

OHRA Welcomes Executive Director Michelle Arellano

Organized. Compassionate. Committed. These words come to mind when talking with Michelle Arellano, OHRA's first Executive Director. Michelle joined OHRA on April 22, bringing with her more than 15 years of experience at the Boys and Girls Club. OHRA welcomes this valuable addition to its team.

"She will strengthen OHRA capabilities, community ties and fundraising. The ultimate beneficiaries will be the people we serve – families and individuals struggling to meet basic human needs such as shelter and employment," said OHRA Board President Ken Gudger.

"I'm excited to be working with such a caring, compassionate and dedicated group of people making an incredible difference," Michelle said. "OHRA's mission of serving those most in need is needed now more than ever. It aligns directly with my values."

A brief chat with Michelle reveals her drive and passions. She began working as a part-time bank teller at 17 in San Marcos, California. Later she joined the Boys and Girls Club, an organization she had learned about through her sister Tish, who worked for the organization for more than 30 years. Her work with that organization included being President and Chief Executive Officer of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Santa Monica, interim CEO for the club's Pacific Region, Director of Organizational Development for the Pacific Region, and President and Chief Executive Officer of the Boys and Girls Club of Southwest County (Temecula, California).

In addition to her work, travel and hiking, the subject that really lights up Michelle is her two grown sons. "They are the apple of my eye. I am so blessed," she said.



OHRA Executive Director Michelle Arellano

From Board President Ken Gudger

Wow! The last year has been a period of challenge and change for OHRA. This spring we hired our first Executive Director, Michelle Arellano. You can read about her in the article above. Michelle will be critical to the growth in our services.

Then there's the Ashland Winter Shelter which ACCESS asked OHRA to manage. Taking this on gave us the opportunity to bring some best practices from other shelters and to work with the amazing volunteers who have operated the program for more than 11 years. Managing the transition to a new model was a tall order including pre-screening guests, implementing behavioral norms and integrating case management.

Adding to the complexity was the fact that Pioneer Hall was not available for sleeping. But the city's faith community stepped up and offered their halls, making a seven-night shelter available for pre-registered guests. When the temperatures dropped below 22 degrees, we were able to open up Pioneer Hall as a warming center, augmenting the 34 spaces that were available in the seven-



Shelter volunteers contributed more than 5,500 hours last winter.

night-per-week shelter. Despite challenges the program scored many successes thanks to the outstanding corps of volunteers and 13 invaluable community partners. (See the note about its achievements on page 2). *Continued on page 2*

Gudger – Continued

I think OHRA is proudest of its ability to bring social services to shelter guests through our navigator (case manager) Chrystal Richard who operates from ACRC. Sometimes the screening process itself was valuable because it brought people who were unaware of our services into ACRC where we could help them find anything from jobs to housing to cell phones.

And we are not done! Last fall OHRA applied for a temporary use permit to site a shelter at 2082 East Main. We are still waiting to hear from the county on that. Meanwhile, volunteers have voiced concerns for documented roles, responsibilities and processes around next year's program. Board member Jackie Bachman is working as a liaison with our partners and volunteers, and Michelle is putting a priority on this as well. We are confident that with the learnings from last year, we and our partners can operate an even better shelter next season.

--- Ken Gudger, OHRA Board President

Meet Crystal Richard New ACRC Navigator

In January, Crystal Richard joined OHRA as the designated navigator (case manager) for the winter shelter program, a position she was attracted to when she came in to volunteer at the ACRC. In her role as navigator, she has made major contributions in getting shelter guests housing, jobs and essential services. She plans to continue at the ACRC until the fall when she enters the Oregon Health Sciences University Bachelor's of Science, nursing program at Southern Oregon University here in Ashland.

In her prior career Crystal was a surgical technologist for nine years. In this position she traveled to various hospitals throughout the U.S. and its territories, working in operating rooms with a variety of surgical specialties.



Shelter Navigator Crystal Richard

ACRC Finds Family A Home

(Each issue we try to profile one of our guests. Names are changed to protect confidentiality.)

Recently Amy and her adult daughter, Elizabeth, came to the ACRC to be screened for the winter shelter. For the past two years, they had rented a motel room during the winter months and car-camped in in the summer. Now, as the Ashland tourist season was starting, their rent was going to go from \$1,050 to \$1,900 per month. Although Amy has 3 jobs, she could not afford the increase.

Amy met with Crystal Richard who discovered that Amy had been a good renter and knew what her barriers were. Crystal began advocating for her and, within a week they met with a landlord and their application was approved.

Through ACRC, Amy met with St Vincent DePaul, which provided household goods, and furniture and, in late March, Amy and her daughter moved into their first home in 4 years.

Shower Trailer Update

The new laundry shower trailer arrived last year, however, on receipt, it did not meet our specifications, so it is currently with a contractor in Eugene who is making it safer and more accessible. It should arrive in May. Since September we have been using a trailer generously loaned to us by Grayback Forestry of Medford. We will be returning it this month. Once our trailer arrives, OHRA will need more volunteers to operate it at the Methodist United Church (Tuesdays), the Ashland Emergency Food Bank (Thursdays) and The Grove (Saturdays). Please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at admin@helpingashland.org if you would like to be part of this great program.

Family Fun Fest August 16

Set for Aug. 16 at the First United Methodist Church in Ashland, the Family Fun Fest provides food, games and school essentials from 4-7 p.m. Also supported by ACCESS, Rogue Community Health, the Ashland Emergency Food Bank, the Maslow Project, and the United Methodist Church, this event helps families handle "back-to-school" costs by offering backpacks filled with school supplies as well as haircuts and physicals for sport participation. Last year 200 children attended. This year the target is 350. All this fun requires lots of volunteers. If you can help, contact Volunteer Coordinator David Stoebel at admin@helpingashland.org.

Winter Shelter Successes

- 135 homeless people were screened.
- 99 of the most vulnerable were granted a shelter reservation.
- 17 are employed or seeking employment.
- 14 previously homeless have found housing; 30 submitted active applications for housing.
- 600+ other services were provided including food stamps, basic cell phones and bus passes
- Over 5,500 volunteer hours worked.

New OHRA Website

If you google OHRA you will find we have a new address and a new website: www.helpingashland.org. The site has the whole story of OHRA and its services, news updates, and even a way to donate on line. Check us out.