



From Our Executive Director

This winter month Ashland has seen our first snowstorm, temperatures in the 20's, and our shelters activated for extreme weather overflow. This week our programs housed over 130 individuals each night, and we supported another 25 individuals at the Night Lawn. Of course, none of this could have happened without our dedicated staff jumping into action. And so, I wanted to take a moment to share.

The strength, compassion, and commitment our staff bring to this work not only makes our mission possible—it sustains this community through some of its most challenging moments.

One of the most valuable qualities of our team is their willingness to step in wherever there is a need, even when the work falls outside of their formal roles.

Our senior staff manage the day-to-day operations of OHRA but are often found on the night lawn at dawn assisting guests as they pack up their tents, responding to challenges at the winter shelter, or serving meals at guest events. This team leads by example.

Our Navigators, who specialize in supporting people in crisis can just as easily be found helping at the Laundry & Shower Trailer, hosting events in Miriam's Café, or creating opportunities for connections for both guests and staff. Our maintenance and kitchen teams bring creativity and strong problem-solving skills to their work—not only keeping people fed and our facilities running smoothly, but pivoting quickly when unexpected challenges arise.

Shelter staff working at all hours—late nights, early mornings, and everything in between—remain ready to respond to crises, assist with events, or simply lend a hand where it's needed. From the warm welcome offered by Resource Center greeters, to our talented kitchen staff, administrative team, and the dedicated crew at the winter shelter, each person plays an essential role.

Together, the staff are the heart OHRA. Compassion and dignity run deep in our culture, and it shows in the way our team supports one another as much as they support our guests. Many staff members grow into new roles within OHRA rather than leave altogether—a testament to the care and respect that define this workplace.

I see hard work, empathy, and genuine care in action every day, and I am profoundly grateful.

With gratitude,



Dan Cano

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Save the Date: Upcoming Events

Community Cleanup

On April 18th, join us as 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, followed by a celebratory lunch hosted at OHRA.

Sponsorships Available. For more information email: alexism@ohrahelps.org

To sign up for the Community Cleanup, click the orange button below.

Brick Garden Party

Save the Date for May 9th 5:30-6:30 PM

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 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM at Southern Oregon University

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 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 Sign-up Here](#)

Guest Spotlight: Maria

After more than a decade of stability as a homeowner and single mother of four, Maria's life changed dramatically when she became seriously ill. "I lost my home in 2008, after 11 years of paying my mortgage punctually, when I

contracted Lyme disease and was unable to work,” she recalls. Although her symptoms were severe, it took five years for Maria to receive a diagnosis—by which time the illness had become chronic. Without the ability to work, and with Disability benefits that did not recognize Chronic Lyme disease, she found herself without a path back to stability.

“I have been wandering ever since,” she says. Even after becoming eligible for Social Security, her monthly income was not enough to secure stable housing.

That changed when OHRA Housing Navigator Andy Davis began working with her to explore Low-Income Senior Housing options. Maria credits Andy’s patience and compassion with helping her move forward during a time when fear and uncertainty felt overwhelming. “With my PTSD, I didn’t think I could survive low-income housing where I might hear anger and abuse,” she explains. “But Andy helped me see that senior housing might not have that element.”

Together, they submitted multiple applications. Just one month later, Maria received a call. By December 2025, she had moved into a home of her own—ending 17 years without stable housing.

“I actually have a place to call home,” she says. “I am deeply and eternally grateful to Andy and the kindness he showed me.”



Working Together for a More Livable Ashland

Since its founding, OHRA has worked in close partnership with the City of Ashland to develop compassionate, practical responses to homelessness in our community. That collaboration was instrumental in helping OHRA secure the Turn-key Grant that made our permanent shelter possible. As the city and community leaders continue to develop its

broader response to the housing crisis, OHRA continues to be a partner in shaping and implementing policies that are both effective and humane.

To do this, our partnership with the city is crucial as we work to deliver programs and services throughout Ashland.

OHRA manages Ashland’s Severe Weather Sheltering program, ensuring that individuals sleeping outdoors have access to safety and warmth when conditions become dangerous. In addition, OHRA manages the city-owned building at 2200 Ashland Street to operate a congregate 4-month winter shelter for registered guests throughout the colder months.

OHRA also coordinates resources for the City’s dusk-to-dawn camping lawn, supporting community volunteers to bring food and coffee, and managing the storage shed to keep their belongings safe when they leave for the day. This work has directly improved day-to-day livability for people utilizing the site. Since OHRA stepped into this role, the site has seen meaningful improvements, including a reduction in unattended food waste and increased

access to portable restrooms—all the result of ongoing coordination and feedback between OHRA, the city, and community volunteers.

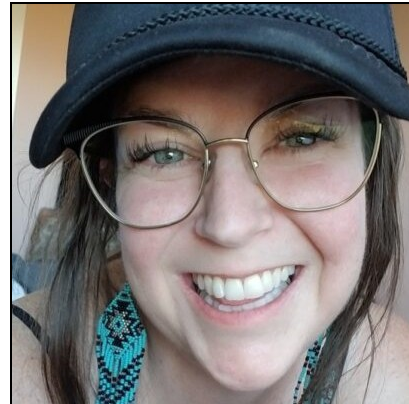
Ashland's Deputy City Manager noted that "The City of Ashland is grateful for the partnership with OHRA at both the dusk-to-dawn camping lawn, as well as the winter and severe weather shelter...we look forward to continuing this work together to better support our unhoused community."

This spring, the City of Ashland is also partnering with OHRA on a Neighborhood Clean-Up project. On April 18, supporters, friends, and neighbors are invited to join us in picking up litter along sidewalks and bike trails throughout Ashland. The city will support this effort by hauling collected waste and deploying street sweepers to help clean our streets. For more information, please see "Upcoming Events" above.

Volunteer Highlight: Shira Chertoff

This February, we hold close the memory of Shira Chertoff and the compassion she brought to our community.

Shira was a devoted and beloved member of the OHRA community. For years, she volunteered at the Laundry & Shower Trailer and Resource Center, and when the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, she stepped into a staff role—doing what she had always done best: showing up for people with joy, empathy, and unwavering compassion. As her father, Rick, said simply, "She was a light."



Shira loved her work because it allowed her to help people, make them smile, and build real relationships. She prioritized connection with unhoused guests, calling people by name and ensuring they felt seen and valued. One guest shared that after years of being unhoused, Shira was the first person who treated him as a full human being. With her encouragement—and her refusal to give up on him—he was eventually able to rebuild his life. Today, he works as a firefighter.

That instinct for compassion began early. At just 10 years old, after a Los Angeles earthquake, Shira asked the question no one else did: "What is going to happen to the homeless people?" That concern for others shaped the course of her life.

Shira passed away on February 20, 2022. In her memory, her family established a fund that has raised over \$15,000 to advance OHRA's mission. On April 16, 2025, OHRA unveiled a memorial plaque in her honor at the Resource Center. Her radiant smile now continues to welcome all who enter.

Each February, we honor Shira's birthday on February 4 and remember a life that showed us what compassion, connection, and humanity truly look like. OHRA is deeply grateful to have known and worked alongside her. Her spirit remains woven into this community.



Staff Highlight: Kevin Childress

Kevin Childress began at OHRA as a shelter staff member, planning to gain experience while working on his human services degree at RCC. Just a few months in, he was encouraged to step into a Navigation role. Though hesitant at first, he took the leap, and found that it was the right fit.

Today, Kevin specializes in HRSN (Health-Related Social Needs), helping eligible guests pay rent, utilities, and moving costs to prevent eviction. His work is very hands-on, coordinating with guests, landlords, and utility companies to make sure nothing falls through the cracks and families can stay housed.

Kevin's background in law enforcement and hospitality shapes how he shows up: organized, disciplined, and calm under pressure, but also focused on going above and beyond. He says OHRA has helped him grow softer in his approach, learning to listen first and meet people where they are.

Working at the Night Lawn keeps him grounded and reminds him daily to lead with gratitude and compassion. Outside of work and school, Kevin enjoys camping, aerial sports, and staying active in the sober community.

He's proud to be part of an organization building solutions in the face of a growing housing crisis and grateful to play a small role in helping neighbors stay housed.



Development Corner

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Making February Count: Planning Today for Peace of Mind Tomorrow

February offers a natural pause in the year—after the rush of the holidays and before the momentum of spring—to attend to important tasks that are easy to put off. It's an ideal time to review or complete essential planning documents such as advance medical directives, life insurance coverage, and your estate plan.

Taking these steps now is a meaningful way to ease the burden on your loved ones later, ensuring they are not left to navigate complex legal and financial decisions during an already difficult time. Clear guidance can offer your family clarity, stability, and peace of mind when it matters most.

As you consider your estate planning, this is also an opportunity to ensure your values are memorialized through planned giving. Many individuals choose to include the organizations they care about most—such as OHRA—in their will or trust, name them as beneficiaries of retirement accounts or life

insurance policies, designate them on charitable gift annuities, or include them in donor-advised funds.

If you would like more information about how to include OHRA in your legacy planning, please feel free to contact me. And if you have already named OHRA in your will or estate plans, I would be grateful to know so we can thank you and ensure your intentions are honored.

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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