



Options for Helping Residents of Ashland
PO Box 1133
Ashland, OR 97520

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Newsletter

Winter 2022

OHRA's Board & Staff

OHRA BOARD

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Michelle Arellano
Grants Specialist
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Director of Administration
Julie Carr
Director of Program Services
Lisa Smith
OCRC/LST Supervisor
Katie Blomgren
Shelter/ Facilities Supervisor
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Newsletter

Winter 2022

Message from Cass

Happy New Year!

Do you know that 2022 marks OHRA's 10-year anniversary?

Since our founding in 2012, we have grown by listening to our community, learning, and adapting. Take a look at the timeline on the next page, and you can see how we've changed. Of course, our most recent major milestone was a big one: opening The OHRA Center. (See page 3 for an update.)

We have not talked much about another major change: OHRA now has a broader reach. Despite our name—Options for Helping Residents of Ashland—OHRA has become a valued resource for people in need throughout Jackson County.

This expansion was inevitable because no one else in the Rogue Valley offers resource navigation like ours. Whether housed or unhoused, with no screening or background checks, guests get help from a resource navigator on everything from preventing eviction to getting a job, from finding shelter to accessing health care. No matter how someone finds us—walking in the door of our Resource Center, becoming a guest at our Shelter, taking a shower at the Laundry/Shower Trailer—a resource navigator is there.

OHRA's navigators are effective because of their network and their training. They leverage a robust network of partner agencies and services to help guests solve problems and take their next step toward stability. As importantly, OHRA staff are trained professionals. They follow an evidence-based approach for working with people in crisis.



Some of OHRA's dedicated navigators and shelter staff

In the social service sector, it's called trauma-informed. Navigators help each guest find and take their next attainable step. They never judge. They always listen. They build trust and spark hope.

Over the past two years, OHRA's geographic reach also stretched because we responded to the times, stepping forward to meet the needs brought on by the pandemic and fires.

For example, in 2020, Jackson County ACCESS approached OHRA to distribute federal COVID relief funds to community members in southern Jackson County. As a result, OHRA distributed \$1.5 million to get people newly housed or provide rent relief to tenants.

And when the Alameda Fire wiped out homes in Talent and Phoenix, OHRA's resource navigators were a life-line, finding temporary shelter and securing benefits for many. We soon added more Spanish speaking staff and now our Resource Center receptionist, two navigators, and a number of our shelter staff are bilingual
(continued on page 2)

Founded by a group of concerned volunteers to help the homeless in Ashland, OHRA now offers skilled support and compassion to anyone in need, housed or unhoused, and serves as a trusted resource in Jackson County.

Message from Cass cont'd

These efforts to meet needs in our broader community are consistent with our role as an access point for Jackson County’s Continuum of Care, the HUD-mandated effort to end homelessness. (See page 3 for a brief update on OHRA’s DEI efforts.) That alliance, through which we share data and can secure federal funding, also means OHRA’s doors are open to anyone in our county seeking to stay housed or find shelter.

Throughout our many changes, our mission has remained constant: helping people move from crisis to stability. Throughout it all, we have been blessed by the time, talent, and support you and so many in this community have contributed. **We are grateful for everything you do to ensure that OHRA continues as a vital resource helping those in need.** ■

Wishing you the best in 2022,



Cass Sinclair, Executive Director

Message from Dan

As the current president of the OHRA Board, I want to thank everyone – staff, fellow board members and most of all, you, gentle reader – for enabling OHRA to once more navigate a challenging year while staying true to our vision: “To bring people from crisis to stability.” We owe you a debt of gratitude for your huge role in helping our guests progress to safer, healthier lives.



I hope this newsletter helps you to get to know us better. We will feature some of our staff and board members over the coming months and continue to feature guest stories.

A Brief History of OHRA	
2012	OHRA is formed by a group of committed individuals to help unhoused people in Ashland.
Nov 2013	OHRA opens the Laundry/Shower Trailer
Feb 2014	OHRA opens its volunteer-staffed Resource Center.
Jun 2015	OHRA hires its first professional resource navigator.
Jan 2017	OHRA develops a 5-year Strategic Plan, formalizing its vision and mission.
Mar 2017	OHRA welcomes its first Advisory Council to help us hear the voice of our community.
Nov 2018	OHRA begins to manage the Ashland Winter Shelter, partnering with faith-based organizations and dedicated volunteers.
Apr 2019	OHRA hires its first Executive Director, and later its first full-time Shelter Director.
Mar 2020	The COVID-19 Pandemic strikes. OHRA changes to meet the unprecedented demand.
Nov 2020	OHRA reinvents its Winter Shelter ensuring that guests stay warm, safe and COVID-free.
Feb 2021	OHRA is awarded the first Project Turnkey grant of \$4.2 million in state funds to purchase an underutilized Ashland motel and transform it into The OHRA Center.
2021	The OHRA Center becomes Ashland’s first 24/7/365 shelter and the new home of the Resource Center. Remodeling is underway so we have a safe, accessible, efficient, and effective building for our mission.

Philosopher and theologian Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) wrote:

“Poverty is the load of some, and wealth is the load of others, perhaps the great load of the two. Bear the load of your neighbor’s poverty, and let them bear with you the load of your wealth. You lighten your load by lightening theirs.”

Together through OHRA, we bear the burdens of our neighbors and lighten loads, enabling people to regain their lives. Thank you so much for supporting us!

Sincerely,



Rev. Dan Fowler, OHRA Board President

Great gifts come with great responsibilities!

The \$4.2 million grant OHRA received in February 2021 to buy a motel was an incredible gift. But, the \$4.2 million was just enough to purchase a former motel in south Ashland, and partially fund the construction of an ADA accessible elevator. Fully utilizing such a key asset, now called The OHRA Center, brought additional organizational costs ranging from increased staff to remodeling expenses. While these were anticipated expenses, they are proof that “to whom much is given, much is required.” The responsibility for wisely managing and maintaining this new community asset is one OHRA takes very seriously.



Recruiting and paying staff for The OHRA Center’s shelter was an early challenge. The shelter operates 12 months a year, 24 hours a day; in the past OHRA ran a five-month, 12-hour-a-day shelter. OHRA also needed to increase the number of navigators to ensure they are available to our walk-in Resource Center guests as well as the Center’s residents. The increase to staffing, which

is critical to the successful operation of our programs, significantly impacted OHRA’s budget. In addition, OHRA must now cover the costs of running a building, including utilities, insurance, laundry, and maintenance.

The remodeling work (shown below) has also begun. We are fortunate to have partnered with Golden Fields Construction & Design to ensure The OHRA Center is safe, accessible, efficient and a good fit for OHRA’s programs.

Fill in the indoor pool to create usable space	Completed
Install fire sprinklers	Underway
Install ADA accessible elevator	Underway
Build out office space for navigators	Underway
Build out office space for our partners	Underway
Build out offices for administrative staff	Underway
Add ADA accessible bathrooms to 7 shelter rooms	Next Phase

“This is a lot of work, but it is work we are delighted to do because of the huge benefits it brings to our guests and our community. With a dedicated and talented staff and a solid track record of helping those in need, we succeeded in securing this Project Turnkey grant through the Oregon Community Foundation,” says Cass Sinclair, OHRA executive director. “Our gratitude to all who made this possible knows no bounds. Stay tuned, there is more work to do, and we will continue to need community support to maximize the benefits of this wonderful asset.”

- When speaking with donors or friends around town, OHRA staff and board hear questions about our work.
- For that reason, we are starting a regular feature that will address some of the questions we get.

In its strategic plan adopted in 2017, OHRA defined “respect” for all people as a key value. Three years later, the board made this value more explicit by adopting this policy of diversity, equity and inclusion: “OHRA is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive culture for all our program participants/ guests, staff, volunteers, community partners and board members. We accomplish this through values, leadership, policies, practices and day-to-day interactions. We define diversity in terms of socio-economics, race, gender, religion, culture, national origin, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical abilities, physical and mental health, age, parental status and immigration status. We respect different experiences and cultures

Where is OHRA on diversity, equity, and inclusion?

and we value an environment in which our guests, staff and community members feel supported, recognized.”

“We continue to breathe life into this policy as we strive to improve how we work. We now have bilingual Latinx staff as well as Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2+ staff. We will soon have a Spanish version of our website, our board is now more diverse, and board and staff will continue their DEI training,” says Executive Director Cass Sinclair. OHRA Board President Dan Fowler adds, “In 2022 we will develop a DEI plan. This continues to be a top priority of the board and staff.”

Meet staff member Dave Stoebel

David Stoebel got into nonprofit work because “I wanted to work for the people who were working for the people who sleep under the bridge.”

Dave, whose title is grants specialist, is one of those behind-the-scenes people who make OHRA tick. He is OHRA’s grant writer, and as such he plays a key role in contributing to OHRA’s income stream. Grants, primarily from foundations – both public and private – finance a large portion of the work OHRA does. Another significant portion comes from individual donors. Both are key. Being a grant writer was not Dave’s original career goal. He started out seeking a career in science but discovered that he was drawn to human services. He got a job with a county alcohol and drug prevention program and later became a nonprofit executive director. Eventually he started doing consulting, both in grant writing and in strategic

planning. In fact, David facilitated the development of OHRA’s first strategic plan.

Dave and his partner, Nadine, retired to Ashland in 2014, and during one of his neighborhood walks, he noticed OHRA’s facility, then on Clover Lane. OHRA was looking for volunteers, and it seemed like a good fit. David initially worked the front reception desk, where he got a first-hand feel for the work that OHRA does – helping those struggling with poverty, joblessness and/or other crises. Perhaps that is one of the reasons he so well represents OHRA in the grant applications he writes. Why does he continue to do this work past retirement age? In the Jewish faith, he explains, there is an imperative to “repair the world.” This, he explains, is his way of trying to do just that.



OHRA Board Member Jackie Bachman’s resume reflects her long-standing commitment to humanity and community.

She launched her career as an elementary special education teacher in Southern California and then moved on to positions including assistant principal, principal of a school for severely disabled students, then later, as director of special education. After retiring and moving to Ashland with her husband, Jim, in 2015, Jackie immersed herself in the community, serving on the city’s Homeless Task Force and the Housing and Human Services Commission as well an appointed term on the Ashland City Council.

Jackie joined the OHRA Board of Directors in January 2019 after she went to an OHRA orientation for volunteers. Two board members quickly spotted Jackie’s passion for people in crisis and recruited her.

Since joining the board, she has been one of its most active members, previously chairing its Advisory Council and now serving on its Board Development and Resource Development committees. She is always helping to recruit volunteers, employees and donors. “I like doing the job of connecting to the community,” she says. If Jackie had a title other than board member, it would be “networker-in-chief.”



Meet board member Jackie Bachman, OHRA’s Networker-in-Chief

OHRA is not her only pastime. Jackie loves theater improvisation as well as dancing, and cites the many dancing groups and lessons she attends (global dancing, line dancing, Broadway dancing). She and her husband also administer the Facebook group, “A More Livable Ashland for Everyone,” which is committed to “constructive engagement” to solve issues rather than complain about them.

“**This is a community that really cares about people and shows it by giving time, money, and creativity to helping others in need. I am happy to be part of that,**” Jackie says.

“My coach, my teammate, my umpire”

OHRA meticulously tracks and counts the services it provides. But sometimes it is hard to quantify what may be the most vital service – being a companion on a guest’s road to recovery.

Susan (not her real name) is a guest whose story and note of appreciation to OHRA stress the value of having someone to lean on when you hit a rough patch.

Susan originally came to OHRA nearly two years ago. She had been working with an OHRA partner, St. Vincent de Paul, on the problem of stable housing, but then Susan’s car broke down and she lost both transportation and a potential (although not ideal) shelter. Lead Navigator Tina Stevens worked with Susan and, with other OHRA partners, raised money for car repairs. However, that did not end the problem of her unsafe housing (couch surfing and even sheltering in a former shop). Eventually, Susan moved into the OHRA Center as a stop gap. Tina worked with her to get a Jackson County Housing Authority voucher and then the housing authority found a landlord who would take the voucher. Here is part of Susan’s note to OHRA, United Way and St. Vincent de Paul.

“This has been a very long journey. But I wasn’t alone on my path. I had you, Tina. You had my back through every single step. I don’t know what I would have done without you rooting me on, being my coach, my teammate and my umpire.”

Susan talked about moving out of her OHRA Center room for its next guest. “This was a wonderful place to be. You are all amazing people.”



Lead Resource
Navigator Tina Stevens

1,730 Showers provided at the Laundry/Shower Trailer in last fiscal year

1,200 Average number of monthly visits to Resource Center over last 18 months

145 Number of people who have stayed at The OHRA Shelter since opening in April

47 Number of guests living in The OHRA Shelter at end of November

8 Number of Shelter guests currently employed

3 Number of guests moving into permanent housing

**OHRA by
the
numbers**