

A special appeal to make happy holidays



The current economic downturn means our phones are ringing off the hook. Families are calling for rent assistance to prevent eviction, or seeking information about entering our family shelter.

Tenants at NHA properties are calling the resident services coordinators looking for emergency food boxes and help to pay their utility bills. This year, even more than other years, we need your help to serve people in need.

Please help us with non-perishable food, toys for holiday gifts, or a cash donation. Remember, we are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization so your contribution is tax deductible.

We wish you a happy holiday season and thank you for your generosity!



Holiday Wish List

Annie Ross House is holding our annual toy drive to help fulfill children's holiday wishes – but we can't do it without your help!! Here's what we need:

- ◆ Birth through age 6: Disney, Fisher-Price, Sesame Street or Playskool toys; or new clothing
- ◆ Older children: Electronic or battery operated toys, Tonka trucks and cars, Barbie dolls or baby dolls, or "real play" toys like tool kits, kiddie kitchen sets, doctor or nurse kits, etc.
- ◆ Teenagers: CDs, Gameboys or logo gear (clothes, hats, bags etc. with popular logos)
- ◆ Teens and parents: Gift cards for stores like Fred Meyer or Target are always welcome
- ◆ We need wrapping paper and ribbon, too!

Please call Michelle Gearheart to arrange a donation drop off (503-654-1007 ext. 112), or bring unwrapped toys and gifts to 2316 SE Willard St. in Milwaukie, Monday through Friday between 9am and 4pm. All gifts will be distributed to families in time for their own holiday celebrations.

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Telling Our Stories: Jim



Stories about families & individuals in our communities

Jim lives at one of NHA's senior communities in Portland. He was recently hospitalized for surgery, and returned home to find a huge stack of bills, notices and letters. Jim was still recuperating and did not feel confident that he could organize and take care of all his correspondence on his own. He reached out to Julia, NHA's Resident Services Coordinator who works at his property.

Julia met with Jim and the two began to work through the stack, separating alert notices from bills and bank statements. Along with medical and utility bills, Jim had received a hospital bill for \$5,000, with a minimum monthly payment of \$800. Grimly, Jim noted that he could not pay rent, utilities, monthly medical costs, and the hospital bill with his modest social security income.

Julia and Jim worked together to call the hospital to explain that the minimum payment was not affordable on Jim's income. They were informed that he may qualify for financial assistance and mailed him an application. While they waited for it to arrive, Julia and Jim set up a budget that would allow Jim to pay his rent and other regular monthly bills while saving a small amount each month. Jim also let Julia know that he had been feeling lethargic and disconnected from others since his hospital release. Julia told him about the Silver Sneakers gym membership program available through Medicare, and helped him become enrolled. With regular exercise, he began to feel more like his old self. His attitude turned more positive, and he began seeking her out when he needed assistance.



Two weeks after they submitted Jim's financial assistance application, he received a letter in the mail stating that 100% of his \$5,000 hospital had been forgiven, leaving him with no financial responsibility. With this taken care of, Jim became even more motivated to save each month for his next big purchase: dentures. Now Jim is back to his old self, and has expressed his thanks to Julia for all her help in his recovery.

Many Local Students in Schools But Not Homes

by Angela Trimble, Director of Homeless Intervention Services

The number of Clackamas County students experiencing homelessness grew by 20% last year. Since 2006-2007, the number of children enrolled in school while experiencing homelessness is up by more than 37% according to a report by the School District Homeless Liaisons. This local data supports national reports that show the incidence of



family homelessness is on the rise in the US. The effects of homelessness often follows children into adulthood.

The National Center on Family Homelessness says it best: "Whether made homeless by economic hardship, domestic violence, the trauma of war, or physical or emotional challenges, these families have lost more than their homes. They've lost their health, safety, and the capacity to support themselves. The children are young; they have witnessed violence in their families and on the streets; they are anxious, depressed, and withdrawn. Today, they need shelter. To build a life, they need support."

The effects of homelessness on children are a big reason why we do what we do at the Annie Ross House. Often people I meet will comment how my job must be depressing, or a friend will protest how they could never do it; they suggest that I must possess some special strength to work with families who are homeless. I can assure you that I do not possess any special powers but perhaps, working with individuals and families who are suffering isn't the line of work for everyone. What I do know is the healing power of a caring community.

I also understand the effects of homelessness on a child's inability to learn and develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally. The Family Housing Fund (2005) a private, nonprofit organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota reported 41% of homeless children attend two or more schools in one year, 28% attend three or more schools in one year, 75% of homeless children test below grade

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Students in Schools not Homes, cont. from pg 1

level in reading, and 54% of homeless children test below grade level in math.

Families who come to the Annie Ross House receive a comprehensive assessment to determine the needs of all family members. Staff makes sure that if a child is experiencing difficulty in school that parents become aware of and are connected to needed resources. Often, when interacting with children who come to the shelter it can give us cues that something “doesn’t seem quite right.” We are sensitive to communicate our concerns to parents to ensure the message we are sending isn’t one of blame and shame. It is our goal to empower parents with information in order to motivate them to act now before it becomes more difficult later down the road.

This year, I observed a little boy who sat motionless in his stroller. He wouldn’t make eye contact or look at me when I tickled his toes. His non-reaction was almost as if he didn’t hear me. The boy and his young mother entered our shelter scared in a new city without any family around. We later discovered that she and her son were living in deplorable conditions prior to coming to the Annie Ross House. She told us that she had no other choice but to live in a camper that was supposed to be on top of a pickup truck. There was no bathroom, no electricity. This little boy, not quite two years old had to eat, sleep and play on top of the make shift bed/home the mother had made for them. The

only interaction the boy had ever experienced was with his mamma. He knew only her voice.

The mother talked to staff about her concerns that her little boy was different than other kids in the shelter of similar age. In a respectful environment, mother and staff members discussed options to have her child assessed for a form of autism and to have his hearing evaluated. The mother made the appropriate phone calls and skilled professionals from Clackamas County Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education came directly to the shelter to conduct an assessment. In the brief time the family was with us at the Annie Ross House, before moving on to permanent housing, that little boy was receiving appropriate services, making eye contact and allowing staff to pick him up to give him a hug.

There are many stories I could share with you about the families who come to the Annie Ross House for help. This holiday season, I want to express the importance of this community coming together to ensure that families have an Annie Ross House to come to every year. Homelessness is the result of poverty, lack of affordable housing, high unemployment rates, home foreclosures, and the lack of a strong safety net. Because of the kind and loving community we have in Clackamas County, Annie Ross House has been here for 23 years and continues NHA’s mission – to provide opportunity through housing.

I want to thank you for your generous support, and extend our wishes for a very happy holiday season!

Thanks from a recent shelter resident

“To Annie Ross Staff: Thank you. No, thank you so much. Without all of your kindness, care and support, my son and I would not be where we are today. Thank you for having faith in me, and giving me the time to regain my self respect which allowed me to do what I needed for my family. Again, thank you. There will always be a place for all of you in my heart.”

This note is from the mother who lived in the camper trailer, mentioned in the article above.

Rite Choice Credit Union helps children get ready for school

by Ashley Blake, NHA Resident Services Coordinator

This past summer, NHA organized our first ever school supply drive for families at Autumn Park, an affordable housing rental property in Wilsonville. The Resident Services Team partnered with Rite Choice Credit Union throughout the month of August to collect basic supplies like notebooks, pens, and pencils – all to help kids succeed in school.

In an exciting turn of events, an employee from the Rite Aid Distribution Center heard of our efforts, and helped

oversee a contribution of 48 bags full of school supplies ranging from notebooks to glue sticks to colored pencils. The donated school supplies were distributed to children at a back to school party organized by Teri, the property manager at Autumn Park.

Many thanks go out to the Rite Choice Credit Union and the Rite Aid Distribution Center, their customers and staff, for helping to provide 48 children with the supplies needed to work hard, have fun, and succeed in school every day!



How “Sweet” it was!

300 NHA supporters packed the Melody Ballroom on October 1st for the fifth annual Home Sweet Home chocolate tasting event. Local reporter and meteorologist Stephanie Kralevich from Portland’s Fox 12 News once again served as Master of Ceremonies. Eclectic Portland musicians 3 Leg Torso added a sweet note to the evening’s festivities. Home Sweet Home gathers local chocolatiers, bakers, coffee roasters and beer brewers to thank the fabulous folks who support NHA throughout the year.

Walsh Construction Co. and Cascade Management were the top tier sponsors for this year’s fundraiser. Other sponsors include NHA’s many generous business partners.

We added a silent auction this year because shopping pairs well with chocolate tasting. Thanks Bob’s Red Mill, the Inn at the Shore, New Seasons Markets, Oregon Humane Society, OMSI, NW Children’s Theater, Portland

Beavers, Portland Timbers, Portland Trailblazers, Rejuvenation, Stumptown Coffee, Whole Foods and NHA’s talented staff members.

Special thanks go out to all the folks who donate their time, talent and chocolate treats to make Home Sweet Home a success: Blue Gardenia Bakery; Cupcake Jones; Desserts of Distinction; Fleur de Lis Bakery Café; Rogue Ales (Chocolate Stout); Saint Cupcake; Stirs the Soul; Sweet Masterpieces; Wingnut Confections; and ZBeans Coffee Roasters.

Thanks, too to all the folks who showed up to learn a little more about Northwest Housing Alternatives – and for the food and fun.



Many ways to help!

The holidays are fast approaching! Annie Ross House throws a big party each year to distribute donated gifts to children in need. **Love to shop? Want to help children?** You can do both by buying and donating toys and gifts (see details on the back page).

The season for **workplace giving** is also here for many. If you would like to make a donation, please let us know if your employer will match your gift. It’s a great way to double the impact of your kindness!

We need a staff car in good working condition so HomeBase staff can get out into the community to prevent homelessness.

Looking for an easy way to give? We enclosed a **remit envelope for donations in this newsletter!** A check in any amount will help people secure safe and stable housing and access needed services and resources.

Even easier: **you can make a secure donation** from our web site: www.nwhousing.org.

Questions? Call Tim Collier, 503-654-1007, ext. 113.

Thank You! 

Creekside Woods partners break ground

Northwest Housing Alternatives and funding partners gathered to break ground on Creekside Woods apartments on Tuesday, September 29th. The property will bring 84 new senior apartments to Wilsonville, in part to provide housing for the many seniors displaced by the closing of the Thunderbird Mobile Home Park. Creekside will open to tenants late in 2010.



Left: architectural rendering. Right: Development partners dig in. From left, Councilor Steven Hurst, Martha McLennan (NHA), Councilor Celia Nuñez, Mayor Tim Knapp, County Commissioner Charlotte Lehan, Councilor Michelle Ripple, Councilor Alan Kirk, Victor Merced (Oregon Housing & Community Services), Michael Hayes (HUD) and Danny Santos (Office of the Governor). Photo by Dan Knoll.