

Spring 2021 Newsletter

Partnering with women facing homelessness to secure housing, achieve long-term stability, and chart new paths for their futures.

Wishing you good health and a happy spring!

Let's stay in touch! Subscribe to our e-newsletter at
homeofthesparrow.org/subscribe
or Text "News" to 833-275-1661

At Home of the Sparrow, we are fitting the pieces together

This year, I found myself working on a few jigsaw puzzles since we were spending more time at home. It reminded me of the saying, "life is like a puzzle". You need all the pieces and they need to fit together perfectly. Generally speaking, the higher the piece count, the harder and the longer it takes to finish the puzzle.

For our program participants, their already complex 500 piece puzzle became an incomplete and intricate 4,000 piece puzzle overnight. Not only did COVID add an array of new pieces to sort and match, it didn't come with a photo on the box top to help visualize the full picture – the picture that would illustrate the way to housing stability and financial security.

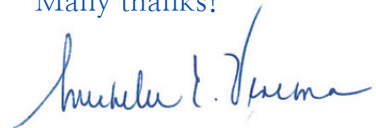
Working with us, our resilient women have begun to rearrange these new pieces: homeschooling their children, finding daycare alternatives, replacing lost income due to loss of hours or layoffs, accessing unemployment benefits, avoiding eviction, staying healthy, paying for needed PPE supplies for the family, finding paper and cleaning products to keep the home COVID free, and providing food to keep the children fed. This puzzle describes ALICE – people who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. That's right – working, even fulltime, does not protect the working poor from being one medical emergency or car repair away from total financial ruin and the loss of their home.

Thanks to our generous community members, we have been able to provide, source, connect, and find many of the missing pieces for our women via trauma-informed case management practices. We've provided rental subsidies, eviction prevention dollars, PPE products, paper goods, cleaning supplies, food, utility payments, car repair funds and so much more. We've also been there for the holidays, for counseling, and for budgeting support.

Donations from our inspiring and supportive donors meant we could quickly assemble the pieces our women needed to survive. Our work however, is far from over, and I hope you will consider making a gift today. Your continued support will arrive at a vital time and – bonus! – will be matched dollar for dollar by an anonymous donor.

You are an essential piece of this very challenging puzzle our women are working on. When your financial support connects with our programing, we are #sparrowstrong and invincible.

Many thanks!


Michelle E. Venema, CEO

Thank
you!

Volunteers: The Corner Piece

From donating to, and assembling our to-go bags filled with much needed supplies, to making healthy meals for our families, to spending time on our administrative tasks, to sorting and cleaning our "giving" garage and maintaining and beautifying our outdoor spaces, HOS volunteers are simply the best and provide one of the most important pieces of our puzzle – their time.

While we had fewer opportunities for volunteers this past year due to COVID and the rescheduling of events, we had some amazing volunteers who helped in impressive ways outside the office. Great Valley High School students tutored children in our programs via Zoom. Grades immediately went up.

When we realized that mental health was being severely impacted, we partnered with private pay counselors who volunteered to provide mental health services for free or at reduced rates.



Students from Downingtown STEM built garden beds for other volunteers to plant and grow fresh vegetables for families this summer.

Solving the Puzzle: Preparing Financial & Housing Stability Plans



Making the Pieces Fit!

Meet Laura



When Laura contacted Home of the Sparrow three years ago, she was facing a lot of hurdles. She had just separated from her partner and her daughter was admitted to the hospital with a heart condition.

Without a second income, Laura could not afford to stay in her house. Her HOS program coordinator helped her locate an affordable apartment and provided several months of rental assistance in addition to helping her renew her teaching certificate.

Laura met with her program coordinator twice monthly to work on her budget and to address the needs of her daughter. Over the months, Laura received to-go bags filled with groceries, household goods, and toiletries. There were also special deliveries like a full turkey dinner at holiday time and decorations and cupcakes for her daughter's birthday.

Pre COVID, Laura was employed as a special education assistant. When her daughter needed additional medical treatment, Laura left her job to be her fulltime caregiver and educator. Laura soon realized that her teaching experience and natural talents could lead to a new business opportunity. With leads from HOS's program team, Laura entered the West Chester University Business Idea Competition. Laura made it to the second round but unfortunately, not the finals. "That's okay," she remarks. I'll just try again and do better!" Her entrepreneurial dream continues.

"Home of the Sparrow continues to provide moral support, guidance and encouragement. I am grateful and eager to give back. I hope my story inspires others to seek help and to support this great organization!" ~ Laura

Our women are:

Increasing Incomes

Finding a way to earn more. This can mean getting more education or job training, securing a better paying position, finding a second job and accessing employer provided health and savings benefits, and overcoming obstacles that lower income.

Reducing Expenses

Realistic budgeting to create a workable budget with each program participant that acknowledges fixed expenses and finds ways or provides ideas to reduce monthly costs associated with rent, utilities, car payments and the like.

Creating Savings

Making sure our program participants set aside dollars each month to create a rainy day fund for emergencies and for future retirement. We help with investigating and encouraging the opening of bank accounts to avoid the high costs of check cashing stores and other fee-based services.

Improving Credit Scores

Late or missed payments, evictions, and repossessions all negatively affect credit scores. The lower the score, the more expensive and harder it is to borrow money or relocate to a new apartment.

Trauma-Informed Skills

Acknowledging a program participant's unique situation and understanding her trauma helps create an individualized plan to make her pieces fit.

An Essential Piece of the Puzzle:

A Dollar for Dollar Match Up to \$50,000!

We are excited to announce that all donations made between April 15th and June 30th, 2021 will be matched dollar for dollar by an anonymous donor! And for even more impact, if you become a monthly recurring donor, your gift will be matched two to one for the next year.

We'd like to maximize this gift and have set a fundraising goal of \$50,000. This is an amazing opportunity for you to super-charge your support of our families!

Make Your Gift Today

Use: the enclosed giving envelope **Visit:** homeofthesparrow.org/donations **Call:** 610-647-4940

Text: "Sparrow" to 833-275-1661 **Email:** KSanger@homeofthesparrow.org

Our Donors!

Thank You!

Save the Dates!

Text "Events" to 833-275-1661

HOS Events on the Horizon:

Stars & Strides Challenge to End Homelessness - July

Get active in your own way on your own schedule to raise dollars to end homelessness. A month-long event for families and businesses to engage in personal goals of physical and mental health while learning more about women who struggle to achieve housing security. Sponsorship opportunities available!

Decorate for a Mission - October

A contest to build community spirit and raise awareness about housing insecurity. Show off your best decorating skills for fall and Halloween! You could win a prize!

Fashion Show 2021: Power of the Purse

Returning to The Desmond on October 26, 2021. The fun and fashions are back!

Decorate for a Mission - Valentine's Day

Show your love with a gift in honor of your special Valentine or demonstrate your hope for housing security for all by filling your windows with hearts!

The Gala: Together at Last!

April 29, 2022 at Drexelbrook Catering. Rescheduled for the last two years but worth the wait. Get your dancing shoes and bidding paddles ready!

Stay in the know by visiting our website homeofthesparrow.org
or by contacting ALeiss@homeofthesparrow.org

