

Spring 2021

Celebrating 45 Years Of Service & Care

To Homeless & Low-Income Women & Children

This June will mark 45 years since the Abby's House shelter first opened its doors to homeless and low-income women and their children to be a "bright spot in the City". The shelter began as a safe place for women to gather and listen to each other's experiences of abuse, neglect, and economic instability, and shape new futures. At the time of its inception, Founder Annette Rafferty and countless volunteers believed that homelessness among women and children would only be a temporary problem. As the years went on however, more and more women came to the doorstep of Abby's House in need of a safe place to stay. It was then that the Board of Directors decided that, in order to be part of the solution to ending homelessness, more services needed to be offered to help women move out of homelessness to an independent and thriving existence. To achieve this, Abby's House added 79 units of supportive housing over the years and expanded its services to include a food pantry (1982), Women's Center (1986), and Thrift Shop (1988). **None of this however, would have been possible without you.**

Through your dedication and belief in the mission of Abby's House, you've created and maintained a flexible service model, allowing for the continual development and strengthening of programs and services offered to women to best support them, their needs, and where they want to go on their journeys. There are many factors that can lead to homelessness, and they can change over time. Women have to flee from domestic violence, are unable to keep up with expenses, and most recently women have lost their jobs due to the ongoing health crisis. Your support enables women to play an active part in the decision-making process and helps individualize their services to meet their unique needs, ensuring equity to all those who come through



The Abby's House shelter remains largely unaltered since its inception almost 45 years ago.

the doors of Abby's House.

As we celebrate our 45 years of service and care to homeless and low-income women and children, we continue to gather and learn from one another, and remain steadfast in our mission to help women and children reclaim their lives and thrive, **knowing that you'll be with us every step of the way.** It is with this knowledge that we're excited to share that, as we continue to adapt to the community's needs, we have begun the planning process to renovate our shelter.

The current shelter needs structural repairs as well as an updated design to meet the needs of today's women and children. This will be done in part by making the shelter accessible as well as incorporating a trauma-informed design throughout the renovation, creating environments that will positively affect shelter guest's sense of identity and worth, dignity, and their empowerment. We'll share architectural plans when they are available and take this journey together with you, as **none of the work that's been done over the last 45 years would have been possible without you.**



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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

This year marks 45 years since our Founder, Annette Rafferty, and a courageous group of volunteers first turned on the light at the shelter and welcomed women through its doors. Since then, we've continued to provide critical services and adapt our service model to meet the ever-changing needs of homeless, battered, and low-income women, with or without children. This past year was unlike any in our history as the women we serve faced many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While last year was difficult for many, you continued to stand by their side and made it possible for each woman and child to have a safe, welcoming home and caring, supportive relationships at Abby's House. Here are just some of the ways your impact was felt in 2020:



Stephanie Page
Executive Director

- 100% of women received bi-weekly COVID education, PPE supplies, and continued access to Advocacy staff during the pandemic.
- 37 women and 4 children were welcomed into the Abby's House shelter for a safe place to stay and to receive help in finding long-term housing.
- 24 women were welcomed into Abby's House supportive housing as new residents, bringing the total to 94 women and 11 children who resided in our supportive housing.
- 21 residents and shelter guests moved into permanent housing, independent from Abby's House.
- 192 cab rides were provided to women to attend medical appointments, counseling sessions, job interviews, attend housing searches, and get to work.
- \$30,102 in ARST (Annette Rafferty Survive to Thrive) Funds were provided to help women in the face of unexpected or increased expenses, including rental assistance.
- Volunteers and staff served 6,525 individual meals to women and children.
- 49 women received clothing in the Thrift Shop through partnering agencies, including LUK, YWCA, SMOC, CHL, You, Inc., APW, DCF, and others.

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 2021 promises to be a more hopeful year, and we look forward to continuing to light the way for safety, healing and new beginnings for homeless women and children.

In gratitude,

Stephanie

2020 Program Funding

100% Funded!

Because of your support, our programs for 2020 were fully funded.



Through your contributions, the remaining 17% of our budget was raised in the final two months of 2020.

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

Living Our Values at Abby's House

Diversity, Inclusion, Equity & Anti-Racism Task Force

Abby Kelley Foster fought tirelessly for an end to slavery and for women's rights, demonstrating remarkable tenacity and resilience in standing up for the injustices of her time. Our country has faced many challenges over the past year in dealing with the ongoing health crisis and the magnification of racial disparities and racial violence in the U.S. In response and to ensure we are doing all that we can at Abby's House in living our values, we formed a Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Anti-Racism Task Force.



***Photo taken during the International Woman's Day luncheon in 2020, prior to COVID-19 restrictions. The women are posing their arms in an "equal sign" in solidarity of the need for gender equality.**

As an organization established to serve women who are facing persistent poverty and lack of resources, homelessness, trauma, and abuse, Abby's House is committed to being a place of safety and healing. Over the last year, we've found ourselves reflecting on how to respond to the racial disparities we witness while fulfilling our mission and values. It is out of this reflection that the Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Anti-Racism Task Force was formed. This task force, which is comprised of staff and board members, will engage the Abby's House community to evaluate and strengthen our current practices and programs to ensure that women of all races, ethnicities, ages, national origins, sexual orientations, disabilities, educational backgrounds, and gender identities have access to opportunities and resources they need to rebuild their lives and thrive.

Over the course of our 45-year history, Worcester County has become more racially and ethnically diverse, and we've seen this diversity at Abby's House in the women and children seeking our supportive housing and shelter, and in the representation of the staff and Board. Both staff and board members also include individuals with lived experience, who at one point in their lives accessed the shelter or housing at Abby's House or are trauma survivors. **It is this diversity that makes us stronger, and allows us to approach situations through various lenses to ensure that each woman we serve is being supported in a way that is best for her and her journey.**

Abby's House is currently working with ONE Worcester to seek a consultant who will help conduct a participatory assessment that will engage the women served at Abby's House, along with staff, volunteers, and board members, to listen to and learn from each other and identify recommendations to move us forward. **The Task Force will look at ways in which we can further create an inclusive community for everyone, especially for Black and Brown women, so they feel safe and respected in an environment that truly fosters their healing and well-being, doing all we can to best live our values at Abby's House.**

Mark Your Calendars!

8th Annual Spring-Tacular

*Lighting the Way for Safety, Healing and New Beginnings
for 45 Years*

Friday, May 7 - Thursday, May 13, 2021

Hybrid Celebration & Online Auction

*We will conclude this year's celebration on Thursday, May 13th with a special program

Learn more at abbyshouse.org/spring-tacular

Abby's House 5K Run/Walk

*12th Annual 5K Race
to Support the Women & Children of Abby's House*

Saturday, October 16, 2021

8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

West Boylston Middle/High School

Race begins promptly at 9 a.m.

Learn more & register at abbyshouse.racewire.com

Get Involved At Abby's House!



Abby's House relies on the collective contributions of time, talent and treasure from our supporters. Even though the current health crisis has limited ways for us to get together in-person, you can still make a huge impact in the lives of the women and children we serve.

Make A Gift:

Now more than ever, 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 from the community.

To view the complete list of our most urgent needs, including food pantry items visit abbyshouse.org/get-involved/donate-needed-items

Join the Legacy Circle:

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

Contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development at (508) 756-5486 X214 or kelly@abbyshouse.org to discuss ways you may further your personal commitment.

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

A Quarantined Birthday Made Brighter!

Abby's House Founder Annette Rafferty would like to thank all those who wished her well on her 91st birthday last month! From the beautifully written notes, to touching personal video messages, Annette was truly grateful to all those who took the time to make this birthday memorable.

Annette Rafferty (right) smiling brightly for the camera at last year's birthday celebration at Abby's House.



Causes of Homelessness & How Your Support Removes Barriers

As we celebrate our 45th anniversary, we are reminded of all those who have come through our doors over the years in need of our services, and look ahead at what we can do as an organization to ensure that homeless and low-income women are receiving the best support to help move out of homelessness to housing security.

There are many different factors that can lead women to become homeless, and they can change over time. This year we'll take a look at the causes of homelessness that we're seeing in women today and address how you are helping to remove barriers to help women move out of homelessness to a thriving existence.

The causes of homelessness, often interconnected, that we've seen recently are:

- COVID-19 pandemic
- Lack of a safety net
- Lack of a living wage
- Domestic violence
- Lack of affordable housing
- Racial disparities
- Childhood trauma
- Substance use
- Gender bias and inequity
- Mental & physical health
- Educational inequality

Each month this year, we'll send out an email that addresses one of the areas listed above and showcase how your support is helping to remove these barriers at Abby's House. Not on our email list?

Sign up today on our website at www.abbyshouse.org.

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.