



# HOME<sup>OF THE</sup> SPARROW

HOUSING / EDUCATION / SUPPORT

Impact Report **2020-21**

Building **big picture solutions** for women and female-led families ... **one piece at a time.**





## Building **big picture solutions** for women and female-led families ...

### *A winning solution — solving puzzles and making the pieces fit.*

When I reflect on this past year, life for everyone became a complicated puzzle. For the women we serve, the pandemic made their already complicated lives even more complex. Our program coordinators spent more time, oftentimes double and triple the usual service hours, with every woman to help address her individual issues, that this year more than ever, went far beyond housing. Never have our trauma-informed case management practices been more vital, necessary, and beneficial.

Often, the work we do to lead a woman and her family towards a path of financial and housing stability requires more than just securing housing. It means providing for each family's deep needs to make sure they not only survive today but thrive tomorrow. We got creative this year and supported not only housing needs, but so many other emergency needs as well.

Layoffs, furloughs, work hour reductions, remote learning for children, higher grocery bills, and paying more at the pump are just a few of the pressures brought on by the pandemic that caused sharp increases in anxiety, fear and depression for our families as they struggled to make ends meet. With the grace of your continued generosity, we were able to partner with professional, licensed therapists who provided mental health therapy at an affordable and partially subsidized rate so that our women and, in some cases, their children, got the mental health support they needed immediately.

We also used your support to assist with expenses like car repairs, childcare costs, and more robust cellular data plans to help children learning online from home. Your in-kind gifts of household supplies and cleaning products were quickly distributed to our women. I wish you could know how much our women appreciate all your gifts and how their lives were improved by your generosity.

Home of the Sparrow's remarkable family of individuals, businesses, grant makers and volunteers helped our women take a step closer toward financial and housing stability in a very difficult year. I am delighted to list the names of our many friends – over 1,000 of them – in this publication.

On behalf of our staff and the board of directors, thank you for your part in making all the puzzle pieces fit together so that women and mothers in Chester County can thrive.

With gratitude,

Michelle E. Venema | Chief Executive Officer

## *The pandemic puzzle ...*

To remain focused on **big picture solutions** in a challenging time, Home of the Sparrow added creative services to our programming.



### ***Mental Health Resources***

Our women were experiencing heightened stress levels due to lost wages and lost jobs often because they were employed in the service industry which was one of the hardest industries hit by COVID and amongst the last to re-open. They needed mental health services quickly.

***Solution:*** Sourcing private-pay mental health professionals. We partnered with professional, licensed therapists who significantly reduced their fees, to help our women and children immediately.



### ***Outreach***

We instinctively knew our program graduates, who prior to covid, were doing very well, would be under significant pressure due to the impact of COVID. We didn't want them to feel isolated or alone or worse be embarrassed to ask for our help.

***Solution:*** Improved outreach and proactive client communications. HOS Program Coordinators called each graduate family to check in, assess needs, and offer our assistance.



### ***Tutoring***

We asked ourselves how our program children were handling schoolwork while learning remotely.

***Solution:*** Matching volunteer tutors to kids who needed a little extra help. We connected Great Valley High School students who wanted to make a difference to our program children struggling to keep up. Grades soared and school performance remained on track.



### ***At the Office***

Being on the front lines and considered essential workers, we needed to be in the office and in the field to provide our services as usual.

***Solution:*** HOS staff returned to the office full-time in June 2020. We used our time in the office together to work as a cohesive team to deliver programming while keeping our focus on our mission. Working together in person successfully and effectively within safety protocols, created a sense of normalcy for the team as we continued serve the community with no disruptions.



# No woman or child should have to experience the trauma of

*Your support of our unique and effective programs helped women take a step closer*

## Supportive Housing

Program Coordinators use holistic counselling practices to understand all the challenges a woman is facing. The result is a comprehensive plan that capitalizes on a woman's strengths while connecting her to available programs, services and training to put her on a viable path for long-term success and self-sufficiency. By subsidizing her rent, she is given the time to obtain skills and training to secure a higher paying job, to reduce expenses and learn how to budget to achieve independence.



## Pre-Senior Bridge Housing

Women of all ages are at risk of homelessness. Home of the Sparrow provides housing for up to 11 pre-senior women. We offer communal and apartment style living via properties in West Chester and Coatesville. Our residents pay modest program fees. We work with each woman to ensure her placement in the subsidized housing queue so she receives housing benefits when eligible. While in our program, we help women develop viable budgets that focus on reducing expenses, making the most of limited income.

## Graduate Outreach

Our long-term support network for our graduates provides services such as budgeting assistance, access to family-friendly events, donations from the community including back-to-school supplies, holiday gifts, and bags filled with products and supplies not covered by SNAP and other public benefits. We are proud that graduates often refer women to us with the hopes that they too will succeed.



## Eviction Prevention

Despite working full-time, homelessness can be as close as one late rent payment. For the working poor, an unexpected expense can turn into a crisis because living paycheck to paycheck means no savings account to turn to in case of emergency. When there is a car repair, for example, women must choose between fixing the car so she can stay employed or paying the rent. Any crisis puts her housing in jeopardy. When eviction is imminent, our Program Coordinators develop a plan to pay delinquent rent and assist women with budgeting to prepare for future emergencies.



# homelessness.

*towards financial and housing stability.*

## Women's Re-Entry Assessment Program (WRAP)

The Women's Re-Entry Assessment Program, known as WRAP, is a collaboration between the County's Adult Probation, Parole and Pretrial Office and Home of the Sparrow.

The goal is to "wrap" each justice-involved woman with personalized services to meet her individual needs. Stable housing is a key to reducing recidivism rates.

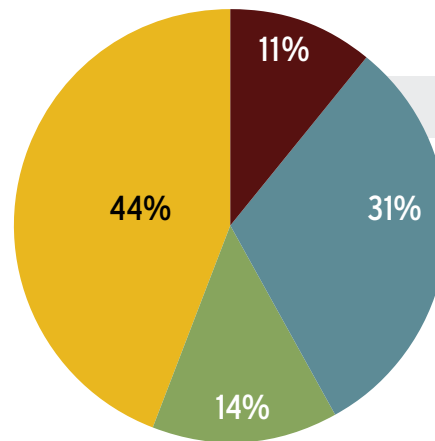
Our goal is to help women regain their dignity, re-enter the community, and create a path to a more stable housing and financial future.

## Shared Housing

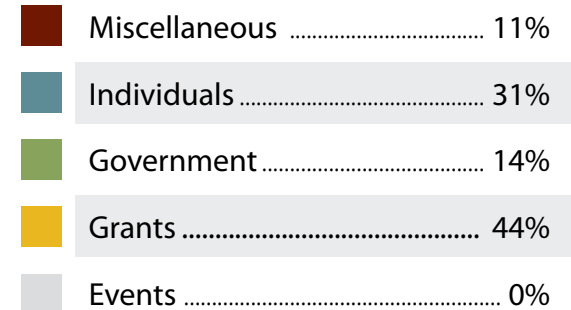
A brilliant and simple solution to the lack of affordable housing in our County. Unique to Home of the Sparrow, this innovative program brings together homeowners who have rooms to rent and may benefit from additional income with women seeking stable, interim housing.

We conduct background checks and serve as a liaison connecting the two parties to ultimately make matches that are, in so many ways, a win-win.

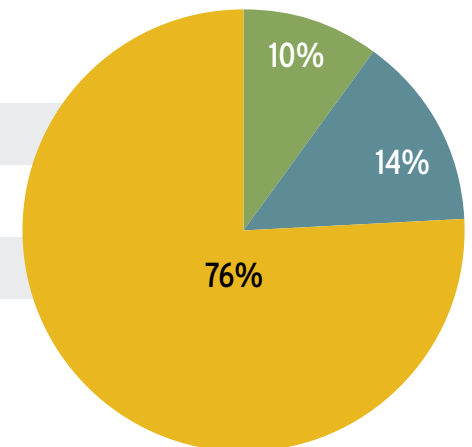
# Financial Performance



### INCOME BY TYPE



### EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION





## *In-Kind Donations*

Keep our **#Giving Garage** fully stocked ... a piece of the puzzle *you* help solve every day!

Your in-kind donations of household products and cleaning supplies keep our **#Giving Garage** fully stocked. When a woman or mother is in need of these everyday products, her program coordinator can pack up a bag of essentials for pickup or delivery.

*An average bag of supplies is worth \$25 - \$35.*

With that savings, our women can redirect those dollars towards rent, savings, medicine, mental health counseling and other necessary expenses.

If you would like to **donate to the #Giving Garage**, please contact [mervine@homeofthesparrow.org](mailto:mervine@homeofthesparrow.org).

*Our sincere gratitude for  
your donations.*

Here is a list of needed items:

- Fuel gift cards
- Bleach
- Cleaning products
- Laundry detergent
- Paper towels
- Unscented trash bags



# *Our sincere gratitude for your donations!*

Every effort has been made to ensure the completeness and accuracy of this donor, supporter and volunteer list. We regret any errors or omissions and encourage you to contact us so that we may correct our records.

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