



# Housing and Hope

## Helping homeless families in crisis find housing and stability

WINTER 2020

**Would you like to get involved with our program? We would love to have you!**

There are lots of areas where we can use your help. Does one of these speak to you?

- \* Cleaning and preparing houses before new families move in
- \* Landscaping and yard maintenance
- \* Organizing household donations
- \* Soliciting donations for our Hope for Housing fundraiser
- \* Serving on our Board of Directors
- \* Furniture donation pick up and disposal
- \* Assisting with social media and outreach

**Just give us a call at 253-638-9798 or drop us a line at [office@ststephenhousing.org](mailto:office@ststephenhousing.org) to learn more!**

## LEARNING TO LIVE THE NEW NORMAL

Like many in our community, the families in our transitional housing program are experiencing the fear and uncertainty created by the pandemic. However, these families were already living life on the margins and many were barely making ends meet. All of the families in our program have experienced literal homelessness and many have underlying health conditions, increasing their risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. As this new reality set in, families learned to navigate working from home, accessing the unemployment system,



**Housing Case Managers Elizabeth Wolters and Marissa Fitzgerald bring food to families in Auburn**

learning to do virtual school with their children, and social distancing from family members and support networks. SSHA continued to

support our families during this time. In the first few weeks of the pandemic, our staff delivered boxes of fresh produce and dairy to families, as well as masks, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, diapers, and formula, and gas cards. SSHA received a technology grant from

Building Changes to ensure all families had reliable internet service, and all children had chrome books and headsets for online school. Our families have made the most of this challenging time and we applaud them for their resilience.

## A SUMMER OF RIDING

Many thanks to all who donated bikes and helmets for the kids in our program this summer! The kids got outside after months of quarantine and took advantage of the sunny weather by jumping on the bikes, scooters and trikes donated by generous supporters. The kids were thrilled and did a great job sharing and taking care of the "community bikes". Thanks to all who made it possible!

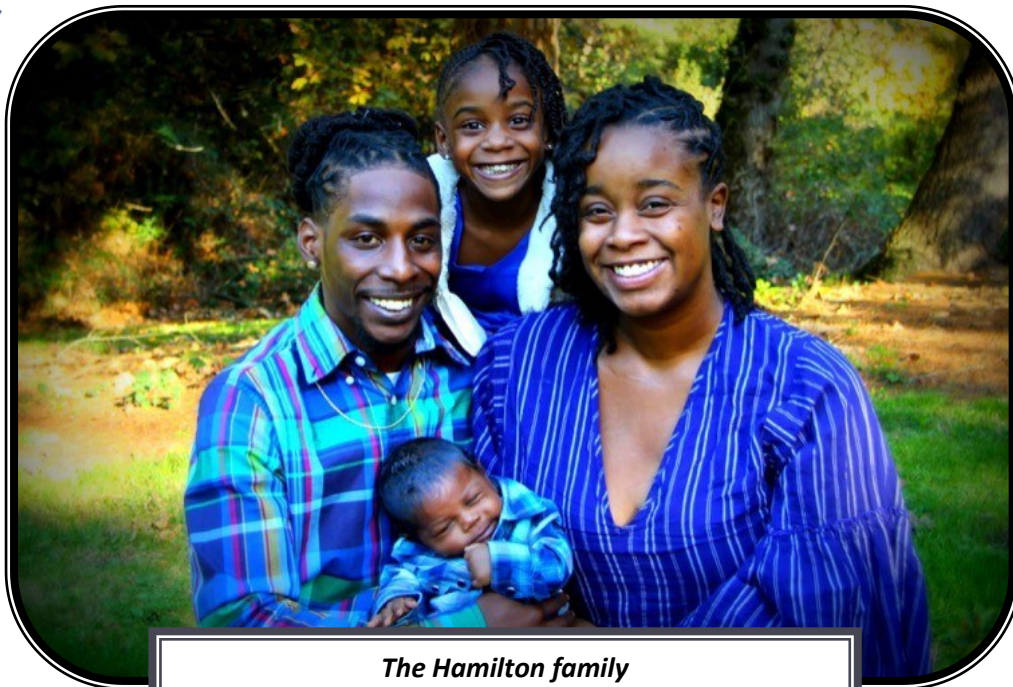


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EIN #: 94-3125444

Thank you to everyone who supported St. Stephen Housing Association this year through individual financial and in-kind donations, payroll deductions and through the giveBIG event. We are so grateful for the continued support of our donors who make this work possible. Thank you!



Our goal for this year's giveBig event was modest, not knowing how Covid-19 might affect people's ability to give. But, wow, did you prove us wrong! This year's event was the most successful one yet! You donated over \$11,600 to help families experiencing homelessness find hope!



*The Hamilton family*

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Housing Case Manager Elizabeth Wolters

Have you ever asked yourself what it could be like to be homeless? In my job as a case manager, I have had the opportunity to systematically ask families what it is like to be homeless.

Being homeless is destabilizing, demoralizing and depressing. You have lost your base, a foundation from which to function. It becomes hard to focus. Constant obstacles chip away at your self-esteem and your healthy personality withers, disintegrates and scatters.

A family I work with shared a few words regarding this. "You begin to feel rootless," said Antonio Hamilton.

"We both grew up homeless, and we knew that when we had a child and family, we did not want our children to have the same life we had growing up", said Jazmine Simmons.

The family continued, "We always tried to sort out stuff on our own at first,

until we realized that by ourselves, we couldn't do much. With the help of St Stephen Housing Association my family has an opportunity. We love how the case managers are involved and they actually care about us."

We found that having the ability to be able to speak to someone about our dreams and aspirations was helpful. You can speak to friends, but it is different speaking to a professional about what you want to do and getting that support."

As a case manager, I find it extremely rewarding when I can contact a family and find them temporary housing, ultimately helping them move into long term housing. The personal relationships that I have built with these families have helped me grow as a person. I look forward to going to work everyday knowing that I am making a difference.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

## HOW DOES YOUR GIFT HELP?

*\$25 buys a pair of shoes for a child*

*\$50 pays for the gas for a family to get to school, work and job interviews.*

*\$75 helps a family stock the kitchen with fresh food.*

*\$100 helps a family pay for a rental truck when they move into permanent housing!*

*Donate through the enclosed envelope, online at [ststephenhousing.org](http://ststephenhousing.org) or scan the code below!*



Dear Friends,

As we near the end of this rollercoaster year, I hope this letter finds you weathering the storm that has changed our world. I think it is fair to say that 2020 has been a year like no other, and for many, a year they'd like to forget. As we look forward to next year and the promise of a vaccine for the virus ravaging our world, I am grateful for the support of people like you who continue to support us during this difficult time.

Despite the bad news brought by this year, we

were still able to support 25 families in housing, five of whom moved from our program into their own permanent homes. No matter the year, that is cause for celebration!

We were also lucky to have been able to hold our annual fundraiser before the onset of the pandemic. That event is a vital part of funding for our operations, though it may be a long time before we can again celebrate together in person.

As a small agency, we rely on the generosity of those who give once a year and those who give every month. At St. Stephen Housing Association every gift makes a difference.

Will you consider an end of the year gift to help keep our program serving moms and dads who have

struggled, kids who have gone without, and families who have experienced great loss?

It is easy to give, through the enclosed envelope or through our website, [ststephenhousing.org](http://ststephenhousing.org).

Your contribution makes a big difference for our small organization.

Today I'm asking for your help to continue our work because what we do is important. I know you believe, like I do, that every person deserves to live in a home. I know we are part of the solution to the problem of homelessness.

And so are you!

We wish you a wonderful Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year!

*Ann*

## VISIT OUR VIRTUAL GIVING TREE!

Usually at this time of year you will find a Christmas tree filled with paper ornaments in the Narthex of St. Stephen the Martyr Church. Many generous donors exchange those ornaments for food and gas cards for the families in our program. We give them out all year and they are a huge help to families. With all the changes this year, our Giving Tree has gone virtual! Just visit [ststephenhousing.org](http://ststephenhousing.org) to see our tree (or scan the code above). There you can click on an ornament to donate money, or choose a present to donate gift cards and other needs.

If you would like to help with our "Adopt-a-family" Christmas program, please email [office@ststephenhousing.org](mailto:office@ststephenhousing.org) to get involved. Merry Christmas from our family to yours!



## SUMMER ABUNDANCE

Like many of us discovering new hobbies this year, the families at our City Park Townhomes found a love of gardening!

Our community garden grew kale, rainbow chard, snap peas, five varieties of tomatoes, banana peppers, pepperoncinis, zucchini, cucumbers, strawberries, raspberries, and green beans.

The little ones LOVED to pick the tomatoes and



kale and the kids were very curious about planting, both from seeds and starts, and were very interested in the kinds of vegetables and berries planted; they were especially excited about cucumbers!

Our staff got the opportunity to share ideas about how prepare and cook different vegetables and families had a chance to dig in the dirt.

Bonus! We grew enough zucchini to share with the neighbors!

## FINDING STABILITY AGAIN

by Housing Case Manager Marissa Fitzgerald

Before coming to St. Stephen Housing, Jacob and Lanee had been homeless for about a year. They had been renting a run down apartment in Lakewood in a high crime area that wasn't safe for their two young daughters, Jamiah and J'onna, to play outside alone. "They couldn't even go outside to play, not to mention, at a place we could barely afford," Lanee said. Lanee unexpectedly lost her job and Jacob didn't earn enough at his job to afford the rent. Once they left the apartment, they bounced around the Seattle area until finally getting a shelter referral for the YWCA in the Central District. The girls were still enrolled in school in Tacoma. "It was the only normal routine they really had and we wanted to keep that stability for them. We were in the shelter in the Seattle and they were taking a taxi or getting a ride all the way to Tacoma," explains Jacob. That left the family with another

challenge, finding work that accommodated the girls' extra long route to school since Lanee held a job in South Seattle and Jacob picked up odd jobs all over the area. Jacob has had custody of his two young daughters since birth, but due to a mix up, has also been paying monthly child support for the last 5 years. "I don't really know how to navigate stuff like that, and I kind of just gave up on getting anywhere with them, so it was just another process in another system that was getting ahead of me," said Jacob. Since moving into our program in May 2020, the family has finally found some stability. "It's kind of nice to be able to sit down and hash some stuff out, like having housing has been able to help us overcome the past and look forward to not having to worry about being homeless again,"

he said. Lanee and Jacob welcomed a healthy new baby girl, Jayda, to their family in July. They are both working on continuing their education and getting back to work. "It's been nice having a place for the kids to be, the baby to come home to, and our family to be together, working on the things that we need to do to move forward. But," he said laughing, "I'm kind of ready to get back to work; this home schooling isn't easy at all!"



*Jacob, Lanee and their beautiful girls.*

## 2020 HOPE FOR HOUSING RAISES OVER \$28,000 FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES!

After the 2019 Hope for Housing fundraiser was postponed, we were thrilled to celebrate the event in early 2020. We didn't know how fortunate we would be to have an in-person event scheduled before the pandemic shutdown! With the help of our generous sponsors, donors, volunteers and almost 200 guests, we raised over \$28,000 to help families experiencing homelessness. Every dollar raised goes back into our program to help these families achieve housing and stability. A million thanks to all who volunteered, attended, donated, and sponsored this wonderful night of giving and inspiration!



### THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 FUNDRAISER SPONSORS AND MAJOR SUPPORTERS

~Archer Construction~  
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~Rich Klepac~  
~Hugh and Reva Lackie~  
~Dorothy Lily~  
~Tony Mladineo~  
~Paolo's Restaurant~  
~Dean Saggau~  
~Total Wine and More~

### THANK YOU UPS FOUNDATION!

Shortly after the pandemic began, the generous folks at the UPS Foundation reached out to find out how our families were faring. We received a grant from their foundation last year, and they wanted to help us again. They generously gave another \$10,000 to support our families through the COVID-19 crisis. Thank you UPS for being a company who cares about families experiencing homelessness!



### BECU PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE AWARD



St. Stephen Housing Association is thrilled to have been chosen by BECU as one of 18 organizations to be honored with the 2020 People Helping People Award! We received a \$15,000 grant to support our mission to help families find and maintain stability. Thank you BECU for being a role model for our community!



13055 SE 192nd St  
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