

RESIDENT STORY

A Choice for a Beautiful Life

Making big changes often comes with difficult challenges. For Rebecca, fear of the unknown became less unnerving than the decision to leave an unhealthy marriage. But it came with a heavy price and led to a relapse after being sober for over five years. The choice also impacted her mental health, and she found herself spiraling out of control.



Rebecca soon fell behind on her rent, and after options ran out, she was ready to find help. "I was broken, scared, and trying to figure out how to start over," Rebecca said. "My boys deserved to have a stable, sober, and level headed mother, and I knew I needed to restart my life."

She had heard about Open House Ministries from friends who had gone through the program, and she knew staff who worked there. She remembered being ready to choose something unknown again.

Rebecca reached out to OHM to add her name to the list, and on her 39th birthday in December of 2024, Rebecca was accepted into the program and moved into the shelter. "It was the best present I could have ever asked for," she said. "Things that had held me back my whole life I was able to release to God."

Time at Open House Ministries was transforming for Rebecca. She remembers how grateful she was to have Chaplain Jon's counseling as she worked through tough issues.



Rebecca enjoying a holiday event with her two sons.

And how important it was to be met right where she was when she arrived, but challenged to grow and take accountability for herself so she could learn how to create a new life.

"Open House saw me, invested in me, and helped me see things in myself that I could not see at the time," she said. "They gave me space

to grow, but also guidance and correction I needed along the way."

Rebecca shared that she appreciated the program's clear expectations and the importance of an open line of communication with staff. "The classes stretched my mind, and I learned a lot that will guide me the rest of my life," she said. She added that the program is well thought out, with residents responsible for keeping their rooms in order and showing up to class on time. She also said she learned to be *present* with her children.

Rebecca appreciated the struggle other residents in the shelter were going through too. "I loved the community of diverse people just trying to make life changes," she said. And when it came time for Rebecca to leave the shelter after finishing the program, she recalled how she was moved to tears with her shelter friends, grateful for the stability and growth in her own life and opportunity to build a better future for her sons.

"I found healing, support, accountability, and a stronger relationship with God. Even in my darkest times, I was able to thank God for my beautiful life," Rebecca said. "I had faith that I would walk out of OHM completely changed. And I did."

We are so grateful for Rebecca and her sons. Her brave choices to restart her life and trust God are a blessing. Please keep Rebecca in your prayers as you remember Open House Ministries and the lives God is changing as they put their trust in Him. •

GRACIOUS GIVING

Year End Giving

As a supporter of Open House Ministries, your gifts throughout the year have enabled us to help change our residents' lives in so many ways. By providing a stable living environment for families, continuing education, and most importantly, regular Bible-based encouragement, you make that happen through your generosity.

Many of you have decided to make gifts directly from your IRA to maximize your gifts and avoid unnecessary taxes. Another way we have received numerous gifts is from your Donor Advised Fund (sometimes known as a Giving Fund or similar names).

These funds can be set up in numerous ways, but one of the best ways is transferring appreciated stock to avoid capital gains taxes. This makes larger year-end gifts possible and gives you the flexibility to delay making a large gift while providing you with a current year tax deduction.

This can give you time to prayerfully consider where, when, and how much to give, and to plan a more comprehensive giving strategy. Giving appreciated assets can make you a more cheerful giver because these assets are almost like a gift from God. Thanks to His leading, you have enjoyed a blessing that acknowledges He is the rightful owner of all that we have, and we are just trying to be good stewards of what He has entrusted to us.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss other unique ways to make a generous year-end gift, please contact Sarah Nichols at 360-737-0300 or email Sarah.Nichols@sheltered.org

Thank you for supporting Open House Ministries. •

Who gets to decide what I do?

Peter tells Christians to “live as free people” in the middle of a passage about living under authority (1 Peter 2:16). This sounds strange at first glance. How can someone live freely when another person sets the terms?

We often imagine freedom as answering to no one. Yet everyone Peter addresses lives within obligations they did not create: citizens under government, servants under masters, and husbands and wives with responsibilities toward one another.

Yet, Peter locates their freedom in whom they ultimately belong to. They may answer to human authorities, yet they belong to God. No one else's decisions release them from their responsibility before him.

Peter shows us this freedom in Jesus. His enemies arrested him, condemned him, and nailed him to a cross. Yet Jesus did not retaliate or make threats. He “entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23). They determined what they would do to him. They could not determine Jesus' response. Jesus remained free to trust and obey his Father.

Our residents know what it is to have someone else set the terms. One of the most frequent struggles we encounter concerns personal autonomy. Who gets to decide what I do? By the time many residents arrive, find themselves answering to parole officers, judges, counselors, caseworkers, and treatment

staff. Then they enter a program with its own schedule, classes, and expectations. It can feel as though someone else now governs every part of life.

That struggle can turn a required class into a battle over control. A resident decides the class is pointless and repeatedly refuses to attend. While fighting the authority behind one requirement, they risk throwing away the freedom still in their hands: the freedom to continue building a stable life for themselves and their children.

Accountability is part of treating people with dignity. Every resident is made in the image of God and capable of responsibility, wisdom, repentance, and growth.

Open House Ministries provides housing, counseling, classes, case management, and pastoral care. We also hold residents accountable for how they use those opportunities. They must care for their apartments, participate in the program, remain sober, and treat others with respect. Their choices have consequences because their choices matter.

Accountability is part of treating people with dignity. Every resident is made in the image of God and capable of responsibility, wisdom, repentance, and growth.

Peter's words belong to all of us. Someone else may set the schedule, enforce the rule, or make the decision. They cannot keep us from honoring God. Because we belong to Christ, the next faithful step remains in our hands.

• Chaplain Jon Nichols

Adopt a Family for Christmas

Christmas time is quickly approaching at Open House Ministries, and we invite you to celebrate by adopting one of our families.

If you would like to participate, the following guidelines will be helpful.

Gift Guidelines and Ideas

- Toys and clothing items from the family's wish list, wrapped and delivered by Friday, December 18th.
- Gift cards such as Target, Fred Meyer, WINCO foods or a gas card.

To adopt a family for Christmas, please contact Claudia Merritt at 360-737-0300 or email Claudia.Merritt@sheltered.org and she will give you the details needed for your family adoption.

Last day to drop off gifts will be Friday, December 18th.

SAVE THE DATE



Mark your calendar for our great holiday event!

November 12th & 13th: 8 am - 5 pm

November 14th: 10 am - 5 pm



SHELTER NEEDS

Bottled water
8.5 x 11 Copy paper
Household items
One-pound packages of hamburger

TOURS & TALKS

Want to see Open House Ministries up close?

Join us for a First Friday Tour! Noon to 1 pm

To sign up, contact us at events@sheltered.org



P.O. Box 242 • Vancouver, WA 98666
360-737-0300 • www.sheltered.org