



Newsletter

Fall 2022

Message from Cass

As we are coming into another holiday season and the year's end draws nearer, I find myself in a time of reflection. It's human nature to have one eye towards the future: What's next? How can I improve? What am I excited for? What am I fearful of? However, in this present moment I am in awe over the journey that OHRA has been on. I relish this moment in OHRA's history. An overwhelming feeling fills my heart: **gratitude.**



I have so much gratitude for our guests who continue to find hope in hopeless situations. **It is an act of bravery to walk through OHRA's doors and allow other people to help you.** Some of us have never experienced the trauma our guests face. Others of us are all too familiar with those hardships. Thanks to community partners, grantors, donors, and friends of OHRA, our guests don't have to walk that road alone. OHRA is here to walk alongside them. To read about one incredible journey, go to **Henry's story on page 11.**

I am grateful for OHRA's staff. This work isn't easy -- but it's so rewarding. **The empathy and resourcefulness of our frontline staff continues to astound me.** Their commitment to training, learning, and connecting is something to strive for. Our administrative staff are organized, sharp, and creative, continuing to support the organization. To see the impact of our staff's hard work, look for **OHRA by the Numbers on page 7.**

OHRA's board of directors is in a season of strategic planning. Their commitment to OHRA's future, OHRA's vision, and OHRA's mission inspires me. Our board's dedication to learning, fundraising, and stewarding is stalwart. In our last strategic planning session 5 years ago, those goals seemed so big. And yet, **here we are today--**



Cass presenting to a group from OLLI, see more on page 10

in a new era of OHRA. I believe that our next season will be just as rich and meaningful.

Without OHRA's robust network of community partners, the life changing, lifesaving, life transforming programs and services wouldn't be possible. Community partnership is at the heart of OHRA's service model. When we envisioned the OHRA Center, we saw more than a shelter and a resource center -- we saw a social service hub. We saw a way to bring the social service resources of Jackson County right to our guests' doorstep.

That vision is being realized with the addition of the Wellness Center in partnership with La Clinica and community partner room coming in 2023. That is also realized through our longtime relationships with so many organizations, and brand new relationships with others. To see our community partner organizations, check out our gratitude lists on page 8. Also, look at the stories of **partnership with OLLI and AAUW on pages 10 and 11.**

OHRA was built on the time and talent given by volunteers -- and this season is no different. **Our volunteers show up, rain or shine, to help where it's needed most. To see their incredible efforts, look to page 4.**

I owe an eternal debt of gratitude to our donors and grantors, who are **the lifeblood of this organization,** keeping our doors open and our programs thriving year after year.

Lastly, but most importantly -- I am grateful for you. You, the sweet soul reading this newsletter, for taking time out of your day to care about this essential community resource. **All of us need all of us -- and OHRA needs you.** Thank you for a spectacular year of hope.

Cass Sinclair, Executive Director

Message from Dennis



The leaves are turning to their beautiful autumn colors, there's a nip in the air, the blessings of rain and the end of the fire season – fall is upon us. Thanksgiving and the holiday season are just ahead. Speaking personally and as president of OHRA, I feel such gratitude for the many wonderful and caring people who ded-

icate their time and energies to our mission and those we seek to help find a better place and a better path forward. My newest line – how do you spell caring? OHRA. This includes all of our wonderful supporters, people who invest in our mission with their time and financial support. I am so grateful for the good people I serve with on our board who take the responsibility of helping build and make sustainable our Center and our Shelter, and they give their considerable financial support as well. Our donors who step up to help us provide the services that are so vital to the vulnerable people we serve. We cannot do this without them, and their financial support means more than just the dollars and cents of it all, their support also gives us

a boost of positive energy that helps propel us forward. Our mighty staff, I cannot find adequate words of appreciation to express the deep support they provide so many at our Center. Lifesaving and life changing assistance.

“Yes, my gratitude is deep, my heart is full.”

Our senior management team, lead by our super and dedicated Executive Director Cass Sinclair, all who work so diligently along side our Center and Shelter staff to provide opportunity for those who seek assistance and often cannot find it elsewhere. Yes, my gratitude is deep, my heart is full. I am so grateful for the combined effort of so many people in so many ways. As Thanksgiving approaches I will say a heartfelt thank you for being a part of this wonderful world of caring we are building. How do we spell caring? OHRA.

Dennis Slattery, OHRA Board President

**Give a gift that lasts forever--
an engraved OHRA brick**



As the holiday season approaches, many of us are asking ourselves, “What is a meaningful gift?” In a season filled with consumerism, we encourage you to consider a gift that transcends: an engraved brick at The OHRA Center.

When you give the gift of a brick, for just \$500, you are honoring your loved one in a permanent way, and also giving the gift of hope to OHRA's guests this holiday season. Every guest and community member who visits OHRA will be able to see the support you give in a tangible way.

Ready to give the gift of hope that lasts forever? Use the enclosed order form and envelope to secure your brick today. You can also order your brick by visiting:

helpingashland.org/campaign

It's in the bag

Padraic McGuire, owner of the Green Springs Inn & Cabins, made a generous donation to the OHRA Center in October – 18 very large recycling bins full of returnables. Those 18 bins resulted in over 100 green bags, ready to be a “starter bag” for guests of OHRA who want to start recycling for income.



The green bags are part of BottleDrop – Oregon’s bottle and can return program. To get started, folks need to make an account with BottleDrop through a kiosk, redemption center, online, or on the app. Then they can visit a participating location to get bag stickers that link to their account and a roll of green recycling bags. Each account can return up to 15 green bags per quarter.

For OHRA’s guests, not only does the program provide possible income, but also a digital savings account. They can spend their balance as cash, or spend it at participating BottleDrop Plus retailers and their funds go 20% further.



How can you help? Two ways. Once you get your own BottleDrop account set up, you can donate any part of you account balance to participating nonprofits like OHRA. Also, you can participate in OHRA’s blue bag fundraiser – stop by the OHRA Center to get a blue bag with a special OHRA sticker, fill it up, and drop it off any redemption center. In Ashland, visit Shop ‘n’ Kart, and in Medford visit the redemption center.



We are so grateful to Padraic, son of our local state representative Pam Marsh, for the generous donation he made. The ability to earn income, start to save, and contribute to the recycling program is so meaningful for our guests -- it gives people purpose, dignity, and hope. Thank you to all our supporters and community partners!

Be part of something bigger



When you and your family set up monthly giving you are becoming part of a stable foundation that will provide programs and services to your most vulnerable neighbors.

Three giving levels:

- **Friend, \$20 per month**
- **Supporter, \$50 per month**
- **Advocate, \$100 per month and beyond**

At every level, you will receive:

- Special communications six times per year full of exciting information about OHRA including current events and heartwarming guest stories.
- Invitation to the annual OHRA Circle of Hope reception event.
- A personal tour of The OHRA Center with OHRA Executive Director Cass Sinclair.

To join the OHRA Circle of Hope today, visit helpingashland.org/campaign or use the enclosed giving envelope.

We are so grateful for our volunteers!

Doggy Day with Rogue Credit Union & Street Dogs

Volunteers from Rogue Credit Union gave up part of their Saturday on October 1st to start construction on a pet enclosure for dogs belonging to those staying at The OHRA Shelter. Street Dogs, a nonprofit devoted to promoting quality of life for the pets of unhoused people, was also on-site doing education, outreach, offering pet supplies, dog food, and to take sign-ups for spaying/neutering and vaccinations.



From left: Cass Sinclair, OHRA guest, Nancy Lyon (Street Dogs), Jo Cooper (Street Dogs), and "Rebel" the doggy.

"For people experiencing homelessness, pets are best friends, even family. Dogs offer unconditional love and are a great comfort to people in crisis," said Cass Sinclair, executive director of OHRA. "Part of providing 'low-barrier' shelter means lowering barriers to entry. Allowing folks to bring their pets is just one way that we do that." The pet enclosure recognizes the importance of pets for vulnerable populations. We look for ways to keep owners and pets together.



Fire prevention day with Ashland F&R

Volunteers came out on October 22nd, a cold & rainy Saturday to help at the new OHRA Center property, working to remove juniper bushes from near the building. OHRA had a property fire risk assessment recently, and one of the recommendations made was to remove the shrubbery in preparation for the next fire season. Juniper is considered highly flammable.



Ashland Fire & Rescue also came out-- they offered education, resources, and the chance for folks to sign up for a fire risk assessment at their own property. A lot has changed in our community over the last few years. Wildfires are now a part of our lives and it's more important than ever to do what we can to protect ourselves, our neighborhoods, and our community. OHRA's programs and services have always been possible thanks to generous and dedicated volunteers.



Ready to volunteer? Go to helpingashland.org/volunteer to see current volunteer opportunities or email volunteer@helpingashland.org

Unitarians feeding guests of OHRA Shelter

OHRA and Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (RVUUF) share a long tradition of helping folks in need in our community – and this compassionate partnership is back at it again. Beginning in October, RVUUF began providing meals to guests at the OHRA Shelter every Thursday night.



RVUUF has been active in providing meals to people in our community in different ways for many years. When OHRA was operating the Winter Shelter during the height of the pandemic at the Ashland Presbyterian Church, RVUUF was providing meals then. Zoe Laidlaw, RVUUF member and volunteer, explained that providing meals to the OHRA Shelter feels full circle. Just like RVUUF was there for OHRA’s Winter Shelter, OHRA was there for RVUUF as part of an effort that sheltered and fed folks at the RVUUF sanctuary when the Ashland winter shelter rotated among faith communities.



Laidlaw says, “It’s part of our mission to engage in this work because the RVUUF is a fellowship, built on a core of principles about justice, equity, and compassionate service. Doing this work is a tangible way of putting our

“Overall, the chance to be a part of something bigger than myself was an experience that I would cherish and remember forever. I will reflect on my days at the OHRA when I need to remember what it means to help others and do something for the community.”

-OHRA volunteer”

principles into action.” Laidlaw oversees the Thursday night meal program, organizing and planning with help from 6-10 different volunteers each week who contribute different elements of the meals. Other members who cannot help with cooking donate to a fund that supports this program. Each week, volunteers drop off all the individual components of the delicious meals and OHRA staff helps assemble individual portions. Guests are still dining separately in their rooms due to COVID restrictions for shelter.

OHRA is so incredibly grateful for our long partnership with RVUUF and for the warm meals being provided to guests every single Thursday night.



We want to say a special thank you to Suzi & Bob Given for hosting a fabulous fundraising event at their Ashland home. We are so grateful for their ongoing support and belief in OHRA’s mission.

Thank you Suzi & Bob for your lifetime of philanthropy and all you do for this community.

A couple's compassion: Nan and Tom Gunderson

OHRA would not be able to serve those in need without our donors and volunteers. To express gratitude, we are printing profiles of some of our many outstanding supporters, beginning with Nan and Tom Gunderson.

Even a casual acquaintance of Nan and Tom Gunderson would not be surprised to learn that they met doing volunteer work in a Chicago housing project. Tom was a VISTA volunteer and Nan was a student at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. How they met is no revelation because generosity of spirit and compassion are hallmarks of this couple. They have spent their careers and free time working with those in need.

They moved to Ashland more than 27 years ago after living in New York City, Anchorage and Portland. Tom had just accepted the job of executive director of the Southern Oregon Child Study & Treatment Center (now known as Family Solutions). The move led to more community involvement. Tom is a former member of the Ashland Housing and Human Services Commission, the Ashland Emergency Food Bank, the Ashland Chamber of Commerce and current member of the board of Rogue Retreat and Family Solutions. As an MSW (master's in social work) and certified alcohol and drug counselor Nan has worked in hospital settings and On Track. The Gunderson family includes three adult sons living in Oregon. Nan is currently a peer-to-peer volunteer counselor for Age Wise Age Well and active in outreach with Grace Lutheran Church.



“We are thankful for the support we have received from Nan and Tom,” says OHRA Executive Director Cass Sinclair. “Their expertise in social services is only surpassed by their compassion and commitment to those in greatest need. We were honored by their hosting of a fundraising for OHRA as well



as their ongoing support and advice as we advance our capital campaign and operations.”

Nan says, “Tom and I are able to give to OHRA thanks to an inheritance from my father. He was a generous man of faith and encouraged his children to support charities. We are glad to be part of the OHRA family.” Tom adds, “We are very impressed by OHRA’s staff and programs.” They learned about OHRA through Tom’s work on the Housing and Human Service Commission, which has made grants to the organization. Tom was already on the board of Rogue Retreat and he felt it was time to do something more local. With a very generous donation, Nan and Tom have sponsored a room at The OHRA Center-- the training and conference room.

“Their expertise in social services is only surpassed by their compassion and commitment to those in greatest need.”

Because of Tom’s and Nan’s background in social work they understand the value of OHRA navigators, who are at the heart of OHRA’s work. In their careers, they have both been case workers, the phrase that formerly described navigators’ work. Case managers help those in crisis navigate their way through the maze of social services to find or keep housing, address other issues and build more stable lives.

Nan states: “Often what we do at Age Wise Age Well is simply listen.” Active listening is a quality they share with OHRA, because as Cass likes to say, “We meet people where they are, and you don’t know that until you listen.”

Interested in sponsoring a room at The OHRA Center? Email ZoeT@helpingashland.org

**From the heart:
Hear from OHRA's guests**

**All names used with permission*

“ *I've been blessed with being able to move out of my old Volvo to a room with a real bed and a shower! An evening meal, privacy... I was "car living" for approximately two years. I was hit by a truck as I was walking and had a broken pelvis. Rogue Retreat's shelter [where I has been staying] had closed... I was still recovering, using a walker. A very kind person made sure I was accepted at OHRA. I've had help from my navigator, Sara, and been able to deal with past traffic fines, order a birth certificate, sign up for housing vouchers, and obtain my award letter from Social Security. I am so very grateful!* **”**

-Linda, guest of OHRA*

“ *Working with OHRA, I have received clothing vouchers, Laundry Love services, a bus pass, food, and hope-- with confidence to progress forward.* **”**

-Anonymous guest of OHRA

“ *My situation is vastly improving. A lot of it is to do with the help OHRA provided me with. Everyone there made me feel comfortable. They went above and beyond to help me.* **”**

-Anonymous guest of OHRA

**OHRA by
the
numbers**



Some of OHRA's caring, hardworking staff

55+ number of community partners OHRA works with to create the best outcomes possible for our guests

70 average number of services offered daily at the Resource Center this fall

21 shelter guests who were employed in October

22% of guests who have stayed at the OHRA Shelter are now permanently housed

23,492 nights of shelter offered at the OHRA Center from 04/01/21 to 10/10/22

Thank you!

Empower a Life, Transform a Community Campaign Donors

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 The Macdonald Foundation
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 William Wood
 Zoë Templeton
 and many anonymous donors



Oregon state senator Jeff Golden and Bob Given



Rick Barth and former mayor of Ashland John Stromberg

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A lot has changed at OHRA, but one thing never will -- everything we do is possible only because of YOU! OHRA's cutting edge, wrap-around services are available to the most vulnerable people in our community because of the huge support we receive. Every grant, every volunteer hour, every dollar donated, every social media 'like' and 'share', makes a difference in the lives of your neighbors. Thank you for believing in us, believing in our guests, and believing in the possibility of a brighter future where everyone has a roof over their head.

Community Partners

Richard H. Browne
Robert Hilton
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Ronda And Ross Barker
Rosalie Wolff & Philip Westergaard
Ross Albertson & Jacqueline Brodsky
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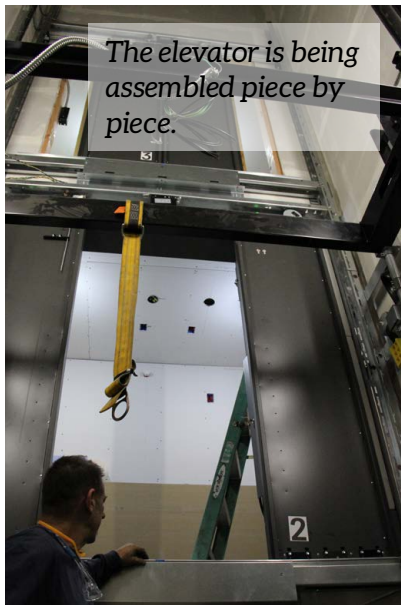
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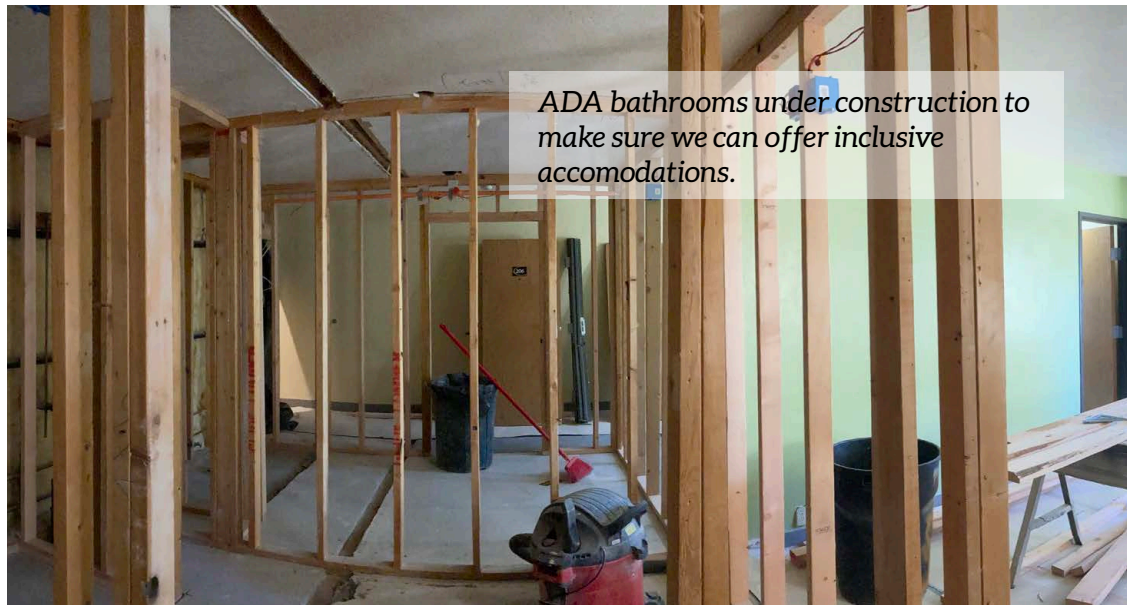
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State of Oregon - Measure 110
State of Oregon - Project Turnkey
Storms Family Foundation

OHRA Center Construction Update

The big news at the OHRA Center this fall is the elevator and the ADA bathrooms on the second floor -- they are going in! The elevator, funded by City of Ashland and Project Turnkey, will serve all three floors of The OHRA Center. 4 ADA bathrooms are going in on the second floor to better serve our guests living with disabilities. Both projects will be finished by year end.



The elevator is being assembled piece by piece.



ADA bathrooms under construction to make sure we can offer inclusive accommodations.

On September 14th, OHRA welcomed ten OLLI members to the OHRA Center for a Guided Exploration on homelessness and poverty. OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Southern Oregon University, provides older adults with intellectually stimulating courses and social functions.



OHRA + OLLI

nity, moving folks from crisis to stability. She shared some very **heartwarming stories about the success OHRA guests are having in finding jobs and permanent housing.** OHRA Board Member Jackie Bachman spoke to the group about how she became involved with OHRA. She explained that what motivates her to help OHRA succeed in our community is that OHRA provides critical services for **any person who walks through the OHRA Resource Center door** needing help.

The OLLI Guided Exploration concluded with a walking tour of the OHRA Center. The OLLI members were very enthusiastic about the progress OHRA has made in building the new OHRA Center with over 50 shelter rooms for guests, as well as the future site of the OHRA Wellness Center in partnership with La Clinica and the community partner room.

If you are interested in learning more about OHRA, look for another OLLI Guided Exploration in the future, possibly in the Spring, advertised in the OLLI Newsflash. To learn more, visit:

inside.sou.edu/olli/guided-explorations.html



Cass Sinclair, OHRA's executive director, spoke to the group about the many challenges of homelessness and poverty as well as solutions to solve these challenges. OHRA's housing first strategy is proven to work. Lisa Smith, OHRA's director of program services, explained how OHRA is changing people's lives in our commu-

Henry's story: Housing, hope, and healing

“I had angels on my side. That is how I got into here.” With those words, Henry* explains how he felt about entering the OHRA Shelter following years of trauma and rough living conditions.

He lost his wife in March to a bacterial infection he believes was caused by contaminated water in a California shelter where they lived. Ultimately, Henry and that shelter parted ways. Henry said the shelter would not give him a room other than the same one he had shared with his wife. Staying in the space they had shared was terribly painful. He came to the Rogue Valley where his sister lives and heard about the OHRA shelter. Since then, he has been trying to recover his wife's remains.

“Go to OHRA on walk-in Wednesday or arrange an appointment. Don't give up.”

He is clear about his long-term goal: **“My intention is to get myself together to I can get my own place. Everything else will fall into place.”**

Marianne, Henry's OHRA navigator, says that OHRA has been working with Henry for about three months. “The first thing we did is get him signed up for HUD Section 8 housing choice voucher programs in Jackson and Josephine counties.”

Marianne says OHRA was able to locate his wife's remains and is in the process of bringing her ashes “home to Henry.” They are also working on getting him a birth certificate. “We are trying to tackle all the basic needs first -- ID, housing and hope.” **Like all of us, she says, Henry has his dream: “having a barbecue at his very own home.”**



Henry and Marianne

Henry suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder from a robbery in which he was beaten with a baseball bat while in his 20s. He is now 58 and also has bi-polar disorder. His only belongings were a bicycle and half a bag of clothing when he moved into the shelter. He believes that with OHRA's help he can find a more stable life. He thinks the same can be true for others.

Henry repeatedly tells people, “Go to OHRA on walk-in Wednesday or arrange an appointment. Don't give up.” Henry is not giving up, nor, he says is Marianne his navigator. “She is a saint.”

**All names used with permission*

OHRA + AAUW



The American Association of University Women/Ashland Branch recently launched the “Big Ideas” series of free public programs in collaboration with Jackson County Library Services.



de Ryss



Rep. Marsh

Sessions are booked on the first Tuesday of the month, **4:00-5:30 p.m., in the Gresham Room at Ashland Library, 410 Siskiyou Blvd.**

The second program is on **January 3** and the topic is **“Adult Homelessness: New Approaches & Solutions.”** OHRA Board Member Diane de Ryss and Rep. Pam Marsh, Oregon House of Representatives, District 5, are the featured speakers. Rep. Marsh will be discussing Project Turnkey legislation and the state's role in addressing homelessness. Diane de Ryss will be discussing OHRA's approach and why it's so effective, as well as sharing data and stories about who OHRA serves and the outcomes for OHRA's guests. The “Big Ideas” series is open to all members of the public.



PO Box 1133
Ashland, OR 97520



A brick for the holidays... info inside!

What's inside

- Volunteer days-- puppies, fire prevention, meals for shelter, and more!
- OHRA's partnerships -- RVUUF, AAUW, OLLI, and beyond!
- Henry's story of hope
- Profile of Ashland's social service duo-- Nan and Tom Gunderson
- *Give a gift that lasts forever--
A brick at OHRA for the holidays*

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Newsletter

Fall 2022

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