

Bright Spot

Shining a Light on Your Impact

Spring 2026

At Abby's House, we see people that otherwise go unnoticed. Some are with us for a short while and some more long-term. These women don't fit into a neat little box and that's exactly why we exist: to serve the underserved without judgment and without unnecessary barriers. Our mission is to protect women and children experiencing homelessness and meet each woman where she is to walk alongside her as she rebuilds her life. But we can't do it alone. During this 50th Anniversary year, we are looking to our community to ensure we are around for another 50 years and beyond.

Viana's Story: Finding Rest in a Life That Never Pauses

When Viana secured a spot in our shelter, she was relieved to have a lifeline that guaranteed she wouldn't be out in the cold. But, like most shelters, ours is only open overnight and that's when she worked. So because of this conflicting schedule, she had no time or place to rest. She often popped into the Women's Empowerment Center for a quick meal or to change clothes, but that small reprieve wasn't enough to restore her energy. Weeks went by, and she stayed awake almost continuously, with small cat naps here and there seated in a chair. She was running herself ragged just to survive.

Viana's story is not uncommon. She came to Worcester hoping for stability but the life she imagined did not exist. She was starting all over in a place that demanded constant vigilance. Every day was a test of endurance.

"I was grateful just to have a spot, but I couldn't sleep. I was awake all day and working all night. I didn't know how I could go on."

Staff recognized immediately that something had to change since it was almost impossible imagining someone rebuilding a life without their most basic needs being met. So we made an adjustment.

This International Women's Month, We #GiveToGain

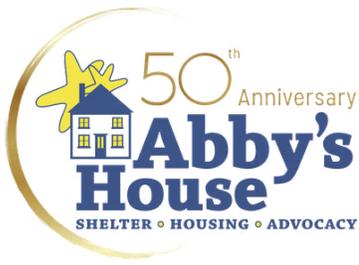
Purchase a postcard in a woman's honor and keep the ripple going. Each includes two mini wallet cards one to keep, one to share.



Viana was able to move into one of our permanent housing units for a short-term stay, an opportunity made possible under exceptional circumstances while we worked to fill the unit with a long-term tenant. For the first time in weeks, she had a place to rest and to regain a fraction of the strength she so desperately needed.

Even with this small measure of relief, Viana's days remained grueling. She still worked nights and navigated public transportation in the off-hours. She turned to her Abby's House advocate who served as a conduit to essential resources like accessing food and finding legal guidance. Even the basic counseling she received made a real, tangible difference in her ability to survive day-to-day.

Abby's House doesn't promise perfect outcomes. For some, we are a soft landing place when the world is hard. We provide help to people who have been made to feel invisible. For Viana, and hundreds like her, that support is life-saving and it exists because we choose to follow-through on our mission, with the support of donors who make hope and stability possible for those who need it most.



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A Message from Julie Orozco, Executive Director

As we mark our 50th anniversary year, I am deeply aware of how uncertain the world can feel right now. In times like these, the need for safety and a true sense of belonging becomes more important than ever. I also recognize that many of you are being pulled in many directions, and that it can feel difficult, even uncomfortable, to imagine celebrating.

For five decades, Abby's House has existed for moments just like this. We have been a steady, compassionate presence for women and children when everything else feels uncertain. This milestone year is not only a reflection on our history, but a reaffirmation of why we are here and who we serve.

Celebration, in this context, does not mean ignoring what is hard. It means choosing to show up anyway for one another, for our community, and for those who need safety, stability, and dignity most. It means honoring the work that has been done and committing ourselves to what still lies ahead. We hope you will consider joining us at our 50th Anniversary Gala on May 29, 2026 as we gather to celebrate all that has been accomplished and look toward the future together.

We are energized by the continued leadership and dedication of our Board of Directors, whose guidance helps carry Abby's House into its next 50 years. To our donors, volunteers, and friends: thank you for standing with us and for making Abby's House a place of hope, now more than ever.

With gratitude,

2026 Board of Directors:

- Paula Sasso, Chair
- Julie Frias, Vice Chair
- Julie Draczynski, Clerk
- Jenn Dragon, Past Chair
- Hope Dennis
- Marisa Dionis
- Gerta Gjata
- Nichole Howarth
- Nadine James
- Jodi Robinson
- Alli Roche
- Edlira Stefani



2025 impact at a glance



28 Women
22 Children
housed in shelter



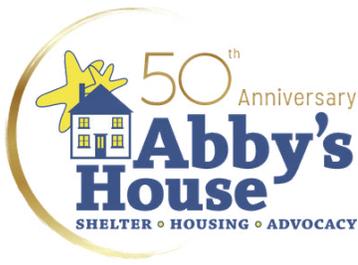
95 women and
children housed
outside of shelter



1510 individual
advocacy sessions



4,239 Meals provided



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An Extra Hour in the Cold by: Melanie Amir

“School gets out at 2:30. It’s 7 degrees. How do you keep your kids warm and fed for another hour outside?”

Because of budget constraints, we’ve had to reduce our shelter staffing. That means our shelter doors now open at 5 p.m. instead of 4 p.m. which is “just one more hour.” But for a mother with three children it can feel like an eternity. An extra hour in freezing temperatures worrying about trying to keep little bodies warm and spirits intact.

Even with our Women’s Empowerment Center nearby, the walk back and forth is grueling. Yet every day, these mothers put on a brave face and fight for their children, even when the odds are stacked against them.

At Abby’s House, our staff continue to do everything we can: providing meals, counseling, advocacy, and hands-on support so families can make it through some of the biggest obstacles you can imagine. Small actions can mean the difference between despair and hope.

This winter has been one of the coldest in more than a decade across New England, with prolonged Arctic air outbreaks and temperatures consistently below recent averages.

This is Why Donor Support Matters

For every story we share with you, there are 100 behind it. And your support now means more than ever.

Gifts allow us to:

- Adapt in real time to staffing and shelter challenges
- Provide safe spaces for women and children even under difficult circumstances
- Offer practical support, like storage for belongings, meals, counseling, and advocacy
- Maintain a community where people feel whole

Your support transforms exhaustion into even a small measure of relief even when the world offers none.

CURRENTLY SEEKING CORPORATE SPONSORS!

I Am Abby's House:
50th Anniversary Gala

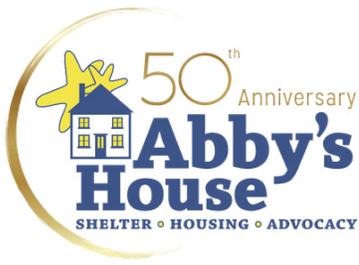
With every sponsorship, you get the opportunity to:

- Demonstrate visible leadership in supporting housing stability and advocacy for women and children
- Align with a trusted nonprofit that has served Central Massachusetts for five decades
- Help ensure Abby's House remains a safe haven for generations to come

Event details:
• Friday, May 29, 2026
5:00 p.m.
Hogan Center
College of the Holy Cross



In Central Massachusetts, the City of Worcester declared a Winter Weather Emergency as sub-zero temperatures, heavy snow, and wind chills near -20°F made daily life dangerous. Residents were urged to stay indoors and take precautions against frostbite.



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Open Doors Through Thrift

— Molly Pietrantonio, Thrift Shop and Volunteer Manager

Q: How does the thrift shop support Abby's House?

A: Clothing and household items donated to Abby's House are sold in our public Thrift Shop, and every dollar raised funds programs that help women and children on their path to stability.

Q: What kinds of programs are supported?

A: Every item sold helps fund services addressing food insecurity, mental health, addiction recovery, and personal wellness.

Q: Can I support the shop if I can't come in?

A: Yes! You can donate online to help keep the shop thriving and continue supporting our community.

Q: Does it make a real difference?

A: The short answer: yes. The long answer: every dollar from our Thrift Shop helps women and children move toward stability and a brighter future.

Q: Who has access to the shop?

A: The shop is open to the public! Residents of Abby's House always have priority access to essential items at low or no cost. Through our community voucher program, this support extends to individuals and families across the greater Worcester area, ensuring dignified access to affordable clothing and household goods.

Thrift Shop Shopping Hours

Monday through Saturday:

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Sunday: CLOSED

Donation Drop Off Hours:

Monday – Thursday

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.



Donation Instructions

Please leave items at the designated donation area around the back of the building. Volunteers are happy to assist

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BRILLIANCE & BELONGING



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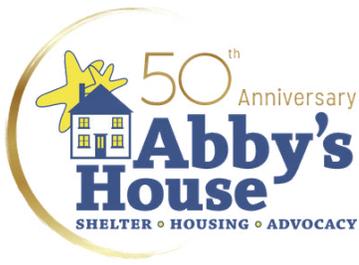
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Learn how you can
make an impact!



Happy Birthday, Annette!

On February 13, we celebrated Annette's 96th birthday with deep gratitude for the woman whose vision and determination started it all. Thank you Annette, for a legacy that continues to uplift generations.

