

Summer 2022

Finding My Life's Purpose

"I am becoming the person I was always meant to be."

I wouldn't be where I am today without the help of Abby's House. My story starts in a small, middle-class town, as the middle child of three. I was a good kid, but I was very anxious and a bit immature for my age. My parents used to call me a "late bloomer".

At 17, I went off to college and began doing the things my peers had been doing for years. My first weekend in college, I was taken by ambulance with alcohol poisoning. My freshman year at college, I went through 3 traumas. First, I was sexually assaulted, then my grandmother whom I was very close with was diagnosed with brain cancer, and finally my mom walked out on us unexpectedly, and divorced my dad. Shortly after all this, my extended family fell apart. Mentally, I was a mess. I did not return to school.

When I had my first mental health breakdown at 19, **I laid in bed crying for 2 weeks desperately seeking an answer to, "What is there to live for?"** This led to hospitalizations, followed by later suicide attempts, beginning at age 28.

After a final suicide attempt, I learned I had been on life support for over 24 hours. This hit me to my core. I decided to get serious about my mental health. I joined AA, and my psychiatrist recommended a Partial Hospitalization program. On my first day, I met the future father of my daughter.

When my daughter was 9 months old, I found out her father was cheating on me and I kicked him out. Already suffering from Postpartum Depression, my mental health only worsened now that I was alone with my daughter with no family support.

Three days later, I called DCF to pick up my daughter. I couldn't care for myself, never mind a baby. I missed her first steps. Those 6 months were the worst of my life, but I do not regret what I did.

When I finally got my daughter back, I moved in with my best friend. But, 9 months into our lease, she



Adria with her daughter

moved out without notice. I couldn't afford the rent alone, so we became homeless. Our first nights were spent in a grocery store parking lot in a tiny 2-door car.

I found Abby's House while googling homeless shelters. I immediately drove to them in total despair, and we were lucky enough to be able to move in to shelter immediately. **Abby's House was so good to us. I hadn't felt love and companionship like that in so long.** I finally felt like I was where I was supposed to be.

After 4 months, I was notified that I had won a low-income "housing lottery" and we were placed in a beautiful, affordable brand-new apartment, where we still live today. I bought a safe "family" car, and over the next 2 years increased my credit score by 200 points.

Six months ago, after 5 years on disability, I started working again. And, for the first time in my life I'm proud of myself. My job does not feel like work. I am a peer recovery specialist, helping others who have been through similar traumas. It's a purpose—a reason for why I have struggled so much. I am now able to help others just like me. I believe helping others is the best medicine for me and my own Mental Health.

I am becoming the person I was always meant to be: a hard-working mom to a happy, healthy 5-year-old daughter, and a needed peer to those in crisis.



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.



Moving Forward Together

A Message from Executive Director, Stephanie Page

Abby's House recently marked the 3-year anniversary of the 52 High Street renovation and the 46th anniversary of the shelter opening on Crown Street. Remembering these anniversaries and the many milestones at Abby's House, reminds us of the humble grassroots beginnings of the organization. Our Founder, Annette Rafferty, began with an idea, a group of dedicated volunteers, and a fierce drive to help women. Her legacy is in our hearts and minds each day as we grow and evolve to meet the continuing demand for shelter, housing, and support services for women, with or without children.



Stephanie Page
Executive Director

As we remember Annette's legacy, we also remember the many staff who have moved us forward throughout the years. After 29 years at Abby's House as a volunteer and then a staff member, Jean Anger recently retired, to spend more time with her loving family and enjoy the retirement she so deserves. Naming the many staff who have brought to life the vision of Abby's House over the years would not be possible in these few paragraphs. These women's legacies live on as we move forward, growing and evolving to meet the continued needs of women who turn to Abby's House as a safe refuge.

These amazing, dedicated staff—Julie, Tess, Parlee, Katrina, and others—left the organization knowing their contributions were felt, and the torch was picked up by a new set of devoted, passionate individuals who will strive to embody Annette's legacy. New staff are coming on board—Alfee Westgroves, Colleen Ryan, Dianne Vega, Locksann Mateo, Kathleen Suchenski, and more to come—to continue this legacy of supporting and empowering women.

Today, Abby's House is in a position to reach more women and children who are experiencing homelessness or who live on extremely low-incomes, many enduring past traumas. The staff here are ready to continue bearing the torch of each past contributor—from Annette, to each volunteer, staff member, donor, and advocate throughout the years – and to work alongside today's contributors. Thank you for being a part of this continuing legacy, and a warm welcome to the amazing new staff members who are a new chapter in the long journey that has been and will continue at Abby's House.

In gratitude,

Stephanie

13th Annual Abby's House Hybrid 5K Run/Walk

Supporting the Women & Children of Abby's House

Virtual: October 8 - October 15, 2022

In-Person: October 15 at 9:00 a.m.

See insert for details!



Learn more & register your team today at
abbyshouse.org/abbyshouse5k

Many Feel Called to Support the Mission of Abby's House

Supporters are diverse, with varied backgrounds and lived experiences

Throughout the years, many have felt called to support the mission of Abby's House. No matter how you make your way to the organization, you are a welcome addition to the Abby's House community. Abby's House supporters ensure that women and children can find a safe and welcoming place to call home.

Past Abby's House Resident, Tyrenna provides support and encouragement

Tyrenna Gaines found herself homeless, seeking safety and access to resources to attend undergraduate college and work towards her degree. She graduated thanks to the support from the Abby's House community and entered a successful career in accounting. Tyrenna serves as an active volunteer and member of the Finance Committee, and recently spoke at the 9th Annual Spring-Tacular Celebration, encouraging others to support women like her. "I was able to grow and learn as a person thanks to the support of everyone here at Abby's House, and I hope that you will consider [supporting Abby's House] so that other women, like me can reach their goals."



Tyrenna sharing her story at the 9th Annual Spring-Tacular Celebration on May 13, 2022.

From an overnight shelter volunteer to long-term Abby's House donor

Ann Stamm has been a dedicated donor and volunteer at Abby's House for nearly 40 years. Ann says, "My first connection to Abby's House was in 1983, as an overnight shelter volunteer. Annette and the other women who founded Abby's always welcomed the women who stayed in the shelter as our guests. The caring and warmth of the staff and volunteers continues to mirror this compassion and respect for the women who come to Abby's. I have volunteered my time and also supported Abby's financially over the years, because it is important to me that there's a place like Abby's House, in Worcester for women in need, because 'there but for the grace of God, go I.'"

After helping a friend, Peter felt called to further support Abby's House

Peter Zschokke describes what led him to the mission of Abby's House. "Helping out a shelter for women has been in the back of my mind for a while. I'd heard that charities focused on women's issues sometimes have a more difficult time raising money. Last year, a friend asked for my help for a woman who was an immigrant facing domestic abuse. Staff at Abby's House gave me contact numbers to connect her with resources. She is now safely, along with her children, back in Brazil with her family. From this initial encounter and success story, I began my support for Abby's House. I plan to be part of creating more success stories for women and children through my continuing contributions to Abby's House."

The Abby's House community is varied and far-reaching. Donors from across Massachusetts and New England, and even states hundreds of miles away are called to support the mission and vision of Abby's House. Supporters like you, Tyrenna, Ann, and Peter, continue the legacy of Annette Rafferty and the Founders today, ensuring that women, with or without children, can access shelter, affordable supportive housing, and critical advocacy services in the safety and welcoming properties of Abby's House.

THANK YOU

For Contributing to the 9th Annual Spring-Tacular!

Because of you, and 258 individuals and businesses, \$152,883 was raised through sponsorships, individual donations, matching donor gifts, and auction proceeds. Your generosity ensures women and children experiencing homelessness, abuse, and trauma can find safety and healing at Abby's House.

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 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 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.

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/get-involved/volunteer/

Join the Abby's House Legacy Circle!

The Abby's House 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.

If you are in the process of making or revising your will or estate plan, we hope that you consider including Abby's House as a charitable beneficiary. Please contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development at (508) 756-5486 X214 or kelly@abbyshouse.org to discuss ways you may further your commitment.

To learn more, visit abbyshouse.org/get-involved/ways-to-give.

Opening Our Doors to More Women & Children: Shelter Renovation Update

Shelter renovation planning is underway, and trauma-informed architectural designs and project funding are being finalized! Preliminary renderings include designs to make the space accessible for people with physical disabilities, and plans to add rooms to serve more women with children.

The door to the shelter opened more than 46 years ago, and we want to ensure that the door not only stays open for women who need it most, but welcomes even more women and children. We look forward to taking this journey with you, and continuing the legacy of Founder Annette Rafferty and the many staff, volunteers, and supporters who have impacted over 15,000 women and their families. You, and many supporters like you, make it possible for Abby's House to continue to expand to meet the growing need for safe, accessible, and supportive housing and shelter for women and children.

For more information on supporting the shelter or to schedule a tour of the shelter, contact Director of Development, Kelly Whalen at kelly@abbyshouse.org or (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? Contact Kelly Whalen, Director of Development, to discuss the many ways your gift can have incredible meaning and impact, at kelly@abbyshouse.org or (508) 756-5486 x214.

Naming opportunities begin at \$7,500.

