

Summer 2024

# Inside OHRA

Greetings!

OHRA's fiscal year 2025 began on July 1 with a new slate of Board officers taking the helm. We are pleased to introduce Cathy Gerbracht as the 2025 Board president. Cathy spent 26 years in the health insurance industry. She is a weekly volunteer at the OHRA Resource Center and joined the OHRA Board of Directors in 2020. OHRA's Board and staff are excited to have Cathy take on this leadership role and we're all eager to work with her. We likewise are grateful to Past-President Dennis Slattery for his tireless leadership the past two years, and we look forward to his continued participation on the OHRA Board.

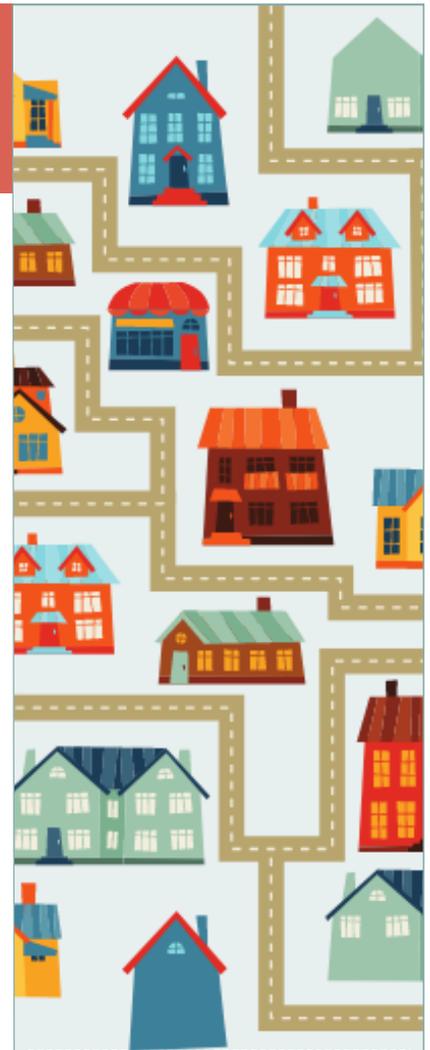
OHRA's growth these past 4 years has been nothing short of phenomenal. Since 2020 we have passed through over 2.6 million dollars directly to landlords to keep families housed and get families housed. OHRA is a human services hub and shelter housing a Federally Qualified Health Center and collaborating with over 60 partners helping our community members. Today, OHRA's Resource Center is the largest of its kind serving all of Jackson County. Since opening the OHRA center in 2021, we have **prevented 599 families from being evicted** - 413 women, 303 children, and 284 men. In addition, we have moved **460 unsheltered families into permanent housing** - 265 women, 137 children, and 260 men. And still, there is so much more work to be done. We need your help.

To continue meeting the needs of our community while building a solid future for generations to come, OHRA's financial sustainability is always a priority. Currently, we receive most of our income from government grants, which are often restricted to specific program expenditures. Yet, our current need is to build infrastructure, sustain growth, and keep pace with the needs of those we serve. That's why your support is so critical. Our journey is your journey, and we thank you for walking alongside us. Together, we are helping those who need it most. We couldn't do our work without you, and for your generosity, we are grateful.

This year, we are asking you to recommit to OHRA's mission with a gift that is meaningful to you. More importantly, I'd enjoy talking with you. Please let me know if we can arrange a phone call, coffee or a tour for you or your friends to see firsthand how your dollars serve others. I look forward to visiting with you and to sharing our plans for continued growth in fiscal year 2025 and beyond.

Thank you for your kindness.

  
Cass Sinclair, Executive Director  
cass@ohrahelps.org



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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Anonymous OHRA donor sparks matching campaign



Opportunities for Housing,  
Resources, & Assistance

is a 501(c)(3) Oregon Non-Profit  
Federal Tax ID #61-1693223

Phone: 541-631-2235  
Fax: 541-482-2291  
E-mail: info@ohrahelps.org

## **OHRA'S BRICK GARDEN - *Honoring Loved Ones, Friends & Family***

During the capital campaign to raise funds for converting the old Super 8 Motel into the OHRA Center, one of the ways community members could participate was through the Bricks for Change program. For a \$500 donation, people could write a special commemorative message. The tribute would be engraved on a plaque, placed on a brick, and displayed at OHRA. We have completed the project and what we now call ***"The OHRA Donor Brick Garden"*** is located next to the front door of the Resource Center.



Right now, there about 50 bricks with messages on view in the Brick Garden and another 250 available for others who would like to be included. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Jackie Agee, OHRA Development Director at [jackie@ohrahelps.org](mailto:jackie@ohrahelps.org) or call 541-631-2235, extension 316.



***"The goal is clearly not just housing, shelter and food. It is betterment of life. Feet on the ground. A future. Hope."***

- Thomas, guest of OHRA



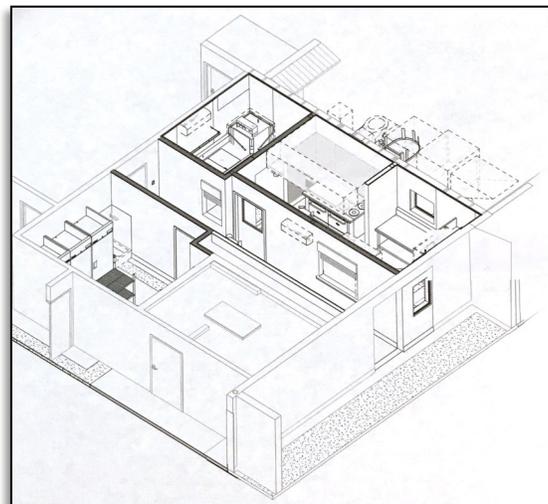
### **IT'S A MATCH!!!**

Soon, you will have a chance to double your gift to OHRA! Recently, a generous, anonymous donor let us know they would like to match general donations received from individual donors up to \$200,000. We are deeply grateful to this donor for giving us a chance to raise \$400,000 on behalf of the vulnerable neighbors we serve. We are working out the details and once we have firmed up our plans, we'll let you know!

## **COMMERCIAL KITCHEN STEAMS AHEAD**

A commercial kitchen to prepare meals for OHRA shelter guests is one step closer to becoming a reality thanks in no small part to Suzi and Bob Given. We're so grateful to the Givens who graciously hosted an OHRA fundraising event at their lovely Ashland home in June. The goal was to raise \$75,000 to match a previous donation of \$75,000 from an anonymous donor. A few days after the festivities, additional gifts arrived bringing us to our goal. In addition to hosting the event, Suzi and Bob also made a generous donation.

OHRA is fortunate to have a team of professionals donating time to manage the



***Kitchen plans take shape***

project. Retired architect Steve Ennis is overseeing the job in collaboration with our contractor John Fields and architect Jerome White. We are currently obtaining bids and once the selection process is completed, construction will begin. Stay tuned for updates on our progress, including when we expect the project to be completed.

## STORIES OF HOPE - *Connor & Gigi*

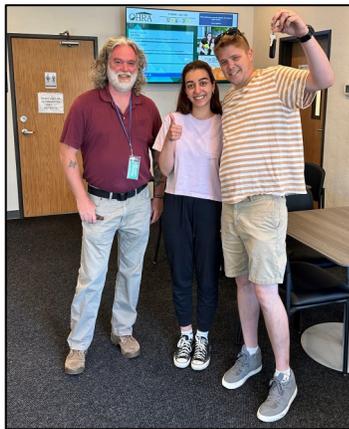
If you passed Connor and Gigi on the street, you'd probably think what an attractive young couple they are. What you *wouldn't* think is that they were experiencing homelessness. Yet for several years, Connor and Gigi lived in shelters, hotel rooms, and, finally, in their vehicle.

The couple met in Montana where Connor was working and Gigi was in college, having come from Turkey on a student visa. But when the pandemic broke out, Connor was laid off and Gigi was forced to overstay her visa when she couldn't return home due to airline restrictions. Things went from bad to worse and, looking for a new start, the married couple moved first to Portland, then to Southern Oregon on the promise of a job that didn't pan out.

They applied for dozens of apartments but were repeatedly rejected due to poor credit and Gigi's inability to get a job due to her immigration status. Connor worked countless short-term day jobs and when not working, he spent his days on endless phone calls to unemployment and social service agencies. Gigi tried diligently to clear up her immigration issues but couldn't afford an attorney.

Finally, an acquaintance steered them to OHRA, where, from their first welcoming phone call with Martha and ongoing navigation help from Andy, things began to turn around. They moved into the shelter and with the stability of a roof over their heads and regular meals, Gigi was able to not only finish her degree but to begin working with an immigration attorney. Connor was hired as a sales professional at Hyundai, which has turned out to be a blessing both personally and professionally. Best of all, they have a new two-bedroom apartment in Talent.

As Connor said, acknowledging that homelessness can happen to anyone, "I used to judge homeless people, thinking they were just lazy. But now I realize how foolish I was. We can't thank OHRA enough for giving us a future."



*Andy helps navigate Gigi & Connor to their new home*

# Highlights of HOPE

Since opening  
the OHRA Center  
in 2021

# 599

household\*  
**EVICTIONS  
PREVENTED**

*	<b>413</b>	women
	<b>303</b>	children
	<b>284</b>	men

# 460

\*unhoused  
households  
**NEWLY HOUSED**

*	<b>265</b>	women
	<b>137</b>	children
	<b>260</b>	men

# 1,662

individuals impacted  
through June 30, 2024



PO Box 1133  
Ashland, OR 97520

Opportunities for Housing,  
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# OHRA

## BOARD

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Catherine Gerbracht

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Jodi Rasor

### Secretary

Diane de Ryss

### Treasurer

Eileen Piker

### Past President

Dennis Slattery

### Board Members

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Libby Gill

Catherine Greenspan

Jordan Pease

Diego Rojas

Rev. Brett Strobel

Deneice Zeve

## LEADERSHIP

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Cass Sinclair

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Ben Bellinson

### Senior Director of Administration

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Jackie Agee

### Projects Director

Pam Lott

### Grants Specialist

David Stoebel

### Director of Operations

Lisa Smith

### Resources Director

Katie Blomgren

### Grant Compliance & Implementation Director

Tina Stevens

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## RENT WELL™ PROGRAM GRADS



**OHRA Rent Well™ grads with their ACCESS team.**

Congrats to our OHRA Shelter guests who recently graduated from the ACCESS Rent Well™ program! The 15-hour tenant education program helps participants develop the tools and skills they need to navigate the rental and tenancy process. Grads learned about tenant rights, landlord expectations, budgeting, and much more. ACCESS will be back in Fall 2024 for a second class.