

## RESIDENT STORY

### Heartfelt Gratitude For A New Life

**F**inding a way forward was challenging for Ciera and David. They were both struggling with addiction when they met, and needed counseling to restore their mental health. While they were in and out of treatment, they learned they were expecting a child.

Knowing they had to make a change, they returned home to their families and Ciera entered into the Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP). At PCAP, Ciera learned about Open House Ministries and reached out to add their names to the shelter waitlist.

Time passed and on December 25, 2023, Ciera and David welcomed a baby girl into their family. "I thought this baby was what I always needed to keep me clean," said Ciera. "She was indeed a miracle. But we quickly found no matter how bad we wanted to stay clean for her, something was still missing."

They were still living separately and Ciera remembers feeling alone, split up, and empty. "I didn't think I'd ever come to know God," she said.

When space opened up for them at Open House Ministries, they quickly responded. She remembers walking into their new place with Paisley and thinking, "Wow, we get to be together as a family."



*Ciera and David with their daughter, Paisley, modeling for the Revival House Thrift Store Fashion Show during our summer block party.*

She shared how they were completely taken care of from the beginning. "We didn't have to worry about furnishing the bedroom, bathroom or kitchen. We had everything we needed to start our new lives."

Spending time in classes gave Ciera and David a chance to learn new life-skills and find fresh faith in God. "The Art of Faith class and Cultivating Virtue class really helped me strengthen the values and morals that were important to me," said David. "Living in the same



*Paisley Mae standing tall next to Ciera and David*

space as a family gave us the structure we needed to be successful. It also allowed us to grow so much closer to God."

Ciera shared how her deep struggle with faith has been changed. "I absolutely love and have honored this time to re-program myself," she said. And went on to describe herself as the "happiest, faithful servant of God." She remembers hearing they were not just entering a program at Open House Ministries, but entering a family. "That is 100% accurate," states Ciera. "I am so grateful to everyone who poured out their love and put so much into our family.

"Things have been so good since we got here," David added. "We had a lot of wreckage from our past to clean up. They helped us with everything over and above what I expected. I don't think words can articulate the amount of gratitude I have for everyone that works in this program," he continued. "They are amazing."

Ciera sees herself as a completely transformed person from the one who first entered Open House Ministries. "This is where miracles happen," she said. "People come here broken and can put back the pieces of their lives because of the help that is given to everyone who comes here. No matter where you're coming from you are treated as a child of God."

Ciera describes how the time they've been blessed with to learn and grow together is the most precious gift. "I couldn't ask for a better gift than time to be a mother to my daughter. We were on the waitlist for eight months," said Ciera, "but really I've been waiting on this my whole life."

This Christmas, Paisley will turn two! Please pray for God's blessing as we celebrate a new life for this young family. •

## MINISTRY NEWS

*Peace  
on  
Earth*

### CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

**S**hoppers filled the family resource center gym mid-November for three days of great holiday shopping, festive music and tasty treats to celebrate the season. Guests and volunteers filtered through the large trees surrounded by tables of Christmas decorations of every kind.



Setting up the gym takes days, but the real work starts early as Christmas decorations are frequently donated to Open House Ministries and organized in the basement of OHM West.

"We prepare for the Christmas Bazaar all year," said Revival House Thrift Store Manager Tina Murphy. "This year we extended the bazaar to three days, including Saturday so people could enjoy the sale on the weekend."

All proceeds from the bazaar go directly to support the families at Open House Ministries. We want to thank our staff, volunteers, and residents who work so hard to make the bazaar a success. We wouldn't be able to do it without you. •



*Sherrill Roskam (left) with her sister Sharleen Newton helping with set up*



## GENEROUS GIVING



### The Joy of Giving at Christmas Time

The holidays always bring a special energy to Open House Ministries. Plans for celebrations with our shelter families start to take shape, and we are reminded once again of the incredible generosity in our community.

Families are deeply moved to see the outpouring of time and gifts that are shared with us by faith groups, businesses, and people who want to give to Open House Ministries. It has a lasting impact, especially with the children who experience a big Christmas celebration with a lot of people. It's fun to see how Christmas time lights up their faces, and brings gratefulness to each family.

Giving at Christmas time feels special, too. When sharing with those in need is the main focus, joy and thankfulness build throughout our community. At Open House Ministries we see that joy on the faces of volunteers and donors who give their time and support for families working to recover from homelessness.

Each year I have the pleasure of connecting with many of you who express your gratitude for Open House Ministries, knowing the work to end homelessness in our community is a big job. We see your support in the letters and notes that you share each month, and we can't thank you enough for your encouragement and prayers.

Many of you have expressed how you would like to do more to help. Including Open House Ministries in your long term giving plan will expand our ability to heal lives. Direct transfers for your required minimum distributions or RMD's can also be a tax benefit. Considering OHM in your will or trust can make a lasting impact for generations.

If you would like to discuss opportunities to give in more detail, please contact me, Jean LaCrosse, at (360) 737-0300 or email me at [jean.lacrosse@sheltered.org](mailto:jean.lacrosse@sheltered.org). I hope you have a joyful Christmas season. •



900 W. 12th St. | P.O. Box 242  
Vancouver, WA 98666-0242  
360-737-0300  
[www.sheltered.org](http://www.sheltered.org)

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Giving Hope to the Next Generation

Time at Open House Ministries moves fast for families working to rebuild their lives. We know we have a small window to help each one turn things around and find a strong path forward. Our work not only focuses on adults who are learning new life skills, but also on their children, who range from newborn babies to 18-year-old kids.

Many of our families are here with babies and children under five years old. We help them balance their time in classes and job-skills training through our on-site child care services. Our staff care for the smallest babies in our nursery, keeping a close eye on them while toddlers and preschool-aged kids participate in educational projects and play with other kids on our playground and in our classrooms.

It is important to us that the children who come through our doors feel loved. Each year, we grow our ministry in ways to help kids find connection and see God's blessing in their lives. It might not happen right away. It can take years before kids look back on their time at Open House Ministries and see how people they didn't know reached out to help them.

We know there are many distractions and difficulties each family faces before they can move on from our shelter and build stable lives. While parents are making progress on those obstacles, we're working to make the most of the time we have with their school-aged kids.

One of the biggest goals for our ministry over the past few years is to expand our after-school program. Adding a children's program coordinator to our staff



has given us the ability to build meaningful time and experiences with the kids in our program.

Thanks to a generous gift, we were able to purchase a van to take kids to events and activities in the area. Kids are going to a Peak 7 summer camp, where they spend time with other kids near Nolte State Park and hear about how God is working in their lives. They are taking day trips to fun places that they might not otherwise get to experience.

When we invest in those opportunities for our kids, we build memories that last a lifetime. They learn that there are people who want to help them and places where they can grow, and make new friends.

I want to thank our staff and everyone who volunteers their time, resources, and gifts to give hope to this next generation. Your investment in these young lives is a big blessing, and builds a stronger future for all of us in our community.

I hope your holidays will be filled with joy and hope for the future as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Blessings,

Renee Stevens  
Executive Director

## OPEN HOUSE MINISTRIES WEST

### Stop by for a visit, stay to shop!

The new stores at OHM West are a great place to catch up and visit with friends. There are newly refurbished bicycles at Wheel House Bicycle Shop, and great deals on home decor, clothing and furnishings at Revival House Thrift Store. Visit soon and enjoy one of our hand-made drinks at The House Coffee Shop!



#### SHELTER NEEDS

Clorox wipes • Paper towels  
Bottled water • Deodorant  
Kid's shampoo • Baby wash  
One pound packages  
of hamburger  
Thank you!

#### TOURS & TALKS

Want to see Open House Ministries up close?  
Join us for a First Friday Tour  
from Noon to 1 pm  
To sign up, contact us at  
[events@sheltered.org](mailto:events@sheltered.org)