



© 2012 KHALIUS / ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

The Transformative Power of Relationships

As she clicked together those sparkly red shoes, Dorothy said, “There’s no place like home.” No one can attest to that better than the women who live at Abby’s House. The women who arrive at our door have often experienced a disruptive episode that has resulted in displacement from their housing – domestic violence or other unsafe living conditions, loss of a job or reduction in work hours, divorce, foreclosure (theirs or their landlord’s), mental health and/or substance abuse issues, or because they simply have nowhere to go. Every woman that walks through the door at Abby’s House needs a place to call home and wants to make a fresh start.

Continued on Page 2

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laurie Bowater, *Treasurer*
Kelly Brissette
Mattie Castiel
Virginia (Ginger) Conti
Marie Fusaro Davis
Molly Donahue, *Clerk*
Amanda Graves
Michelle Hansen
Bridget Havard
Eileen Galvin Karr
Lynne McKenney Lydick
Sue Manero, *Vice President*
Natalie Mello, *President*
Ann Pingitore-Spring

HIGHLIGHTS

Recent Events

Abby’s House joins Giving Common!

Abby’s House was one of the first 300 non-profits – and the only one in Worcester! – to join the Giving Common, a new initiative of the Boston Foundation. The Giving Common is a database of in-depth organizational profiles that can be searched across 175 fields of data. It’s designed to provide donors, funders, and the general public with the data they need to make informed giving decisions and gives non-profits a chance to tell their story directly to potential donors and to the community. You can view the Abby’s House profile by visiting:

<http://www.abbyshouse.org/givingcommon>

Continued on Page 3

WOMEN’S STORIES

Making Room for Peace

Each woman who comes to Abby’s House has experienced some sort of trauma or crisis that forces her to reach out for help. The following letter is from one of the many women who walked through our doors, ready to accept the help, support and encouragement she needed to start turning her life around.

Dear Alcohol,

I am ending things with you. Our relationship is over. You have done nothing but cause me grief, promise me false hope, and get in the way of a brighter tomorrow. In your place I have met real friends. Solid humans with big hearts who provide the love and support that you could never bring me. You know nothing about true friendship.

That dreadful night is just one evening in a sea of nightmares that led me swimming ashore in search of a safe haven. The enchanted and beloved Abby’s House has replaced you forever. And for that I am grateful.

It has been just over a year since your ultimate betrayal. Since the night that I flirted with you on my lips and inhaled your poison into my system. Things became heated that evening and

Continued on Page 3

**Hip,
Hip,
Her
Race
2012!**



Save the date: **Saturday, October 20, 2012!** This 5K road race benefits Abby’s House! To register, please call Sarah Lange at 508.756.5486 x18 or register online at [www.abbyshouse.org/hiphipherace!](http://www.abbyshouse.org/hiphipherace)

Upcoming Events

3rd Annual Hip Hip Her Benefit 5K Race

A race for runners and walkers of all ages! Prizes will be given in many categories. Raffle prizes will be available, as well.

Saturday, October 20

Location: Middle/high school in West Boylston. Registration is \$25/\$20 (students) until October 11, \$30/\$25 thereafter. To register or get more information, visit: www.abbyshouse.org/HipHipHerRace

On average, we receive 15-20 calls a day from women who need our help. In the past three years, the average length of stay at our shelter has increased from 11 to 27 to 33 nights. The waiting list for our 78 units of housing is now 3-6 months long; at other housing agencies, it's even longer. The Worcester Housing Authority needs an additional 12,000 units of housing in order to house everyone on their waiting list. The WHA waiting list is eight years long. At present, there are not enough units of affordable housing to meet the increasing need.

Homelessness isn't just about not having a roof over one's head – it impacts an individual's social, emotional, medical, developmental, educational and occupational status, as well. Homeless women and children demonstrate higher rates of mental health issues and problem behaviors, have poorer developmental and health outcomes, and over the long run, suffer from a lack of educational, vocational and economic success, which places these women and their children at continued risk for homelessness.

At Abby's House, we strive to end the cycle by providing women with a place to live, and by assigning each woman an Advocate who helps her craft an Individualized Service Plan designed to help her regain her footing on the path to independence. The Plan is unique for each woman, because each woman is at a different point in her journey. From there opportunities begin to unfold, which include anything from discovering interests or talents they never knew they had, finding a volunteer or paid position, or reconnecting with their friends and/or family. Confidence slowly begins to return to these women, who have lost it somewhere along the way.

Our goal is to empower each resident to take control of her own life and take the next step, whatever that may be. We recognize that each woman has the strength within to make the right choices for herself. We are here to advise, advocate, inform, encourage and support them; in short, to accompany them on their journey.

The most transformational and unique aspect of the way Abby's House operates lies in this idea of accompaniment. Each woman who stays at Abby's

House feels a sense of support and community, with staff and the other women. We share community space, eat lunch together, and leave our office doors open. Residents know that we are here for them, no matter what. "Michelle", one of our residents, said, "In other living situations, I would get harassed. Here, I have support to reach my goals. The connection with other women is empowering."

We recognize that each woman has the strength within to make the right choices for herself.

Empowering each woman to reach her own potential requires time, patience, acceptance and love. Adopting this approach has allowed us to help transform the lives of more than 11,500 women and children. For the women who stay with us, Abby's House is an oasis in a desert, a place where they can reclaim and rebuild their lives, at their own pace and on their own terms, in relationship with other women. Ultimately, it's the combination of having a safe space in which to live and being in community with other women that allows them to transform their lives. The strength of these connections remains, even after the women move on. As many of them will tell you, "Once an Abby's girl, always an Abby's girl." ★

Current Progress

As of July 13, 2012 Abby's House has raised \$736,000* of its \$1.2m budget.



*includes \$250,000 in donations from Raise the Roof Campaign

Necessities

Please contact Julie Komenos at (508) 756-5486 ext. 17 prior to organizing a food or clothing drive. Please visit our website for a complete list of our needs.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Bleach
- Tough cleaning sponges
- Oven cleaner spray
- All purpose cleaning spray
- Paper towels
- 409
- Lysol
- Simple Green cleaner
- Comet cleaner
- Windex
- Tilex
- SOS pads
- Large garbage bags
- Toilet Paper

GIFT CARDS

- Local to Worcester supermarkets (Shaws, Price Chopper, Stop and Shop, Price Rite)
- Walmart



Thank you to everyone who supported us during our 100 Cars for Good Campaign and voted for us on July 1, 2012. Unfortunately, we did not win the Toyota Sienna

Van but we gained exposure and experience through our participation in this contest.

Toyota has generously donated \$1,000 to each of the 500 finalists chosen, which we will use to provide shelter and housing.

Thank You!



Interns, Board Members, and Volunteers gathered to celebrate 36 years of Abby's House!

RECENT EVENTS from Page 1

36th Anniversary Dinner to Celebrate Our Volunteers!

In June, Abby's House celebrated its 36th Anniversary. The Volunteer Dinner gives us the opportunity to recognize the accomplishments, dedication and energy of our board members, volunteers and interns. Thank you to all the members of the Abby's House community who attended the celebration.

Ladies Night Out!

On Thursday, May 10, Abby's House held Ladies Night Out at the Dzian Gallery on Water Street. The event featured cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, desserts, massages, card readings, raffles and merchandise from a variety of area vendors. We had great fun and the event raised more than \$750. Thank you to the attendees, the massage therapists for donating their time, the vendors, the local businesses who donated raffle prizes and David Papazian for donating the space! ✨



Julie Komenos, Mary Plummer and Annette Rafferty enjoyed Ladies Night Out!

Friendship Flower

On June 21, 2012 the women of Abby's House dedicated one of the gardens they planted at 52 High Street to Annette Rafferty and read the following poem as a symbol of appreciation for her work and commitment to the women of Abby's House.

*Life is like a garden
And friendship like a flower,
That blooms and grows in beauty
With the sunshine and the shower.*

*And lovely are the blossoms
That are tended with great care,
By those who work unselfishly
To make the place more fair.*

*And, like the garden blossoms,
Friendship's flower grows more sweet
When watched and tended carefully
By those we know and meet.*

*And, if the seed of friendship
Is planted deep and true
And watched with understanding,
Friendship's flower will bloom for you.*

~Helen Steiner Rice

"This poem, given to Annette Rafferty, on this day June 21, 2012. May it be a small token of our gratitude for your endless service."

The Women of Abby's House

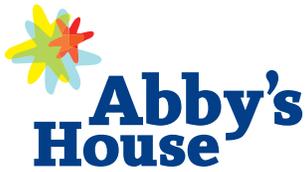
MAKING ROOM from Page 1

unidentified bruises presented themselves. Not only visible ones, but internal scarring, as well. The night I fled from a damaging situation, fled from harms way, I left behind another person who had also danced with you that evening. With you running through my blood, I made it home safely only to be joined by the red and blue lights that met me as I parked. The other human intoxicated with you called the cops on me. "Guilty as charged!" I exclaimed, surrendering a final time to the misery you brought me. And so my journey began.

The emptiness that followed that particular night with you seemed bottomless. I was left stripped of my pride and my dignity and was left confused and lost. I walked through the next month blindly. I looked towards my immediate family to provide me with the light that was necessary to do what I had to do, including quitting my job (which I enjoyed), surrendering my privilege to drive, and going to court. Yuck. Dealing with legal issues has been life changing at best. And although the legal list of 'things to do' seems to be never ending, there is no mistake of a silver lining that has presented itself as I continue on in my life without you.

Along with paying thousands of dollars, going away for two weeks, and continued therapy for a year, I was court ordered to do 100 hours of community service. Abby's House was recommended by my cherished roommate, and thus my life has blossomed. You have been replaced. Since the moment I walked through the doors of Abby's, I have felt a welcoming warmth engulf my existence. The staff have been my guardian angels from the first opportunity I was given to speak with them. They were attentive to my story and understanding and compassionate, going above and

Continued on Page 4



52 High Street, Worcester, MA 01609

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
PAID
WORCESTER, MA
PERMIT #337

SHELTER • HOUSING • ADVOCACY
Donate online! WWW.ABBYSHOUSE.ORG

Contents:

FEATURE:

The Transformative Power of Relationships

OTHER ARTICLES:

- *Making Room for Peace*
- *Recent Events*
- *Upcoming Events*
- *Friendship Flower*
- *Needs List*

Recent Grants

All Grants were received between 3/23/12 - 7/12/12

- Albert W. Rice Charitable Foundation
- Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund
- Avidia Bank
- Avidia Bank Foundation
- Citizen's Bank
- Citizen's Energy
- DCU for Kids
- Fletcher Foundation
- Fred Harris Daniels Foundation
- Greater Worcester Community Foundation (multiple funds)
- Haffty Family Fund
- Hermann Foundation
- Hyde Charitable Foundation
- Stoddard Charitable Trust
- The Community of the Sisters of St. Anne
- TJX Foundation

Make a Planned Gift

Did you know? You can make a gift of annuities, life insurance, retirement plans, stock dividends, or securities to Abby's House! Ask your attorney about the financial benefits of including Abby's House in your will as part of your estate planning. Visit www.abbysouthouse.org/plannedgiving for details.

GO GREEN

We are developing an E-Newsletter version of "Bright Spot". To receive the latest information about Abby's House, please contact Alexandra Kartheiser, Communications Coordinator at alex@abbysouthouse.org or call 508.756.5486 ext. 35. YOU CAN ALSO SIGN UP ONLINE AT WWW.ABBYSHOUSE.ORG!

MAKING ROOM *from Page 3*

beyond the help I required. My 100 hours of community service has turned into a lifetime friendship. Not only have staff allowed me to return to my hearts desire; to be there and provide help to others, but they have given me help as well a two way street.

Now that you have been removed from my life, there is room for positivity. The rewards for staying at the women's shelter are immense. Being able to have the opportunity to listen to courageous women has helped me to move forward with confidence as well. Also, an immense contribution to my recovery has been Abby's house Thrift Shop. I have found a home

away from home among the smiling volunteers who help at this shop. This is largely due to the mentoring I received from Jodi Salerno. A wonderful women with a huge heart has taught me so much, not only about my love affair with artistic endeavors, but about how I want to conduct my life. Jodi, who will do anything for anyone, has encouraged me to speak up.

When I was friends with alcohol, I was quiet. I let a toxin lead the way and didn't have much

voice. Being around such a remarkable person has given me the opportunity to be heard. The encouragement and faith I have received is a gift I am forever grateful for.

I am happy to have alcohol out of my life forever and all of my friends at Abby's House to support me instead. I know that my friendships will only grow and be nourishing now that I spend my time more productively.

*Thank you Abby's! **

Join Our Network of Supporters Today!

We love to connect with our supporters through social media! Like us! Go to: www.facebook.com/abbysouthouse1