

Summer 2023

## The Path to Self Discovery

*Abby's House supported Linda on her path to recovery*



My name is Linda and I am a former guest and resident of Abby's House. My initial introduction to Abby's House was not something I chose for myself. I was completely immersed in my addiction and was not ready to face my fears and put in the work to change my life. My Mom had reached her breaking point with my addiction and brought me to Abby's House with the hope that I could change and heal.

I did make those changes, but not on that day. After only a few days in shelter with addiction knocking on my door relentlessly, I lost the courage to stay sober and moved on. It took me nearly 15 more years, multiple relapses, and **a gift from God to bring me back through the doors of Abby's House. I was ready!**

At that time, I had been sober for 5 months, but was living with a partner who was also an addict. We had relapsed together a few times, and I knew I needed to find a way out; out of the relationship, and out of addiction, permanently. Fortunately, a dear friend of mine who had been a volunteer at Abby's House reached out to me. God put her in my life at the right time and I found myself walking through the doors of Abby's House once again.

I needed a safe place to sleep and stay sober, but I got so much more. The thing with Abby's House is that they meet women where they are. They understand that there is not one "cookie cutter" approach and help each of us on our own path to personal discovery. My initial goal was continued sobriety and to work to build a foundation for myself within the safety of shelter.

**Working with the women's services team I was able to transition from shelter guest to resident in just a few short months.** I went back to school and am proudly working as a licensed addiction counselor today, using my lived experiences to help others who have walked in the same shoes I had walked in for so long.

I moved out of Abby's House in June 2022, but I will always be connected to Abby's House. Walking through these doors still feels like coming home again and I am forever grateful.

*Linda is filled with gratitude knowing Abby's House will always be a home away from home for her. Through your support more women and children facing homelessness will be compassionately served in 2023.*

After 47 years of opening doors to women and children experiencing homelessness, we are breaking ground on a much-needed renovation and expansion of the current shelter located in the Crown Hill neighborhood of Worcester. The renovation is expected to take 9-12 months and will address the growing need for shelter for women, with or without children seeking safety, connection to resources and one-on-one clinical case management services.

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Annette Rafferty  
*Founder*

Julie Orozco  
*Executive Director*

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#### Bright Spot

Vol. 42, Issue 2  
August 2023  
Published three times per year

#### 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.



## A Message from Executive Director Julie Orozco

I began the process of joining Abby's House in May of this year and the first thing I learned is that Abby's is an incredibly special place. I can tell you about the tangibles that make this true—such as the ability to support each resident and guest in a flexible and individually tailored manner or the unique beauty of the four historic buildings that ensure women and children feel a sense of dignity when they refer to Abby's House as their home, but what I struggle to capture in words are the intangibles. What makes Abby's House special is embedded in the walls and hallways around us. **It is in the air and undoubtedly in our 47-year legacy.**



Julie Orozco  
Executive Director

One of the final steps in my journey of joining the Abby's House team was a one-on-one with founder, Annette Rafferty. Annette shared stories and anecdotes about the history of Abby's House and offered me her wise guidance on how I ought to transition into my new role as Executive Director: "Just be yourself." She repeated it a couple more times and then followed with this, "you already have everything within you, so just be yourself and you'll be alright."

It occurred to me that this is likely the secret ingredient, the intangible "stuff" that makes Abby's House such a special place. Annette's founding of Abby's House, like our namesake Abby Kelley Foster, was done in the face of great challenge, but with her unwavering knowledge that a place like Abby's House was desperately needed and determined to not just house women and children, but to curate an experience marked by safety, empathy, empowerment, and resilience. **THIS is Abby's House!**

**The next chapter of Abby's House is an exciting one.** We are on the heels of breaking ground on the shelter renovation. This project will double the shelter capacity and redesign the space in a way that addresses accessibility (installation of an ADA ramp and accessible spaces on the first floor), parenting needs (i.e., creating a clear line of sight from the kitchen to the children's play area to ensure mom's can keep an eye on their kiddos while preparing meals), and other unique features. The expansion of our shelter comes along with an expansion of critical services offered to residents and guests that will better address the mental health, substance use, social risk factors, and barriers to accessing supports and services within the community.

Receiving the baton from outgoing Executive Director, Stephanie Page, is an honor. Her leadership and those before her, along with the vision of the Board of Directors and dedication of the Abby's House residents, guests, donors, staff and volunteers is truly inspiring. I look forward to continuing this journey and am excited to have the entire Abby's House community along with me for the ride.

Sincerely,

# Breaking Ground on Positive Change

*A Safe and Secure Home for Years to Come*

Each year, Abby's House serves as many as 500 women and children disproportionately impacted by a lack of safe, affordable housing, access to mental health services, substance use programs, and poverty. With the average fair market rent in Massachusetts at nearly 50% higher than the national average, women are facing an insurmountable gap between housing costs and available income opportunities.

When Founder, Annette Rafferty and a collective of strong women and men came together to open one of the first shelters in the United States for women, they never imagined how the need for shelter would continue to grow. It quickly became evident that access to safe shelter, affordable housing, and 1:1 supportive services provide a clear pathway to healing and stability.

Constructed in 1890, the historic building at 21-23 Crown Street has remained largely untouched, except for some minor changes. The renovation project addresses the challenges posed by an aging building with a focus on ADA accessibility. Upon completion, the Women's Services team will adequately serve 18 women, with or without children in a safe and healing home.

Investments will allow Abby's House to meet the growing need for shelter with access to critical services to mitigate the causes of homelessness. The renovation will provide:

- Expanded staffing model to meet guest-to-staff ratios
- Implement an Integrated Model of Care to address risk factors and critical needs
- Create a trauma-informed home with an accessible entrance and 1st-floor living space
- Upgrade all major systems including plumbing, HVAC, and electrical
- Reconfigure kitchen, living room, and children's play spaces
- Create a dedicated space for staff and volunteers on the first floor, including a meeting room
- Reconfigure the lower level to include two, new apartments with separate entrances
- Enhance the outdoor space with areas for enjoyment, communal gatherings, and parking
- Enrich the Crown Hill neighborhood and the conservation of a historical home

The majority of the capital funding has been successfully secured through both public and private sources; additional support is needed to complete the scope of the renovations. For more information on how you can make an impact, contact Senior Director of Development and Communications, Kelly Whalen by email at [kelly@abbyshouse.org](mailto:kelly@abbyshouse.org) or phone at (508)756-5486 X214.

**\*\*Abby's House is continuing to serve women and their children at risk of homelessness throughout the renovation. If you or someone you know needs assistance, contact a member of the Abby's House team at (508)756-5486.**



## 14th Annual Abby's House Hybrid 5K

**Virtual: October 7 - October 14, 2023**

**In-Person: October 14 at 9:00 a.m.**

See insert for details!

**Learn more & register your team today at [abbyshouse.org/abbyshouse5k](https://abbyshouse.org/abbyshouse5k)**



## Get Involved At Abby's House!



Abby's House is community of people working collectively to achieve its mission. **Your contributions of time, talent, and treasure make an impact in the lives of the women and children.**

### 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](https://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](https://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](https://abbyshouse.org/thrift-shop).

### Volunteer:

We're looking for dedicated individuals to staff the overnight shelter or help in the Thrift Shop! Training is provided by Abby's House staff. To learn more and to fill out a volunteer application, visit [abbyshouse.org/get-involved/volunteer](https://abbyshouse.org/get-involved/volunteer).

## Thank You for 25 Years of Service Mattie & Adriana

"They keep the women & children fed and in clean beautiful homes all year round. They make Abby's House feel like home.

We love these two women for listening to our stories, for making us feel welcomed, for making us laugh, and celebrating big and small milestones in women's lives, every day."

- Rose Rodriguez  
*Associate Director of Housing*



## Join the Legacy Circle!

As a Legacy Circle member, you imagine your world beyond the present.

The Legacy Circle honors individuals who have included Abby's House in their will or trust. By including Abby's House in your estate plans, you will make a profound difference in the lives of women and children at risk of experiencing homelessness and leave a permanent legacy for your loved ones.

This flexible gift option can be revised at any time and can be made as a specific amount or a percentage of your estate—allowing you to also take care of your family. In addition, your gift may entitle your estate to estate tax charitable deductions.

To arrange a personal conversation or for more information on joining the Legacy Circle, contact Associate Director of Development, Jennifer Spicer at [Jennifer@abbyshouse.org](mailto:Jennifer@abbyshouse.org) or call (508)756-5486 x239.

## Honor Those You Love

with naming opportunities at 52 High Street

We invite you to name a space in our largest property of safe, supportive housing in honor or in memory of a loved one. Provide a gift that will live on in the hearts and home of the women at Abby's House.

Contact Kelly Whalen, Senior Director of Development and Communications, to discuss the many ways your gift can have incredible meaning and impact, at [kelly@abbyshouse.org](mailto:kelly@abbyshouse.org) or (508)756-5486 x214.

