

Summer 2021

Walking Through The Years: 1976-2021

Q&A With Abby's House Founder, Annette Rafferty

Q: How did the Abby's House Shelter first begin?

"I was asked to serve as the head of the task force investigating whether there were women, with or without children, living on the streets of Worcester. I went to neighborhood centers, hospitals, the newly opened rape crisis center, and compiled statistics. After 2 years of meeting it was decided not to proceed with a night shelter for women. We were told that we had no money and were limited in that kind of social work experience, but something happened inside me that I could not let go.

I went back to all the people I had visited who helped compile the statistics and asked for their help. In December 1975 we set up a variety of committees and made a list of what we'd need to open a night shelter. After six months we had everything in place – we had raised money, had volunteers coming forward to help, but we couldn't find a place to house the shelter. At our last meeting in April 1976, one woman suggested we look at Crown Street where one side of a brick house was empty. Two of us met with the landlord and he was very open to what we wanted to do. He showed us both apartments and rented them to us for one price. So, on June 7, 1976 we put the light on the porch and the sign up on the house and 45 years later it's still here."

Q: How has Abby's House changed over the years?

"The expansion of our services has been phenomenal, going from one overnight shelter to adding three buildings of supportive housing. I also feel that we've enhanced our services and that the staff are excellent in the advocacy work that they provide to women. The mission of Abby's House is so timeless because we continue to help women identify their



Abby's House Founder, Annette Rafferty
sitting on the Shelter porch.

needs and then adapt to them, ensuring that the women receive the best possible services that will move them forward on their journeys. We just have so much more to offer at this point in terms of supportive housing and advocacy services, and that's because of the many individuals and organizations who volunteer their time, donate items, participate in events, or give monetary donations. It's a home away from home and it will always be that way. We're here to help women and their needs will always come first."

Q: How do you feel about Abby's House celebrating its 45th anniversary?

"It's wonderful to think that a grassroots operation is still in existence and that people are still saying, 'What can I do? How can I be involved?'"

We originally thought we'd only be open for a few years because we thought the city, the state, and the country wouldn't tolerate having anyone, never mind women, living on the street. I'm happy that there are plans to renovate the Shelter, but at the same time it's disheartening to know that there's still such a need. Until policies change I know that Abby's will continue to be here to provide for homeless women and children in need."



Annette Rafferty
Founder

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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 Support Through The Decades

Has Impacted Thousands Of Lives

Whether you've been connected to the mission of Abby's House since 1976 or just recently became involved, your support has brought safety, healing, and new beginnings to thousands of homeless women, with or without children. Here are just some of the many lives that have been impacted by your generosity.

1970's/1980's - Deidre Finds Hope

Having experienced severe trauma during her childhood, Deidre found herself coping with the pain through alcohol. She left school and found herself in need of a safe place to stay as she sought treatment for her addiction. She arrived at the Abby's House Shelter feeling fearful and kept herself closed off from others.



"Everything gets locked up inside your head," said Deidre. *"I buried all my pain, did my best to move on, and it worked for a long, long time. Then came the crash and I ended up in a state hospital. Even with a disability check, I didn't make enough money for a decent place. Rents kept going up and finally I got evicted. Abby's House was nice - homey and warm. And I didn't have to pay for shelter or food, which gave me a chance to save."*

Deidre was able to begin healing and even helped welcome a newcomer into shelter. The woman had been attacked and needed a safe place to stay. Deidre waited up for the woman to be discharged from the hospital. When she arrived, Deidre wrapped her arm around her and guided her to the dining room where they chatted quietly. The safety and community that Deidre felt and provided to this other woman still carries on today at Abby's House.

1990's - Janet & Her Children Reclaim Their Lives



Janet wasn't safe in Puerto Rico where she was living with her two young children. She needed to get away from the violence that was present in her home. She fled one morning and boarded a plane headed to the U.S. with her daughter and son, hoping for a brighter future for all of them. After a couple of months in the U.S., Janet came to Abby's House, where they lived safely for 7 years.

"I was in danger and I wanted a better life for my two children," said Janet. *"It was pretty scary at first, having to leave everything and having to start over again with two little children. But I had the strength, and Abby's gave me the support I needed."*

While at Abby's House, Janet was able to complete a

12th Annual Abby's House 5K Run/Walk

Walk at Home or In-Person to Support the Women & Children of Abby's House

Virtual Race: Saturday, October 9 - Saturday, October 16, 2021

In-Person Race: Saturday, October 16, 2021



See insert for details!

Register today at abbyshouse.racewire.com

two-year program at Quinsigamond Community College in education. She now works as an educator for special needs children.

"It was almost like a village [at Abby's House]. They were there to support my mom, to support us," said Janet's daughter, Rose. "And whatever we needed they were there for us."

2000's - Danielle Found Safety & Healing



Danielle came to Abby's House after fleeing from an abusive relationship. She arrived with just the clothes on her back, needing a safe space where she could stay while she figured out her next steps. *"I was an addict and had reached a bottom,"* said Danielle. *"I had just lost custody of my daughter and was living with a boyfriend who was physically abusive."* Danielle started going to AdCare to receive help for her addiction and to figure out her next steps. It was there that she learned about Abby's House and ended up coming to stay in the Shelter.

"When I was there they gave me vouchers to the Thrift Shop and I was able to go and get stuff because I was too afraid to get my belongings. I remember feeling so safe at the Shelter. We'd have dinner all together and I was just really grateful to be there."

While at the Shelter, Danielle took full advantage of the partnerships and resources available to her. She got connected to Dress for Success which provided her with work attire and helped her get a job interview, and began receiving therapy to cope with the traumas she had faced. She got custody of her daughter back, got a job with the Department of Corrections, and went back to school. She now owns a 2-family house and is a landlord, and she just graduated with her master's degree in Criminal Justice this May. Danielle also celebrated 13 years of sobriety this past December.

"Abby's House is a safe and productive environment. It's so supportive and there are a lot of resources here that would benefit anyone who comes through their doors."

2010's - Katie & Alyvia Found A New Beginning

Katie had been homeless before but had never stayed in a shelter. After needing to find a more stable living environment for herself and her daughter, she came to the Abby's House Shelter feeling nervous but hopeful. *"I had been clean and sober and so I didn't want to put myself on the street because then you get into bad situations,"* said Katie. *"I was able to maintain my sobriety through all of the uncertainty I was experiencing because of the stability that Abby's House gave me."*



After leaving Abby's House, Katie moved into an apartment with her boyfriend and father of her daughter, Alyvia. Unfortunately, Katie's boyfriend passed away a month later and she found it hard to maintain her finances going from a two-income household to just one, part-time income. *"After my boyfriend's death Abby's House continued to help me in any way they could. They provided me with gift cards to get groceries, helped me file for fuel assistance programs, and gave me vouchers to the Thrift Shop to make sure I had clothes for work. Everybody helped me a lot."*

Four years have passed since Katie first arrived at the Abby's House Shelter. In that time she was able to get her license, pay off all of her debt, raise her credit score, and found a house for her and her daughter to live. *"Life is a lot different now and I hope that the people who are currently at Abby's House know that they can do whatever they want and they can turn their life around."*

THANK YOU!

*For Making Our Annual Fundraising Event, **Spring-Tacular** a Huge Success!*

From May 7 - 13, over 300 individuals, organizations and corporations made gifts in support of this year's Spring-Tacular event.

When we combine the donations you made, proceeds from the online auction, corporate and individual sponsorships, and the \$25,000 and \$5,000 anonymous matching gifts, you helped to raise over \$155,000 to support the essential needs of the women and children who call Abby's House home!

We'd also like to give a special note of thanks to the Spring-Tacular planning committee for their work in making this year's event a success!

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.

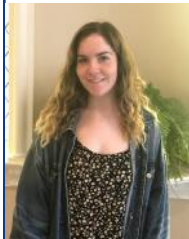
Contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development at (508) 756-5486 X214 or kelly@abbyshouse.org to discuss ways you may further your personal commitment.

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

At The Heart Of Abby's House

Since the doors of the Shelter first opened in 1976, volunteers have been an important piece to our mission. Volunteers help staff the overnight Shelter, run the Thrift Shop, prepare meals for the women in the Kitchen, help with special events, and so much more.

This summer, two interns from Holy Cross are giving their time to learn about the impact your generosity has on the women and children we serve. Read why they were drawn to giving their time, and how they hope this experience will impact their future.



abbyshouse.org/blog/interns

Keeping The Door Open: Shelter Renovation Update



We are pleased to share that the Shelter renovations are underway, and we are currently in the design process. The architect has been hired and is identifying how to make the space accessible and trauma-informed, as well as how to add family rooms and play spaces for women with children. The architect is creating potential renderings for the planning team to review this month.

We opened the door to the Shelter 45 years ago, and want to be sure that the door stays open for women who need it most. We look forward to taking this journey with you, as **none of the work that's been done over the last 45 years would have been possible without you and your support.**

For more information or to schedule a tour of the Shelter, contact Director of Development, Kelly Whalen at kelly@abbyshouse.org or by phone at (508) 756-5486 x214.

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.