

# HOUSING AND HOPE

Helping families experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis find stability

## Building Momentum: A Year of Growth and New Opportunities

As we approach the end of the year, we're excited to share an update on the progress of our merger and the meaningful work our unified organization continues to accomplish. Since Way Back Inn and St. Stephen Housing Association officially merged in December 2024, the transition has continued to go remarkably well. Our combined team, mission, and resources are proving stronger together. Over the last year, we've deepened our collaboration, aligned our programs, and strengthened the support we offer families experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis in South King County. Our merged organization remains grounded in the same values that have guided both St. Stephen Housing Association and Way Back Inn for decades—compassion, stability, and the unwavering belief that every family deserves a safe place to call home.

We're thrilled to share that this year brought important opportunities to widen our reach.

### Expanding Our Impact

**Three New Permanent Housing Units:** We were awarded a contract with King County to provide three units of permanent housing for families with children experiencing homelessness. These homes, located in Kent, allow us to offer long-term stability to families who need more than temporary support.

**Steele House Moves Forward:** We also received initial funding from the City of Renton to begin work on Steele House, a permanent affordable housing project in the Renton Highlands. This development will provide safe, stable, and affordable homes for families in an area where the need is great. This early support allows us to take concrete steps toward bringing Steele House to life.

**Continued Rental Assistance:** Our Housing Stability program continues to provide direct rental assistance for households at immediate risk of losing their housing in South King County. This funding prevents evictions, helps families recover from unexpected financial crises, and stabilizes households facing short-term setbacks.

**Strength in Numbers:** This year we provided safe, stable housing and supportive services to 42 households—160 adults and children—through our transitional housing programs. We also delivered critical rental assistance to 38 households, including 61 individuals, helping families remain housed and avoid the trauma of homelessness. Together with our supporters, we are creating lasting stability for families across South King County.



**Thank you for walking alongside us during this first year of growth and transformation. With your partnership, we look forward to creating even more pathways to stability, hope, and home in the year ahead.**

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# A Mother's Journey: From Fear to Safety, From Uncertainty to Hope

By Samrawit Gebru

When my family first arrived in the United States from Ethiopia, I dreamed of giving my children a peaceful life. For many years, my husband worked as a truck driver, gone for long stretches of time but providing what we needed. Everything changed after his injury. As he spent more time at home, the man I knew seemed to disappear. His frustration grew, the drinking took over, and my safe home became a place of turmoil.

I tried to hold on. I tried to be patient. For so long, he had been our provider, and with my limited English and education, I didn't know how I could stand on my own. But as the abuse worsened, I could see my children losing their sense of security, shrinking into themselves. My heart knew it was time to leave.

I gathered my courage and made the hardest decision of my life: to take my five children and leave Kansas for Seattle, where my sister lived. I hoped that being close to family would give us a chance to start over, but her apartment building did not allow us to stay. We were asked to leave. Overnight, we had nowhere to go.

That was the beginning of our homelessness. We entered a family shelter, and though we were grateful not to be on the streets, life there was overwhelming. My children missed Kansas, missed their father, missed everything familiar. We shared a community kitchen with dozens of families, and I could not cook the foods they were used to. Our room was the size of a small hotel space; we were all squeezed together, and it was always loud. My youngest children, who are twins, clung to me



constantly, too afraid and unsettled to attend school every day. I spent long days in that single room with three little ones while my older children tried their best at school. When they came home in the afternoon, they walked into chaos: crying babies, no space, and no privacy, They were hurting too, and I felt their frustration and fear. There were nights I lay awake wondering how we would ever get out, how I could give my children even a small piece of stability again. It felt like we were drowning in challenges bigger than us. And then a phone call changed everything. We learned that there was an opening at Nike Manor with St. Stephen Housing. I remember standing there, holding the phone, trying not to cry. For the first time in what felt like forever, I felt hope rising inside me. A place of our own. A door opening when so many had been shut. It was a moment that reminded me: even in the darkest times, something better can still be waiting ahead. My children and I are still healing, still rebuilding, but now we have a place to breathe, to rest, and to dream again.

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## Turning Housing Into Home: Our Most Needed Items This Season

As families settle into safe, stable housing, the next step is creating a space that feels warm, comfortable, and truly their own. You can help make that transformation possible. Our most-needed items right now include:

- New twin-size sheets, comforters and pillows
- New pot and pan sets, silverware and drinking glasses
- Food and gas gift cards

These essentials help families do more than furnish a space: they help them rebuild routines, restore dignity, and create a home filled with comfort and possibility. Please contact our office for drop off options and thank you for supporting our families in this tangible way!



## Hope for Housing 2025

What an incredible evening! The 2025 Hope for Housing event was a tremendous success, powered by the generosity, energy, and commitment of our amazing community! Thank you to all our dedicated sponsors, generous donors, our hardworking volunteers and enthusiastic attendees: you made this night truly memorable. **Together we raised over \$33,000** to provide vital resources, stable housing, and essential support to families with children experiencing homelessness. Thank you for helping turn hope into lasting stability for those who need it most!



**THANK YOU TO OUR MANY PARTNERS, CORPORATE SUPPORTERS AND INDIVIDUAL DONORS IN 2025. THIS WORK COULD NOT BE DONE WITHOUT YOU!**



## Mainvue Day returns!

St. Stephen Housing was honored to be selected again as the beneficiary of MainVue Homes' annual Day of Volunteerism. On September 11, more than 75 MainVue employees spent the day at Nike Manor in Kent, contributing over 375 hours of hands on work: an estimated \$15,600 in volunteer labor plus \$8,224 in materials!

Their team tackled an impressive list of projects: building and installing new closet shelving, refreshing interior paint, cleaning up landscaping, removing dead trees and bushes, hand-washing the exterior of all nine units, and power-washing driveways, sidewalks, and patios.

In total, MainVue's contribution amounted to nearly \$23,000 in donated time and materials. We are deeply grateful for their generosity, enthusiasm, and commitment to supporting families in our community.



## Are you or your group interested in volunteering? We'd love to have you!

- Cleaning and preparing houses for move-in
- Serving on our Board of Directors
- Assisting with social media and outreach
- Landscaping and yard maintenance
- Organizing household donations

Contact us at 253-638-9798 or [office@ststephenhousing.org](mailto:office@ststephenhousing.org)





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## GIVE THE GIFT OF HOME THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



***Our programs rely on generous supporters like you to continue the vital work of helping families experiencing or at risk of homelessness find stability and a safe place to call home.***

***As the year comes to a close, please consider making a year-end gift or becoming a monthly supporter of our housing programs. Your contribution provides families with essential resources, guidance, and the stability they need, not just for this month, but for many months to come.***

***From all of us at St. Stephen Housing Association, thank you for your generosity and compassion. Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a new year filled with hope and home.***



*To make a one-time donation or to sign up for monthly giving, scan the code above, use the enclosed envelope, or visit our website at **ststephenhousing.org**. Thank you for considering a gift!*

