



# Open House Ministries

*Empowering homeless families in our community*

900 West 12th Street, Vancouver, WA 98660

(360) 737-0300

August 2008

## STOP... LISTEN... THINK... RESPOND



Hi. My name is Elna and I am a single mother living at Open House Ministries. I invite you to take a break in your day and sit back while I share my story with you.

Here's a little bit about myself. I'm 33. I have three boys who have been in the foster care system since August 2006. You see, I'm a recovering meth addict, pot smoker and alcoholic. I've been binge drinking off and on since I was 13. From a very young age, I remember having extremely low self-esteem. Because of my own lack of self-love and confidence, my kids have suffered the consequences of living in an environment where addiction and abuse have been a way of life. I've always been dependent on controlling, abusive men who have done my thinking for me.

At the age of 16, I became pregnant and was scared. Before I knew it, I was married at 17 and found myself in an abusive marriage that lasted 6 years. More abusive relationships followed. I began to use drugs as a young mother to cope with my stress and depression. It only made it worse and eventually my drug use tore my family apart.

Through it all my church community was there to support me. One day, I asked Rick, a friend from church, for a prayer - a prayer that would help me escape from drugs. Because of my faith that God can heal, I was delivered that day. However, a couple days later some of my old acquaintances tried to sabotage me getting clean. As a result, I lost my children and for the amount of drugs they found in my system I should have been dead. I believe if I hadn't had that prayer my kids would no longer have me.

My children were taken on August 7, 2006 and I checked myself into a year-long treatment program on August 28th. From the day I lost my kids, instead of running to drugs I ran to God for his comfort. I spent 13 months in an intense in-patient recovery program. I graduated the program - the first time I have ever completed anything. I have never been through anything so hard in my life. I only was allowed one 10 minute phone call a week and a visitation with my kids and family two or three times a month. It took everything in me not to walk out of there and give up, but my kids kept me going because they encouraged me.

When my recovery was complete, my church family was there to support me again. I love them very much. After a couple months of having to adjust to the world, I got into the program at Open House Ministries. I have completed my classes in the program. I am working at a job that I love, training as an intern at Shared Hope International to do office work. It's through Open House that I found out about the job and was referred to it. Today, I have full custody of one of my sons. My youngest son stays with me 5 days per week. My oldest will be next to come home when my permanent housing is in place.

Open House Ministries gave me a place to live for my kids to come home to me. As I get ready to transition out of the shelter, I'm thankful for the people that support Open House. You give people like me a chance to be successful in life. You don't give up on us but encourage us to make it through. The program here gives us the tools to succeed and the support we need. If it wasn't for the community supporting us, we wouldn't have this chance - and I wouldn't be reuniting with my sons. I'm grateful for Open House Ministries and the second chance I have been given to be a good mom to my boys.

Although I am preparing to leave the shelter, there are still so many things I need to accomplish to be ready. Please pray with me as I seek affordable housing for my children and me. Also, please pray that I will be able to find work following the completion of my internship. I have come so far, but I still have a journey in front of me.

If you would like to give more people like me a second chance in life, please make your donation to Open House today. Open House Ministries needs your support now more than ever.

Thank you for taking a moment to stop and listen to my story. I hope I have given you something to think about and I pray you have the desire to respond.

*Elna*

thinking



## How to get involved with Open House...

\* Buy school supplies for two - you & a student at OHM. Call for a list of specific items needed 737.0300.

\* Collect food from your neighbors to help us stock the shelves of our Food Pantry. See list to the right.

\* Share your favorite summer craft project with the children or adults at OHM.

## Help Open House stock the Food Pantry

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> pears  | <input type="checkbox"/> jelly                 | <input type="checkbox"/> corn                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peaches                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> ketchup               | <input type="checkbox"/> <del>pork &amp; beans</del> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> apple sauce                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> ramen noodles         | <input type="checkbox"/> <del>green beans</del>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mixed fruit                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> hotdogs               | <input type="checkbox"/> chili                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> baby food (jars)                             | <input type="checkbox"/> canned chicken        | <input type="checkbox"/> pudding/jello               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hamburger                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> tuna                  | <input type="checkbox"/> tomato soup                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> toilet paper                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> diapers (2-6)         | <input type="checkbox"/> coffee                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hamburger & Tuna Helper                      | <input type="checkbox"/>                       | <input type="checkbox"/> tampons                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pancake mix & syrup                          | <input type="checkbox"/> shampoo & conditioner |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> beef & chicken broths                        | <input type="checkbox"/> chicken noodle soup   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brooms, dust pans, mops for residents' rooms |  |  |

## The staff of Open House love to hear from you...

Monthly we receive notes from many of you when you send in your donations. They uplift us and encourage us when we need it most. Here is an example of one such note...

7/18/08

Dear "Hard Workers,"

*Where is July going? Seems that we were watching fireworks just yesterday. I must say the Minnehaha area was NOISY & colorful. Hope you're all well. Thanks so much for your communication via newsletters, Dave's letter, & thoughtfully written thank-you notes! :-)*

Warmly,  
Donna Jacky

**Thank you for your encouragement and support!**

## Save the dates for these upcoming Open House Events...

**\* August 23, 2008 \***

### Open House Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

Celebrating volunteers from the past, present & future  
\* Noon @ Open House Ministries  
Please join us for a "picnic in the parking lot"! RSVP by August 15th to Dawn Barton, 737.0300.

**\* September 27, 2008 \***

### Dessert Reception and Auction

6:30 pm @ Open House Ministries \* \$10/ticket  
Would you consider offering a weekend stay at your vacation home for our auction? Do you have new or antique items you would like to contribute? Please contact Jennifer at 737.0300.

**\* November 10, 2008 \***

### Open Hearts for Open House

4:00 - 6:00 pm @ Open House Ministries  
Tours, hor devours, meet the staff & hear how you can get more involved with the ministry.



**Kids say the cutest things...**



## Open House Ministries

P.O. Box 242, Vancouver, WA 98666  
Ph: 360.737.0300 Fax: 360.737.3157  
David Wilde, Executive Director  
Email: sheltered@juno.com  
Website: www.sheltered.org

*Empowering homeless families  
in our community*

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Vancouver, WA  
Permit 443

One day, Vikkilyn, director of our day care, watched as the children set up a tea party in the play area. She heard little Sharon say, "Let's pray!" Sharon started to sing the "Thank you Jesus" song the kids sing before snack time.