

House of Hope, Inc.
812 Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA. 01854

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House of Hope Newsletter

812 Merrimack Street, Lowell MA 01854

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www.houseofhopelowell.org

Spring/Summer 2020

Dear Friends,

Like all of America, House of Hope was confronted with COVID-19 in mid-March, and we were scared. But, we have transformed that fear into compassionate energy.

The leadership team at HOH sprang into action, engaging in short and long term planning, imagining as many scenarios and responses as we could. We enlisted help from all employees as everyone assumed responsibility for sanitizing, hand washing and mask wearing. In order to reduce crowdedness, we encouraged residents who could safely spend time away from the shelter with family or friends to do so, while maintaining at least weekly contact with them. We removed some furniture from the dining room, switched to disposable plates and cutlery, offered meals on a staggered schedule, and added in-room eating when required. We stopped welcoming visitors, volunteers and guests and greatly reduced donations. Our board approved new expenditures for much-needed personal protective gear, cleaning equipment, and staff compensation. We spent a small fortune on our first order of face masks but had them available to all staff and residents by the end of March. Happily, subsequent orders were cheaper and gifts of both cloth and disposable masks have enabled us to have a decent supply on hand. Shelter directors moved families from one room to another in order to create some isolated quarantine spaces within the shelters and we identified available spaces outside of the shelter. TV's and Disney Plus were added to rooms and tablets were made available to residents through a lending library. All outside play equipment is sanitized daily and all residents are urged and staff required to mask up and maintain social distancing. We installed a sink in the dining room making it more convenient to wash hands before and after eating and any time in between!

Our planning continues as we imagine responses for worst case scenarios and tweak the changes we have already put into place. While we were executing our plans and changes, the community was remembering us by making many online donations and Foundations have offered us COVID-19 Support Grants. We have received notes and cards from our friends offering us prayers and support and gratitude for our efforts. We are reminded daily that we, the ESSENTIAL STAFF of HOUSE OF HOPE, are being supported and this feels really good as our employees report to work and then go home to deal with COVID related concerns there.

These 3+ months have indeed been stressful, the most stressful of my forty year career serving the homeless. We have had COVID cases among our sheltered families and an ability to swiftly respond and mitigate the risk of spread. No shelter employee has contracted COVID at work and no employee or resident has required ongoing medical intervention or hospitalization. But ... the risk has not subsided and we need to continue to maintain our efforts in all areas of shelter operations. We need do this in spite of the sadness around us; the sadness of COVID deaths, growing poverty and racial violence as well as the temptation to yield to cynicism and lose hope. Today more than ever, we do need to stand together while being apart! Please continue to remember the staff and homeless families at House of Hope as we move beyond this present time and hopefully into a brighter and healthier future.

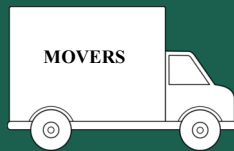
Sincerely,

Deb Chausse, Executive Director



Thank You Dale!

Dale served on our Board of Directors since July 2012. She has served as the Board Secretary since 2013 and then also served on the Harvest Event Committee since 2014! Dale consistently made a strong impact with an alert passion for the mission of House of Hope. Thank you to Dale and Happy Retirement!!



On The Move

*Chad Foley,
Housing Program Manager*

During this unprecedented time, safe and stable housing is more important than ever. House of Hope has been helping families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, pursuing the goal of obtaining sustainable housing for every family. Our Housing Advocates continue to exhaust all possible housing opportunities for each and every family, resulting in an average of 5 families per month securing permanent housing since the beginning of this crisis. Over the past few months, we have moved a total of 20 families out of shelter and into permanent housing.

Of these placements, 13 families moved into subsidized housing, which means their rent is based on approx. 30% of their household income. Given the incredibly challenging economy we're experiencing, this gives parents peace of mind knowing that if they have a decrease or loss of income their rent will be adjusted, allowing them to sustain their housing. Housing Advocates and Case Managers continue to support these families every step of the way from the housing search to the screening process to lease signing and finally, to moving into their new homes. During these very difficult times, House of Hope continues to support our families, that have been already handling the many unknowns of shelter life, guiding them into new beginnings where they can thrive.

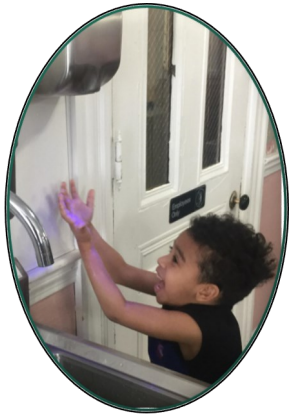
COVID CLEAN!



COVID READY!

A very BIG THANK YOU to our friends who brought us PPE face masks and LOTS of hand sanitizers:

- Andrew Boyle
- Marissa Barner and the New England Quilt Museum
- Cotton Masks Community
- First Church of Christ, Bedford
- Ann Jackson
- Mariposa
- MEMA
- Alyce Moore
- Sheryl Quinlan
- Kate Tyndall
- Trans Med USA, Inc.



GLCF THANK YOU

The Greater Lowell Community Foundation funded our COVID-Clean sink at the Fletcher shelter—the kids love it! In addition, the GLCF supported HOH with funds from the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund to launch our incentive pay for HOH staff during the pandemic. Awesome HELP!



YOU MAKE HOPE HAPPEN!



THANK YOU to all of the House of Hope supporters who put our families at the center of their holiday giving in 2019! Together, we provided the magic of Christmas with presents and love for 314 children (165 boys and 149 girls) from 164 families! The Adopt-a-Child Program and the holiday "Giving Trees" both received immense community support from so many families, companies, churches, organizations and individuals who shared their time, talent, and treasure with those who need it most right here in our community! At Easter, we delivered baskets to 75 children. For Mothers Day we shared special gifts for 40 moms, each received a gift card and a bouquet of Tulips (Tulips donated from Gaining Ground in Concord) **Together, we make all the difference!** - Edna Gustafson, Operations Manager

HOH NEEDS LIST

For the safety of our families, at this time HOH is limiting donations to the following:

- 1) Donations of COVID-19 related emergency materials
- 2) House of Hope's easy Amazon Wish List at <https://a.co/gKPsTp9> or WALMART LIST <https://www.walmart.com/registry/registryforgood/welcome>. These items can be shipped directly to the shelter!
- 3) New Summer Clothing for children ages newborn to teenagers: we need new lightweight summer clothing (Shorts/ short sleeve shirts/tank tops/ short sleeve onesies). Please ship them to HOH at 520 Fletcher St, Lowell Ma 01854. For more information or any questions, please email Edna at edna.gustafson@houseofhopelowell.org or call 978-458-2870.

