



Winter 2009 | Volume 5 | Issue 1

[The next issue you receive will be the Second Step Housing newsletter]

Our mission isn't changing, just our name

On May 14th, YW Housing will officially change to Second Step Housing. We will have a new name and a new look, but our service to the community will remain the same: provide safe, affordable housing linked with resources to help women and families escape the cycle of homelessness.



SAVE THE DATE:

On the evening of May 14th we will hold a celebration event to honor the past and celebrate our future. Mark your calendars now and watch for more information because you won't want to miss this great event.

What is the second step?

Ending the cycle of homelessness has many steps. The first step is deciding to change a way of life: become clean and sober, leave an abusive relationship, make a better life for your children. The Second Step is seeking help through organizations like Second Step Housing.

Second Step is neither a quick fix nor a hand-out to the homeless. We believe in an empowering approach to housing: teach people how to live and you house them for a lifetime. Our housing programs provide women and families safe homes paired with the life skills training they need to reunite their family, earn an education, or secure a living-wage job. In the end, over 75% of our residents return to permanent housing and complete self-sufficiency.

For those struggling with homelessness, we say: "You take the first step; we'll help you with the second."

Volunteer Spotlight: Barbara Klabin-Smith

“Volunteers are not paid—not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.”

—unknown

Priceless. It is a word we use to describe the mentors in our Women Helping Women program, and, no mentor deserves the title of “Priceless” more than Barbara Klabin-Smith.

Barbara has been with Women Helping Women since the very beginning. In spring of 2000, she and nine other women completed the first training class where they learned to mentor women with a variety of backgrounds: past convictions, drug abuse, domestic violence.

When looking back on the first year as a mentor, Barbara recalled thinking, “Are we going to have the answers these women want?” But she quickly learned that it wasn’t about having all the answers, it was about being dependable, compassionate, and above all, a good listener.

“The requirement was one year, one hour per week,” Barbara remembered, laughing a little, “but that is never what [mentors] do. We continue giving because we become involved in their lives and we want them to reach their highest potential. If the women desire to turn their lives around and are motivated to do so, we are here for them. They deserve no less.”

Barbara has devoted nine years to helping women achieve self-sufficiency. She has personally mentored four women and has touched the lives of many, many more. Now, after all this time, Barbara is taking a well deserved break.



Get Involved! Be a mentor.

Q & A

How do you feel about leaving the program?

All my thoughts are positive, but it is time for me to move on. I leave knowing that the program has strong, intelligent, caring mentors who will continue to be positive role models for the women. I have made many friends, both mentors and mentees, and I intend to keep in touch.



Barbara Klabin-Smith

What are your hopes for the future of Women Helping Women?

I hope Women Helping Women continues. The program is growing and it is imperative to the success of the women in YW housing. These women need to have someone to talk to, someone that really cares about them.

What is one thing you learned?

I learned that we all have struggles, but we have more in common than we realize.

Did anything ever surprise you?

One surprise was when my very first mentee said to me, "You can talk to me, I care about you too." You volunteer thinking that they are the ones getting help, and you realize that you benefit as well. That was a gift.

Director's Note

The news this year has been full of anxiety-inducing headlines and gloomy predictions from every side of the economy. You don't need me to remind you that phrases like "not since the Great Depression" and "collapse of the financial sector" are ubiquitous in the media. Many families who have never faced poverty are starting down that road and families who were teetering on the edge have fallen on hard times. Almost all nonprofits are experiencing a familiar but uncomfortable reality; it is exactly when resources are most scarce that the need is greatest.

I am pleased to say that right now YW Housing is financially (and in all other ways) healthy and strong. We, like so many others, are taking precautionary belt-tightening measures to ensure that we can stay strong for whatever lies ahead. While we have had, and will continue to have, phenomenal success in helping women and families achieve self-sufficiency, it is hard to forecast what the coming weeks, months and year will bring in terms of continued government funds for our work. We are by no means immune to economic crisis, and in fact our success (more importantly the success of our residents and clients) hinges on a dependable income with which to keep our programs running.

Please stay on this journey with us and please continue to believe that by serving our neighbors in need we all benefit. After all, it is community not commodity that results in the most lasting, meaningful wealth.

—Megan Newell, Executive Director

The following donors generously supported YW Housing from September 2008 through December 2008:

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Thank you, Donors!

HOLIDAY THANK YOU

The following groups and individuals went above and beyond, donating time, talents, and treasures this holiday season.

Alki Middle School's Alki Leadership: Delivered Secret Santa gifts to children at Aurora Place Apartments.

Cascade Park Baptist Church: Collected toys and gifts for 38 families.

Church of the Holy Spirit: Collected toys and gifts for 16 families and made stockings for 33 families.

Debby and Bill Dover: Offered free family portraits to residents at Aurora Place.

HDJ Design Group: Collected cleaning supplies and personal care items for our residents.

J.E. Dunn Northwest: Adopted two families this holiday season

Michelle Brammer: provided Christmas dinner for 3 families and two single women.

Sacred Heart Church and Saint Joseph's Church: Collected toys and gifts for 17 families.

Santa's Posse: Collected and delivered food and gifts to 103 children.

Val Ogden: Provided gifts to the 3 families at Val's House

“...you have helped keep Santa alive in my daughter’s heart for another year.”

“I was so excited to see [my son’s] face on Christmas morning.”

“My daughter [had] the Christmas I always dreamed for her to have.”

“Your donations and compassion have helped to give us a truly wonderful Christmas.”



Image by a 4-year-old child in YW Housing



Photo by Bill Dover

Message from the President

Looking back on 2008 I am again astounded by the accomplishments and hard work of the women and families we serve. In this economic climate, the barriers facing the homeless and impoverished are bigger and more abundant, but our residents succeed!

In 2008, a total of 80 families received housing services through our Transitional and Re-Entry Housing Programs, and over 400 were served through education services.

Many of the women who entered YW Housing came without children, but through hard work and determination, 23 mothers successfully reunited with 39 children. These successful families prove that safe, affordable housing is so much more than a roof over someone's head: it's the foundation upon which all other elements of life can flourish.

—Cheri Meyerhofer

Board of Directors Update

It is with great pleasure that YW Housing's Board of Directors adds Jennifer McClure and John Fazzolari to the team.

Jennifer is a LEED certified engineer with MacKay and Sposito. Her experience with sustainable development and LEED Certified environmental engineering makes her a huge asset to YW Housing's Board.

John, owner of Fazzolari Custom Homes, has been a supporter of YW Housing since 2005. He comes to us with extensive experience and knowledge about the building industry and the community as a whole.

Welcome Jennifer and John!

Board Members

Cheri Meyerhofer, President
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David Gilmore, Housing Services Assistant
Megan Newell, Executive Director
Valerie Norris, Case Manager Coordinator
Teri Owen, Housing Services Coordinator

YW Housing Mission Statement

As a community based non-profit we exist to foster self-sufficiency for at-risk women and families through affordable housing linked with community services.

Tenant Education: a Win-Win-Win

Since February 2004, YW Housing has offered the tenant education class known as Ready to Rent. The purpose of the class is to help participants address barriers to renting such as poor credit and past evictions so that they become more successful at securing a safe, decent, affordable place to live.

As with all things at YW Housing, this program is expanding to further meet the needs of our community.

YW Housing is no longer using the Ready to Rent curriculum. We are now collaborating with other agencies to create a newer, broader program with the interim title Tenant Education of Clark County. While the program lacks a catchy name for the moment, it certainly doesn't lack content; participants learn how to make effective choices in all aspects of life. As one community member noted, "You are teaching about renting but so much more! You are teaching the difference between needs and wants and teaching basic life skills."

The result of the new curriculum is a win-win-win—for participants, landlords, and the community as a whole.

For more information about the class, contact Tenant Education Coordinator Victoria Clevenger at 360-906-9117.

Did You Know:

- Tenant Education is open to anyone in Clark County, not just YW Housing residents.
- Last year, over 350 people attended one or more Tenant Education classes.
- The class is taught, in part, by community members who volunteer to share their expertise and experience with participants.
- There is a 180-page workbook that participants complete in order to receive their certificate of completion.
- Landlords increasingly refer potential tenants to the class.
- The Clark County Rental Association now puts a notice of the upcoming class in its monthly newsletter.

Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day, February 24th

We've all heard President Obama's call to community activism: Now is your chance!

Please join YW Housing and the Washington Coalition for the Homeless as we make our annual trip to Olympia to meet with our lawmakers. We'll hear from leaders in the housing and homelessness communities, participate in advocacy training, and get an update on the legislative session.

To be part of this special event, contact Debby Dover, YW Housing Asset Manager at ddover@ywcaclarkcounty.org.

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www.ywhousing.org



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360-906-9151

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