

House of Hope, Inc.  
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Lowell, MA. 01854

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[www.houseofhopelowell.org](http://www.houseofhopelowell.org)

Fall/Winter 2020

Dear Friends and HOH Family,

House of Hope wishes you a Healthy and Happy Holiday! Did you know that most of the world's major religions celebrate December Holidays that invite light and hope into our lives? I believe that this is a unifying truth we need to embrace this year!

As we prepare for our Christmas Day celebration at House of Hope, we are focused on the needs of our kids who have lost so much due to COVID-19 while also experiencing homelessness. For children in our shelters, their world has become even smaller as they try to embrace digital learning either from their family's shelter room or in an area of the shelter designed to maintain social distancing. Our students are sometimes reluctant to log into their classes for fear of being "found out" that they are homeless and that they live in a crowded and sometimes chaotic environment. Some HOH families are also challenged by language barriers which makes following the lesson plans and homework assignments difficult and others are simply overwhelmed and confused about the log in and downloading features. As much as the education, our kids have also lost the normalcy, mentoring, routine, safety, food and friends that school represents. A virtual education is not in children's best interest but especially not for homeless children. We have received support from the Lowell School Department and we have reallocated our full time volunteer coordinator to work with parents and children on an as-needed basis but we know that we are not yet meeting the needs of all of our K-12 students. Me and my team have applied for grants that will enable us to more fully support the educational needs of HOH students and their parents.

As we look toward Christmas, and the simple joy we will bring to our children, I need to thank you. Our friends and community have not stopped supporting us by freely sharing their Talents and Treasure. We are grateful and look forward to once again welcoming our volunteers and benefiting from the Time they so freely give. House of Hope's young residents and their families in both shelter and our housing will receive gifts of toys, food, clothing, supplies and gift cards - this is because of support from you and others like you!



We are also blessed by an amazing staff, a group of individuals who have supported each family and each other in every possible way. As you probably know, House of Hope operates 3 separate congregate shelters and can serve up to 58 families. We also own and manage 39 units of affordable housing at 5 locations in Lowell. Managing these 8 buildings and caring for their inhabitants is not always easy—some of our residents have contracted COVID-19 and have required both quarantine and isolation. Our staff has been the bridge to care for these families by arranging transportation, providing food, supplies, books, toys, and daily contact to ensure their well being. HOH employees have also worked incredibly hard to maintain a safe and clean environment within the shelters, ensuring that food, shelter and social service needs are being met every day. To my knowledge, not one case of COVID-19 has been acquired by an employee while working at HOH. Also, no House of Hope Employee has worked from home because in order to safely and fairly deal with this pandemic we needed all hands on deck to help in whatever way possible. Some employees have needed to be out of work as they deal with day care, illness or potential exposure issues, but the remaining HOH team members have jumped in with generosity and commitment.

For us, as for you, these 9 months have been difficult but we also have reasons for celebration. We look forward to a New Year of Health and Hope. Thank You and Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,  
**Deb Chausse, Executive Director**

## Remote Learning in Shelter

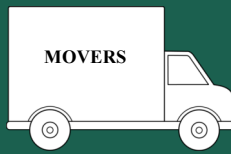
It has been all hands on deck to get our children in shelter on board with digital learning while the pandemic has closed the schools in Lowell. All the departments are working together so that the children can succeed with remote schooling while in shelter. Thanks to DHCD, desks have been added to common areas in the shelters so the children can have a quiet space to focus and learn. Thanks to the HomeWorks Program, Chromebooks are available for every student. Supplies such as headphones and mice have been provided to children as well.

We are so fortunate to have Julia Balerna, our fantastic Community Services Assistant, who has been working with the children in shelter one-to-one on school work, and helping the children relax during breaks with crafts and games, all whilst socially distancing.



## AT YOUR SERVICE

Over the past year, House of Hope has served 118 families totaling 349 individuals in shelter. HOH placed 24 families from shelter each into their own homes. For the first half of the year we moved many families, but as the pandemic continues, there aren't as many housing opportunities for families as vacancies are becoming more difficult to come by. Our Housing advocates leave no stone unturned when it comes to finding homes for our families.



## On The Move

*Chad Foley,  
Housing Program Manager*

In March 2020, a family arrived to House of Hope shelter after falling on hard times. This family consisted of a mother with her daughter and son who is confined to a wheelchair. Throughout their stay at House of Hope, case management and housing have worked very closely with this family to ensure all needs were met and to obtain suitable housing. Throughout this housing search, an apartment has been secured for this family that is ADA accessible, meeting the needs of this family. This unit is a three bedroom unit in which the family will be paying 30% of their income, easing financial burdens for this family. The family has worked closely to ensure a smooth transition to this unit and has a move-in date for December 2020. After transitioning into this unit, House of Hope's housing department will continue to work with this family on stabilization efforts, working to ensure success for many years to come!

**DID YOU KNOW THAT**



HOH now has a discreet Educational Fund which will enable us to respond more fully to the educational needs of our parents and children. Should you want to donate for this purpose, please note "Educational Fund" on your envelope.



## WE'RE OPEN!

We are so happy to have reopened The Hope Chest! Please stop by 11am - 5pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There is a great selection of very affordable children's winter clothing. For example: a winter hat is \$1 and a jacket is just \$5! We follow CDC workplace guidance. Masks and social distancing required in the store. Follow us on Facebook! @HopeChestLowell.



## HOH WINTER NEEDS LIST

For the safety of our families, at this time HOH is limiting donations to the following: House of Hope's easy Amazon Wish List <https://a.co/cSLJvP3> or WALMART LIST <https://www.walmart.com/registry/registryforgood/welcome> These items can be shipped directly to the shelter! Include your name & address so we can thank you!



**New Clothing needed:** Infant clothing 0-6 Months; Packaged underwear boys/girls/ladies/mens; Toddler boys and girls pants & shirts (sizes 4-16); sweat pants/Hoodie sweatshirts for teens (adult sizes); slippers for children & adults. Please ship them to HOH at 520 Fletcher St, Lowell, MA 01854.



Most needed Gift Cards for teens and parents: Walmart/Target/Market Basket/CVS/RiteAid/ Barnes & Noble/Dollar Tree/Five Below/VISA/Mastercard



For more information please email Edna at [edna.gustafson@houseofhopelowell.org](mailto:edna.gustafson@houseofhopelowell.org) or call 978-458-2870. Check out our "Needs List" post every month on Facebook too!

*One of the real joys of the Holiday Season is the opportunity to say "Thank You" and to wish you all the very best for the New Year!*

