



From the Desk of Our Executive Director

As we begin a new year, I want to pause and share our appreciation for the donors, partners, neighbors, community members and advocates who supported OHRA throughout 2025. Your partnership and efforts—whether through financial contributions, collaboration, or advocacy—advanced our work to meet the community's evolving needs. I am grateful to work alongside you.

While the challenges of homelessness and housing instability remain, I look to 2026 with a sense of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm for creating new opportunities for our guests at our shelters, and enthusiasm for the new partnerships we will create with our neighbors, our business owners, and our agency partners.

Every day, we witness that when people come together, listen to one another, and commit to a shared responsibility, challenges can be overcome. We saw this in action last year when we expanded our roles in the community. These expansions included partnering with neighbors surrounding OHRA to address litter in South Ashland, collaborating with Ashland City leaders, the Ashland Police Department, and working with community organizations like Southern Oregon Housing for All (SOHFA) to increase resources at the Night Lawn. We could not have done this without investing in our partners and working to build better relationships.

While the need for OHRA's services grows, 2026 will see us leaning even more intentionally into partnership-building. This will be critical as we seek to increase capacity and efficiency in an unpredictable funding environment. Thank you for continuing to walk alongside us as we work to meet the challenges of the new ahead. Together, we are building a stronger and more resilient Southern Oregon.

With gratitude,



Dan Cano

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Save the Date: Upcoming Events

Community Cleanup

On April 18th, in celebration of Earth Day 2026, OHRA and our community partners will host a neighborhood cleanup focused on caring for the places we share. Volunteers will come together to remove litter from local streets and bike trails of Ashland, helping to create a cleaner, more welcoming community.

Following the cleanup, all participants are invited to a community celebration and lunch at the OHRA Center.

Sponsorships Available. For more information email: alexism@ohrahelps.org. If you are interested in staying in the loop on updates to the Community Cleanup, you can sign up by clicking the orange button below.

Brick Garden Party

Save the Date for May 9th! Join us at the OHRA Center for our Brick Garden Party as we celebrate the donors (you) who make our positive impact possible.

More information to come.

Author Talk with Gregg Colburn: May 20th (Time and location TBA)

OHRA, along with the Rogue Valley Metaphysical Library, is honored to host Gregg Colburn, co-author of *Homelessness is a Housing Problem*. Mr. Colburn will be in Ashland on May 20th and will share his extensive research on how housing market conditions, such as the cost and availability of rental housing drives the prevalence of homelessness in a given city.

Email alexism@OHRAhelps.org for more information.

[Cleanup Interest Form](#)

Guest Highlight

This is a story of hope and stability—and of showing up for a neighbor in crisis a moment when support was needed and not easily found elsewhere.

A parent caring for three children came to OHRA seeking rental assistance after a temporary medical setback. An unexpected illness followed by surgery forced them to step away from work for a period of time, creating a short-term financial gap and putting their housing at risk. Although the family was doing everything right and the parent was able to return to work when recovered,

there were few options available to help bridge this brief but critical interruption in income.

The family has lived in their affordable housing unit for several years and, under normal circumstances, is able to sustain housing independently. What they needed was modest, time-limited support.

OHRA Resource Navigator Andy Davis stepped in to fill that gap. Andy worked closely with the parent to assemble a funding packet through a Jackson County Mental Health grant and reached out to the Housing Authority on the family's behalf to ensure all required documentation was in place.

Because of this timely intervention, the family was able to remain safely housed while the parent recovered and returned to work. This story reflects the reality many households face today—and the vital role OHRA plays in providing stability, dignity, and practical support when our neighbor face a crisis.

Partner Highlight: Options for Southern Oregon

Leila Nevarez is an outreach worker for Options for Southern Oregon who tables at OHRA on Thursdays. OHRA partners with various organizations that come to the OHRA Center to connect our guests to vital resources, enabling us to be a human resource hub for those who need it. Providing a one-stop shop for our guests allows us to remove barriers to receiving services for our guests.



During her time tabling at OHRA, Leila has been able to sign up guests for mental health services through Options and connect guests with housing through Rogue Retreat. She shares that she is so grateful to share a partnership with OHRA, also saying that our staff is so kind and caring.

OHRA is so grateful to maximize our impact through collaborations like the one we have with Options for Southern Oregon. We could not achieve our mission without our partner organizations.

Board Member Highlight: Libby Gill

As Libby Gill prepares to conclude her service on the OHRA Board of Directors in March, we extend deep gratitude for the leadership, insight, and care she has brought to our organization over the past three years. Libby's time on the board has been marked by thoughtful engagement, as the chair of the Development and Community Outreach committee, steady advocacy, and a clear commitment to turning conversation into action.



Reflecting on her experience with OHRA, Libby often points to the strength of the board itself. “Things happen quickly, ideas flow, people talk to one another, it’s very friendly.” For Libby, that sense of momentum and shared purpose made her service both meaningful and rewarding—and helped ensure that OHRA continued to move forward during a period of significant growth and change. She believes OHRA could be a model of care for the rest of the nation.

Libby’s dedication to addressing homelessness is deeply informed by both professional experience and personal connection. She speaks candidly about homelessness as a complex, policy-driven crisis decades in the making, shaped by housing shortages, rising costs, and the loss of affordable housing options. Her perspective is further shaped by having a close family member who experienced homelessness due to mental illness—an experience that underscores her belief that housing instability can affect anyone. “Who wants to live without dignity, without a roof over their heads, without a steady meal source?” she asks.

Beyond OHRA, Libby brings an extraordinary breadth of experience to her community. A former television executive and longtime executive coach, she is now an author, speaker, and leadership consultant, with a focus on the science of hopefulness. She also chairs the Southern Oregon chapter of Willamette Writers and mentors emerging women leaders in the Rogue Valley. As Libby steps away from the board, we thank her for her generosity, clarity, and belief in community-led solutions. Her impact on OHRA will be felt for years to come.

Staff Highlight: Grace Entriiken

Grace joined OHRA just over a year ago as shelter staff while completing her capstone project at Southern Oregon University. She has since graduated with a degree in criminology and a minor in psychology and continues to be an integral part of the OHRA team. What kept her here? “I love how interactive it is,” Grace says. “I don’t like jobs where I’m by myself. I like being out in the field, hearing people’s stories. And the environment here—it’s like a family.”

Like many who come to this work, Grace describes her early months at OHRA as a steep learning curve. “I had never had a job like this before, and I had never worked with this population,” she shares. “It was hard at first, but I learned a lot. This job taught me everything I need to know for the field I’m going into.” Grace hopes to become a counselor, and her time at OHRA has helped shape that path.

Working so closely with guests has deepened her understanding of the unhoused community. “I’ve always empathized,” she explains, “but being in it every day gives you a completely different perspective.” She has learned not only greater empathy, but also the importance of setting healthy boundaries and not carrying work home at the end of the day.

Grace also points to how her experience has challenged common myths about homelessness. “There’s a negative connotation that every unhoused person is on drugs, or that they don’t want to help themselves—and that’s just not true,” she says. “So many people are incredibly motivated. What becomes clear is

how broken the system is, how much blame gets placed on individuals, when in reality they are often victims of a much broader problem.”

In her role, Grace spends much of her time welcoming guests, de-escalating conflict, listening, and connecting people to what they need. “It’s a lot of talking, a lot of being present,” she says. “Mostly, it’s just being there for people.”

Outside of work, Grace enjoys yoga, sewing, hiking, and spending time in the kitchen cooking and baking.

We are grateful for Grace’s compassion, curiosity, and commitment to showing up for our guests and our community every day. Her work reflects the heart of OHRA: meeting people where they are, with dignity and care.



Development Corner

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From the Development Corner

As the new year begins, I want to begin with heartfelt gratitude. Your generosity and commitment to OHRA not only carried us through our year-end campaign—it helped us surpass our fundraising goal. That momentum matters. Because of you, we are starting this year on strong footing, ready to continue providing critical services when and where our vulnerable neighbors have needs.

This moment is especially meaningful to me as it also marks my one-year anniversary as Development Director at OHRA. Serving in this role during such an uncertain time in our history has been both challenging and deeply affirming. The need is real and urgent, but so is the compassion of this community.

Nothing builds hope quite like seeing caring community members come together to solve big problems at a local level. Over the past year I have witnessed my neighbors choose to invest in their local community and show what is possible when people respond to crisis with action, dignity, and care.

Thank you for your trust, your partnership, and your belief in OHRA’s mission. I am profoundly grateful to begin this new year alongside you, inspired by what we have already accomplished together—and hopeful for what lies ahead.

Warmly,

Brandy MacDonald
Development Director



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We love showing people where their support does its magic. Call or **email** us anytime to schedule a personal or group tour!

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