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# NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: OPEN HEARTH, INC.



**What is your name and role with Open Hearth, and what is its local history?** I am Kelly Raggazino, Executive Director. Open Hearth, Inc. was originally formed in 1989 as a local grassroots committee to assure equal housing opportunities for people who are traditionally isolated and systematically denied opportunities. Open Hearth received its tax-exempt status in April of 1991. We have been renting office space in Spring City, Chester County, for more than 25 years but will soon be moving to our new headquarters at 701 South Main Street in Phoenixville, a relocation of about five miles. Open Hearth’s areas of focus include all of Chester County and the following municipalities in Montgomery County—Collegeville, Limerick, Pottsgrove, Upper Providence, Royersford, and Trappe.

**What are unique aspects in what your nonprofit offers the community?** Over the years, our organization has grown and evolved to serve members of our community who are the most vulnerable, and all income-eligible populations who come from diverse racial, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. We believe our greatest strengths are staying abreast of emerging issues and best practices and then developing programs and effective partnerships to meet the needs of the community we serve. Because of this, as community needs have changed, we have expanded our services to include asset-building, financial education and coaching, transportation solutions, workforce opportunities, and direct case management, believing that the answer lies in prevention and education.

**Can you tell us about the work your nonprofit does and the program or programs you run, and who specifically benefits, and why it is valuable and needed locally?** Open Hearth is committed to ending homelessness and financial instability through prevention and education. Our programs are offered on a continuum—from preventing homelessness to homeownership opportunities. Staff

guide and support program participants as they move toward greater financial stability and self-sufficiency. All our programs are free and include—

**Housing—**

- Homelessness prevention
- Permanent housing subsidies
- Security deposit loans, and basic critical furnishings
- Temporary stays in motels while waiting for permanent housing

**Financial Management—**

- Personal financial education workshops
- Budgeting, social service referrals, and goal-setting
- Ongoing financial coaching
- Matched savings for a first home, higher education, or car

**Transportation—**\$1,000 in matching funds for the purchase of a car

**Workforce—**Leading PA CareerLink - Chester County, focusing on increasing access to workforce development services to unemployed and underemployed County residents

**Community-Building—**Open Hearth is a respected leader in community-building efforts on the issues of affordable housing, financial stability, and improved quality of life for all; efforts include—

- Hosting 50+ social service staff for monthly networking meetings
- Leading the governance board of Chester County’s initiative to end homelessness
- Published six editions of *The Help Book—A Health and Human Services Guide*





- 75 percent—at least one member of household has a disability
- 60 percent—racial/ethnic minority
- 55 percent—female

**FY21 budget**—\$2,218,132 plus \$3.7 million Emergency Rental Assistance Program (COVID-19 relief funds)

**Is there anything else you would like to share?**

Funds raised from Open Hearth’s capital campaign, Home Is Where the Hearth Is, will be used to renovate our donated building, for our relocation, so that the space reflects the high standard of service set by Open Hearth’s staff, funders, and collaborators. This new home will be a place of hope for our clients and partners as they are welcomed into a location that is both accessible and inspirational. To learn more, visit [www.openhearthinc.org](http://www.openhearthinc.org).

Open Hearth served 661 unduplicated households in 2020, with estimates at this point to serve more than 1,000 households by the end of 2021. In April 2021, we added a new program, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program; it provides direct rent and utility relief to Chester County residents affected by COVID-19. In the last five months, we assisted 296 households through this program, paying out over \$2.1 million in rent and utilities. Our staff expanded from 12 to 18.

As a leader of the county-wide initiative to end homelessness, we provide the critical link between local agencies and the County’s coordinated entry system for temporary shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing subsidies. Additionally, our ability to break down silos between service sectors also connects clients to services and benefits they may otherwise not have access to.

**Do you have any number-oriented illustrations to help show your community?**

**Where Open Hearth clients reside—**

- 30 percent northern Chester County
- 30 percent central Chester County
- 30 percent western Chester County
- 10 percent southern/eastern Chester County and western Montgomery County

**Client demographics—**

- 98 percent—low income
- 87 percent—between 25 and 64 years old

*This feature showcases a local nonprofit in our community to raise awareness of all the good they do, highlighting its cause. **SEEKING NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT SPONSOR!** If you're interested in becoming a sponsor of this section in helping us to continue to bring you community content like this more often, please contact Jerry See, at [jsee@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:jsee@bestversionmedia.com), to learn more. If you know of a local nonprofit worth nominating, please send contact information for it to [jhetrick@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:jhetrick@bestversionmedia.com).*

