



From the Desk of Our Executive Director

I hope you have been enjoying the warmer weather as winter comes to an end. This month's newsletter, I wanted to share with you some highlights from our experience operating the 2200 Ashland Winter Shelter, as well as thank those who helped make it possible.

Running the Winter Shelter was a privilege. Not only because we developed relationships with guests, but because we worked closely with our city managers, the police department, and public works. We were all working together to make sure the facility was heated, well-functioning, and safe. When glitches happened, the public works team responded at all hours of the night.

Safety was also critical. We worked closely with the Ashland Police Department to ensure we had open lines of communication, that our policies were aligned, and that the property was safe. When officers came knocking, it was more likely they were bringing in someone who needed shelter rather than responding to a safety need.

Our volunteers were also critical. Whether they cooked food or came in to support staff and guests, your presence made a difference, THANK YOU. We also had many volunteers on standby who were not called on to serve. We appreciate you and will reach out with more opportunities soon.

As the last day of the Winter Shelter ends on April 1st, our team has been preparing to transition those guests into the OHRA Shelter, where they will have an additional six-months to stay and engage with OHRA Navigators. By this weekend, close to 20 of the 32 guests will have moved into OHRA, most of whom started the winter season unhoused, on the streets, and struggling with basic needs.

Certainly, we also had challenges. Hosting 32 adults in a close-proximity congregate shelter with bunk beds would test anyone's nerves. There were frustrations, disagreements, and sporadic emotional situations. Yet our staff were patient, gave second chances, built trust, and in the end significantly reduced the need to expel guests back onto the street.

Finally, I would like to recognize our Ashland Street neighbors and business owners. You were overwhelmingly supportive as we worked to address the many needs of our unhoused community this winter. Operating this year's Winter Shelter

has given us new ideas to better address those needs, and we look forward to sharing them while getting input from you over the next year.

Very Sincerely,



Dan Cano

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Neighborhood Cleanup

Born from a desire to be good neighbors, OHRA will be hosting its first ever Neighborhood Cleanup on April 18th from 9 AM - 1 PM. Volunteers will gather for sign in and breakfast before splitting off into groups to pick up litter in an allotted area around the OHRA Center.

After the event, there will be a BBQ held at the OHRA Center to celebrate.

Individual and group volunteers welcome! We hope you will join us to celebrate Earth Day and steward the community that connects us all. To sign-up, click the button below.

[Sign Up Here](#)

Guest Highlight: Chad and Kristi Baldridge

“If I could cry tears of joy every day, I would, but I’m too busy for that,” says former shelter guest Chad Baldridge.

Chad and his wife, Kristi, came to the OHRA shelter last August after experiencing homelessness and exhausting every other option. From the moment they arrived, they found more than just a place to stay. “You took us in like friends or family,” Chad recalls. “We felt safe and welcomed, and that gave us the space we needed to move forward.”

Within just a couple of months, Chad began using the shelter’s resource center computers to search for work. With support from staff—including help covering the cost of a background check—he secured a job. Around the same time, another opportunity fell into place: the couple moved into an apartment that aligned perfectly with Chad’s new employment. “It all kind of worked together,” he says. “God and you all helped make us successful.”

Today, Chad and Kristi are thriving. He’s earning a steady income, they have reliable transportation, and they’re building a stable, independent life together. But what stands out most to Chad isn’t just where they are now, it’s how far they’ve come.

“Just a few years ago, I was living in a park,” he says. “Coming off the streets, going through recovery, then stepping into the shelter and now into our own place—it’s amazing.”

Each morning is a reminder of that journey. From their apartment, they can see the mountains surrounding the valley, flowering trees, and what Chad calls the “tree of life” just outside their porch. From the kitchen window, he can even see the apartment building where he lived as a child. “It’s incredible—just waking up every day and taking it all in,” he says.

Chad credits OHRA with giving them the traction they needed to rebuild. “We are a success story because of you,” he says. “You helped us get to where we are today.”

As they look ahead, Chad and Kristi are focused on maintaining the life they’ve worked so hard to build. “Going forward, it’s just a nice, clean, strong life that we’re living,” he says. “And OHRA was the step that got us here.”

Their gratitude remains strong. “We thank God for you,” Chad adds. “We won’t forget about you.”

Volunteer Highlight: Kellen McCommons

Kellen McCommon’s commitment to service is rooted in both family and experience. His mother serves on OHRA’s Board of Directors, and both of his parents have long worked in fields connected to human services. Growing up in the Bay Area, Kellen saw the homelessness crisis up close and heard the myths that often surround it.



At OHRA, Kellen volunteers with the Dusk till Dawn Sleeping Lawn and the Laundry Shower Trailer, helping provide safe storage, hot showers, and clean laundry. What stands out most to him, however, is the human connection volunteering can bring. “It’s easy to ignore the issue of homelessness,” Kellen says, “but connecting with people changes your perspective.”

Those connections have reshaped how he understands homelessness. Many common myths, such as the belief that unhoused people are dangerous or responsible for their situation, have been dispelled. “They are kind, regular folks dealing with various problems,” he explains. “A crisis can happen to anyone.”

Seeing how homelessness intersects with mental health, addiction, and other systemic issues has shaped Kellen’s future goals. His volunteer work has pushed him toward pursuing a master’s degree related to social work, where he hopes to combine clinical care with resource connection. “Sometimes therapy isn’t enough,” he says. “Addressing environmental factors can be just as important.”

Through volunteering at OHRA, Kellen has found both purpose and clarity. The work has shown him how meaningful service can be and that a future in social services is one he can truly see himself in.



Staff Highlight: Michal Zwick

Michal's career has always centered around feeding people. From deli counters to school cafeterias and restaurant kitchens, food has been the common thread in his work. About a year ago, he brought that experience to OHRA, joining the team just as the kitchen in Miriam's Café was opening.

Since then, Michal has worked closely with OHRA's Chef Kamryn to prepare nightly meals for shelter guests each night, including those staying at the 2200 and Cedarwood shelters. Kamryn plans the menu and orders the food, and when Michal arrives, he jumps right in. Cooking for such a large number of people requires careful coordination and time management. As Michal puts it, "It's a lot of people to cook for, so I have to manage my time to make sure things get done on time."

Before coming to OHRA, Michal worked in several kitchens around Ashland, including the former Black Sheep restaurant and a local school cafeteria. Much of his background is in institutional cooking, which prepared him well for the pace and scale of preparing meals for the shelter program.

For Michal, the biggest difference between restaurant work and nonprofit work is the people he serves. "I love serving food to people who deserve and need it," he says. "These are people who don't always get the things that they need, or the care they deserve. Being able to provide some of that feels really good."

Outside the kitchen, Michal spends much of his time practicing martial arts. A longtime student of Tai Chi and other disciplines, he now studies Wing Chun here in Ashland. In fact, it's his passion for martial arts that convinced him to stay in the community.

Through his work in Miriam's Café, Michal helps make ensure hundreds of people experiencing homelessness receive a warm, reliable meal each day, something that can make a meaningful difference in the lives of OHRA's guests.



Development Corner

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Development Corner: The Evolution of Volunteerism at OHRA

OHRA was built by volunteers. In the earliest days, dedicated community members did everything. Since hiring our first employee in 2014, we've grown to a team of more than 50 trained staff, allowing us to deliver services that are increasingly specialized, consistent, and trauma-informed.

As OHRA has evolved, so too has the role of volunteers. Many responsibilities that were once volunteer-led are now carried out by experienced staff. But that shift has not diminished the importance of volunteerism—it has refined it.

Today, volunteers play a unique and deeply meaningful role in building connection and community. Whether it's Laundry Love volunteers sharing coffee, conversation, and kindness with guests using the laundry and shower trailer, community members delivering food to the Dawn to Dusk lawn, or volunteers helping with mail service, special meals, gardening projects, and holiday celebrations—volunteers bring warmth and humanity that complements our skilled services.

Giving your time offers something powerful: a chance to engage directly, to better understand the challenges our neighbors face, and to be part of the solution in a personal way.

This year, we're also inviting volunteers to participate in something new. On April 18, our **Neighborhood Clean-Up** will be a community-wide day of service, extending beyond OHRA's property and into the shared spaces we all call home. It's a meaningful, flexible way for you and your whole family to get involved—no long-term commitment required. To find out more about this event, see the events section below.

Volunteer roles may have changed at OHRA, but their impact remains as vital as ever. We love our volunteers!

Warmly,

Brandy MacDonald
Development Director

Save the Date: Upcoming Events

Neighborhood 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 pick up litter and bike trails of Ashland, helping to create a cleaner, more welcoming community.

After the event all participants are invited to a community celebration and lunch at the OHRA Center.

Sponsorships Available. For more information, email:
brandym@ohrahelps.org

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: On May 13th at SOU in the Rogue River Room, OHRA, along with the Rogue Valley Metaphysical Library, is honored to host Gregg Colburn, co-author of *Homelessness is a Housing Problem*.

There will be two community lectures, one at 11:00 AM and the other at 6:30 PM. We invite you to come and hear 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.



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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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