




**OPEN HOUSE
MINISTRIES**

www.sheltered.org

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**He is
Risen
indeed.**

**Happy
Easter!**

Connections

April 2020



Look Inside!

Trusting in God's Faithfulness

"If I only knew then what I know now." I wonder how many times we've said that phrase and considered what kind of advice we would give our younger selves. Would we change anything with more information? Gratefully, Scripture tells us God is in control, and His love for us never changes. As God is at work in our daily lives, He challenges us to become stronger believers. Whether our struggles are big or small, we know we can count on Him to be in the middle of our circumstances, regardless of the timeframe.

At Open House Ministries, we start each day praising a faithful God and seeking him for guidance. As we prayerfully consider the challenges we are facing, our mission remains the same: to provide shelter and intervention through Christ-centered programs. We will continue with our work, focused on our mission, as we make necessary adjustments in our organization.

Recently we made the difficult decision to close our thrift store and cancel pick-up and delivery of large items. We are limiting items received at our shelter drop off location and encourage everyone to call in advance for our current donation list. Respecting the need to minimize health risks, we have also sent

most of our volunteer work force home. In the meantime, Open House Ministries' staff is stepping up to fill gaps while we wait for our volunteers to return.

The programs at Open House Ministries have been impacted on many levels as a result of these changes. We are reaching out to you for added support at this time, due to our temporary drop in revenue. If you would

like to help, we would appreciate a special donation to Open House Ministries. Your generosity will help bridge our financial gap by providing us with vital funds necessary to stay within our budget and keep programs running smoothly. To donate, please go to our website at www.sheltered.org and click on the donate button or contact us at 360-737-0300.

We also ask for your continued prayer for our residents, staff, and volunteers as we seek God's guidance and wisdom to navigate through this unknown territory. No matter where we are, or what crisis is happening around us, we know we can trust in God. He is faithful. ❤️

Blessings,

Reneé Stevens,
Executive Director





The wondrous cross

Chaplain's Corner by Mark Roskam

Images of crosses dominate my office wall in the McClaskey Family Resource Center (MFRC). I have been told that at night, people can see the glow of those nearly 30 crosses illuminated by the streetlights on 13th Street. It was only two years ago that a nearly 100-year old tenement house languished on this very site; providing dilapidated housing for up to 15 people. They lived in squalor, in their addictions

and sinful lifestyles, and in a seemingly antithetical manner to the Christ-centered community of Open House Ministries sitting right next door.

Yet they were our neighbors, and the people of Open House endeavored to be good and biblical neighbors. Though our residents were forbidden from being inside that drug house, we built strong relationships with many of the tenants, helping them with food, clothing and services. When it came time to demolish that house to make room for the MFRC, we helped every neighbor find alternate housing. Still today, I remain in close contact with several of these old neighbors, albeit through cancer, addictions, poverty and death.

One cross at Open House Ministries stands alone. As the building site for the MFRC was cleared for future construc-

tion, there was a large hollowed-out area where the basement of the old house once stood. We jokingly called it our future swimming pool. Instead of a swimming pool, we placed a large solitary cross. This became the location for prayer circles, chapel services and commemoration ceremonies. Both Pastor Aaron Knapp, the former chaplain at Open House, and I would lead dedication services for this new ministry site, with the cross standing as witness. As we dedicated this site to God's work in our community, we asked the residents, staff and volunteers to sign the cross. Today, the cross still stands as a witness, not only to the 75 people who signed it, nor the rebirth of the site, but to the transformative work of Jesus in our community and neighborhood.

***"See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love
flow mingled down; Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?"***

From the hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,"
written by Isaac Watts, 1707

It was at the cross of Jesus where "heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love," as Scott Sauls wrote. We celebrate the "kiss" of Jesus today and every day at Open House Ministries. We are so grateful for your faithful partnership in ministry as He changes lives, legacies and cities to the glory of God. ❤️

With love and fond affection,

Mark

Giving and receiving can happen together

Jesus said it is "more blessed to give than receive," and most of us know from past experience that this is true. Just think about the joy we have when we give a gift to special people in our lives at Christmas, birthdays and other occasions. Hopefully, we also have this joy when we support ministries such as Open House and our churches.

There are a number of ways we can support our favorite charitable causes and both give and receive. Two of these methods are a charitable gift annuity and a charitable remainder trust. These types of gifts are referred to as deferred gifts and are best made with an appreciated asset like stocks, mutual funds and real estate, but they

can also be made with an outright gift from your checking or savings account. This type of donation will become a gift after a certain number of years. In the meantime, it can bring you tax-advantaged payments and help avoid capital gains taxes, as would be the case with a highly appreciated asset.

We would be delighted to give you more information and discuss the details of how these types of gifts work so you can share it with your adviser. Please call us at 360-737-0300 or email ross.merritt@sheltered.org to setup an appointment or request more information. ❤️

After years of searching, Elaine has found her way home

Gang life can give you a sense of belonging — and a home. It gave that to Elaine, a young runaway who then got pregnant at 16. Now, Elaine is thrilled to have a sense of belonging and a home at Open House Ministries.

“I have never felt so loved and accepted,” she said. “I don’t ever want to leave!”

Best of all, Elaine says, “At Open House Ministries, I have bridged the gap between me and God.” Although she’s seen a lot of tragedy in her life, has past addiction problems and often hasn’t had a safe home, she says, “The biggest part is I didn’t have God.” Elaine, 38, is now clean, sober and hopeful. She lives at the shelter with her 4-year-old daughter, Calia, the youngest of her four children. (Her three sons live with other family members.) The two ladies are enjoying having a bed that stays in one place. For years, she says a truck was the family home, sometimes housing the entire family of five.

“It made me and my kids really close,” she said. “It wasn’t all bad.” But it wasn’t all good. The best memory Elaine has of the family’s Durango is when it finally broke down. Why? “God knew what he was doing. If that truck didn’t break down, I likely wouldn’t be in Vancouver or at Open House.”

Elaine grew up in the area and was back here visiting when stranded by her vehicle/house. When the Council for the Homeless asked her if she was seeking vouchers and other monetary fixes or if she’d be interested in a more organized home and recovery environment, she says she didn’t have to think twice about pursuing a move to Open House Ministries. Elaine wanted life to change.

“I’d been ready, I just didn’t know how,” Elaine said. Open House Ministries and a connection to God showed her the way.

Getting off the wrong path

Before arriving at Open House Ministries, Elaine’s answer in life was often drugs. “I was using drugs to not eat as much, to be awake to make sure no one was breaking in the truck, and I didn’t want to feel anything because nobody cared,” Elaine tells. “I kept praying to God, ‘Help me get it right!’”

While living in a faith-based housing community is a big

change from her gang-associated nomadic decades, there’s a lot she likes about living at Open House Ministries.

“On top of my recovery class, conflict resolution has been really helpful. Chapel is great, too,” she says. “And I LOVE giving back. I appreciate this place so much.”

Giving back is a program that has residents caring for the shelter with cleaning or other contributions. And “loving it” is a common comment from residents here. They enjoy giving back to a place helping them find their way. Many of them also miss the productive feeling work brings. Elaine is used to, and likes, a life with work. “I even worked when I was sleeping in my truck,” Elaine says. She was a housekeeper.



Elaine receives a Giving Back assignment from Dave Hamby, OHM facilities manager.

Tina, a case manager at Open House Ministries, loves what she’s seeing. “It’s a blessing to be a part of Elaine’s journey and watch her grow as a person and as a mother. The biggest blessing has been watching her faith grow day by day!”

“I know I am on the right road,” says Elaine. “I don’t think about the future. I live right now, and my life is in God’s hands.” She often comments that she’s not “future tripping” — a term she learned in recovery that means not getting overwhelmed by life’s unknowns or anxious about how

far she has to go.

Part of living “right now” includes her commitment to a new life. Elaine is looking forward to being baptized soon, and she is grateful she knows she belongs to God.

“God’s a gentleman,” Elaine says of the timing involved in giving her life to Christ. “He’s gonna open the door, but He’s not going to push you through it.”

He might take advantage of your car breaking down in the right place at the right time, however. Elaine is glad He did and that she’s learning how to live a new kind of life at OHM. ❤️



Calia, Elaine’s daughter, feeling strong in a fireman’s hat.

Open House Ministries Benefit Luncheon



Open House Ministries is temporarily placing a hold on the annual benefit luncheon due to current COVID-19 restrictions.

We appreciate your prayers and hope to share news of any changes to our Hope in Motion Benefit Luncheon with you soon.

Thank You!

Open House Ministries Event Committee

Tours & Talks

Tours are available for anyone interested in learning more about Open House Ministries and seeing the shelter in action. Please contact Leslie Cook, our development coordinator, at 360-737-0300 to sign up for an already available tour date or to create one that works better. You can also sign up on our website: www.sheltered.org/tours/.



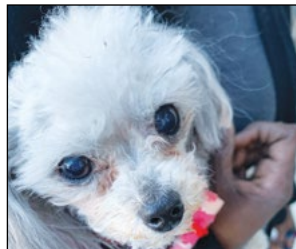
We schedule our tours at lunch time. Please join us and we'll provide a light lunch for you to enjoy!

Pet clinic at Open House Ministries

"Our family resource center was built so Open House Ministries could offer space to partners and people in need in our community," Reneé Stevens, executive director of Open House Ministries, told Clark County Today recently.

The paper wrote about a Feb. 27 clinic for pets of people who are homeless, put on by the Humane Society for Southwest Washington and WellHaven Pet Health and hosted at Open House Ministries. These monthly wellness clinics offer free veterinary care to people in the homeless community and will rotate each month this year between the Vancouver Navigation Center and Open House. (The next clinic at Open House Ministries is from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on April 23.)

"We have a space that's easy to access for homeless pets and their owners, and the Humane Society is a great partner," Reneé was quoted



saying. The Columbian also covered the event, reporting, "Pets were examined and could receive vaccines, microchips, flea and tick and heartworm medication, and get their nails trimmed and ears cleaned. ... Free pet food, harnesses, leashes, collars, sweaters and carriers were also up for grabs."

At the event, at least one man said he had no email address to supply clinic workers for notifying him about future needs for his cat. Email access is one of the many things most of us take for granted that are more difficult for the homeless.

These generous clinics are staffed by a mix of paid employees and trained volunteers, and we're glad to be a part of it.

"The relief on the faces of people in seemingly insurmountable life situations is a reminder there are many ways our community can help the homeless," Dina Hovde, communications manager at Open House Ministries, told Clark County Today. ❤️

SHELTER NEEDS:

Blankets, hand warmers,
food items, toiletries and
cleaning supplies.
Thank you!

A NOTE TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Open House Ministries is responding to regulations by working without our faithful volunteers. We wish to thank each of you for your valuable service to our ministry and look forward to having you back soon. Please continue to pray with us as we all do our part to make a difference in the lives of homeless families. Thank you!