
Opportunity House

2023
Gratitude
Report

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grat·i·tude

the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.



A NOTE OF THANKS

I sat down to write this and my mind went blank. I couldn't think of the words to say - nothing seemed quite good enough. A simple thank you doesn't even begin to capture our gratitude for all you have done for our community.

A year ago, Opportunity House was no more than a vision of what could be. It was an idea of an organization that centered community and rooted its work in trauma informed, housing first, and harm reduction practices. I was anticipating a long journey to opening our first housing site - but I was wrong.

Partners in the community responded to the call and gave time, resources, and knowledge. Our friends, family, and neighbors gave generously to support our efforts. This became a community endeavor.

And for that I am thankful. I am thankful to you - our supporters, our family - for doing everything you can to ensure the wellbeing and success of the young people of the St. Louis community.

It is a great relief to know we are not doing this alone.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Donnelly". The signature is fluid and cursive.

ROBERT DONNELLY

FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our Team

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Gratitude

Our Board of Directors share their gratitudes for our first year.



I'm grateful for everyone who has invested in Opportunity House. For our four Residents it has meant a safe space for them to get their footing and pursue their goals. They are all doing so well. It wouldn't be possible without you. Thank you for believing in their potential!

Because of the support we have received from the community, we've been able to assist Residents in achieving their goals. Through my involvement with the organization I have been able to grow as a young professional. Thank you to all those who have made this possible.



It's an honor to be a part of the Opportunity House mission and to watch our young people realize their goals. I gain a true sense of joy hearing their successes and watching them thrive. Knowing that my support helps them grow helps me find meaning. For your support, I am grateful.

When I joined the board I wasn't certain what to expect. Watching the organization grow over the last year has been a unique and rewarding experience. I'm grateful for our Residents who, despite their experience, continue to achieve their goals.



Creating Belonging: Partners



As a new organization, we were concerned that it would be a struggle to find a housing partner. All that changed with an email to Tower Grove Community Development Corporation. In a matter of months our emails turned into phone calls, our phone calls into meetings, and our meetings turned into housing. Their support has been invaluable to Opportunity House and the community.



Black Pride supports the wholistic needs of the Black queer community. When we reached out to Black Pride to introduce our organization, a meeting was schedule within days. Our friends at Black Pride attended our events and have connected us to partners in the community. It is partnerships like these that make our work a success.



The mission of Thomas Dunn Learning Center is to build a sustainable region through education. The organization has provided our Residents with flexible HiSET programming which has allowed them to safely and comfortably resume and complete their education. Their support has been crucial to ensuring our Residents achieve their goals.



Creating Opportunity: Events

Open House

As we inched closer to opening our first housing site, we wanted to invite the community to learn more about our work. In May we hosted an Open House. It served as the jumping off point for what has been an exciting year.

Over 50 community members came out to tour our space and show their support. At this event we connected with Novus Health - an organization which has made it easy for our Residents to connect to physical and mental health care. We connected with staff from several foundations, one of which has provided our organization with the funding necessary to sustain our work.

Tower Grove Pride

September provided us with the opportunity to connect with the community at Tower Grove Pride. Volunteers and Board members and introduced our program to the community.

We connected with new organization for partnerships in the areas of health and employment. We engaged community members who have since joined us as volunteers.

What was even more powerful was seeing the St. Louis community show up to support our LGBTQIA+ community members.



Creating Opportunity: Events

Trivia Night

When we thought about our first fundraising event, a trivia night was a no-brainer. A trivia night is a fun way to connect with our community and raise funds for the organization.

As a young organization, we worried about the turnout. But the community showed up! Not only did we far surpass our fundraising expectations, but we grew our support network.

The outpouring of support reminded us that we are not doing this alone. Because of the support from this event we were able to plan for a year of programming without the worry of how we would fund the program.

Black Pride Expo

When we were invited to have a table at the Black Pride Expo, we jumped at the opportunity. This was our first tabling event and, to be honest, we were a bit nervous. As a new organization, we are never certain how we will be greeted by the community. We were welcomed with open arms.

The event gave us an opportunity to meet likeminded organizations and connect with young people in the community. We are grateful for the ongoing friendships and partnerships that have blossomed from this event.





Creating Change:

Kendra

It was weeks before our opening and we received a call from a mother with a four year old daughter. She was in need of housing. Her determination and dedication to improving her life was apparent. All she needed was a safe place to live.

Relying on herself for so long, accepting support was a challenge. But over time she warmed to the idea. The housing stability has since allowed her to enroll her daughter in preschool and focus on her education. In three short months she completed her HiSET.

In her words

Since moving in, my overall mental and emotional state has improved tremendously. I've completed by HiSET and have enrolled in college. My daughter has enrolled in an amazing preschool and continues to learn and grow.

When I think about my future, I see my life being transformed. I see myself being successful and happy. I see my daughter continuing to learn and grow. I will settle into a meaningful career and I will be financially independent.



Creating Change: Antoinette

There are many factors that result in a young person experiencing homelessness - trauma, poverty, acceptance. The lack of acceptance of LGBTQIA+ young people greatly increases their risk of homelessness.

When we started our LGBTQIA+ housing site we knew of the need. Antoinette experienced first hand the challenges that come with not being accepted. Discarded by her family, she struggled to find the safety and stability necessary for her long-term success.

In her words

After years of moving from place to place, I'm finally stable and feeling comfortable in my own skin. I feel safe where I live and I'm accepted for who I am.

I have been working at my current job for three months - the longest I've ever held a job. I'm starting to save money and plan for my future. I see a future of physical, mental, and emotional growth and wellbeing.

Thank you to all of our supporters!

Ian Aebel Natalie Allen Perla Alviar Patricia Amendola Candace Anglin Murat Arslanoglu Brittany Barbour Michelle Barbour Christi Becker Elizabeth Bender Dana Benedicktus Chelsea Berkhout John Betsill Julia Betsill Marissa Betsill Amy Bornstein Laura Boyce Patrick Boyle Holly Bracher Watson Debbi Braunstein DJ Broccoli Caitlin Brown Michael Browning Heather Burns Lorenza Buzon Andrea Cain Caleb Caldwell Kris Caldwell Samuel Caldwell Ali Caliendo Gretchen Carnoske Lorien Carter Maria Castillo Josephine Catapano Anita Chen LaToya Clark Samantha Cloud Sarah Coffin Kimberly Consiglio Donna Costa Susan Crawford Shirley Crenshaw Gina Dattilo Collene Deangelis Jason Delaney Lisa Delcour Nikki Deleo Marissa Denehy Cara Dennis Christina DePierro David DePierro Judy DePierro Debra Dills Irma Dizdar Derek Dohler Cynthia Donegan Christopher Donnelly John Donnelly Carol Donnelly Kirstin Donnelly CarliRae Duncombe Kelly Duncombe Leslie Erfe Samuel Everett Julia Fabrizi Jessica Falk Sarah Frye Paula Gaertner Jerry Garrett Jalen Gayfield Amber Geiger Mike Geronimo Alice Gleason Katherine Golden Jon Goudy Braton Grannan Tiffany Green Terri Grossman Grace Hagen Maura Hagen Jancey Hall Ben Halliburton Paul Haluszczak Amy Hancock Alexandra Harmon-Threatt Jennifer Harrison Robin Hattori Jennifer Heim Ashley Henderson Kathleen Hinckley Pamela Hinrichs Janet Holt Laurie Holt Walter Holt Katie Holzer Oseyi Ikenobe Erica James Jennifer Jaworski Brittini Johnson Barbara Jones Thornton Rossana Joo Jan Kaczor John Kaczor Peter Kane Barbara Keene Karen Kehoe Amanda Khalil Larisa Klebe Catherine Knights Gwenn Knox Jennifer Kohan Kristine Kovarik Kristen Kremer Jessica LaFleche Eileen Lambert Mel Lambert Jeff Landow Katie Lappe Tammy Laws Travis Laws Lorin Layton Greg Lazerwitz Angela Lee Olli Lehmann Metsue Leonardo Steve Lightle Devra Lobel Daniel Locke Nicole Longworth Jonah Lundberg Sydney Maberry Kristel Mabie Brenda Malone Janine Martin Lisa Marucci Alex Maxwell Megan McClaire Deborah McDonald Diane McFarland Lynnette McRae Kristen Medlock Katherine Meola Xenia Meshik Stephanie Milenkowic Karalynn Miller Cherie Moore John Mora Erica Mosca Michele Mosley Terry Mosley Kim Mozelack Keith Mullen Ellie Myers Kim Nannariello Peter Nelson Ronald Nembhard Nesha Newton Tracie Nickles Ellen Noll Adam Northcutt Betsy O'Brien Ashley Obradovits Michael Obradovits Patricia Obrien Keri Odom Barbara O'Brien Damion Parks-Weekly Romell Parks-Weekly Victor Picca Tracy Plants Dana Plonka Brittany Preston Kimberly Puglisi Heather Pyle Edith Querubin Maria Neliza Quisao Emily Rathjen Michael Ray Clarissa Reel Tamysen Regan Sharon Reid Jeffrey Ricker Poli Rijos Lori Ritter Megan Ritter Matthew Rittor Marni Romano Kaylie Ross Ambra Roth Christine Rowan Meredith Rowan Saswato Roy James Sabo Lori Sabo Jonathan Schaefer Meghan Schaefer Jim Schallom Merilee Schallom Denise Schiliro Kathy Schnetzler Stephen Schwallie Steve Schwallie John Scott Andrew Scully Michael Seminara Jordan Shaw Nora Shields-Cutler Kendra Shoge Kelley Shortsleeves Tommy Siam Jennifer Silverman Renata Sledge Nicholas Smith Oshea Smith Benita Solano Laura Sparks-Boyce Rebecca Speidel Kelley Staab Lyle Staab Audra Stewart Danielle Stewart Tammy Stewart Tony Stewart Casey Stinemetz Aaron Stoll Emily Stuart James Sturgeon Caleb Sutton Anthony Tatum Stephanie Taylor Peggy Terrell Dimitra Theodoropoulos Ariel Thomas Sansing Emily Thompson Maria Torres Wedding Josh Torres Wedding Jose Torres Cynthia Townsend Lorraine Trolio Brian Vacek James Vacek Meredith Vacek Patti Vacek Dee Van Huss Kelly VanWart Christine Vinarcsik Rebeca Vindas Justin Walker Kathleen Walkowiak Katie Walkowiak Michael Wallerstein Nathaniel Waugh Jeremiah Wedding Josephine Weil John Wendland Diane Wiegel Rick Willmore Steve Wissinger Daniel Witzofsky John Woldum Landon Wolf Nancy Wood

