



# NEWSLETTER



*"By helping people move from crisis to stability, OHRA builds more capable individuals, stronger families and a better community."*

## Message from Michelle

*Michelle Arellano, OHRA Executive Director*

What a year and what a ride! When I joined OHRA just 12 months ago, I knew its work to be phenomenal. But when I started working closely with the staff, board, volunteers, community leaders, grantors and donors I was even more impressed. This organization changes lives for the better, and I am so grateful to be part of it!



At first, I focused on the normal executive director duties, reached out to leaders in government and nonprofits, reviewed fundraising and got to know our wonderful partner agencies. In the fall, I then set about to begin to fulfill my goal to ensure all our guests, whether housed or unhoused, had plenty of case management/navigation services as they assembled the building blocks for more stable lives.

In October, Cass Sinclair came on board to head up our shelter operations, and Lisa Smith joined the navigation team, then quickly became the dedicated shelter caseworker once the shelter season began. Everyone was delighted that we had one shelter location seven nights a week. Volunteers were doing their usual great job of operating a safe, respectful facility. Lisa's excellent case work facilitated permanent housing for 28 individual shelter guests. And then, a global pandemic! In alignment with national and local health authority recommendations, we reluctantly closed the shelter for the season 10 days early. But, the weather was still rough, and we had some fragile guests who still needed shelter. Enter ACCESS, the City of Ashland and United Way.

Each of these organizations stepped up and funded rooms for 11 of the most fragile until mid-May. Then the City asked us to manage temporary housing and provide navigation services for 50 additional COVID high-risk people with nowhere to "shelter in place." As a result of the City's grant for rooms plus our navigation, we're on track to find permanent housing for 11 more people. We also teamed with the City, the Ashland police and parks and recreation departments to allocate parking permits to the homeless who could use their cars to shelter in place.

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## Message from Michelle, con't

Additionally, meals traditionally provided by Peace House, Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice and the Monday Night Meal group were also impacted. Collaborating with the City and our community partners, we developed a plan to use the sidelined OHRA van to deliver meals to five drop-off points. Another problem solved with teamwork, collaboration and support from the City.

Meanwhile we had to close the Laundry/Shower Trailer. With high-risk volunteers sheltering in place and uncertainty about sufficient sanitizing, operations were suspended. Once again, our partners to the rescue. OHRA gave out numerous bus passes, laundry tokens and shower vouchers, courtesy of the City, St. Vincent de Paul and the Petro truck stop in Phoenix.

And what about the Resource Center? Unfortunately, we lost our center volunteers who needed to shelter at home. At the same time, guest “visits”, in person or over the phone, doubled to 50+ per day. To keep pace with demand (and cover Tina Stevens' coinciding maternity leave) we hired Sam Hough, Shira Chertoff and Emma Franz to navigate part-time.

Operations changed, too. We immediately installed a hand-washing station at our entry. All guests are met at the door and required to maintain social distancing for safety. Where we can, we answer guests needs over the phone, and appointments are encouraged to

respond to the increased demand for our services. Staff members continue to wear face masks, wipe down surfaces frequently and maintain distancing.

So how was my first year? Exciting, rewarding, and yes...challenging, given COVID complications. I am so grateful for the people of our city and our community partners.

This spring, in response to the pandemic and our mail fundraising campaign, we have received more than \$50,000 in donations – including some from first-time supporters. Thank you, generous people of Ashland!

I deeply appreciate how City Housing Specialist Linda Reid, then City Administrator Kelly Madding, the Ashland City Council and State Representative Pam Marsh teamed with us to take care of our most vulnerable neighbors. ACCESS, Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice, Peace Meals, United Way, Jackson County Continuum of Care, the Monday Night Food Group and community members together all worked hard to serve those in need.

And, I am honored to lead a staff dedicated to meeting people wherever they may be to help them move from crisis to stability.

What is the good thing about bad times? We really learn to appreciate one another.



Michelle Arellano, Executive Director

## ACCESS: OHRA's Partner Since Our Beginning

Who better to highlight in our first partner profile than OHRA's very first partner, ACCESS of Jackson County?

The relationship dates to October 2014, when the Ashland City Council asked OHRA and ACCESS to prepare a joint proposal for the “Resource Center for the Homeless” in Ashland. The City Council trusted ACCESS long experience serving the needs of Jackson County seniors, people with disabilities, children and people of low income. And, with ACCESS help and expertise, the two nonprofits crafted a detailed budget and timeline for services. The City said “yes” to OHRA's Resource Center by funding it for its first two years of operation with a \$100,000 grant.



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## ACCESS, con't

At the time, OHRA was staffed by one part-time director and dozens of volunteers. All were grateful when ACCESS, while acting as financial partner, helped OHRA with training, office set-up and social services best practices. OHRA's board knew that it did not matter how big our hearts were or how essential our assistance was to those in need, accounting procedures needed to be learned, daily financial decisions made, and bills paid on time. ACCESS helped OHRA through the learning curve.

Today, OHRA is a stand-alone agency with its own staff. However, the partnership with ACCESS remains strong. A year has not gone by without ACCESS and OHRA working together. Most recently, ACCESS provided invaluable funding for OHRA's Winter Shelter.

"Partnerships are critical for the health of our communities. OHRA has done incredible work to

provide resources for those seeking shelter and services to the most vulnerable in Ashland. ACCESS is proud to be a small part of this important work to neighbors in need," said Pam Norr, executive officer of ACCESS.

"OHRA owes so much to ACCESS. The Resource Center is the heart of our operation. Launching it without ACCESS would have been impossible," said Michelle Arellano, OHRA executive director.

Of course, ACCESS has many other projects of its own and its scope is impressive. In 2018-2019, it served 52,497 individuals in Jackson County, with an emphasis on providing food, warmth and shelter.

Though operating at different scales, both organizations share a common goal...to assist those in need in moving towards self-sufficiency.

Small wonder we are great partners!

## COVID-19: What's Next?

None of us knows what is waiting around the corner in this era of COVID-19, however OHRA Board President Diane de Ryss wants OHRA supporters and guests to know two things:

- Our guiding principle is the safety of our guests, staff, and volunteers.
- Our core mission is to help people reach stability, and we do this with our proven expertise in navigation/ case work, employment support and the traditional essential services of our Resource Center.

"OHRA needed to be extremely flexible and even more collaborative than usual in the early days of the pandemic," says de Ryss. "To help those in need, we took on additional emergency tasks such as food delivery and temporary housing. We worked on these in partnership with nonprofits, the City of Ashland, a number of government officials and agencies, and grass roots volunteers. Thankfully, special emergency funds were available. As COVID restrictions are now lifting, OHRA remains dedicated to its core mission.

We are grateful to our dedicated staff and every organization that worked together during this time of heightened need and for the funding to provide supplemental services."



**OHRA Staff geared up for COVID staff meeting.... lower left to lower right ...virtual Dave, Cass, Michelle, Shira, Pam, Emma, Sam & Lisa**



# Partners & Patrons 2020

**Our deep appreciation to these individuals who donated over \$1,000 during our spring campaign:**

**>10K**

Anonymous  
Elizabeth C Pease Memorial  
Fund for Education and  
Social Welfare

**5k-9999**

Tom & Nan Gunderson  
Cameron Hanson  
Miriam Schiffman

**1k-4999**

Anonymous (2)	Susan Peck Rust
Diane de Ryss	Eileen Piker
First Presbyterian Church, Ashland	Mark & Josephine Polakoff
Charles Haneberg	Reg and Susan Spittle
Gary & Judith Hansen	Temple Emek Shalom
Dennis Kendig	Wm G & Ruth T Evans Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation
Montye & Joseph Male	

**Options for Homeless Residents of Ashland  
abn Options for Helping Residents of Ashland  
is a 501 (c)(3) Oregon Nonprofit  
Federal Tax ID #61-1693223**

**Special thanks to these partnering organizations for their sustaining financial support thus far:**

ACCESS	Jackson Co Continuum of Care
AllCare Health	St Vincent de Paul
Anna May Foundation	Jackson Co. United Way
Carpenter Foundation	Leightman-Maxey Foundation
Carrico Foundation	Oregon Community Foundation-Schneider and Walker Family Funds
City of Ashland	Washington Federal
Collins Foundation	
Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation	
Jackson Care Connect	

**Special thanks to our community partners:**

City of Ashland	Peace House
Ashland Police	Henry's Laundromat
Ashland Fire Dept	Petro Truck Stop
State Rep Pam Marsh	Carlisle Garden Suites
Monday Night Food	Stratford Inn
Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice	Anonymous Hotel Ashland Hills Hotel

## Guest Success

*Spotlight on Stability*

Navigator Lisa Smith met David Athanas while he and his Labrador, Tripper, were guests at the OHRA Winter Shelter. While there, David's name came up on the Housing Authority section 8 voucher list, leaving OHRA and David just under two months to find an apartment using the voucher. David, Lisa learned, had been homeless for 38 years.

Lisa partnered with Charlotte Dorsey of St. Vincent DePaul, and together they started their search. David had lived his entire life in Ashland and wanted to be near his medical providers. His voucher however, was insufficient to cover costs for available options, so Lisa contacted the Housing Authority and asked for a "reasonable accommodation" to raise the amount it was willing to pay towards David's apartment.

During the process, David became critically ill and had to be taken out of the shelter by ambulance. He was in the ICU for almost ten days. Again, Lisa contacted the Housing Authority, this time asked for an extension of his voucher due to his illness. Thankfully it was granted.



**David Athanas, housed after 38 yrs**

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## Guest Success, con't

After his release, David was placed in a motel by his insurer because his illness made him very high risk for COVID-19. He was originally given two weeks in the motel. However, when housing was not found in that period, Lisa stepped up once again, petitioning for, and receiving two more weeks of motel payments.

During this period David found an apartment that suited him and Tripper. OHRA paid for the application fee, and David qualified for a loan from ACCESS for his rental deposit. David was accepted for the apartment, but it would not be ready for ten days and the insurance money had run out.

OHRA then moved him to a motel room secured for people who were high risk during the pandemic. Meanwhile David and Lisa worked hard on getting him, and his apartment, ready for his move. A woman

from St. Vincent DePaul contributed with the purchase of a bed for his new home.

On April 22nd, David came to the Resource Center to finalize the process. Not being housed for more than 30 years, David was unfamiliar with lease agreements, and Lisa spent a great deal of time reviewing and explaining its rules. David signed the lease virtually, and Lisa sent him to purchase his cashier's check and go back to the property management office to get his keys.

David stopped by the Resource Center the next day "with the biggest smile on his face," Lisa recalls. "He said he had spent his first night in his home. He had tears in his eyes."

## Staff Spotlight

A five minute talk with Lisa Smith leaves you with one question: where does she get the energy?

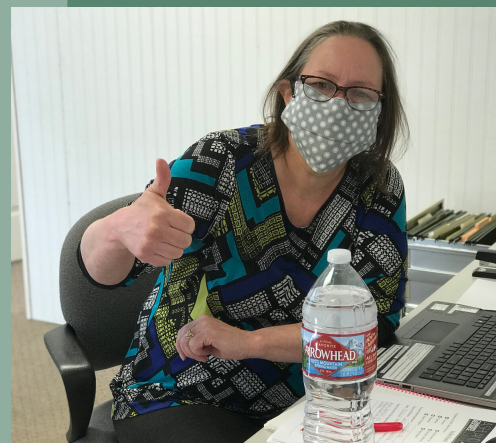
Lisa is a lead navigator at the Resource Center and was the dedicated shelter navigator during the season. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. Lisa is also the mother of 18 children aged 35 to age 6, and she and her husband fostered 15 of these children before adopting them. They did all of this while operating a 10-acre ranch, enjoyed by the six children still at home today.

And she is a part time bookkeeper for the Ashland Elks!

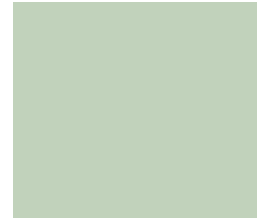
As a former program manager for CASA of Jackson County (a nonprofit that provides volunteer advocates for children in the court system), Lisa is an experienced social services provider.

Lisa loves working at OHRA's Resource Center and Shelter. "I love doing social services work. I enjoy helping people and meeting them where they are rather than setting expectations for their lives." Lisa's approach clearly works, as evidenced in this edition's "Guest Success" story about David Athanas. With Lisa's perseverance and OHRA's partner agency St. Vincent de Paul, David now has an apartment after 38 years of being homeless.

What's the source of Lisa's energy? In her own words: "Every day is a gift. Live it to the fullest."



**Lisa Smith, Lead Navigator**



WHAT'S INSIDE

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PARTNERS FROM  
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COVID 19: WHAT'S  
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## All Because of You...2019

**T**hanks to your generosity...



*and moved one step closer to stability!*