visited Abby's House received referrals for shelter, housing, and other services
- \$19,936 in ARST (Annette Rafferty Survive to Thrive) Funds directly provided help to women in the face of unexpected or increased expenses, including rental assistance, transportation, medical co-payments, and more
- 52 women received Thrift Shop vouchers for needed clothing and housing items, through partnering agencies including CMHA, Everyday Miracles, Family Health Center, SMOC, Spectrum Health Systems, YWCA, and others
- Volunteers and staff served 5,160 meals to women and children

Thank you for continuing to believe in our mission and for coming together as a community to support the women and children of Abby's House when they needed you most. We know that 2022 promises to be a more hopeful year, and we look forward to continuing to light the way home for women and children.

In gratitude,

Stephanie

2021 Program Funding

Because of your support, all of the programs at Abby's House were 100% funded in 2021!



You made shelter, housing, and advocacy services possible for women & children!

Helping Women on the Housing Continuum

How Abby's House Helps Women Thrive



Abby's House Continuum of Housing (Left to Right): 9-Bed Shelter, 56 Single Occupancy Rooms at 52 High St, 16 Single Occupancy Rooms on Crown St, 7 Two-Bedroom Apartments on Chatham St.

Since its establishment, the Abby's House Shelter has played a vital role in the ongoing efforts to provide a continuum of affordable housing in Worcester for homeless women, with or without children. With 9 Shelter beds currently and plans to increase to 18 beds in 2023, and 79 supportive housing units, Abby's House offers women guidance and support to move towards independent housing beyond Abby's House.

Abby's House, in an effort to expand its continuum of housing, will be renovating the Shelter to provide additional and more accessible Shelter beds, to ensure more women can access safe shelter and the important linkages to housing and critical services. These additional units will provide women with more safety, community, and support.

Many Shelter guests at Abby's House, after working with Abby's House staff to identify realistic goals and access the tools she needs to achieve them, move into a Single Room Occupancy apartment in one of the other two Abby's House supportive housing properties. With additional support and a personalized empowerment plan with her Advocate, the women living at Abby's House can then find the resources they need to move forward on their journey to access independent housing and maintain it.

One resident, Maggie, demonstrates the importance of the continuum. Maggie arrived first at the Abby's House Shelter, but after some months moved to supportive housing at 52 High Street. Realizing she found joy in the therapy pets that regularly visited the Annette Rafferty Women's Empowerment Center (prior to Covid-19), Maggie brainstormed with her advocate the steps to become a vet tech. Maggie connected with a partner organization to receive a Veterinary Assistant Certificate, which supporters helped to fund. Now, Maggie has a new job and a car that help bring her independence and the opportunities for maintaining and affording safe housing.

Abby's House supports women at all stages of the continuum, providing overnight shelter which can then bridge to supportive housing. Once a woman finds independent housing, Abby's House can continue offering ongoing supports through the Women's Center. This unique model seeks to provide tools and resources for women to thrive and find a future filled with hope and stability.

Mark Your Calendars!

9th Annual Spring-Tacular: Lighting the Way Home

Presented by Counseling & Assessment Clinic of Worcester, LLC

Thursday, May 5 - Thursday, May 12, 2022

Virtual Celebration & Online Auction

**We will conclude this year's celebration with a special virtual program for all on Thursday, May 12th!*

Learn more at abbyshouse.org/spring-tacular

Abby's House 14th Annual Hybrid 5K Run/Walk

Join us virtually or in-person!

Saturday, October 15, 2022

8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

West Boylston Middle/High School
Race begins promptly at 9 a.m.

More information coming soon!

Get Involved At Abby's House!



Abby's House relies on the collective contributions of time, talent and treasure from our supporters. You can make a huge impact in the lives of the women and children we serve.

Make A Gift:

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 make a gift, visit abbyshouse.org/donate. Set up monthly recurring gifts to multiply your impact.

Donate Needed Items:

To fully serve the women who come through our doors each year, Abby's House relies on donated items. See our list of needed items online at abbyshouse.org/get-involved/donate-needed-items.

Your Thrift Shop donations also help clothe women and children in need, and raise funds for Abby's House programs.

Learn more at abbyshouse.org/thrift-shop.

Join the Legacy Circle:

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

Contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development at (508) 756-5486 X214 or kelly@abbyshouse.org to learn more or notify us of your planned gift.

Learn more at abbyshouse.org/get-involved/ways-to-give

Join the Thrift Shop Volunteer Team!

Volunteers have been at the heart of Abby's House since the beginning. Some Thrift Shop Volunteers have been at Abby's House for decades! They assist with accepting and sorting donations, stocking the shop floor, helping customers find the perfect outfit and working at the cash registers.

The current Thrift Shop Hours are Monday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Saturday's 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Thrift Shop Volunteers currently needed on:

Monday and Wednesday 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Thursday 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Did you know?

In 2021, 10.5% of the Abby's House budget came from Thrift Shop revenue! Your in-kind donations & patronage help us serve more women and children!

Have You Shared the News?

Sharing Abby's House social media posts and emails helps raise awareness about how we help women and children

When Peggy was homeless and living in a Worcester hotel, she had no idea where to turn next. Thankfully, she called the mayor's office and learned about Abby's House.

While Abby's House has a wonderful community of supporters, there are still many people who have not heard about the shelter and supportive housing options that help women and children in need.

By sharing on social media or email, you can ensure an even larger network of people know about the programs offered and have a chance to lend their support or get involved!

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter & LinkedIn!

**Sign up for Abby's House Email Updates
at abbyshouse.org
at the bottom of the page!**



Naming Opportunities Available

At 52 High Street Location

Would you like the opportunity to name a space in our largest property of safe, supportive housing 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 and provide immediate support to ensure that women have a safe place to heal and thrive.