

Northwest Housing Alternatives creates opportunity through housing.

Annie Ross House: Looking back at 2007

Angela C. Trimble, MSW

As the flowers begin to bud on the Annie Ross House campus, I want to take the time to share with everyone the accomplishments of my first year as Shelter Services Program Director. Now mind you, these aren't my accomplishments but more of the experiences we have all participated in to make the lives of these families better.

The Annie Ross House helps families in many ways. The most widely known resource is operating the only emergency shelter for families in Clackamas County experiencing homelessness. In 2007, 31 families were served in the shelter. The lives of 75 children and 38 adults were touched by the services and shelter Annie Ross House was able to provide.

On the campus where the Annie Ross House sits, Northwest Housing Alternatives operates six housing units for families in the shelter to transition into. The goal of the transitional housing program is to provide an environment where progress and stability is maintained while the family moves toward obtaining permanent housing. This allows for the growth achieved in the shelter to continue without too much interruption from re-locating out of shelter. The children continue to gain a sense of security - by seeing the same people everyday, continuing to settle in at the same school they started while in shelter, and having a safe place to play and thrive.

In 2007, four families moved from transitional to permanent housing. This affected eight children and seven adults and gave four more families the same opportunity for success.

The House to House Program (H2H) is an additional way the Annie Ross House assists families in need. This

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NHA starts new program to help tenants succeed

NHA has offered affordable housing for twenty-six years. The agency has built skill in development and asset management, and the Annie Ross program has provided access to social services for families transitioning out of homelessness. The natural next step for NHA was to create a Resident Services program to connect NHA tenants in senior and family properties to community resources. To start the program, NHA applied for a "VISTA" volunteer through the AmeriCorps national service program. VISTA stands for Volunteers In Service To America, and places dedicated volunteers at community organizations that help people up and out of poverty.

NHA was chosen as a VISTA service site, and we were able to hire a talented young man to serve as NHA's first Resident Services Coordinator. Eli Tinkelman started working with NHA last August, and has connected many tenants to social service agencies in the metro area. He organized a monthly visiting nurse program at one of our senior properties, has helped children find homework help on a regular basis and has coordinated informational meetings about health insurance and other topics of interest. He wrote and produced the first edition of NHA's tenant newsletter with articles about saving money on groceries, finding help for tax preparation and more.

While a great deal of the work of a Resident Service Coordinator involves working with whole communities, Eli also makes himself available to help people make sense of the constantly shifting world of social services. He is on-site at three of NHA's senior communities weekly to allow residents to come to him for one-on-one information and referral.

We're lucky to have such a skilled and enthusiastic volunteer to help NHA tenants access new opportunities for success. Thanks Eli!



upcoming events & activities

Saturday, May 10th

8:30am 'til 3pm

Spring Garden Festival!

Support Annie Ross House by shopping for plants at the 16th Annual Spring Garden Festival, a part of Milwaukie's Step Into Spring event held at the Waldorf School.

A note from Santa, the man behind the beard

The Wright family and I have been working with Annie Ross House for over 15 years, and we have truly enjoyed this connection with a very worthy organization. It all started in 1992 when the Wrights stopped by one day to drop off some donation items and began a conversation with Annie Ross staff about the upcoming Christmas party. The staff person mentioned that they were planning a Christmas party and wanted me to stop by. The Wrights had small children at the time and thought that I might want to join them at the party. Well, the Annie Ross House has allowed me and the Wright family elves (and Wright family friends' elves) to participate in an important holiday tradition that we all look forward to every year.

It started with just a few family members helping me hand out good cheer

and candy canes to about 20 children in the living room of the Annie Ross House. For the 2007 holiday party, with the help of over 40 friends and family, the Wrights and I raised nearly \$2,000 and delivered gifts for 154 children. The Wright family and friends raise funds, shop, wrap and of course help at the annual party which continues to be one of the highlights of our holiday. It is quite an effort, but after 15 years we have things pretty figured out...and still get a kick out of the big smiles on the faces of the children as they open their holiday gifts.

I am very proud that my elves have continued this great tradition. The Wright family's children are now old enough and have increased their role in this annual celebration of giving. I hope that the tradition will continue for many years to come.



All the families from Annie Ross House, want to thank Santa and the Wright family and friends for keeping this tradition alive. We couldn't do it without you!

Greenhouse for Annie Ross House

NHA and the Annie Ross House (ARH) would like to thank Warn Industries, Lifewise Health Plan of Oregon and all the volunteers who have helped with the Annie Ross Greenhouse Project. The project was designed to raise funds for the shelter through our annual plant sale; and to provide positive interaction and outreach to clients of Annie Ross house and the larger community. The financial gains from the plant sale will enhance ARH programming which benefits Annie Ross families. When the greenhouse project is completed it will provide ARH with year-round volunteer opportunities. If you have a green thumb and time to spare – please contact Tim Collier at 503-654-1007, ext. 113.

The greenhouse is 8' by 16' and is located just a few steps away from the Annie Ross House play area. The interior will soon have shelving to support

seedlings, a heater, fans and a watering system to help grow the hundreds of plants necessary to have successful plant sales for many years to come.

All of us here at NHA and the Annie Ross House, and all the families who benefit from our services, would like to extend our appreciation to Warn Industries, Lifewise Health Plan of Oregon and all the volunteers who have supported the Annie Ross Greenhouse Project.



2007 in review continued

program has been in operation for many years and is truly an example of community helping community. We receive donations like food, diapers, personal hygiene products, household cleaners, furniture, and various kitchen wares. H2H served 51 families, 119 children and 64 adults during 2007.

The last big event of 2007 was the Annie Ross House Holiday Party which was held at the Milwaukie High School in late December. Again, because of the amazing generosity of the community we were able to provide a bright, shining holiday to 62 families. 154 children and 66 adults were recipients of food and gifts throughout the holiday season. What an amazing year!

Kids on the Block: the voice of children at Annie Ross House

Before I experienced homelessness, I did not realize how bad it really was. I always imagined the homeless as the “bums” on the street. However, that is not the whole picture. Sometimes things happen to folks beyond their control. When my father was released from prison (he was a victim of the IRS, nothing violent), the family members we were staying with asked us to leave. So, we came to live with our father, but he did not have a place to stay. Thus, we are homeless and it is hard.

Being homeless made me feel invisible and insecure. No one seemed to want to help us *or tell us* about people that could. I felt stressed out about school, when we would have a home, and what I would eat. I worried about my dad’s health, if we would live on the streets and wondered if I would have to take my junior year again. These questions pounded through my brain.

I felt like my world was falling apart. Until this moment in my life, I had always had a home. It was a constant reminder of the awful state our lives were in. Most of all I was afraid of my family being separated. I worried if I would ever be with my father and brother again as a family.

Would we ever live under the same roof? Would I ever feel safe again?

In the Bible, King David spoke about when he was homeless. When I read it, I almost cried. It reflected exactly how I felt. I felt like everyone rejected me. King David wrote: “I was reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to mine acquaintance: They that did see me without fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel” (Psalm 31:11-12). I felt so very much like a broken vessel with no place to call “home.”

Annie Ross House has been a great relief for many of these stresses. Thanks to Annie Ross House, I know where I will be sleeping and that I will not be separated from my family. I’m in school and making friends. I thank and praise the Lord for Annie Ross House everyday. We have hope for the next day because we know we have a place to live, food, and we are together as a family. The staff here is helping us find housing and other resources. Life is becoming more stable thanks to Annie Ross House.

Annie Ross House is the ONLY homeless shelter in the area that accepts

families. All the other shelters will help mothers with children but NOT fathers with children. In our day and age which frowns upon discrimination, we have discovered that whole families and men are discriminated against when it comes to homelessness. Other shelters reject two parent families. We have talked to some of the families we’ve encountered here and they were told that the only way for them to get help was for the wife to divorce her husband; that only then would the shelter help her and her children but NOT the father. Annie Ross House helps these families.

This place works to keep families together. I can not tell you enough how grateful I am for Annie Ross House. Don’t get me wrong. We still have many problems to work out but here we have a starting place and we are getting help. In fact, we just got a call this week and it looks like we will have our own place to live soon. We will never forget the help we received here. When we get back on our feet, we look forward to being able to help others. We have a different point of view now. There needs to be more Annie Ross Houses but for now, this one deserves your support.

Signed, A talkative 17 year old girl



Avalon

Northwest Housing Alternatives recently developed Avalon, home to six women, some with children, who are working hard to get their lives back on track. Avalon is being operated by The Inn, a nonprofit that serves people experiencing homelessness.

2007 Clackamas County Homeless Count

130 volunteers and staff members completed the Clackamas County Homeless Count in January 2007. It is a point-in-time count of homeless persons in the County. The findings revealed:

- 3,543 homeless persons including
 - 1,310 children (37%)
 - 2,233 adults (63%)
- 51% of households counted were families with children
- 42% of households were adult-only
- 7% were unaccompanied youth
- 8% of those surveyed were veterans

Research shows that adults who are homeless often experienced homelessness as a child. Nationally there is a larger movement focused on keeping families with children stable to prevent serious developmental consequences.

The services and resources through programs like Annie Ross House are needed more than ever. As the only shel-

ter in the County serving in-tact families, there is more pressure to move people through the shelter with less financial resources and a lack of affordable housing options to move families into.

Despite all of this, Annie Ross House is making a difference for families experiencing homelessness. We are able to do this with the long-standing ties we have to the larger community, including the support and generosity of all of you. For all that was accomplished in 2007, we thank you...for the volunteer hours, donated services and goods that went directly to the families and all of the financial support Annie Ross House received to support operations; thank you!

– Angela

NHA creates opportunity through housing

2008 Plant Sale

This year marks the 16th Annual Annie Ross House Spring Garden Festival & Plant Sale. This event brings people together: friends & neighbors, children & adults, local businesses & nonprofits, volunteers & employees.

The Garden Festival is great way for Annie Ross House to raise money and awareness for our shelter program, and is a favorite community event. The 2008 Garden Festival will take place Saturday, May 10th, the day before Mother's Day, at the Waldorf School in downtown Milwaukie from 8:30 am 'til 3:00pm.

If you are not able to attend the Spring Garden Festival please use the enclosed remit envelope to show your support for Annie Ross House and Clackamas County families.

Thank you!



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