



OPEN HOUSE
MINISTRIES

We're a family shelter

Connections

September 2021



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Seeking God's Guidance

Greetings from Open House Ministries. This summer has been full of blessings for our residents and staff. We enjoyed hosting two weeks of fun summer day camps with the YMCA for our children and the community. Southwest Washington Sea Hawks added to our pantry donations with canned goods and socks for our residents, and Gateway Mortgage collected school supplies for our kids going back to school. Our annual Hope fundraiser on June 3rd was our first gathering event on campus since the pandemic started, and we were grateful to have friends join us in person for our evening event.

Lately, we have been seeing changes going on around us and in our community. For months the need to find affordable housing has been drastically increasing and our residents are finding it difficult to secure homes to transition into once they finish with our program. Vancouver is simply running out of affordable places to live and our graduate residents are stuck without housing options. Those who can find hous-



Executive Director Renee Stevens sharing the steps with resident children

ing are moving farther away from our resources, making it harder to check in with case managers and stay in contact with supportive friends.

I know from experience how important it is to have a strong network around you while you're getting back on your feet. We want to be able to help our resident families continue to grow when they finish their work at Open House Ministries and keep their

families moving in the right direction.

The needs are real and the impact is deep

When families are ready to move on but can't find housing, it keeps us from helping more people in our community. We see a real need to create more space for current residents to move into at Open House Ministries so we can reach more homeless families struggling in Vancouver and Clark County.

I invite you to pray with us while we seek guidance to grow our ministry. There are many decisions to make and we know from scripture unless the Lord is in the midst of our plans our work will be in

vain. (Psalm 127:1) Thank you for standing by Open House Ministries and our mission. Your support is creating more opportunities to help families heal and build independent lives.

Blessings,

Renee Stevens

Renee Stevens, Executive Director

The Farm

They literally gave away the farm! And they were excited to do that after they learned about how they would benefit. The farm property was first transferred to a Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) allowing the charity to sell it without any taxes due and provide income to the donors for the rest of their lives. Since they were now ready to move into a retirement community and divest themselves of the farm, they were very pleased about handling the sale in this fashion and eventually have the remaining proceeds support charitable causes.

They were so happy with the results they even wanted to take a picture with me at their attorney's office to commemorate the occasion! They truly exhibited joy in giving and receiving! That was the first time I was involved in this type of transaction, over 20 years ago, and I knew then that I had made the right decision to make a big career move to help people make meaningful planned gifts. Over the years I have assisted many generous donors with this type of gift, and I would be delighted to personally discuss or send you information on how this might be something for you to consider.

Highly appreciated assets, like the farm, rental properties, or stocks are ideal assets to first transfer to a CRT before the sale. This will enable 100% of the sale proceeds to be used to provide income for you (the donor), while deferring capital gains taxes and ultimately benefiting charitable organizations that are near and dear to your heart. With real estate and the stock market at all-time highs now might be a good time to learn more about this type of deferred gift.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at Open House Ministries, 360-737-0300, or email me at ross.merritt@sheltered.org for more information. **Thank You!**

Please consider including Open House Ministries in your will.

Power, Love, and Discipline

Our family recently moved into a house. Exhausted from unpacking all day and preparing for bed, the quiet silence of our new home was pierced by the doorbell. It was 10:00 pm. My thoughts raced, "Who could be at our door?" There were no porch lights on and peering around the corner all I could see was black.

As I walked toward the door, I was overtaken by dread. All I could seem to think about was possible worst-case scenarios. The flight, fright, freeze mechanism in my brain was at war with the part of me trying to ground myself in rational thought and faith.

With no one visible out the window, I unlocked the door and prepared myself for the unknown. There was no one. Nothing. Was it a prank? Did I imagine the doorbell sound?

Then my eyes caught something on the ground. There on our porch was a package. It was an item we were expecting. My wife and I had completely forgotten that it was supposed to be arriving. Although, neither of us expected to receive it at 10:00 at night! Nonetheless, I felt silly. So much emotion and fear about nothing.

As I reflect on this embarrassing moment, I'm reminded of the amazing witness the church has been through the history of the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the basic human desire of self-preservation. At times

when the church has every reason to shrink in fear or withdraw to try and save themselves, they do the opposite. In fact, Sociologist Rodney Stark notes how one of the elements that sparked the explosive growth of the early church was the Christian response to the epidemic devastating Rome in the 4th century. Christians moved into the neighborhood to offer help and hospitality establishing the first modern hospitals in their homes. This is not an isolated example either. The history of the church is replete with testimonies of how Christians have rushed to rather than fled from danger to serve others and share the gospel.

I don't think they could do this because they were fearless. I think it's because they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. It's natural to feel fear. It is natural to be anxious when your doorbell rings at ten o'clock at night. Yet, it is also possible to rise above fear with the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

So, whether it's answering the door late at night, or starting school or a new job, facing the unknown of a new diagnosis, or watching the news at night, take heart! You don't walk alone. ● *Chaplain Jon Nichols*

THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY

Adopt a Student for School!

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of so many of you who chose to adopt a student with new school clothes and shoes. Because of you, 80+ students will be heading back to school with a fresh start!

School Supplies

Thank you Gateway Mortgage for donating school supplies to Open House Ministries. Our students are geared up and ready for the new school year!

SHELTER NEEDS JOB OPENINGS

- Boxed and non-perishable foods
- Men's gloves
- Men's, Women's and Children's socks and underwear of all sizes

- Part-time Volunteer Coordinator
- Part-time Childcare Worker

For more information please email: careers@sheltered.org



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