

## Housing Helped Me Move Forward: Housing First Works

Jackie had been in and out of jail for issues related to drug abuse and had difficulty keeping her family together. Through Gaudenzia, a long-term treatment center for people battling addiction, Jackie was eventually able to get help for herself and her family. Gaudenzia staff connected Jackie with temporary transitional housing, and between 2012 and 2015 she was able to start the recovery process.



Then tragedy struck with the overdose death of Jackie's husband in 2015. At the same time Jackie was having difficulty finding stable work due to frequent moves related to temporary housing situations. The older of Jackie's two children had already attended 3 different school districts by the age of 8. Jackie needed help finding a permanent housing solution.

Through a referral, Jackie was put in touch with Open Hearth's Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing Program (CoC) and Amber Campman, the Permanent Housing Program Coordinator. Jackie was able to identify a rental in which she could raise her children in their current school district. The housing subsidy provided by CoC would also give Jackie the support she would need to start a new career. Jackie credits Amber with her ability to find a long-term housing solution for her family. Jackie

has always wanted to give her children a stable life.

Over the years

shared that Amber was instrumental in her securing a lease by convincing the landlord to give Jackie a chance. Jackie says, "Amber and Open Hearth have been amazing,".

Now 4 years later, Jackie and her children are grateful for the opportunities that permanent housing has enabled. Jackie became certified as a counselor for drug addiction, working first with Gaudenzia before moving on to The Council of Southeast PA as a youth recovery specialist. She is also now only 12 credits shy of earning her associate's degree. Jackie's children are enjoying the stability of their new home and have been thriving in school. Jackie states, "My children and I have a place to go home to every night. It's an awesome feeling. It wasn't always like that during my addiction. Housing has helped me move forward."

Since becoming stably housed, Jackie's career success has resulted in her no longer needing other assistance programs. She has been able to find happiness in her personal life as well. Jackie and her fiancé are planning to wed in 2020 and are looking to buy a house within the next few years. Jackie now says, "I don't know where I would have been without Open Hearth. I would not have been able to afford housing without them."

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Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life.

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Open Hearth is a proud partner of Decade to Doorways, Chester County's ten year plan to prevent and end homelessness. By collaborating with government entities, service providers, educators, healthcare professionals, faith communities, funders, businesses and the general public with strategic and evidence-based action plans (like Housing First), Decade to Doorways aims to effectively end homelessness by 2022.

# 2018 By The Numbers



Over **70** households with a documented disability and lived experience of homelessness received permanent housing subsidies through our **Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing Program**.

**Housing Stability Case Management** services were provided to **16** households to ensure permanent tenancy.



## Housing

We helped over **160** households who were experiencing homelessness with temporary housing, security deposits and a goal plan to end their homelessness.

Over **100** households received housing start-up costs or emergency rental or utility assistance from our **Housing Contingency Fund**.

The **Goal Achievement Program** served **23** households with rental assistance and case management to avoid eviction.



## Transportation

Over **10** households were assisted with their transportation needs. Some were issued loans, while others received a donated vehicle or saved for the purchase of a car. **10** Individuals attended our **FREE Car Buying: Put Yourself in the Driver's Seat** workshop.

## Financial Management

Over **280** NEW households participated in our **Financial Insight and Resource Management Program** and received personalized budget counseling, goal planning and resource coordination.

Our **Financial Navigator** worked with **259** households on their goals of increasing income, decreasing debt and building assets.

**177** unemployed or underemployed households worked with our **Mobile Workforce Navigator** in Phoenixville, Exton, Coatesville, and Kennett Square with the goals of acquiring an individual training opportunity, on-the-job training or returning to work.



**11** savers graduated from our matched **Family Savings Partner Program** with either a new vehicle, tuition payment or their first home, adding to the **\$11.6 million dollars** of assets purchased by **181 graduates!**

We hosted **27 FREE financial literacy workshops** and had 131 attendees.

## More 2018 Accomplishments!

Last summer we launched our **new website**, which you should visit at **[www.openheartinc.org](http://www.openheartinc.org)**! In the fall, we participated in the **Amazing Raise**, a 24-hour giving challenge, and hosted our 1st annual **Jams & Generosity** event at Tuned Up Brewing Company during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness week!



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LOCAL FRIENDS—It's not too late to help! Buy your reusable bags in July and Open Hearth will receive \$1.00 per bag. Get yours at **GIANT Food Stores** located at 1824 Ridge Pike in Royersford or 967 S. Township Line Road in Royersford.



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**Open Hearth staff celebrate our coworker  
Brandon Benn's  
accomplishments and congratulate him as he  
transitions to his new position as  
Chester County's Mental Health  
Housing Coordinator.**



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