



Corvallis Housing First

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Fall/Winter Newsletter

HOMELESSNESS

PREVENTABLE • SOLVABLE • UNACCEPTABLE



From Homeless to Home Cook



THANK YOU DONORS

Not only did we cover the gap in purchasing Sycamore Place, we exceeded it! Thanks to your generosity, we raised over \$120,000 to pay for the unfunded purchase cost as well as future repairs to the property. Sycamore Place has four one-bedroom units, and has been fully occupied since April 2022. 🏠

Board Spotlight: Melissa Carter-Goodrum

Since 2021 CHF has been fortunate to have Melissa Carter-Goodrum serve as Board President. With her 25 years of experience developing training programs for companies like Microsoft, GM, and Eli Lilly to name a few, she is a natural with team-building and problem-solving.

Many in Corvallis know her from her work as co-founder of the Philanthropic Giving Circle, the Power of 100 People Who Care. She is determined to make meaningful change in this community, and knows that it takes a village to solve complex problems like homelessness. When asked how her involvement with CHF has impacted her personally, Melissa shared her personal connection to this issue:

“No one likes to see people living in tents under the highway or elsewhere. But those people are part of our village. In the 1950’s, my grandfather was one of “those people.” He died the year I was born on the streets of Denver. The number of people who are homeless has grown exponentially since then thanks to deinstitutionalization of patients in mental health care facilities in the 1970’s, rising housing costs, insufficient housing supply, increasing poverty, inequitable resources, and other reasons. While CHF provides much needed housing and services to those who have been chronically homeless, it’s also important to work upstream to prevent homelessness in the first place.” 🏠



This year, CHF will be participating in Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (HHAW) from November 12-20th. Since CHF places formerly homeless into permanent housing, we are going to showcase how entering housing has transformed residents’ relationship to food. Each person will share one of their favorite recipes. To see these stories, follow us on Facebook and Instagram at @corvallishousingfirst.

In support of this awareness week, the First Alternative Co-op will be also sharing these stories on their Facebook page. See our stories and their own tasty content by following @firstaltcoop. They will also generously be providing CHF with a gift card to help residents buy fresh ingredients to make their favorite dishes.

To start off HHAW, we will be posting a recipe from John Utecht, who is currently living at our Third Street Commons facility. John can often be found in the on-site community kitchen cooking for himself, and anyone else that needs a hot meal. “Food has to be three things,” says John, “it’s got to look good, taste good, and be good for you. That’s the only way you can nourish your body physically, and mentally.”

When he was living in his car, John was limited with the kinds of food he could eat. The shelf-stable, packaged food that those living in their tents or cars typically eat is often highly processed and lacking in nutrients. “Food saved my life,” remarked John when talking about his health conditions. Because of his heart condition, John needs to include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables in his diet. Now that he has stable housing, he is able to store and cook meals that help him lead a healthy life. 🏠



Celebrate this international day of giving by donating to CHF! You can use the enclosed donation envelope, or visit our website at corvallishousingfirst.org to set up your one-time or monthly donation.



THIRD STREET COMMONS DEVELOPMENT PLANNING UNDERWAY, DESIGN TO BE FINALIZED THIS WINTER!

We are excited to share that this past summer CHF hired MWA Architects, a Portland-based firm, and Essex Construction, based in Eugene, to work with us on designing and building new housing and office space at Third Street Commons (TSC). Both firms have experience developing and building supportive housing in Oregon. To learn more about best practices in supportive housing and to design the services plan for TSC, a team of CHF staff and partners recently completed the Oregon Supportive Housing Institute, led by the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a national organization.

As we begin the TSC project, we have held several focus groups with residents, staff, partners, and neighborhood folks to get input about needs and desires for the TSC site. In early November we held a design charrette where MWA shared

initial building and landscape design ideas and gathered feedback. CHF supporters will be invited to a project info session which will feature further details of the design and services plans. This will be in January or February. Watch your email and mail for more information on this event! 🏠

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

While new as a CHF volunteer, Stephen has spent most of his life here in Corvallis. Growing up, he's seen big changes come to this small city. For much of his life in Corvallis, there were very few homeless that were clearly visible. He observed, "Homelessness was something always apparent in places like Portland, L.A., and Eugene."

As an employee of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Stephen has been in close proximity to the growing issue. The library has long been an important resource for the homeless, and often the only safe, warm (or cool) refuge to stay during the day.

After hearing about CHF from a library security attendant, Stephen saw it as his opportunity to help.

Without hesitation, he joined a small group of volunteers to clean out the bike shed at the Van Buren House. Over time, the shed on the side of the house had accumulated many objects from residents past and present, hindering the accessibility of bikes and bike trailers. Armed with sturdy gloves and a good attitude, Stephen helped clear out the clutter.

If you are interested in volunteering for similar projects, please contact us at admin@corvallahousingfirst.org, or call the main office at (541) 230-1297. 🏠



STEPHEN WHITENER



Landlords are an important partner in ending homelessness

While CHF is busy developing more supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness, we know that local homeowners and rental property management companies are key partners in the work we do to ensure people have access to housing. This past year, we have been approved for several large grants that allow us to provide rent support for individuals while they wait to receive a Section 8 voucher, SSI/SSDI, or save money from employment to pay for rent. This follows the philosophy of Housing First, which is to get people off the street and starting on their path of recovery from homelessness as soon as possible. However, the people we work with usually have many barriers to being approved for housing, including poor credit scores, lack of rental history or past evictions, and criminal records. Despite these challenges, our staff can work with clients to address these barriers and support them when they transition to housing. We also offer additional deposits as well as access to an excess damages fund to help encourage landlords to accept people they typically might deny. CHF case managers connect with clients on at least a weekly basis and can troubleshoot housing and lease compliance issues, which is a huge benefit to accepting one of our clients into housing. Our contracted property management company, At Home Properties, has been a huge help and advocate for our clients and have been our largest offsite housing provider, along with Centurion properties. We hope to have more property management companies and private landlords jump on the bandwagon to help end homelessness in our community.

Another option for people who own a home and have a desire to share their space is to work with us to identify possible renters. We work with one private home owner who has opened up two rooms of her house to our clients. There is also Home Share Oregon, which is a nonprofit that connects homeowners who have a spare bedroom to rent and home seekers in need of affordable housing. This is a great option for people who don't want to live alone and/or would like the benefit of additional income, while helping to solve the affordable housing crisis in Oregon. Not everyone experiencing homelessness needs supportive services, these are great options for people who can live independently, but face barriers in getting into affordable housing.

If you are a rental property management company owner, or if you work with a local company to manage your rental properties, please share this information and let us know if you would like to talk more about the benefits of renting to CHF clients. If you would like to know more about Home Share Oregon, check out their website at homeshareoregon.org, or connect with the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition Housing Action Team. 🏠

