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484-509-2087 • www.opphouse.org

581

men, women and children
spent 30,262 nights at
the emergency shelter
in 2019





Heather arrived at our shelter dragging her addiction behind her like a chain. Here, she found the strength to break it. With your help, she got her act together, landed a full-time job, and walks toward a brighter future.

Heather was always smart, well-spoken, and creative. She was also an addict. After 10 years in a Connecticut prison on drug-related charges and years of sobriety, Heather relapsed. Her return to drugs destroyed her relationship with her family and a promising career as a caterer. “I was back and forth in my addiction like a see-saw. I did right, then numbed my pain with drugs. I’d get a job, lose it, find another, lose it.”

With nowhere to go, she came to Reading, where her partner lived and where she continued her downward spiral. “I ran the streets and slept on the railroad tracks. I’d created my own destruction.”

As an addict on the streets, Heather learned to survive. What she had yet to learn: how to live. To thrive.

In her first weeks here, she focused on physical and mental recuperation. “I slept a lot, in the dayroom, with my head down on the table.”

As her head cleared, she focused her energies outward. “Because I’m my own worst enemy, I did everything I could to distract myself from myself. Cleaned bathrooms, helped cook meals, worked in the garden.”

Her turning point: upcycling a junked chandelier into a piece for the shelter’s garden area. Naturally gifted in art, she’d planned and painted a mural in prison. “While

incarcerated, I realized I had this ability to have a vision and create.” So she again turned to art. “Instead of using my mind to focus on of the bad things I’d done, I used it to create something good. Doing good is an internal balance for me. It’s healing.”

Heather got a part-time job and continued her art. She painted the faces of the children in the shelter. Designed bulletin boards. Crafted cards and an elaborate gingerbread house for the holidays. She also began to volunteer in our warehouse, scanning books for our online book business and thrift store. Within weeks, she transitioned from volunteer to full-time employee.

As Heather plans her future, she runs the book department in our warehouse. “I’m still learning who I am,” she says. “This job is an opportunity to figure out where I need to be.”

But she knows that, in some way, she wants to help others break the shackles of their own pasts. “I look for the good in people,” she says. “I want to give back what many have given to me. To give someone chances like the chances given to me. To give back with my stories and my understanding of where they’ve been, because I’ve been there. And I can learn from them, too. We learn from each other, energize one another, ignite each other. That’s what makes the world go round.”

2019 Highlights

52%

of all meals were provided by volunteer groups



4 STARS

In 2019, our Second Street Learning Center was awarded 4 STARS (highest honor) by the Keystone STARS program. The real winners: the kids!



367

children from low-income families were enrolled in the Second Street Learning Center



RIDE SHARING PILOT PROGRAM

In November, Opportunity House was awarded a \$25,000 venture grant from United Way of Berks County to launch a ride sharing program. One of the obstacles to getting shelter residents employed is lack of transportation to jobs that can’t be reached by public transportation. Drivers will be hired from the shelter to drive a car and a van donated by a local auto dealer. First priority for these free rides will be given to those going to jobs or job interviews, second priority for those needing to get to medical appointments.

GENEROUS WISH

Javien Ortega’s Christmas wish came true! Santa (actually, the generous Berks community) donated \$2,000 to support the families and adults who shelter here.



322

child victims of sexual abuse in Berks County were served by the Children’s Alliance Center

Code Blue: Assistance needed now!



333

veterans and their families received assistance through Supportive Services for Veteran Families



CODE BLUE is when the temperature drops below freezing.

- During Code Blue season, our shelter population surges 30%.
- Currently, 100 men, women, and children shelter here each night.
- We see more men and women over 60, and more young people barely out of their teens.
- Increased costs to accommodate Code Blue residents include clothing, food, water, heat and paper products.

Donate \$45 now to keep someone safe and warm.

2019 Financial Statement

Income

Learning Center	\$1,294,181
Government Grants	
Shelter	366,081
Pre K Counts	340,000
Reuse/Recycle	100,668
Supportive Services for Veteran Families	672,381
Housing	234,372
Children’s Alliance Center	164,020
Total Government Grants	1,877,522
Contributions	711,602
Reuse/Recycle	753,153
United Way	255,042
Rental Income	224,767
Special Events (Net)	224,864
Investments/Miscellaneous	26,314

Total Unrestricted Revenue and Other Support **\$5,367,445**

The financial information contained was derived from the June 30, 2019 financial statement audited by Reinsel Kuntz Leshner, LLP.

Expenses

Learning Center	\$1,553,618
Shelter Services	655,507
Pre K Counts	359,103
Housing	369,928
Children’s Alliance Center	241,122
Supportive Services for Veteran Families	703,400
Reuse/Recycle	864,875
Management & General	416,985
Fundraising	328,802

Total Expenses **\$5,493,340**

19

families were provided with affordable housing and case management services

