




**OPEN HOUSE  
MINISTRIES**

[www.sheltered.org](http://www.sheltered.org)

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*Look to the  
Lord and his  
strength; seek  
his face always.*

*1 Chronicles 16:11*

# Connections

*September 2019*

*Look Inside!*

## From life behind bars to community and Christ

For most people, it's nearly impossible to fully comprehend being arrested, booked into jail and sentenced to serve, whether long or short. Tina, a resident at Open House Ministries, can comprehend life behind bars all-too well.

Tina grew up in Battle Ground and was plagued with bipolar disorder and alcoholism throughout her life. At age 48, she was incarcerated at the Washington Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor, Washington, for 15 months.

The 50-year-old shares, "Prison life was hard and lonely. I had a cellmate who was serving three consecutive life sentences. I saw lots of women who were in for decades, and I didn't want that to be me. I missed my sons and my mother terribly."

During her time in prison, Tina was determined to make big changes. She read the Bible and spent nearly everyday in the chapel attending services.

"I tried to learn as much about our Lord as possible. This was where I finally realized I was forgiven my sins and where I began my relationship with Jesus," says Tina.

She adds, "I prayed and prayed for God to show me the way and help me change my life. I wanted to create a better version of myself." She did. "I gave glory to God, and He carried me through prison," Tina said.

Tina was released, but, unfortunately, she again made choices that put her behind bars. Toward the end of a 65-day stint at Clark Coun-

ty Jail in downtown Vancouver, she participated in the Clark County Jail's re-entry program. The program offers inmates access to community resources including education, housing options, addiction rehabilitation and more. This is where Tina was first introduced to Open House Ministries and its faith-based environment and teachings.

"Open House was a safe place for me to live where I could address other things like my overall health, mental health and work experience," Tina says. "When you don't have a stable place to live, you can't do anything else very well." She moved into the shelter in October 2018 and lives there today.

Tough work has ensued over the past 10 months — outpatient, co-occurring-disorder classes, therapy sessions, Bible studies, chapel, job training and financial management courses. During this time, Tina has been faithful with her medications and has been clean and sober for more than a year.

"Every day, I feel the Lord. I knew He had a path for me, and I prayed He would show it to me, and He did," says Tina.

Today, Tina is expanding her job skills by working at Open House's thrift store, Secondhand Solutions. She coordinates outfits and accessories, dressing mannequins and assisting customers. She also continues to grow her relationships with her biggest blessings — her two grown sons.

"I was broken," recounts Tina. "I am so thank  
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# More than enough

## Chaplain's Corner

For months, my brother, Mike, and I have been preparing for a big adventure — Route 66: Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness. In early September, we, along with our wives, Gini and Sherrill, will leave in an RV for Chicago, where we will start a 2,448-mile bicycle ride to Santa Monica, California, along historic Route 66.

The purpose of the ride is to raise money for and awareness about the homeless families at Open House Ministries. We are asking for you to join us in that! Every penny of the proceeds will go to Open House Ministries. If we can raise between \$13 and \$14 a mile, per rider, we can make our goal of raising \$66,000 on Route 66.

We are diligently addressing the myriad of details, not the least of which is a requisite 50 miles per day of “saddle time,” readying the body for 70 to 110 miles per day for 30-plus bicycling days. We are gearing up, getting up and giving up our vacation time for this endeavor.

One fun fact of long-distance bicycling is that we will need to eat 6,000 calories a day to keep our strength. For that reason, the RV with its food supply and our wives, will always be ahead of us, just beyond our reach. That will keep us pedalling!

Today, I ask you to undergird this endeavor with prayer. Listen to the Apostle Paul:

“So I wouldn’t get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. At first I did not regard it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. He told me, ‘My grace is enough; it’s all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness.’ Now, I quit



focusing on the handicap and appreciate the gift. It was a case of Christ’s strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take my limitations in stride, they cut me down in size, and so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10, The Message)

I was recently asked about my greatest hopes and concerns for the trip. Hopefully, God will allow the time with Gini, Mike and Sherrill to blossom. But moreso, I seek protracted time alone with God on my bicycle: time to pray, praise, revel in His creation and in the crown jewel of His creation — us!

My only concern is that Jesus would be so very obvious to the Open House Ministries family, and to continue to break the cycle of the bondage of sin and homelessness which dominates so many.

With Abiding Love,

*Mark*



## Oh, Baby!

This summer, members of Zion Lutheran Church made a special delivery to expectant mothers and new babies at Open House Ministries. The talented ladies of the Vancouver-based church gathered together and created 10 hand-made blankets and quilts for the newest arrivals. Zion even made additional blankets for some of the older children in the day care to use during naptime.

Thank you, Zion Lutheran, for sharing your precious time and creative talents, making a special time ever more memorable. ❤️





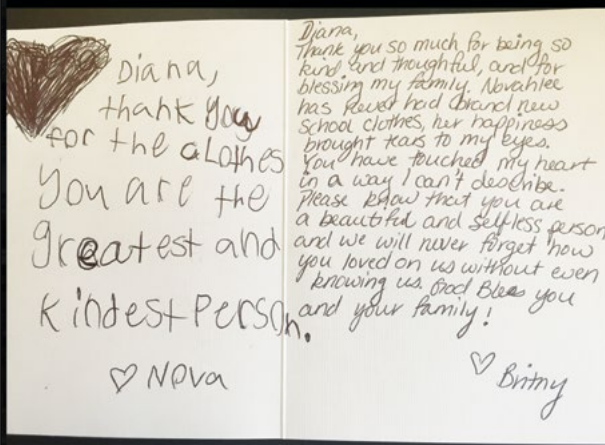
# Back-to-school tradition, made possible by donors



The fleet of children living at Open House Ministries headed back to class in style! All 75 elementary, middle and high school students sported brand new back-to-school outfits, while carrying backpacks full of school supplies, thanks to a very generous and supportive community.

Over the summer, individuals “adopted” the organization’s youngest kids, who are either current or past residents of Open House or its transitional housing unit, Pinewood Apartments. These individuals and the Homeless Outreach Promoting Education (HOPE) organization purchased and donated backpacks of all shapes, sizes and colors, filled with pencils, erasers, markers, scissors, notebooks and more. Kids also received brand new clothes, including shirts, pants and even shoes. In addition to individual donations, Vancouver Elks Lodge #823, led by Debra Hoose, secured a grant that clothed 10 teenagers at \$200 each.

“Every year, teachers tell us kids show up without anything. And it’s so very important to be prepared, and look and feel good – especially on your first day of school,” said Vikkilynn Rolfs. She’s Open House’s day care director and also pours her energy into the annual back-to-school donation drive. Rolfs added, “It’s a momentous day that should be filled with pictures and good memories.” ❤️



(Continued from page 1)

ful and grateful for Open House and an amazing staff. They helped me get on the right journey and stay on it.” She is continuing to learn to love, accept and trust God moving her toward complete healing.

She loves her community at the shelter. “I get to know the other residents and their kids. They support me, I support them. This place feels like a real family,” Tina explains. “It’s bittersweet when people leave, but I am so proud of them and can’t wait to see what they go out and do!” ❤️







## *Breaking the Cycle of* **HOMELESSNESS**

Follow brothers Mike and Mark Roskam as they pedal their way on a fundraising bicycle ride this fall. For more than a month, the cycling enthusiasts will ride 2,400-plus miles along historic Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica, California. Funds raised will go to Open House Ministries to help end the cycle of homelessness. Expenses on the trip will be funded by the cycling team.

“God has given us our good health and stamina to do this. He is in us and with us every mile on the road,” says Mike of the duo’s goal of raising \$66,000 for Open House.

To support Mike and Mark on their quest to help break the cycle of homelessness, call Leslie Cook at 360-737-0300 or visit our website events page to make your by-the-mile pledge or secure donation for this event at <https://www.sheltered.org/upcoming-events/>.



### **ADOPT A FAMILY FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

Fa la la! Every Christmas, the Southwest Washington community and various organizations “adopt” more than 75 families associated with Open House Ministries. They provide gifts, love and cheer during the season.

Specific wish lists are provided for families of all sizes and ages, include clothing needs, shoe sizes, ages and favorites (colors, toys, sports, teams). To be one of our Santas, important dates follow. Call 360-737-0300 to sign up.

Adoption requests due: **September 15**

Adoptions assigned: **September 30**

Donations returned: **December 10**

### **Mark your calendars for September 19, 2019!**

Join us for 24 hours of generosity in our community. On Sept. 19, head over to our Give More 24! event page to support OPEN HOUSE MINISTRIES with a single click. Matching funds and prizes can make your gift to Open House go further on this community-wide day of giving. (If you’re interested in being one of our matching donors, call Leslie Cook at 360-737-0300.)

[www.givemore24.org/organizations/open-house-ministries](http://www.givemore24.org/organizations/open-house-ministries)



**givemore24.org**

**GIVE  
MORE 24!**

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

### **GETTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER**

In 2 Kings 20:1, God tells King Hezekiah, “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.” This is a reality for all of us, and one of the ways we get our house in order is to have an up-to-date will and/or revocable living trust.

God wants us to be good stewards of what He has entrusted to us, and for the benefit of our loved ones, this is one of the most loving things we can do to minimize issues in our “home-going.” If Open House Ministries has been one of the “loved ones” in your life, it is also a wonderful way to make a significant gift, either as a fixed-dollar amount, percentage of your estate or as a residual.

I would be delighted to help you with this and have resources we would be glad to share with you. Please contact me at [ross.merritt@sheltered.org](mailto:ross.merritt@sheltered.org) or 360-737-0300, if you would like more information.

P.S. To support Open House now, you can transfer the required minimum distribution from your retirement account directly to us and avoid taxes that would be due on it.

### **Now hiring: donor relations officer**

Interested in making a real difference in the lives of homeless children? We seek a full-time Donor Relations Officer responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining donor relationships, donor engagement and fundraising strategies to enhance and grow revenue of current and prospective donors. Please email [careers@sheltered.org](mailto:careers@sheltered.org) for a complete job announcement and application.

### ***SHELTER NEEDS:***

Children’s clothing — new and used 12 mos. to size 16, including shoes, socks and underwear, size 4 and 5 diapers, gender-neutral backpacks, paper towels, razors and day bus passes



**Please consider Open House  
Ministries in your will or trust.**