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Shelter Guest to Shelter Volunteer

Sue's Story at Abby's House Comes Full Circle

Some journeys come full circle in the most meaningful ways. This is the story of a former Abby's House guest who, after rebuilding her life with the support of our community and the grace of God, has returned to give back as an overnight shelter volunteer—offering the same kindness and support that helped her find her way home:

I grew up in a dysfunctional family. When I had my own children, I promised I would love them selflessly and care for them as much as a mom could. I dedicated my life to being their mom, giving them all my love.

But when I was hospitalized and diagnosed with manic depression and bipolar disorder, everything changed. I was in the hospital for over a month. Having been a stay at home mom, I was not working and was forced to give up my apartment. I could no longer care for my children and they went to live with my ex-husband. I found myself without a home, without my kids, and without a clear path forward.

As I became more stable, I was faced with the overwhelming reality of rebuilding my life from the ground up. With nowhere to live and no one to turn to for help, a hospital social worker connected me with the Abby's House Shelter. I was terrified when I first walked in, unsure of what to expect. But over time, I opened up and met some of the founders—Annette, Elaine, Lydia, and Tess—who welcomed me with open arms. They saw me, not as someone broken, but as someone who had just lost her way. Slowly, they helped me piece my identity back together, reminding me of the strength I had forgotten I possessed.

In time, I moved into what was then known as the Boarding House and eventually an Abby's House apartment. I spent countless hours at the Women's Center, sharing stories and meals with staff and guests,



*"Abby's House had helped me so much and I want to give back."
Sue is an overnight volunteer at the Abby's House Shelter.*

rediscovering who I am and learning to trust myself again. I began to spend time with my children again, meeting them at parks and savoring every moment we could share together. I had found a community that empowered me every day, offering me a space to heal.

It took a couple of years for me to regain enough confidence in myself, but I finally felt ready to take the next big step. With the help of Lydia, I found my own apartment on the outskirts of Worcester. I had reached a place where I could care for myself again, something I once thought was impossible. Through it all, I felt the presence of God guiding me, putting the right people in my life at the right time.

Many years have passed since those days, but my gratitude for Abby's House remains unwavering. Today, I give back by volunteering at the Shelter, doing overnight shifts to support women who, like me, found themselves lost but were given a second chance. Abby's House showed me I wasn't broken—just in need of a little help to find myself and my way home again.



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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 Message from Executive Director Julie Orozco

Dear Friends of Abby's House,

As I reflect on this past year at Abby's House, I'm filled with awe at the resilience of the women and families we've served, alongside the unwavering support from all of you. This year has been one of growth in ways I couldn't have fully imagined. We didn't just reopen our Shelter; we expanded our ability to provide safety, comfort, and hope, doubling our capacity to welcome more women and children who needed a safe place to land. Witnessing the transformation of women walking through our doors, uncertain but soon embraced by a caring community, is truly humbling.



Julie Orozco
 Executive Director

As we enter the holiday season, excitement fills the air at Abby's House. Our residents eagerly anticipate the annual holiday dinner, where volunteers, staff, friends, and neighbors gather to celebrate as one big family. It's a time when our halls fill with warmth and joy, not just from the delicious food shared, but from the presence of volunteers, staff, neighbors, and friends—people like you who make this season feel truly magical.

There's something unique about the holidays here at Abby's House. I've had the privilege of seeing the extraordinary kindness from people of all ages and walks of life. Every donation, whether it's a gift from our wish list or a financial contribution, carries the same message: "You matter. You are cared for." That's what makes this time of year so special—the way that spirit of generosity ripples through our community, lifting up those who need it most. Behind every smile and every moment of holiday cheer is your love and support. I can't thank you enough for that.

As I look ahead, I can't help but feel grateful for the opportunity to connect with many of you. Whether you're giving in memory of a loved one, contributing gifts to our wish list, or volunteering your time, you are making a lasting impact. From all of us at Abby's House, we wish you a holiday season filled with love, peace, and hope. We couldn't do this without you, and we look forward to all the good we'll continue to do together in the year ahead.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Mark Your Calendars for
#GIVINGTUESDAY™

This Giving Tuesday, your donation can support women and families facing food insecurity. Help us reach our goal of raising \$12,000 to provide nourishing meals and essential pantry items to our shelter guests and residents this holiday season.

Donate on Tuesday, December 3rd, at abbyshouse.org/givingtuesday, and follow us on social media to see how your generosity impacts lives every day!

Volunteering at Abby's House Shelter

Katherine and Lilly's impactful time at Abby's House

This summer, the Abby's House Shelter was fortunate to host two interns, Katherine and Lilly, who brought enthusiasm, warmth, and compassion to every aspect of their work. As part of Holy Cross's 8-week SPUD program—Student Programs for Urban Development, the largest student-led service and justice organization at the college—they dedicated themselves to the afternoon and overnight shifts at the Abby's House Shelter and supporting the re-opening in June, where they helped prepare the space for new guests. Their hard work included making beds, assembling welcome kits, setting up the kitchen, planting flowers, organizing inventory, cleaning, and stocking supplies. Once the shelter was open, Katherine and Lilly were instrumental in orienting new guests to their surroundings, helping them settle in, and building relationships to ensure everyone felt comfortable.



When asked what they would say to anyone considering volunteering at Abby's House, their response was both enthusiastic and simple: "Do it!"

"They really dedicated themselves to our Shelter and embodied the mission of Abby's House in everything they did," said Molly, Abby's House Volunteer Manager. "I treasured every minute we had with Katherine and Lilly; I was inspired by their dedication, energy, and passion for the work of Abby's House."

During their time at Abby's House, Katherine and Lilly helped create a compassionate, welcoming environment for the women and children in Shelter. They provided support, whether it was making coffee, lending a listening ear, or even letting an eight-year-old guest style their hair. Their contributions were particularly valuable during an exceptionally busy period, and they approached every task with grace, positivity, and a sense of unity that resonated deeply with staff and guests alike.

Chelsea, Director of Women's Services, added: "I really enjoyed watching them develop meaningful relationships with the guests and the staff. I was so proud to have them as part of our Shelter Team. They weren't just there to do a job—it was clear they were emotionally invested and acting from their hearts."

For Katherine and Lilly, the most rewarding experiences were often found in small moments. "I loved spending time with all the kids," Lilly shared. "They brought so much joy, and I even got to witness a baby's first steps!" Katherine echoed a similar sentiment: "I will always remember the sense of community—the laughter shared around the dinner table and dancing through the house. The small victories mean a lot to me."

Katherine and Lilly's story shows that even during times of change, there is always room for positivity, growth, and meaningful connections. Their journey at Abby's House is a testament to the difference a volunteer can make—not only in the lives of others but also in their own. To anyone considering getting involved, Katherine and Lilly's message is clear: "Do it!"



Thank You!

YOU did it! With the support of amazing donors like you, the 15th Annual Abby's House 5K raised surpassed our goal of \$90,000 and made over \$100,000 to benefit the women and children at Abby's House! Thank you to everyone involved in making this event a success. Together, we will keep making a difference in the lives of those who call Abby's House home.

View photos of the event at
abbyshouse.org/abbyshouse5k

Special thanks to Patti McKone, 5K Committee Chair and the entire Planning Committee!

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.**

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 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/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.

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/volunteer.

Give a Gift This Holiday Season!

Women and children are in need of the following new items.

Gift cards such as:

- Amazon
- Walmart
- TJ Maxx
- Target
- Dollar Tree
- Prepaid Visa/Mastercard (in English and/or Spanish)

Holiday gifts such as:

- Reusable grocery bag/tote
- Travel/insulated coffee mugs
- Personal care/body care products
- Feminine hygiene products
- Children's books

To view more needed holiday items, shop our wishlist, and to view information on scheduling a drop off, visit abbyshouse.org/donate-needed-items.

To organize a holiday needs drive or for more information, contact Anna Maruca Hoak at annam@abbyshouse.org | 508-756-5486

Operating Grants

Received from 1/1/24 - 10/1/24

Agnes M. Lindsay Trust

Alternatives For Youth Foundation

Ethel S. Cunningham Fund

George A. Ramlose Foundation, Inc.

Greater Worcester Community Foundation

Hyde/Dexter-Russell Charitable Foundation

Insperty Corporate Citizenship

Marc and Ernest Pallota Foundation

Lillian S. Pratt Fund

Saint-Gobain Corporation

Spectrum Health Systems, Inc.

The Andover Companies Charitable Foundation

The Blanke Foundation

The Metta Giving Foundation

The TJX Foundation, Inc.

Worcester City Manager's Office

We deeply appreciate our grantors for their unwavering support and commitment to the mission of Abby's House!

Honor Those You Love

with naming opportunities at 21-23 Crown Street

Provide a gift that will live on by naming a space at the newly renovated shelter in honor or in memory of a loved one. Leave a mark on our community and commemorate your dedication to Abby's House while leaving a legacy that supports the lives of the women and children who seek hope within our walls.

Contact Jennifer Spicer, Director of Development and Communications, to discuss the many ways your gift can have incredible meaning and impact, at jennifer@abbyshouse.org or (508)756-5486 x239.

Naming opportunities begin at \$10,000.

