




**OPEN HOUSE
MINISTRIES**

www.sheltered.org

P.O. Box 242
Vancouver, WA 98666
360-737-0300

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*"I have loved
you with an
everlasting love."*

Jeremiah 31:3

Connections

February 2020



Look Inside!

Open House families benefit from staff members with homeless pasts

In October, the Open House family was hit hard by the loss of Larry Smith, 60. The five-year facilities employee at Open House was also a former resident.

"We both just came up on our five years," said Lori, the shelter's donations supervisor. "I've worked alongside him the whole time I've been here. He was set in his ways, but he filled the building with joy. Everywhere." Lori is also a former resident.

A similar story was told again and again about the love and joy that poured out of this man and about how people knew Larry as both an Open House employee and former resident.

Renee Stevens, the executive director at Open House Ministries, said of Larry's employment, "Larry was honored that he was given an opportunity to work at Open House." She added, "He loved working and giving back to the place that saved his life."

That's a common theme among staff members at Open House who are former residents. And right now, there are nine of them, making up a third of the staff.

Open House Ministries is in a unique position to employ people who are willing to give their job everything they've got because they have been on the receiving end of the shelter's generosity. At a recent lunch the board threw for Open House employees, Nicole, a former resident turned staff member, said that every time she sees Joanne Kendall, co-founder of this ministry, she tears up. The bike shop manager is blown away and humbled by the

amount of care and diligence Joanne devotes to homeless families in Vancouver.

Warmth for and investment in a workplace is easy to have when you credit that workplace and its leaders for helping you get on a path that prioritizes a relationship with Christ, family and community.

Renee is also a former resident. After her stay at Open House ended in 2003, she started



**Open House program graduates
who are now staffers share
a lot of laughs and life.**

working for the shelter doing night-time security in 2004 and was continuously promoted, becoming the executive director in 2017. She knows the place inside and out, from many angles. "People believed in me when I did not believe in myself," she says.

Believing in residents is a huge part of the restorative gift given at Open House, and Renee has been a huge believer. As a past case manager at Open House, Renee trained two of the current case managers on staff and has mentored even more of the employees.

Well done, good and faithful servant

Chaplain's Corner / By Mark Roskam, OHM chaplain

Today, I reflect with you in light of the death of Aaron Knapp on Nov. 15, 2019. Aaron was Open House Ministries' chaplain before me, and the words, "He was as Elijah to me," pulse through my heart.

Elijah was a voice of God before kings and he led a great victory over the priests of Baal (I Kings 18). In like manner, Aaron gave a strong, unequivocal voice to the non-negotiable truth of Jesus as the one and only foundation for life and living. Upon this truth, he taught me to choose my battles carefully and know which hills to die upon. Aaron was such a voice of wisdom. When my family was in the middle of very difficult troubles, his sage counsel was straight from the heart of God.

Just as Elijah enjoyed great pinnacle moments, he could also experience great human discouragement (I Kings 19). Pastor Aaron's humility and humanness reflected a real man of God wrestling through struggles, suffering and injustice. He was transparent and modeled sharing with and loving one another. In the later years, Aaron and I talked of his suffering and some stifled dreams, yet he never lost his enduring hope. His last words to me were, "Why does the Lord tarry?" We talked of needing time for goodbyes and meeting Jesus face to face where he would hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21). He smiled, and we parted with a holy kiss on his forehead. Aaron reflected Jesus beautifully. As a shepherd, Aaron cared for others tirelessly and faithfully. And his "flock" was never a closed community, it was open to any and all. He saw the intrinsic value of every person, and grace and mercy flowed freely through him to all those in need.



Former OHM chaplain Aaron Knapp (left) and current chaplain Mark Roskam (right) baptize former resident Larry Smith together.

I recall countless visits he made to the jails to meet with the imprisoned, to the courts to testify on behalf of a friend, to various agencies to advocate for his residents, and to a hospital room to bring comfort. Aaron's heart was for every man, great and small, and he fought for justice for those who had lost their voice — just like Jesus.

You are cordially invited to attend an Open House-based memorial service for Aaron Knapp. It will be in the McClaskey Family Resource Center at 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8. Refreshments will be served.

As we grieve Aaron Knapp, I know that Earth's loss is truly heaven's gain.

Mark Roskam, Chaplain



TAX-WISE GIVING

A convenient way to support Open House Ministries in 2020

Many Open House supporters take advantage of our automatic-donation option, a way to simplify their giving to Open House Ministries on a recurring basis with their credit or debit card. And we love that! Recurring gifts are very helpful, allowing us to best make strategic plans for providing homeless families with shelter, intervention and Christ-based, life-saving programs.

Automatic donations are easy to set up. Just go to the donation page on our website that is devoted to financial gifts (www.sheltered.org/donate/). Once there, click on

the blue "Donate Now" button. Enter the information required for your tax-deductible donation and select one of the recurring payment options under "frequency." You can also call us for help in setting this up for you.

Your reliable support as a friend of Open House helps make a steady and dependable stream of income, enabling us to create a solid foundation of support for this ministry. If you have any questions about various giving options, please call 360-737-0300 or email ross.merritt@sheltered.org. ❤️

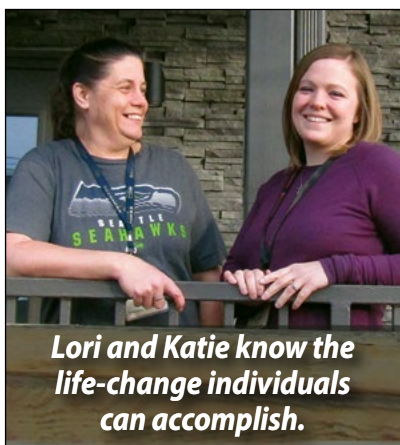
POLICY OR PRACTICE?

It's never been a formal policy to try and hire former residents. When Dick James, Open House Ministries' board president, was asked about the practice, he said whenever a position comes open, the hiring manager, human resources team and executive director write a job description and a job posting goes out. Those working with residents who have successfully completed their individualized programs at the shelter and have moved on from it discuss if there is a program graduate who might be qualified to apply.

"The intent," Dick said, "is to find the right balance between finding the best person for the open position, while also providing the potential for further upward mobility for program graduates."

If it's the right fit, a job within the Open House environment for a former resident can further his or her job skills and build confidence. It also provides current and future residents with understanding staff who can really relate to their situations. That's valuable.

Amanda, one of the former residents hired at Open House several years after leaving residential life at the shelter, says, "I think a benefit of being a former resident is that on some level, I know what they are going through and how to best cater to them." The thrift store manager added, "We all walk different



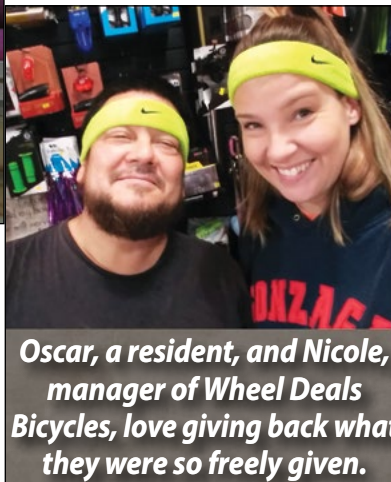
Lori and Katie know the life-change individuals can accomplish.

paths but have been in similar situations. Drugs are a big part of my story, and on that level I can offer support and advice on how to overcome obstacles that arise with being sober."

Katie, a case manager at Open House, spent a few years as an at-home mom after leaving Open House residency. "I heard through the grapevine that OHM was hiring a case manager. I texted Renee and asked her if she thought that I could do something like that. Renee said, 'You know that I have always believed in you!' I applied and the rest is history."

GOD'S THE BOSS

Lori says, "This place is a blessing, and every day I am blessed to be here." It's a sentiment former residents share.



Oscar, a resident, and Nicole, manager of Wheel Deals Bicycles, love giving back what they were so freely given.

"I will never forget what Renee says," Katie shares. "She says, 'God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.'"

Amanda says she will never forget something Mark Roskam, Open House's chaplain, told her when her family was living in the shelter. "He told me God has a book about your life; He takes it down and reads it

regularly. When He puts it back on the shelf, He proclaims that the story of Amanda is a best-seller!"

Amanda and the others are writing their latest life chapters at Open House Ministries. And like Larry, the beloved facilities worker we said goodbye to in the fall, they are filling our buildings with gratitude and joy. Everywhere. ❤️

Switching to digital saves in two ways

Greetings from the Open House Ministries newsletter team.

As we start the new year, Open House Ministries is looking for practical ways to make the most of our donor resources. Since our mailing list is growing with compassionate people wanting to learn more about Open House Ministries, the time involved to fold, sort and deliver the packaged printed copies is growing along with the cost. Currently Open House spends \$4,500 to print and mail the newsletters each month. By switching to a digital newsletter you can help us reduce both the cost and time needed to efficiently deliver the newsletter to you.



HOW TO HELP

If you would like to help, please visit www.sheltered.org/newsletter/ to electronically change your method of receiving the newsletter. Start by clicking "Sign Up Here" in the orange news and information box located on the opening page. Enter your first and last name and email address, select newsletter by email and add the word "updating" in the comment line directly below your choice to change. Confirm you are not a robot and click the red "Add My Name!" button. That's it!

Please don't feel pressured to switch to the digital option. We want you to enjoy our newsletter in print, if you prefer. If you would like to help and need assistance receiving your newsletter digitally, please contact our office at 360-737-0300 and we can change the preference for you.

Thank you in advance for helping us be good stewards! ❤️

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/.



Scheduled tours happen during lunch time. Please join us and we'll provide a light lunch for you to enjoy!

Restorative work is happening together

Twelve months of housing at a glance

On Sept. 30 each year — the end of our fiscal year — we compile the number of residents we served during the past 12 months. This statistical snapshot helps us understand trends and needs among the homeless population and helps us communicate how many people were impacted by our donors' generosity.

In the table below, you'll see how many homeless families and individuals spent time sheltered at Open House and how many bed nights were supplied. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, Open House Ministries provided 50,750 bed nights, an increase from last fiscal year's 44,451 bed nights. This year we were able to serve even more families.

Year	Families Served	Adults	Children	Bed Nights Provided
FY 2018-2019	71	83	90	50,750
FY 2017-2018	58	91	108	44,451



Residents experienced Christmas joy at Open House

Christmas was a special time at Open House. From gift adoptions to parties, residents were able to see how valued they are by our community. Not one family went without thoughtful presents around the tree and special food to celebrate the holiday.



"Christmas at Open House Ministries restored my hope in humanity," said Renee Stevens, executive director at Open House, about having her family adopted by supporters at Christmas time when she lived in the shelter. "Knowing that people in our community cared about my family — not even knowing us — made my heart melt."

Here are pictures of some of this year's adoptions and of an annual party thrown for Open House

families by the Portland Hoo-Hoo Club, a fraternal organization of men and women involved in the lumber industry.

Jim Adams organizes this event in its 19th year. It brings great joy with gifts for children living at or associated with Open House Ministries.

"I'm blessed more than I deserve," said Adams about his passion for this annual event. "This is just something our club can do for the kids. They are in a situation that is out of their control."

As families gathered, the spirit of Christmas filled the room with laughter, joy and togetherness at Open House. Blessings and thanks to all. ❤️

Photos courtesy of JK Gulli — jkgulliphotography.smugmug.com



SHELTER NEEDS:

Blankets, hair conditioner, razors and men's and children's clothing.
Thank you!



Please consider Open House Ministries in your will or trust.