

A JOURNEY NURTURED IN HOPE



2016 Report Jubilee Edition

DEB CHAUSSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HOUSING IS THE ABSOLUTE
FOUNDATION FOR EVERY-
THING PEOPLE CAN ACHIEVE
IN THEIR LIVES. IT ENABLES
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT,
AND THE ABILITY TO CONNECT
WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES.



Leadership Message

Thirty years ago, our community created House of Hope to serve our most marginalized neighbors; families without homes. Over the years, our organization has continued to respond to this crisis through the expansion of our shelter programs and the creation of permanent supportive housing, which we know is the best way to help homeless families.

As we look toward the future, we are hopeful that, when we write our next chapter, family homelessness will be a thing of the past, our shelters will be converted to permanent homes, and House of Hope will continue to provide affordable housing for those in need.

You can continue to help us to achieve these goals by volunteering your time, sharing your talent, and donating your treasure.

Sincerely,

Deb Chausse

Executive Director, House of Hope

HOUSE OF HOPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PICTURED ABOVE:

Seated (L to R): Nels Palm, Diane Earl, Kate Tyndall, Patricia Sullivan Talty

Standing (L to R): Brian Bonenfant, Brian J. Stafford, Emily Moloney Smith, Ryan Dunn, Dale Makowski, Dan O'Connor, Marc Teal, Laurie Gould

Not pictured: Yovani Baez, Andrew T. Boyle, Ellen Cataldo, Michael Conway, Andrew Gilmore, Rev. Cecilio Hernandez, Daniel J. Mansur, Barbara Smith



OUR JUBILEE YEAR

House of Hope is observing a special anniversary this year. Our 30th anniversary of service to homeless families makes this a Jubilee Year. This anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect on a journey that began in gloomy economic times, but one that has been nurtured in hope and fed by optimism. For three decades, our staff, volunteers, board of directors, and the larger community have maintained a deep commitment to helping families rebuild their lives at House of Hope.

During this Jubilee Year, we will celebrate our accomplishments, recognize that we have encountered bumps along the way, and look ahead to our future. That future will dramatically increase the number of families we serve as we bring two new properties online.



OUR MISSION, OUR COMPASS

Beginning in the mid 1980's, as the nation recovered from a deep recession, homelessness exploded even as unemployment rates dropped. Structural changes in the economy and politics (such as welfare reform, loss of rent control, and reduction of federal support) forced housing costs higher. Housing prices soared beyond the reach of extremely low-income families, increasingly headed by single mothers. Once, homelessness was perceived as an affliction of men with mental health or substance abuse issues, but now a different demographic—women and children—also endured the trauma and dislocation of homelessness.

Setting Our Course

Lowell mirrored the national experience. In 1984, homelessness was an unaddressed problem. Pastors of local churches reported an increase in the number of requests for help that they had trouble answering. Often they found the only assistance they could give was to draw from their discretionary accounts and then send families and individuals to the now-defunct Caswell Motel in Tewksbury, which was then a place of some notoriety in the region.

In January 1985, the Rev. K. Gordon White, then rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Lowell, sent a letter to the Roman Catholic Cardinal Bernard Law defining an urgent problem and asking for help. Father White was writing on behalf of the Lowell Ethnic Covenant, an ecumenical group of religious leaders who assisted new immigrant groups.

A series of ecumenical meetings, the first one led by the late Bishop John M. D'Arcy, over the next several months helped us to define our longstanding mission:

“The House of Hope, a temporary shelter, provides advocacy and care for homeless families. Rooted in a belief in God, and under the direction of an ecumenical board, it seeks to affirm the dignity of life to all who are served.”

That ecumenical spirit has endured, providing our compass over the decades.



December
1985

House of Hope created and
opens at 812 Merrimack
Street, Lowell, MA

Getting Started

We had much to do over the next several months. A group led by the Rev. Paul Bailey of St. Michael's Church worked on setting up a house for the homeless. The Ethnic Covenant was also looking for solutions. It became apparent that they should join forces and expand the ecumenical composition of the effort. Two important decisions were required: who would direct the shelter and where would it be located?

In April 1985, Sister Jeanne Poor was hired to lead what was now named House of Hope. She was the former director of Lazarus House in Lawrence, which the Lowell group saw as a model.

Soon afterward, House of Hope entered a \$1-a-year lease with St. Joseph's Hospital for the first two floors of 812 Merrimack Street. Extensive renovations began and many volunteers helped with the job.

Sister Jeanne, now 80 but working part-time at Youville Place in Lexington, recalls that sometime that fall a decision was made to open on Christmas Eve. Opening the shelter to the homeless on December 24th might have seemed like an appropriate symbolic gesture, but for Sister Jeanne, the decision caused some trepidation.

As the opening drew close and the renovation neared completion, we still had no beds where our first guests could sleep. Sister Jeanne thought about the problem and then made a call to the U.S. Army. She needed cots, she said on the phone.

"Providence was with us," Sister Jeanne remembers. That call resulted in the just-in-time delivery of 100 cots. An early volunteer for House of Hope, Pat Brown recalls, "We opened the doors that night to a few guests, the Army cots, and a good supply of volunteers but not much else."

While there was community support for House of Hope, there were doubters. Pat remembers hearing her work "was just a band-aid." But she never wavered. It was not long before the House of Hope's achievements qualified it for state funding and city support.

In its first year, House of Hope served adult homeless individuals as well as families. But the Middlesex Shelter, now the Lowell Transitional Living Center, opened in 1986 to serve single adults who were homeless. Our focus shifted to the needs of women and children forced into homelessness for any number of reasons beyond their control. Whatever the reason, it was now our goal to help them through the trauma of homelessness.

JIM O'DONNELL, one of the original directors of HOH and an owner of nearby O'Donnell Funeral Home

THEY [HOUSE OF HOPE] HAVE STAYED TRUE TO THAT MISSION OF HELPING. THEY'VE GROWN BEYOND PROVIDING TEMPORARY SHELTER. NOW THEY SEEK TO GET THESE FAMILIES TO THE NEXT STEP – INTO PERMANENT HOUSING.

Our Spirit Guides Us

We have been through transitions, and we have faced challenges in the past 30 years, but House of Hope has held fast to our ecumenical spirit and faith-filled commitment to affirming the dignity of life of all whom we serve. Jim O'Donnell, one of our original directors and owner of the nearby O'Donnell Funeral Home, credits our success to our constancy in following our mission. "They have stayed true to that mission of helping. They've grown beyond providing temporary shelter. Now they seek to get these families to the next step – into permanent housing."

We believe that safe housing provides the foundation needed for women to develop job skills, find employment and care for their children. In spite of the rising rates of family homelessness, we have focused on quickly moving families into permanent homes and providing the support needed to ensure they remain stably housed. We have seen both heartache and joy as families struggle to achieve goals that we help them set.

Sister Jeanne left us in 1995, although she later returned for a term on the board of directors. She was succeeded by Cheryl McClarney and then in 2000 by Deb Chausse.

In the year before Sister Jeanne left, we purchased our building at 812 Merrimack Street. In 1995 we purchased two adjacent lots. Under Cheryl's direction, we began work to bring our facility into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and to tear down the dilapidated buildings on the adjacent lots so we could create a playground and picnic area. In 1998 we added 2,800 square feet of program and living space to the shelter.

As always when the shelter added space, the board of directors pitched in to help with renovations. Long-time board member Patricia Talty says, "It has always been a working board, a board whose members roll up their sleeves" when there is hard, physical work to be done. Our board of directors has been vital to our success.

Support from Greater Lowell's communities of faith has remained an important asset for us. When Bishop D'Arcy left Lowell to become diocesan bishop of Indiana, the late Bishop John R. McNamara stepped in and provided tremendous support as we grew.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HOUSE OF HOPE IS DEDICATED TO TRANSITIONING HOMELESS FAMILIES INTO A STABLE COMMUNITY LIFE BY PROVIDING TANDEM SERVICES THAT (1) RESPECT AND NURTURE FAMILIES SO THAT THEY CAN HEAL FROM THE TRAUMA OF HOMELESSNESS; AND (2) SUPPORT PARENTS BY GUIDING THEM THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD ECONOMIC SUFFICIENCY AND EMBRACE A STABLE HOME LIFE.

Finding a Better Way

When Deb arrived, the crisis of family homelessness had become what seemed like an intractable social problem. Soaring housing prices and government funding shortfalls for supported low-income rental units put more and more women and children in precarious and dangerous situations, often aggravated by stress due to poverty, major life events and the fragmentation of families.

With a shortage of shelters, Massachusetts turned to putting many families in motel rooms where a mother might be lucky to have a microwave to heat frozen dinners, but probably not a refrigerator to store perishables.

Of motel life, a 2014 Boston Globe story said, “Each day, more than 3,600 children across the state who wake up in motel beds...slip into a compartmentalized world of contradiction: mornings are often chaotic, where family members form a line to take showers, race to microwave food, and get the children dressed for school. Some kids go to nearby schools, while others are bused as far as an hour away. In the classroom, some find structure. At recess, they embrace open air. At the end of the day, they leave their friends behind and return to the motels, where guests are not allowed in rooms, there are few places to play outside save for the parking lots, and early-evening curfews are enforced.”

Thankfully, since that article was published, the numbers of children living in motels has greatly diminished as the state has worked to find better solutions to an economically and emotionally inadequate response to housing homeless families.

More than 15 years ago, House of Hope recognized that existing approaches to end homelessness were not working. When Deb became executive director, she initiated a strategic planning process to find a better way. A shelter, no matter how compassionately and respectfully run, cannot replace a safe home. A home represents connectedness, strong family relationships, and identity within a community.

The strategic plan that emerged in 2002, after two years of research and decision-making, led to the creation of House of Hope Housing (“HOH Housing”) as an independent but affiliated nonprofit. Permanent affordable housing is the key to ending homelessness, the plan concluded. Together House of Hope and House of Hope Housing would work to transition homeless families into safe, stable communities with links to support services.



172 Lakeview Ave



203 Salem St



391 Pawtucket St



520 Fletcher Street

OUR SUCCESSES SEEN THROUGH OUR BUILDINGS

House of Hope and HOH Housing have steadily added living space for homeless families. Our buildings represent much more than real estate. They are the public face of our commitment to provide a caring environment in which families can heal from the emotional and sometimes physical trauma that left them without shelter. Our buildings are also our observable effort to strengthen our neighborhoods and our city.

In 2005, we began a new venture with the opening of New Hope Apartments at 203 Salem Street, right behind the House of Hope shelter. With the opening of New Hope Apartments, we became landlords and thus property taxpayers in Lowell. The 11 units of subsidized rental housing offer two, three, and four-bedroom apartments for House of Hope residents who are ready to take the next step in their journeys.

These apartments are bright and gleaming, giving tenants a chance to build stable futures. "Once you get an apartment, it is a whole new life," one of our first residents said.

Our neighbor, Jim O'Donnell, is enthusiastic about the work we have done with our buildings. "They have contributed to the renaissance of the Acre by the way they have renovated and maintained their properties."

BENEFITS OF HOME

Homelessness jeopardizes every stage of a child's development. The profound trauma of homelessness leads to hunger, developmental delays, poor physical and mental health, and missed educational opportunities. And yet, in 2013, an estimated 2.5 million children (or 1 in 30) were homeless. Children require secure housing to thrive. Mothers need secure housing to obtain the education and employment necessary to build their own self-esteem as well as that of their children.

Research from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Family Options Study, 2015) shows that permanent affordable housing is the key to housing stability. HUD evaluated four different approaches to housing and service interventions for homeless families. Although research is continuing, HUD found that a housing subsidy program provided the best results. And the HUD subsidy program did not have the supportive services programs that HOH offers.

Our rent-subsidized apartments offer families a possibility of 'a whole new life.' Families pay a percentage of their income for their apartments. They receive case management services as needed to help manage behavioral and physical health issues, build confidence, and give children educational opportunities they might otherwise be denied. Because most were at first guests at a House of Hope of shelter, we know them, and they know us.

Adding Shelter Space and More Apartments

When New Hope Apartments opened, Nels Palm, then president of the Board of Directors, declared:

"We will do more, as much as we possibly can, for as long as we can, until the scandal of children without homes is no longer part of our reality."



2009

Hope to Opportunity
(H2O) shelter on
Varnum Avenue opened.

“WE WILL DO MORE, AS MUCH AS WE POSSIBLY CAN, FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN, UNTIL THE SCANDAL OF CHILDREN WITHOUT HOMES IS NO LONGER PART OF OUR REALITY.”

And we have done more. We have continued adding shelter and rental housing ever since. In 2007, we purchased a renovated building on Lakeview Avenue from the City of Lowell. It became three units of affordable, subsidized permanent housing. We also acquired and renovated 179 Salem Street, the “Green House” adjacent to New Hope Apartments. The Green House is a co-shelter for two families on the second floor and one additional unit of permanent housing on the first floor. In 2009, we opened the Hope to Opportunity (H2O) shelter on Varnum Avenue. H2O opened with five rooms; a sixth room was added in 2011 and in 2013 two more rooms became available by reconfiguring office space. And in 2014, we opened New Hope Apartments 2 on Pawtucket Street. All of our properties were carefully renovated and are now maintained so that they are cheerful additions to their neighborhoods.

In 2012, we opened The Hope Chest, our first workforce development program, at 397 Market Street. It is a retail operation offering low cost, gently used children’s clothing to our Acre neighbors. It offers internships that give mothers a chance to develop employment skills and build self-esteem. Community members who share our commitment to serving vulnerable families donate the clothing.

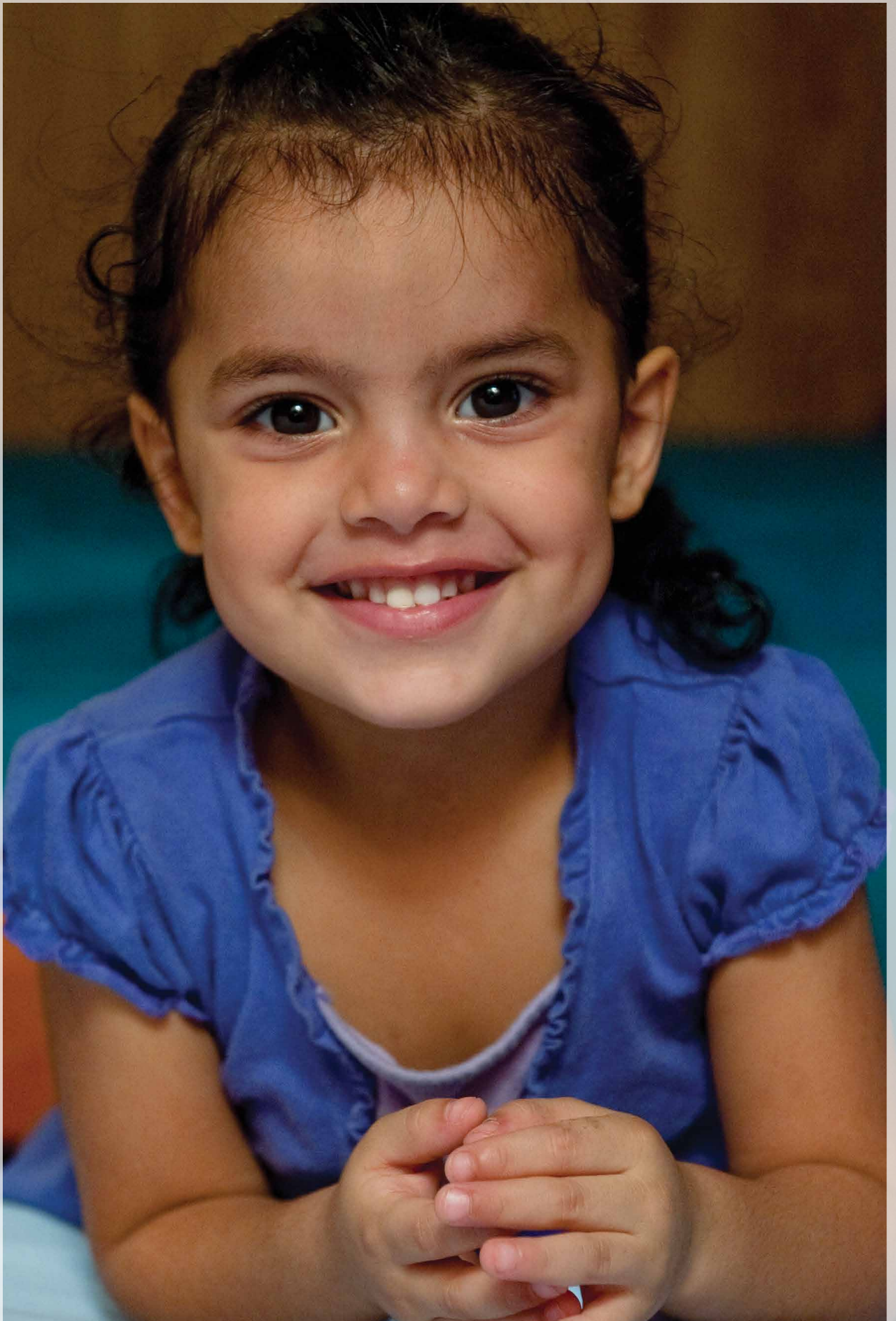
We have worked hard over the years to meet the needs of rising numbers of homeless families. We believe the way forward is to be part of a solution that will truly end family homelessness.



2012

Workforce Training formalized: Retail store “The Hope Chest” opens. Mothers develop employment skills and build self-esteem.





OUR STORY IS ONE OF COMMUNITY

House of Hope is a story of community. Vulnerable women and children, our staff and volunteers, our board of directors, our neighbors and our supporters provide the story's narrative.

Our staff and volunteers strive every day to meet the individual needs and circumstances of all our residents. They provide a healing environment where families can begin to build new lives.

Milly, who lived at the Green House for six years, says she has trouble finding the words to express her gratitude to the staff and volunteers. "They do a wonderful job. I'm here because of them." For Milly, 'here' means the house she bought in Lowell because of the skills she learned at House of Hope. While at the Green House, Milly completed an associate's degree in biotechnology and now commutes to Cambridge every day for work in that field.

"I'm so grateful for the love they showed my daughter and me," she said. "They're family to me."

Laurie Gould, former president of the board of directors, praises the professionalism of the staff. The organization, Laurie says, is "so healthy and well run that we are able to keep good staff." Deb Chausse says that, while bad days happen, the staff keeps an upbeat attitude. This spirit opens up possibilities and enables creative energy, Deb says.

Our board of directors has provided courageous support as we have faced challenges and dreamed dreams of affordable housing for extremely low-income families.

No story of the House of Hope community would be complete, however, without acknowledging the larger community—our neighbors and supporters throughout Greater Lowell and the state and local agencies who believe in our mission and trust in our skills. Individuals, churches, hospitals, and businesses give the support that families need to attain a life of self-sufficiency. House of Hope is a loving environment due to the deep commitment of every member of our community.

2X shelter families per night to be served in 2016/2017 from previous year.



2015

FAMILIES SERVED



2016/2017

FAMILIES SERVED

Growing Our Services and Programs

Over the past 30 years, the needs of homeless families have changed. And their numbers have grown. At House of Hope, we now serve 28 families in our shelter and 22 families in permanent housing. We have expanded our programs and services, always with the objectives of increased self-sufficiency and empowerment in mind.

Each family has its own unique challenges, so our case managers work individually with the residents to set specific goals that will help each family to move as quickly as possible from shelter to long-term permanent housing.

Case managers receive accolades from our residents. As one resident of H20 says, “My case manager is very supportive, as is everyone at House of Hope. If I need something and they can’t help, they will find someone who will.” Those sentiments have been reported by many others across our decades of operations.

Parents want to build happy lives for their children, but sometimes need help, especially when they are homeless and poor. Our support services are designed to assist them as they learn what they need to do to become increasingly self-sufficient.

Services provided by the House of Hope are:

- Emergency food, shelter and clothing.
- Housing Resource Center that works with parents

to secure stable housing and to help them remain housed.

- Case management that works individually with residents.
- Bright, cheerful play areas for children staffed by community volunteers.
- On-site workforce development opportunities.
- Mental health and substance abuse referrals for mothers in crisis.
- A wide range of specialized children’s services.

Intervention, engagement and love are the operative words when it comes to the kids of House of Hope.

Our Record-Breaking 2016/2017

This year is already a record-breaker for us. We are bringing two new properties online that will dramatically increase the numbers of homeless families we can serve.

On May 24, 2016, we passed papers on the Merrimack River Valley House on Fletcher Street. Formerly a home for elderly women, this property will more than double the number of shelter families we serve from 28 to 58. The Fletcher Street building comes with a large capacity kitchen, which will enable us to expand our work training programming. Meals will be prepared in this kitchen and served on site with delivery to our other shelters.

Massachusetts state of homelessness 2016/2017

3,823

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN WERE IN THE STATE'S EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SHELTER PROGRAM AS OF MAY 5, 2016

554 of the **3,823**

FAMILIES IN THE STATE'S EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SHELTER PROGRAM WERE SHELTERED IN MOTELS

11.6% or 757,235

PEOPLE WERE LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS FALLING BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL IN 2015

\$2,000/month or \$24,000/year

IS THE AVERAGE RENT FOR A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT IN THE BOSTON METRO AREA

Expansion on a scale like this could not have happened without a great deal of support from our community. That includes our friends at D'Youville Life and Wellness Community, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development, Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), the City of Lowell, our neighbors in the Acre, architects at Davis Square who care deeply about homeless families, private donors, corporate supporters, a courageous board of directors and a compassionate and energetic staff.

This Jubilee year, we are also acquiring a property on Smith Street that, after construction, will almost double the number of affordable apartments for long-term housing while preserving another historic building in the City of Lowell. Completion of this project is expected to be in 2017.

Our Evolving Challenges

Our deepest wish is for stable, long-term housing so that all families and children might be safe and flourishing. Right now, however, that seems like a distant dream. Real estate prices have recovered from their lows of the previous decade. Ownership and rental prices are rising again. While this is a national trend, it is particularly acute in Greater Boston (of which

Lowell is a part.) In Lowell, housing that extremely low-income families might afford is disappearing as wages remain low, the demand for rental housing is high, and rents continue to rise.

The following numbers reported by state agencies describe the challenging and resources-limited environment that we confront:

- On May 5, 2016, 3,823 families with children and pregnant women were in the state's Emergency Assistance shelter program.
- Of that number, 554 of these families were sheltered in motels, although this number has been trending down.
- The state's poverty rate in 2015 was 11.6% that meant that 757,235 people were living in households falling below the poverty level. The current poverty level for a family of four is \$24,300 a year.
- Average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the Boston metro area is \$2,000 a month or \$24,000 a year.



OUR WAY AHEAD

Much has changed in 30 years, but our commitment to homeless families remains the same. However, it is clearer than ever that the solution to homelessness is permanent, affordable housing.

Our Families

Our mission has taken on an added dimension as our understanding of homelessness and its effects have grown. Families need more than shelter as a refuge. Families need a safe harbor, a place to call home. It is within a home that families can build lives. Since housing is the foundation upon which each and every family builds their lives, it is not only true that “Home is where the heart is”; House of Hope believes that “Home is where the start is.”

Our Future

Our long-term vision is to convert all our shelter space—including 812 Merrimack Street—into stable, permanent housing. We are working towards a day when emergency shelter is no longer needed because affordable housing is available and our tenants have access to support services to remain in their homes. Well run, affordable housing is our exit strategy from emergency shelter.

Until that day, we will continue to do all that we can do to shelter and house homeless families in our community. Our success is guided by our mission and it depends upon your continued support.

Get Involved

You can help homeless families in Massachusetts individually or through your place of work. We welcome donations of time, money and in-kind donations. For the ways you can get involved, visit www.HouseofHopeLowell.org to learn more.



Our Families

"House of Hope gave me everything that I needed: They gave me the encouragement to get done what needed to get done, but they made me do it on my own. I am not afraid to tell my story. I hope that other people will learn and be inspired for themselves."

- Laurie



"Even after I had been gone from House of Hope for a year, the Housing team still helped me to find a permanent place to live. I didn't know how to do anything (like getting a credit report) but they were always there to help me."

- Donna

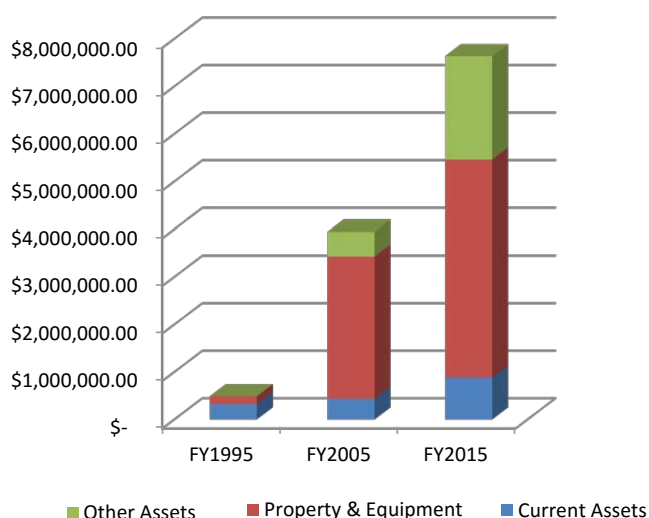


"When I first arrived, a staff member told me, 'this is not a shelter - this is a home.' I didn't believe her at first but later I knew it was the truth. I am so glad I was able to stay at House of Hope - I was safe and stable and loved, and I learned a lot."

- Marissa

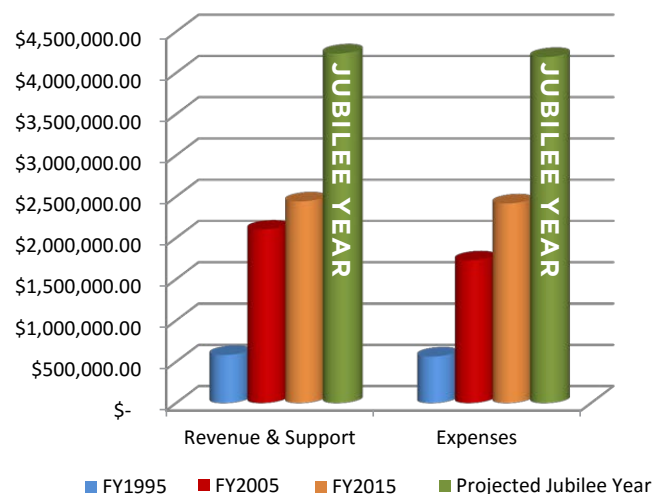
2016 FINANCIALS

30 YEARS OF ASSET GROWTH



- In 1994, House of Hope purchased for \$25,000 the property at 812 Merrimack Street which it had leased since inception.
- The first major bump in asset growth came when House of Hope Housing began building the New Hope Apartments in 2004.
- In 2007, HOH Housing added the Lakeview House and HOH brought the Green House online.
- In 2014, HOH Housing added "New Hope 2" apartments at 391 Pawtucket Street in Lowell.

REVENUES & EXPENSES: 30+ YEARS OF SERVICE



- The original shelter at 812 Merrimack serves 18 families per night.
- In 2009, HOH added another major shelter location at "H2O" meaning "Hope to Opportunity" which enables us to serve 8 more families each night.
- In 2015, HOH served 28 families per night in shelter and HOH Housing had 22 families permanently housed.
- As projected in 2016/2017, HOH is growing to serve 58 families each night and HOH Housing will serve 38 families in permanent housing.

Acknowledgements and Thank You

House of Hope has completed 30 years of service and helped thousands of families. We have experienced rapid growth and have remained laser focused on providing as much as we could for as many homeless families as possible.

So many individuals, institutions, businesses, churches and foundations have contributed to our success. The City of Lowell has been supportive of our mission and many neighborhoods have been welcoming of our buildings and programs. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts vis-à-vis the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has been willing to provide major funding for many years as we partner with them to end family homelessness. So many businesses and churches have offered financial and volunteer labor support; it is impossible to try and name them all here, but they have helped us build a firm foundation upon which to grow our organization and serve our families.

House of Hope has employed hundreds of individuals over these past thirty years. Each and every employee has supported our mission by caring deeply for our families resulting in shorter shelter stays and many permanent housing placements. Our current team of House of Hope employees rates as the most compassionate and skilled team we have ever had.

The Greater Lowell Community has offered us an abundance of skilled professionals to serve House of Hope as Board Members. As a result of their leadership, compassion and courage we are fiscally robust and organizationally competent.

We say a particular thank you to our current Board of Directors who, over the next 18 months, will oversee a doubling of our shelter services and the construction of our largest permanent housing project to date. They are:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Daniel O'Connor, *President*

Kate Tyndall, *Vice President*

Brian Stafford, CPA, MST, *Treasurer*

Dale Makowski, *Secretary*

Yovani Baez

Brian Bonenfant

Andrew Boyle

Ellen Cataldo

Michael Conway

Ryan Dunn

Diane Earl

Andrew Gilmore

Laurie Gould

Rev. Cecilio Hernandez

Atty. Daniel Mansur

Nels Palm

Atty. Emily Moloney Smith

Barbara Smith

Atty. Patricia Sullivan Talty

Marc Teal

House of Hope has proven the adage of Helen Keller, who said, "Alone we can do little, together we can do so much." We have done so much and we thank you all very much!

A special thank you to Greig Cranna, for the beautiful photographs that were featured in this report.



HOUSE OF HOPE INC.

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