



# House of Hope Newsletter

812 Merrimack Street, Lowell MA 01854 (978) 458-2870

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

Fall/Winter 2009

**Mission Statement:** House of Hope, a temporary shelter, provides advocacy and care for homeless individuals and families. Rooted in a belief in God, and under the direction of an ecumenical board, it seeks to affirm the dignity of life to all who are served.

## *A Message from the Executive Director:*

Dear Friends,

The season has changed and the winter is close at hand. Our winters in Massachusetts are cold and dark, long and fear-provoking, especially if you are one of the thousands of families who are homeless. Against this backdrop, your House of Hope (HOH) staff continues to be a community where families participate in educational and employment activities that, combined with a recently embraced Housing First approach, is resulting in large numbers of families being placed into permanent housing. In fact, since July, House of Hope has placed over 30 families into permanent housing, as well as 3 families into more appropriate, transitional housing. The Housing First Approach recognizes that, first and foremost, homeless families need a home, and from that place of safety, day to day concerns like health, education and employment can be better addressed. To fully implement this new approach, HOH has created a new department or work group; Housing Placement and Stabilization, and has identified discreet space from which to function, ensuring that Housing First goals are not diluted due to competing demands within shelter. The results speak for themselves and we know that HOH is among the most accomplished statewide in quickly moving families from shelter to housing.



*Our new shelter at 35 Varnum Avenue*

Another major accomplishment over the summer has been the acquisition of a new property at 35 Varnum Avenue in Lowell which we are calling Hope to Opportunity (H2O). H2O is already fully functional and is providing shelter and services to 5 of the most vulnerable families who present to us for help. House of Hope envisioned this program when staff identified that some of our families are further traumatized by having to live and function among eighteen families in the very dense space of House of Hope, and these families would fare much better in a smaller, more service rich environment. To this end, we identified operational support from the Commonwealth, identified a building, developed a program, and opened the doors on July 1<sup>st</sup> – and 8 families have already been placed into permanent housing from this site making the program an unmitigated success. HOH recognizes support from the City of Lowell, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation, and we hope for additional support from the Department of Housing and Community Development as we hope to make major improvements to the exterior of this beautiful building.

House of Hope is so blessed to have a team of staff and board members who are always trying to do more and better by the families entrusted to our care. We are pleased to report that six new staff members have been hired and many quality employees have been promoted to ensure the success at our new facility and our Housing First strategy. Case Managers Julie Lemire and Jenn Farmer are at the helm of these new programs and putting to good use their recently awarded masters' degrees. Our HOH House Manager Margo Moloney is now at H2O and our longstanding 4-12 counselor Carmen Pirela is now running the house at Merrimack Street. We are also blessed to have hired a new Business Manager, Sister Julia Fitzpatrick, CSJ, who brings to House of Hope many years of senior administrative experience and a strong background in education.

Much has been given to House of Hope, and we pledge to continue to give back; to meet and exceed all reasonable expectations as we work toward the day that all children will have homes. Until that day, we continue to ask for your help because we cannot succeed without it. Please support HOH and our families by contributing your time and talent as a volunteer, your treasure as a patron, and your prayerful support as a friend, because, together, we can dream and achieve the goal of homes for all mothers and their children. The House of Hope Community wishes you and each of our supporters a warm, safe and healthy winter season.

Sincerely,

*Deb Chausse*



Along with many hellos, House of Hope also has to say a few goodbyes and, today, we say goodbye and many, many thanks to **Brenda Hassett**, who has served the House of Hope as it's Business Manager for the past six years. Throughout Brenda's tenure, the organization has experienced a great deal of growth by expanding contracts, building New Hope Apartments, acquiring property, and human resource management for an expanding staff. Brenda handled all of this growth and development with confidence and ease as she utilized her strong business background and welcomed the new learning as opportunities to develop new skills. The organization is better and stronger for having Brenda as a part of our family, and all of us who worked with Brenda wish her all the best as she leaves us for new opportunities.

## HELP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

*Edna Gustafson, Operations Coordinator*

Last year, through all of the community support, we were able to help **103** families with Christmas presents. In addition to our 23 families in shelter, 14 tenants in our permanent housing units, and the more than 40 families in our Housing Stabilization Program, we also help many of our former residents, families that are still struggling day by day. We try and receive two clothing wishes and three toy wishes for each child. We also try and receive a few items for the mom/parents, typically two clothing wishes and items for the household. We ask that the wishes be **under \$30 each**. Wrapping of the presents is optional, though preferred, with tags written from: Santa. The last day to drop off presents is **December 15<sup>th</sup>**. This will give us time to get the items to the families.

There are many ways to help one of our families this coming Christmas:

- Adopt a family
- A present for every child in shelter
- A present for every adult in shelter
- Adopt a specific amount of children 1, 2, 3...
- New toys, just a basic drive and we will find them a good home
- A goods/food drive for the shelter



If you'd like to help this year, please contact Edna Gustafson at (978)458-2870 or [ednahoh@hopelowell.org](mailto:ednahoh@hopelowell.org)

*Thank you for helping us to make it a Christmas to remember!!*



## HOPE TO OPPORTUNITY: H2O

*Julie Lemire, Case Manager*

On July 1, 2009, House of Hope opened a new shelter for homeless families, **Hope to Opportunity**, also known as **H2O**. **H2O** is located at 35 Varnum Avenue in Lowell. Though similar to **House of Hope**, this new program offers a far more intimate, service-rich setting for 5 families who would have more difficulty living in our considerably larger congregate shelter on Merrimack Street. We offer case management services and groups 3-4 times a week. Groups may include parenting, mental health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS education, visits from the Lowell Community Health Center, housing groups, house meetings, budgeting, and job search. H2O is a 24/7 operation, with a house manager and several counselors working different shifts around the clock. Also, our new Housing Department is located right next door. The **H2O** program is designed to help teach a self-sufficient model including such things as having families learn some essential cooking skills while they are here. Families are responsible for preparing most of their own meals and doing their own housekeeping. The house manager helps families budget and plan meals. Since opening, we've had 8 families move into permanent housing. We have 2 people on the waiting list to start upcoming trainings/classes, 1 family is working, and 2 more are almost ready to move. Things are going great! Please stop by anytime for a tour of this lovely, new property.

If you have any questions about our program, or would like to stop by for a visit, please contact Julie Lemire at (978) 458-4234, or email her at [juliehoh@hopelowell.org](mailto:juliehoh@hopelowell.org)

**"I thank the House of Hope for giving me hope. And for all they did for me. God Bless them."**  
*- Former House of Hope Resident*

### Broadening Our Horizons



*Sue Heilman, Executive Director of Horizons for Homeless Children breaks bread with House of Hope Board President, Marc Teal, Board Member Diane Earle and Executive Director, Deb Chausse during the grand opening of our newest Horizon's Play Space at Hope to Opportunity on Varnum Avenue.*

Our one and only annual fundraiser, the **Harvest of Hope**, was held on October 1st at the beautiful John Nesmith House in Lowell. There was plenty of music, food, and party goers all gathered to show their support for House of Hope. This year's event raised more than \$10,000 for our shelters! The HOH Staff and Board of Directors are very grateful to everyone for their generosity and friendship.



*Please visit us on the web at*  
[www.hopelowell.org](http://www.hopelowell.org)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**OFFICERS:** Marc Teal, President; Laurie Gould, Vice-President;  
Brian Stafford, Treasurer; Jill Adamy, Secretary

**DIRECTORS:** Brian Bonenfant, Andrew Boyle, Ellen Cataldo, Mary Jane Creegan,  
Diane Earl, Mary Ellen Fitzpatrick, Louise Griffin, Rev. Cecilio Hernandez, Richard Jumpp,  
Daniel Mansur, Eileen McNamara, Jacqueline Moloney, Jack O'Connor, Nels Palm,  
Kevin Roden, Pasquale Russo, Patricia Sullivan Talty, Diane Trowbridge, Peter Zarrilla

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Deborah Chausse

*[www.hopelowell.org](http://www.hopelowell.org)*

Our website offers visitors the option of using their credit card to help support our fundraising efforts. If you'd like to make an online donation, our website makes it quick, secure, simple, and user friendly.

*Remember: Your contributions to House of Hope are tax deductible.*

### HOH NEEDS LIST

Personal Toiletries	Non-perishable Canned and Dry Goods
Paper Products	Blankets
Cleaning Supplies	Adult Craft Supplies
Bed Pillows	Baby Dolls
Laundry Baskets	Matchbox Cars
Hand Sanitizer	New Slippers for Adults and Children
Juice Mixes	
Dessert Mixes	

*Your donations are always appreciated!*

**Keep up with HOH by checking out  
our new blog! Visit us at  
[www.hopelowell.org/blog](http://www.hopelowell.org/blog)**

**Would you like to see us in color?**

This newsletter, including all of the  
wonderful photographs, can be viewed  
in its original format on our website:

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

Special thanks to **Neoprint Inc. of Chelmsford**, a long-time  
supporter of House of Hope, for donating their  
services in bringing you this newsletter.