

Spring 2023

Finding Health, Wellness, and Hope

Abby's House supported Antoinette as she waited for a life-saving surgery

My name is Antoinette. I was born in Jamaica and moved to the United States at the age of 17 with my family. I worked and made a life for myself, and had an autoimmune disorder that I kept under control. In my early forties, I started experiencing major health issues and spent a great deal of time in the hospital. The medication I was taking for the autoimmune disease had attacked my body. In 2014, my health declined rapidly, and the left side of my body slowly stopped working. The doctors discovered my kidneys were shutting down, and I had to spend months in the hospital and rehab before I could return home.

Due to my worsening health and lack of mobility, I had to leave my career and go on long term disability. My employer's disability insurance covered my mounting medical bills for one year and then after the first year my social security and disability income was not enough to cover rent, let alone food, utilities, medications, and copayments. Before my health issues, my fiancée died unexpectedly. It was a very difficult time, as I lost both my fiancée and my home and found myself unable to afford the monthly rent of \$1,900 on my own. I knew I needed a more affordable place to live because I wouldn't be able to work again. I spent over twelve hours a week receiving dialysis treatments for the next 8 years to prevent further kidney failure. Most days after dialysis, I could not do anything but rest and care for myself.

Thankfully, I applied and got housing at Abby's House right after the renovation of 52 High Street in 2019, which made the building fully handicap accessible and safe for me to get around. I walk with a cane and remember leaving it around Abby's House but the front desk staff always knew to bring it back to me!

As a disabled woman, I knew I was safe at Abby's House. Safety is a top priority of theirs, and my advocate and other residents would check up on me regularly.

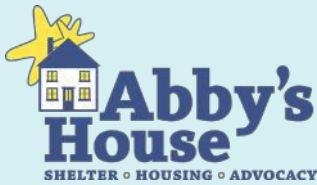


Antoinette enjoys visiting Abby's House to see friends and staff.

When a fire alarm went off, a friend who lived a few doors down would help me get safely outside.

I desperately needed a kidney transplant. The transplant requires I take immunosuppressant drugs for the rest of my life, so I needed to find a home where I could live alone to avoid catching illnesses and infections from others. If I could have stayed at Abby's House, I would have. I was worried when I left that I wouldn't have the personal support from my advocate and people to talk to every day.

Because of my health issues, I was moved to the top of the list of apartments I applied to. On September 25th, I finally moved into an apartment building in Worcester. Just three days later, I received the call that a kidney was available. I went in at 10:45 a.m. and by 10 p.m., I had a new kidney. It's been 3 ½ months and I'm doing very well. I have my own affordable, safe home and I visit Abby's House every week or two when I can. I made lifelong friends with other residents, and come back for events in the Women's Center, food pantry and other programs. I'm so grateful for how Abby's House helped me. Each day that I get up and am well, it's a good thing. I have so much to be thankful for in my life. Thank you for giving me hope and lifelong friends at Abby's House.



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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.



For All You Do, Thank You

A Message from Executive Director, Stephanie Page

As I write this message, it has just become public that I will step down as Executive Director on June 30 after 9 years in the role. I have been honored to be part of Abby's House since 2014 and serve women and children who come through our doors and have the strength and courage to overcome homelessness and heal from past traumas. I am grateful to each of you for ensuring Abby's House can be a place of safety, hope, dignity, and compassion for them.



Stephanie Page
Executive Director

During the past year, we have all continued to come together to provide a "bright spot" for women and children. Your support has allowed Abby's House to welcome more women and children and to provide hopeful choices for their lives, individualized women's services tailored to their unique needs, and a commitment to their dignity. Here are just some of the ways your impact was felt in 2022:

- 28 women and 10 children were welcomed into Abby's House shelter
- 87 single women and 10 mothers with 15 children total lived in Abby's House permanent supportive housing throughout the year
- Volunteers and staff served 6,525 meals to women and children
- 1,986 women who called or visited Abby's House received referrals for shelter, housing, and other services, a 78% increase from the year before
- \$12,694 in ARST (Annette Rafferty Survive to Thrive) Funds directly provided help to women with rental assistance, transportation, medical co-payments, educational courses, and more
- 64 women in the community received Thrift Shop vouchers for needed clothing and household items, referred by 17 partner organizations

Thank you for believing in the important work of Abby's House and for continuing to come together with compassion, generosity, and dedication. You and 3,145 donors made monetary or in-kind gifts in support of the mission of Abby's House last year. There is still much important work to be done to meet the needs of women and families experiencing homelessness, and Abby's House is in an excellent position for my successor to continue the mission together with you. Again, my deepest gratitude to each of you.

Warmest regards,

Stephanie

2022 Program Funding

Because of your support, all of the programs at Abby's House were 100% funded in 2022!

You made shelter, housing, and personalized women's services possible for the more than 500 women and children who rely on Abby's House each year!



Providing Shelter from the Storm

Abby's House shelter has created a home for women and children for 47 years

When Abby's House first opened in June 1976, the volunteers in the shelter knew women and children would be coming through the doors for many different reasons. One of the first reports in March of 1979 describes the women who stayed in the shelter in its first 3 years – 351 individual women and 148 children. These women included “142 transient women” who “wandered the city seeking employment, residence, or a better world...102 women who experienced alcoholism at some point in their lives causing a loss in finances...an unknown number of women with mental health issues who were displaced by the closing of local hospitals...59 physically abused or in danger of abuse...6 victims of sexual assault who were brought by police or local centers... and women whose stories were not identified and who came and went quietly.”



Opening in 1976, the Crown Street shelter has served women, with or without children, for 47 years.

Today, Abby's House still welcomes women and children experiencing these traumas, from homelessness, recovery, mental and physical health challenges, and domestic violence. Much like 47 years ago, Abby's House Shelter at 21-23 Crown Street continues to keep its lights on, welcoming women with or without children each night who live at the shelter while working towards their goals.

Overnight shelter volunteers welcome the guests as they return throughout the evening. Some women come back after working or picking up their children from school or daycare. Others have spent the day searching for housing or employment, or navigating healthcare and other social safety nets to meet their basic, most critical needs. A senior at College of the Holy Cross, Phina describes what she loves most about volunteering at the shelter. “I love the conversations. Even when I met a woman from Haiti and there was a language barrier, I still connected with her. I've also learned that no one has a ‘perfect’ life, there are always ups and downs and unexpected changes.”

Abby's House is more than shelter. Our community of staff, volunteers, residents, and guests, create a home that is welcoming and provides needed social connections. Alfee Westgroves, Shelter Manager, describes what she sees at the shelter, “Women get to release this stress they've been holding. They sometimes cry or the opposite, smiling these huge smiles. I offer hugs or laugh with them, as appropriate. They thank me me, but I know they are thanking Abby's House. Being present for them, supporting them in all the ways that I can, is the least I can for these women—my sisters.”

Abby's House is excited to embark on the needed renovation to the shelter in June. This renovation will double the number of beds from 9 to 18, provide accessibility to women with disabilities, offer additional privacy for single women and mothers, and make more space for children, all while upgrading the communal spaces available for needed rest, healing, and social connections.

A shelter guest recently said, “This feels like home,” as she walked through the shelter doors. Your support of Abby's House has allowed the lights to stay on and the connections to continue to grow. The next 47 years will bring more beautiful stories of community and hope.

Are you interested in touring the shelter prior to June's renovation? Contact Kelly Whalen at kelly@abbyshouse.org to schedule your tour.

Mark Your Calendars!

10th Annual Spring-Tacular: A Decade Celebrating Home

Presented by Counseling & Assessment Clinic of Worcester, LLC and
Fairway Independent Mortgage: Murphy Mortgage Team

Thursday, May 10 - Thursday, May 18, 2023
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



Get Involved At Abby's House!



Abby's House relies on the collective contributions of time, talent and treasure from our supporters. You can make a huge impact in the lives of the women and children we serve.

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 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.

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.

Join the Legacy Circle:

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

Contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development at (508)756-5486 X214 or kelly@abbyshouse.org to learn more or notify us of your planned gift.

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

A 93rd Birthday to Remember

In February, we celebrate love and a special woman! People from across the Abby's House community wished founder Annette Rafferty a happy birthday with heartfelt cards, a beautiful cake, and a special video celebration!

Annette continues to encourage and inspire, as her legacy continues in the mission and vision of Abby's House and the Abby's House community. We wish her a wonderful year ahead!



Join the Overnight Shelter Volunteer Team!

Volunteers have been at the heart of Abby's House since the beginning. Some volunteers have supported Abby's House for decades! Our volunteers vary in age (18-90+!), some are retirees or in the workforce, while others are in college. Individual volunteers provide overnight coverage at the shelter, and give guests a welcoming, compassionate atmosphere to return to each evening. Shelter volunteers respect a woman's ability to do for herself; they stand beside her as she works to heal and accomplish her goals.

Visit abbyshouse.org/get-involved/volunteer to learn more and submit your application!

Did you know?

Overnight Shelter Volunteers have been supporting the shelter since the first day Abby's House opened its doors in 1976!

In 2022, dedicated overnight shelter volunteers staffed the shelter a total of 306 nights, which is 26 nights each month on average!

Naming Opportunities Available At 52 High Street Location

Would you like the opportunity to have one of the single occupancy bedrooms or other designated spaces at the largest location of supportive housing at 52 High Street named in honor or in memory of a loved one, contact Kelly Whalen, Senior Director of Development and Communications 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.

Tours are available of all four locations by appointment. Contact Kelly to arrange a visit! Tours of the shelter location are available only from Now – early June 2023.