

## **Home By Thanksgiving**



**Dawn and Ed dream of being in a home by Thanksgiving.  
You can help make the dream come true!**

Greetings friends,

It's now been four months since I've taken the reins at New Hope Housing and I am grateful to be part of this community. In September, we held our Volunteer Appreciation event and our first Lunch-And-Learn where you got to meet me and I got to hear from many of you as well. Thank you all for your service and for your advice.

We're quickly approaching winter when many of our communities go above and beyond to keep everyone safe on the coldest nights. Hypothermia programs are wonderful and will prevent deaths, but I believe we can do more. **And the big answer is always going to be housing. Housing is healthcare.**

After the pandemic it became evident that health and homelessness are inextricably linked and can create a challenging cycle for many of our clients. A chronic health condition is often at the root of someone's homelessness, either through losing their ability to maintain a job or pay their bills or through causing them to miss multiple days of employment leading to their termination. And once someone is homeless, it's that much harder to address their health and work themselves to stability. To do what we need to do to break that cycle requires more specialized staff, more time, and more money.

We need your help. Please consider giving today to help fully fund our programs and provide more life-saving services for our homeless neighbors. **With Giving Tuesday coming up on November 28th, you have a chance to have your gift matched by several of our generous donors.**

Homelessness is not a disease, but it can be fatal if not treated soon enough. I hope you will join me in giving to New Hope Housing today.

Thank you,

Ashley McSwain, LMSW, MSOD  
Executive Director

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## Who Ya Gonna Call?

There's just been a storm and the heavy rain water has washed trash, branches, and construction debris into local waterways, causing major flooding in your neighborhood. **WHAT DO YOU DO? Call Operation Stream Shield!**

Flooding due to clogged waterways is not a new problem in Fairfax County. And a small county department with a big name (Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES)) was tasked with trying to solve it.

A program in Albuquerque, New Mexico, called "There's A Better Way" provided a model: hire people experiencing homelessness to help clear waterways, pick up trash, and remove invasive weeds. That program was a huge success and worth trying here at home.

DPWES created a pilot program in 2019 in partnership with the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH). They hired clients from the Bailey's Shelter, Kennedy Shelter, and The Lamb Center on an hourly basis several days a

week. The pilot was such a success that it became permanent in 2020 and was named Operation Stream Shield. The project began with only trash and litter removal, but has expanded to removing non-native invasive plants and assisting with maintenance at the Norman Cole Pollution Control Plant. In the past few years, several clients at NHH have used OSS as a stepping stone to being hired by Fairfax County for full employment!



Many community members quickly became supporters! Citizens can report litter "hotspots" and problems all around the county. Request OSS by emailing: [DPWESSWMPTrashmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:DPWESSWMPTrashmail@fairfaxcounty.gov)

### IMPACT

OSS continued through the pandemic and has resulted in the removal of:

FY 2020: 15.9 Tons of Trash  
FY 2021: 178.9 Tons of Trash  
FY 2022: 151.3 Tons of Trash  
FY 2023: 153.3 Tons of Trash

**For a total of 499.4 Tons of Trash and 298 bags of invasive plants!**



## Dawn and Ed

Dawn and Ed have been together for 15 years and can't imagine being apart for even one day. When they first sought shelter, they learned they didn't qualify as a family because they don't have children with them. A bed for a woman was open, but none for men at the time. Separate or stay together? **Each day of homelessness is filled with hard choices, but this wasn't one.** They have taken each step of this hard journey together.

Dawn and Ed are very different people, and had lived very different lives from each other. But when they finally met at ages 39 and 45, they started chatting about their love of music, and felt an unexpected comfort with each other that led to deeper conversation.

It had started with coffee. In 2008, Dawn was working heavy equipment on the Huntington Metro construction site. When she got reassigned to gate-guarding duty on a cold November day, Ed (who had seen her around ) showed up with a thermos and two cups, asking "Can I share a cup of coffee with you? And maybe just get to know you?" And that was that.

Life has never been very easy for them, but the life they made for themselves was good for a while. They had a nice little place at Washington Square Apartments in Alexandria. They had pretty good jobs and had a good life.

**Then in 2010, Ed got sick.** He was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. His health went downhill fast. Dawn was

worried that Ed would die. She couldn't take care of him and their bills by herself, and they soon lost their apartment.

They did what many do in this situation and turned to family. Dawn's mother was in Norfolk, and was in need of some help, too. And housing was cheaper there. So they relocated and restarted their lives.

Norfolk had some quality moments. (Ask Ed about the time he cooked for Tom Hanks when Ed was the chef at Charlie's Cafe!) But they were mostly scraping by. In 2022, they came back to Alexandria to be with Ed's family. Several of his family members had passed away including his father, uncle, and two aunts. They stayed with his sister for a few weeks, but had to leave with no specific place to go.

Dawn and Ed had just gotten to the Rising Hope Hypothermia Program when more tragedy struck. **Dawn learned her daughter and granddaughter were killed in Hampton.** After that, Dawn couldn't stay at the shelter and be around so many people. She was dealing with PTSD and needed space.

She had gotten a job at a hotel nearby and the manager allowed them to stay in a room temporarily. When management changed, the hotel went from okay to terrible. Dawn was doing all the housekeeping and laundry in a place that became increasingly filthy and dangerous. **They were faced with yet another difficult choice: quit and lose the space they had, or live in filth?**

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When they left the filthy hotel, they sought out shelter services in Fairfax County and learned that at the time, there was only shelter space for her.

**“I can’t be without him. He is what keeps me strong. For 15 years, we’ve been together. He knows how to handle my post-traumatic stress disorder. And I take care of him. So, I’m safe. And vice versa.”**



**Dawn & Ed with their F-150**

Even though they aren’t staying at the shelter, they are still able to access services. The employment case manager, Kelsey, got to work with them right away. But tough choices remained.

**“Where do we sleep tonight?”**

That’s a question that most of us don’t have to ask every day. Dawn and Ed have a 20-year-old Ford F-150 with a covered truck bed. When it’s nice out, they pop a tent in the back. When it’s raining, they put the seats down and sleep inside. Each night they try to find a place to park the truck where they won’t get harassed and

also won’t be considered a nuisance to a business or family.

In early September, the average temperature spiked to 97 degrees and they had to spend \$500 of their hard-earned money at a hotel. Several other rooms at this hotel also had individuals and families currently homeless, including a family with three kids next door. One day, Dawn had picked up some extra sandwiches at Kennedy Shelter for her and Ed, but chose to give them to the family so they would have dinner.

They accept help, but don’t want handouts. They are very willing to work hard. Within a week of meeting with staff at Kennedy Shelter, Dawn and Ed were both on the Operation Stream Shield team twice a week. Dawn began working at Goodwill as a Sales Associate in July and Ed was soon a kitchen manager at the South County Recovery & Drop-In Center. They work nearly every day and are trying to save enough to have their own place.

Dawn and Ed dream of being in their own safe housing by Thanksgiving. They have both experienced hunger in their lives, but growing up, Thanksgiving was the day that no one went hungry and your bellies were filled with the best foods. They also want to give back and are always sharing job leads they get from Kelsey to people they meet, and telling people to visit the shelter for help!

**Please consider giving today to help your neighbors get home!**

## Thank You, Volunteers!

Friends, volunteers, and staff of New Hope Housing gathered on September 14th to recognize and thank volunteers for their service to the community.

Ashley McSwain, our new executive director, opened the night thanking volunteers for their contributions, stating that “volunteers are the lifeblood of nonprofits.” Liza Feiler, Director of Community Engagement, gave special keychains to volunteers describing them as the “symbol of a successful volunteer program, that when clients receive their keychains, *our* mission and *their* dreams are fulfilled.”



Our Community Champion this year is the team at **Hilton Arlington National Landing!** They have been incredible partners for the past two years. They do everything from hosting our Over The Edge event to cooking meals at the shelter to cleaning our streets!



**Donald Richardson w/Jenny Jewell of Summit Church**

Name a volunteer project at New Hope Housing, and volunteers from **Summit Church** have done it! For six years, church members and youth ministry have cooked dinners, hosted bingo, and served wherever needed. Summit Church volunteers made hundreds of meals to deliver to our COVID hotel shelter program. This summer, they deep-cleaned the RPC Shelter. They are wonderful and always willing to help out!



**Quenton, Colette, and Paris Rodgers**

**Mr. Quenton Rodgers** is a new volunteer and is willing to do whatever is needed! He has volunteered multiple times at our Max's Place group home, performing maintenance and cleaning the yard. He has hosted resume building workshops for residents and recruited his wife and daughter, Colette and Paris, for additional help polishing the resumes. Thanks to all!

## Our Volunteers Are The Best!



**Maanvi & Jessamin**

**Mrs. Maanvi Patoir** earned her yoga certification during the pandemic and began leading yoga classes at the RPC Shelter in 2022. After two classes, only Ms. Jessamin attended. She came every week and they soon began talking. Maanvi learned more about Jessamin's struggles. She had had several strokes and needed regular physical therapy. Maanvi's classes provided needed exercise and personal connection. Maanvi was helpful in Jessamin's life at the shelter and continues now that she is in her own place.

**Ben Benita** is the DC rep for **Super Soul Party**, a nonprofit dedicated to uniting communities and creating a safe space for people who are experiencing homelessness. Their most popular event is the Superbowl! Ben and friends came to the RPC Shelter in Arlington and threw a Superbowl party for the guests that included a great meal, lots of snacks, goody bags, and many moments of connection between volunteers and residents. Ben and his friends brought a great feeling of home to the shelter and all who currently live there.

**People. Animals. Love. (PAL)** The founders of PAL knew animal companionship has protective health effects and created a nonprofit that would bring animal companionship to people who lacked regular access. The local chapter of PAL has been visiting both the Bailey's Shelter and RPC shelter for the past 2 years. Every time they visit, many of the clients are overjoyed to sit and play with the dogs. For so many individuals, getting time to enjoy the friendly and patient animals is truly therapy. We're grateful for our four-legged and two-legged friends at PAL!



**Donald Richardson & Jenny Roellke**

**Mrs. Jenny Roellke** has been leading Alcoholics Anonymous / Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA) meetings at RPC. She knows that it can be difficult for people to attend so she always shows up early to talk with residents before each meeting. She works to get to know them and to gently encourage them to join the circle. If that weren't enough, she also bakes cookies every week! She is always rooting for everyone to succeed.

# Double Your Gift for Giving Tuesday!

We're excited to share that several generous friends have pledged to match up to \$20,000 in donations made to New Hope Housing between November 1 and November 28, 2023, for Giving Tuesday!

To get your gift matched, **donate online at [www.newhopehousing.org](http://www.newhopehousing.org)** today or return the enclosed card with your gift.

Giving Tuesday is a global day of giving held annually on the Thursday after Thanksgiving. Your gift will provide hope and hospitality for over 350 people a day in shelter and supportive housing- and even more during hypo season!

For more info or to spread the word, please contact Jan Sacharko at 703-799-2293 ext. 27, or [jsacharko@newhopehousing.org](mailto:jsacharko@newhopehousing.org)

Scan Here  
to Donate:



# GI ING TUESDAY

## Lunch & LEARN



Scan Here to  
Register:



**Preparing for Hypothermia:  
Join us online to learn how you can  
help our homeless neighbors stay  
safe during the winter months.**

**WED,  
Nov 15th  
12pm - 1pm**



Learn More and Get Involved  
New Hope Housing  
8407-E Richmond Highway  
Alexandria, Virginia 22309  
703-799-2293  
[www.newhopehousing.org](http://www.newhopehousing.org)