

Spring 2024

## A Place of Belonging

*Patti's story of spreading her wings and becoming herself again*

We would like to introduce you to former Abby's House resident Patti. Though her story is uniquely her own, it is also a long-told story of the inequalities inherent in today's society. Spoiler alert: **Through Patti's resiliency and strength and the many helping hands at Abby's House, we are proud to share how she broke the cycle of poverty and forged forward on a new path in life!** Here's more on Patti's story.

"Born as one of eleven children in Worcester, my childhood shaped my life in ways I could have never imagined. My mother was not able to provide the support that we all needed growing up and I found myself navigating my way through the foster care system at a young age. Every time I moved from one temporary house to another, I remember feeling heavy with uncertainty and it was hard for me to find a place that felt like a home. Not knowing who I could trust, I often ran away and as a result was in and out of the foster care system until I was eighteen years old.

The challenges only intensified as I reached adulthood and became a young mother myself. Before I came to Abby's House, I had been living with a boyfriend. At the time, his sister needed a place to stay, so we took her in. Sadly, this was a huge turning point for me as I learned that she was using substances, and I began to see the day-to-day effects that drug use has on a person. The situation reached a breaking point when she falsely accused me of attacking her to the police when I refused to give her money. Despite the fact that I had done nothing wrong, I was asked not to return to my home as my boyfriend had chosen to support his sister.

I was fortunate to be able to live with my daughter for a few days but needed a more permanent solution. I remember my first meeting with the Shelter Manager at Abby's House and her warmth and compassion while



*Patti visits with friends in the Women's Empowerment Center.*

telling me she would find a place for me. Because I had been able to maintain my job, I was able to secure a permanent housing unit at Abby's House, and each day after that became a journey of self-discovery. I arrived feeling so low physically and mentally, but soon learned it was just the start of my transformation into a beautiful butterfly.

From learning how to cook, to expressing myself through art, I enjoyed my time getting to know other residents and making close friends while participating in programs in the Women's Empowerment Center. In time, **I found the courage to come out of my shell, build my self-esteem, and trust again.** I was no longer running and was able to rest.

After seven proud years as an Abby's House resident and lots and lots of support and guidance from the advocacy team, I finally took the leap last fall and moved into my own apartment and was able to adopt a sweet little kitty named Berma who brings me so much joy.

I will forever carry with me the lifelong friendships and many lessons learned within the walls of Abby's House. **Thank you for believing in me.**"



Annette Rafferty  
*Founder*

Julie Orozco  
*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.



**A Heartfelt Thank You**

*A Message from Executive Director, Julie Orozco*

In 2024, we proudly celebrate 48 years of Abby's House – 48 years dedicated to serving the women and children of the Worcester community. Abby's House remains just as essential today as it was when we first opened our doors in 1976.



**Julie Orozco**  
Executive Director

As the housing crisis continues to escalate not only in our city but across the state, it becomes increasingly important for us to rise to the need and ensure the well-being of our community. The ongoing renovation of the Abby's House shelter exemplifies the transformative power of community unity. **Together, we have the capacity to positively impact the lives of countless women.** Here's how your impact was felt in the lives of women and their families in 2023:

- 83 women and 11 children total lived in Abby's House permanent supportive housing or were welcomed into shelter.
- Volunteers and staff served 6,781 meals to women and children.
- 2,083 women who called or visited Abby's House received referrals for shelter, housing, and other services.
- \$9,434 in ARST (Annette Rafferty Survive to Thrive) Funds directly provided help to women with rental assistance, transportation, medical co-payments, educational courses, and more.
- 56 women in the community received Thrift Shop vouchers for needed clothing and household items, referred by multiple partner organizations.

**Your continued dedication to the women and children of Abby's House made all of the above possible.** Last year, you and 3,160 donors generously contributed monetary or in-kind gifts to support the Abby's House mission. We are deeply grateful for your belief in our mission and for your commitment, compassion, and generosity as a community.

There is still more important work to be done to meet the needs of women and families experiencing homelessness, and with your support, 2024 promises to be another incredibly impactful year at Abby's House as we celebrate the completion of the renovation of the Abby's House Shelter and what that means for the women and children we serve. **Thank you for your invaluable support.**

Warmest regards,

**2023 Program Funding**

**Because of your support,** all of the programs at Abby's House were 100% funded in 2023!



You made shelter, housing, and advocacy services possible for women & children! Your support gives them the opportunity to build brighter futures.

# Launching Abby's House Day Shelter

## *The Community Impact of Abby's House Shelter Renovation & Day Shelter*

Excitement fills the air as progress continues on the renovation at the Abby's House Shelter! Yet, amidst the anticipation, the women and children of Worcester facing homelessness still seek crucial resources. Annemarie Govardhan, PsyD., Senior Director of Women's Services says, "We could not sit idly by during our shelter renovation, particularly given the critical state of housing in Worcester. There remains an immense need for safe spaces, dedicated specifically to women and women with children, where they can receive the kind of intensive case management that is often required to move them from a space of being unhoused or insecurely housed, to a more permanent option."



**The Day Shelter will be located at one of our properties on Chatham Street.**

Hence, the idea of the Abby's House Day Shelter was formed. It is a place that provides temporary relief while the Shelter goes through changes. The Day Shelter promises a sanctuary where women can find solace and support. Equipped with essential amenities such as access to laundry facilities, a kitchen, showers, computer workstations, and a dedicated children's area, it seeks to meet the fundamental needs of its guests.

Yet, the Day Shelter offers more than just physical comforts. With on-site case management services and membership to Abby's House Women's Empowerment Center at 52 High Street, guests are enveloped in a community dedicated to their well-being. Guests will have access to twice weekly meals, food and nutrition classes, and activities such as yoga, craft workshops, and bingo. Additionally, there is a market table and food pantry available, along with basic personal care and hygiene items accessible through their advocate, and vouchers to the Abby's House Thrift Shop.

The demand for safe and stable housing options tailored specifically to women and women with children is more pressing than ever. The city grapples with soaring rents and a chronic shortage of affordable housing, leaving many residents on the brink of homelessness. By addressing the immediate needs of individuals and families who need shelter most, Abby's House aims to mitigate the impact of the housing crisis while laying the groundwork for lasting solutions.

Director of Women Services, Chelsea Levine LICSW, says, "Our hope is that Day Shelter will provide much needed supports and services to the women of our Worcester community, to empower and support them in their efforts to achieve their goals. By working to identify and build connections with unhoused women in our community, we hope to seamlessly transition them to our shelter once renovations are complete."

The renovation at the Abby's House Shelter is expected to be completed in early summer. The renovation will double the number of beds from 9 to 18, make the shelter accessible for women with disabilities, provide more privacy for single women and mothers, and create extra space for children. The renovation will also improve communal areas, offering a better environment for rest, healing, and meaningful socialization. Even after the completion of the Shelter renovation, the Day Shelter will remain operational, extending its services to even more women and children in need.

"These are exciting times," says Associate Director of Shelter Operations, Melanie Amir. "We're excited to be expanding the Abby's House Shelter while providing support and a space to empower women to rebuild their lives."

## **Mark Your Calendars!**

### ***11th Annual Spring-Tacular: Roots of Resilience***

Presented by Counseling & Assessment Clinic of Worcester, LLC

**Thursday, May 9 - Thursday, May 16, 2024**

Celebration & Online Auction

More information on the in-person and virtual celebrations coming soon! Online auction will feature local restaurants and businesses, family friendly adventures, sports memorabilia, a 7-day vacation rental on the Cape and more!

**Learn more at [abbyshouse.org/spring-tacular](https://abbyshouse.org/spring-tacular)**

## Get Involved At Abby's House!



Abby's House is a 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.**

Together, we can continue to build a safe, supportive community for women and children at Abby's House.

### 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](http://abbyshouse.org/donate).

Set up monthly recurring gifts to guarantee a bright future for the women and children of Abby's House.

### 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](http://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. Visit [abbyshouse.org/thrift-shop](http://abbyshouse.org/thrift-shop).

### Volunteer:

Volunteers have been at the heart of Abby's House since the beginning. Work in the Thrift Shop, hold workshops or teach a class. To learn more, visit [abbyshouse.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://abbyshouse.org/get-involved/volunteer)

## Be A Permanent Part of Our Story

### Naming Opportunities For Abby's House Shelter

As the renovation of the Abby's House Shelter nears completion this summer, we extend a heartfelt invitation to you to partake in a unique opportunity: the chance to have one of the shelter rooms named in honor or in loving memory of someone dear to you.

To explore this meaningful opportunity further, contact Jennifer Spicer, Director of Development and Communications at [jennifer@abbyshouse.org](mailto:jennifer@abbyshouse.org) or call 508-756-5486 x239.

Naming opportunities begin at \$10,000. Your generous contribution not only honors the memory or legacy of your loved one but also provides immediate support to ensure that women in need have a safe and nurturing space to heal and thrive.

## 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 Director of Development, Jennifer Spicer at [jennifer@abbyshouse.org](mailto:jennifer@abbyshouse.org) or call (508)756-5486 x239.

Learn more at [abbyshouse.org/get-involved/ways-to-give](http://abbyshouse.org/get-involved/ways-to-give)

## Honoring 94 Years: A Birthday to Cherish

In February, we celebrated our founder, Annette Rafferty's birthday! Members of the Abby's House community extended warm birthday wishes through heartfelt cards, sweet goodies, and a memorable video celebration!

Annette remains a source of encouragement and inspiration to the Abby's House community. We wish her a fantastic year ahead!

