



Over-the-Rhine Community Housing

WHERE COMMUNITY COMES FIRST

Winter 2014 Newsletter

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Home means a lot to us all, and especially at this time of year as the weather turns cold. There are few things that are more comforting on a cold, rainy, long day than turning the lock and opening the door to home. Taking off my coat and shoes while listening to the wind howl outside, lighting a fire in the fireplace, or turning on the oven to prepare dinner are all deeply comforting and give me and my family a great sense of security.

Privacy, protection, comfort; I can't overstate the importance of housing. Yet, I take it for granted nearly every day, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. In taking it for granted, I can focus on work, relationships, plans that my husband and I have for our son's future, a vacation, visiting relatives, paying bills. My 6-year old can focus on homework and play without worry of where he will sleep. He can grow up healthy without fear of losing all of his belongings from multiple moves and shelter stays.

My wish for the coming holiday season is that every family, every person can take their housing for granted. That they can focus on celebration, serenity; family dinners and good food, homework or job readiness, reading a book, doing a crossword, or watching a movie.

Actually, my wish points to the core of what Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is all about, and what we share with you in this newsletter.

Most of what we do is to provide the security that I experience at home. Some of our residents need more than a house and a home. For them, OTRCH provides recovery support and housing stability. For all of our residents, we provide the secure footing in Over-the-Rhine to establish themselves as active participants in the neighborhood. We provide them the secure place to live so they can thrive and define their place in Over-the-Rhine.

OTRCH is about more though. We are about building an inclusive OTR community where all residents are welcome and valued. Our annual event, *Celebrating Our Beloved Community* (see page 2 for highlights) is a time when we keep this vision alive for all of us; staff, volunteers, supporters.

Thank you for sharing in this work with us. Unlike my housing, I don't take your support for granted. While we may not always say it clearly, your donations provide people (families, seniors, veterans) with the security and comfort of housing. Your support allows people to sleep at night without fear of where they will end up tomorrow. Your support is key to helping low-income, and often long-time residents of Over-the-Rhine find their place and voice in the neighborhood.

I am feeling really grateful for my home and for you!

MARY BURKE RIVERS
Executive Director



OTRCH'S 8TH ANNUAL CELEBRATING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY

OTRCH's 8th annual *Celebrating Our Beloved Community* was held October 23 in the Corbett Tower of Music Hall. Over 200 people came to honor and celebrate the work of OTRCH. The evening's key sponsor was PNC Bank, with catering provided by Picnic and Pantry and Power Inspires Progress.

The evening was emceed by Jai Washington. The program began with OTRCH's Executive Director, Mary Burke Rivers, providing a year-in-review of OTRCH, especially celebrating the opening of Elm Street Senior Housing (1500 Elm Street) in May. Drawing from OTRCH resident words

about living in Over-the-Rhine and what it means, Annete Januzzi Wick and Bonnie Neuemeier each wrote a poem, which was put to music and performed by the Marburg Collective.

OTRCH also recognized and honored The Model Group as

Organization Partner, and Don and Jane Gardner as Individual Partners, with the 2014 Partner in Building Our Beloved Community Awards.



The Marburg Collective Prepares to Perform with Children's Creative Corner Children



OTRCH Year-in-Review presentation



OTRCH President, Roger Auer, welcoming attendees



DON AND JANE GARDNER - 2014 CELEBRATING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY INDIVIDUAL PARTNER

Don and Jane Gardner have been a part of the Over-the-Rhine movement to support low-income residents for years. When their children were young they brought them to the Drop Inn Center, caring enough to raise them with a social conscience. Christmas gifts to each other were gifts to the Drop Inn Center. They are two people who walk with charity on one foot, giving of time, resources, and expertise; and with justice on the other foot, willing to be a part of organizations that challenge and ask why are there still people in Cincinnati homeless and ill-housed.

Family and faith matter to them. Their love and support reached out beyond your own family. It's rare to find committed people, who are dependable, well connected, and emotionally aware of what this struggle demands of us all. We only hope we have let you know in a real way how much we care about you, Don and

Jane. It's a friendship forged through a history of struggle, there's nothing sweeter.

You both are positive, humble, forward-looking, problem solving people, and always accessible, even today after years of

service, you continue to take our calls for assistance, from helping us clear up a complicated deed to making a pie for this occasion. Thank you for your friendship, your love, and your steadfast support over these many years.

—Comments of Bonnie Neumeier in presenting the award



Don and Jane Gardner

THE MODEL GROUP - 2014 CELEBRATING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PARTNER

The Model Group is an integrated property development, construction, and management company with a passion for revitalizing urban neighborhoods. They are a recognized leader in historic preservation, mixed-use urban development, senior living communities, and affordable housing that is indistinguishable from market-rate housing.

OTRCH has worked with them on 7 projects, resulting in 384 affordable housing units in Over-the-Rhine. Each one of these projects provided their own opportunities and their own challenges. Each time Model stepped up with integrity and commitment to get the job done. In addition to being our partner on several development projects, Model has also provided us with technical assistance during our periods of growth.



Steve Smith Receiving Model Award

There are several people that I want to call out and offer thanks; Tim Moning, Ron Muse, Bob Keppler, Jen Walke, Bobby Maly, Steve Smith, and Shirley Poe. Then there is Art Reckman, Model's founder and president. Art is an inspiring

leader who brings out the best of the people at Model. He is kind and generous. Recently I received an email from Marianne Lawrence, who runs the support program at Nannie Hinkston House:

“A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend Wesley Kids day at Art Reckman's lake and cabin in Sunman, Indiana. Art goes all out for a day of fun for the kids including fishing, pony rides, lake activities and a wonderfully orchestrated meal. He also made sure the many volunteers that came had as much fun (or more) than the 40+ kids. It is a day I will never forget.

Art had been kind enough to help me arrange a fishing trip for my transitional housing folks and alumni for Friday, August 15. I had asked if we could use the lake for a couple hours, not expecting anything else. He has volunteered to provide a wonderful meal for us, too! He is such a kind man.”

—Comments of Mary Burke Rivers in presenting the award



Steve Smith

OTRCH STAFF REFLECT ON WORK AND HOPE



When a person walks in the front door of OTRCH, it's usually me that meets them. As the Front Desk Manager, I'm responsible for, among other things, answering the phone and greeting people as they come in. Some people might think this would be hard, tiresome and difficult. Sometimes it is, but mostly not.

I love my job because I work for an organization that values people and their right to affordable housing, and that is dedicated to helping others take steps to provide a brighter future for their children as well as themselves. I also have the most amazing, hard-working, dedicated, and accomplished coworkers in the world. I'm amazed daily at the achievements we all have, individually and collectively.

Having all this behind me, inspiring me to do better everyday, it's a joy and privilege to be a "front" person for OTRCH. My hope is to take all this strength and to continue to meet everyone that walks in the door with the respect, professionalism, and competence that they need and deserve.
—Carol Strayhorn, Front Desk Manager

Last spring I celebrated 20 years of working to provide housing for homeless men and women. This is not easy work, and it is not always successful. However, it is always challenging, inspiring and deeply rewarding.

It is so deeply rewarding because we have seen, and will see, hundreds of homeless persons get a place to live, and from there, make huge strides to reclaim a greater measure of fulfillment in their lives. It is also rewarding because the staff of OTRCH provide a genuine and compassionate response to the crisis that is being homeless. In 2015, with the



Andy Hutzel accepts the President's Award for nine years of service on the board of the Ohio Community Development Corporation Association. Sitting is Nate Coffman, Executive Director, standing is Steve Torsell, Board President.

help of our partners, I believe we will be able to transition more homeless men and women into safe, affordable homes than ever before.

—Andy Hutzel, Director of Housing Services

What I aim to do everyday at OTRCH is walk side-by-side with our residents as they work to keep their housing and move their family forward towards greater well-being. It is hard work, for all of us. This movement forward can feel, and often is, glacially slow and very uphill.



What I know to be true is that our residents do their very best with the startlingly difficult hand that is dealt them. I know many mothers who raise their children with little money, fierce love, little outside support, and a whole lot of unknowns in the future. This is a miracle to me. It is my job to have these mom's backs. It is my job to make it easier where I can, to navigate difficult and frustrating systems with them (those in poverty are regularly treated as "less than", even in places that are there to "help"), and to connect them with resources that will assist them in reaching their goals.

I show up because they show up and want to make it work. I believe we need to be on each others side, this is what Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is all about for me. What I hope for is greater strength, creativity, and endurance in the struggle for the OTRCH residents with whom we work in Resident Services. I hope this for myself, and for each of those with whom I walk in my work here.

—Amy Silver, Social Worker



Two months ago I celebrated my 5th anniversary as Program Manager at OTRCH's Recovery Hotel. In that time I have tried to be a champion in assisting homeless men and women to obtain stable housing and to maintain their recovery from alcohol and drugs. As many

of us in the helping professions find and say, I have received more than I have given. Being with residents of Recovery Hotel, as they work to piece together their lives, is sometimes difficult. It is always rewarding. The strength of character that I have witnessed and experienced inspires me to be both a better person and a better director of Recovery Hotel.



As I look to the new year, my hope is to become more aware of how to give hope to others that are struggling with homelessness/addiction, and to be an advocate for those who believe they have no voice.

—Christine Wooten, Recovery Hotel, Program Manager

By nature I am a nurturing person and enjoy seeing individuals accomplish their goals. It is rewarding when a person comes in looking for affordable housing and I am able to help.



Sometimes help is simply giving words of encouragement, sometimes it is providing information about rent assistance, sometimes it is helping to get all the personal information needed to complete our housing application, sometimes it is referring individuals to employment programs. It is always about listening and providing the service that each person needs.

When I hear applicants talk about the living conditions their families are living in because their landlord isn't taking proper care of the property, it gives me great pride to show and insure them that OTRCH properties are in excellent condition and affordable.



I am also able to share about and outline all the resources and stability we

offer our residents living here in Over-the-Rhine. I believe we are called to service one another. My position gives me that opportunity. Each day, and for the coming year, I hope to continue that service with a warm heart, willing hand and a big smile. I also hope that all of our residents, now living in safe, comfortable, affordable housing and perhaps especially the new ones that I see, will share with others what they experience here at OTRCH.

—Cynthia Bell, Leasing Manager



Hope is the basis of our work at the Jimmy Heath House. At JHH we always ask where to begin. I believe the answer to that question is that we start with the hopes and aspirations of our tenants. We began our 5th year of operation December 10, and in these first years I have learned that hope takes on many different

shapes. For Jorge, one of our newest residents, hope revolves around regaining meaningful employment, and his wish to be self-sufficient. For Edward, hope is addressing his medical needs, and relief of the debilitating, multiple effects of Traumatic Brain Injury. Stephen, who moved in about a year ago, is hoping to spend Thanksgiving with his family. Randall, another new tenant, who has spent years living on the railroad tracks between Oakley and Norwood, hopes to learn his new surroundings and adjust to his new neighborhood.

For many of our longer-term residents, hopes are more pedestrian. Peter, who has lived with us since our opening, and who has found sobriety since moving in, hopes for a raise from his job at the steakhouse. Joseph, who is up with the sun collecting scrap metal, hopes for a better price for his scrap, and dreams of a day when he can replace his grocery cart with a truck to haul his scrap to the scrap yard. Reynaldo hopes to untangle his insurance benefits. Ted hopes for relief from a painful medical condition. Harold's hopes and work are for change in the political climate in the city.

Hope also moves beyond the Jimmy Heath House. Tenants who entered their names onto the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority voucher list during open enrollment in late 2010, have begun to receive vouchers. So far, three individuals have received them. One person chose to stay at Jimmy Heath, citing the support available on site. The second has moved to

OTRCH STAFF REFLECT ON WORK AND HOPE

(CONTINUED)

Westwood, but remains connected to the program. The third person, Pleas, decided to leave, but insisted that it was his hope to remain connected to the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, and to continue to have OTRCH as his landlord.

In the end, like all of us, the hopes of Jimmy Heath House residents and staff vary from the grandiose to banal. We try to honor and encourage the hopes of our tenants, large or small, in the knowledge that hope is what keeps us all going.

—David Elkins, Program Coordinator



My year as a Resident Services Intern at Over-the-Rhine Community Housing began in late August. From the moment I walked through the green doors on W. 14th Street, I felt hope in

this space. A welcoming atmosphere and friendly faces greeted me one by one; I felt excited to get started, but had no idea what a truly valuable experience this would all turn out to be.

Here at OTRCH, I am working on several projects to benefit our residents and our community. A primary focus has been working with The Salvation Army of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to sign our families and residents up for holiday programs like Toys for Tots, Adopt a Family, and Adopt a Senior. This has given me the opportunity to meet and interact with residents who have openly welcomed and introduced me to their neighborhood.

One of my favorite parts of my work is Creative Children's Corner, a place where - rain, snow, or shine - children from the neighborhood come to do art projects, play games, have a snack, and work on homework. Each child brings different emotions to CCC - joy, anger, excitement, and sadness. For an hour and a half they are in a safe space where they can release all these emotions and enjoy each others' company. Being at CCC twice a week fuels me with all the hope I need to move forward when my strength is tested, which sometimes happens.

I am even further inspired by the co-workers surrounding me at OTRCH. Each one is working collaboratively and

creatively to overcome all the challenges that accompany the work to provide affordable housing. From summer block parties to supporting a resident with a job search, each and every day folks at OTRCH are working vigorously to support and sustain the neighborhood and provide resident-centered affordable housing, driven by hope for the community.



As the first half of my internship comes to a close, I am looking forward, full of hope, to spending the next few months at this organization. It is a privilege to work side-by-side with the passionate individuals here - staff and residents alike - and I could not ask for a better place to learn and work during my final year in school.

—Lauren Stoll, Intern

It's no secret. Money is in very short supply for low-income residents of Over-the-Rhine. As development of high-end condos and cutting edge restaurants happens around them, these people struggle to find and keep safe, affordable and comfortable housing. Money to help them do so is also tight. That's where I come in.



I've seen what stable housing can do to improve lives. That's why I raise the money that helps OTRCH continue to serve and advocate for low-income residents. But our dreams are always ten steps ahead of our funding. My hopes for the New Year? I hope that the area's homeless get the help they need to move into our housing and find jobs (our new Resident Services Emergency Need Fund can help with that). And I hope that our working residents have jobs that will support them. Big hopes, but you can help make them realities by supporting us.

—Roland Kreaeger, Development Director

RESIDENT STORIES. OUR MEASURE OF SUCCESS

A Grassroots Degree

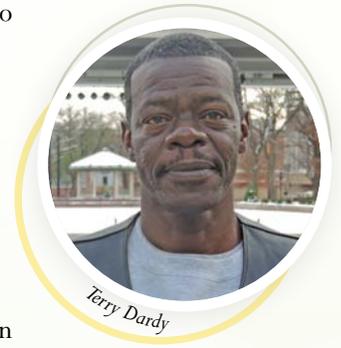
Terry is a quiet and humble guy. He works hard each day at the Drop Inn Center as a Housing Case Manager, helping individuals who come into the shelter with basic needs, and that they are placed into the appropriate program in the Center. With a focus on the 250 individuals entering the shelter each night, it's hard for Terry not to think about what led him to his current position.

His is an amazing journey. Terry first came to the Drop Inn Center 34 years ago, not long after it opened its current home at 12th and Elm Street. Terry wasn't an employee, he was a resident. He slept next to the other residents in what was an old car shop. Soon after he arrived, Terry began to volunteer at the shelter. He was asked to serve on a housing task force by the late buddy gray, making plans to create housing for homeless and low-income families. Terry says, "buddy always said if you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the problem."

Terry also worked on vacant buildings in Over-the-Rhine to preserve them with buddy and many other volunteers. Eventually, Terry was hired as an employee at the Drop Inn Center. Then, after several years at the Drop, Terry was asked by Fr. Chris Hall to get involved in securing properties on 12th Street. These buildings would soon become home to the non-profit Tender Mercies, an agency housing mentally ill homeless men and women. Tender Mercies is still going strong today in Over-the-Rhine. But Terry didn't stay involved with buddy or Fr. Chris for too long as he

struggled for years with addiction to drugs and alcohol.

Those struggles landed Terry in the penitentiary on one more than one occasion. But Terry battled back. He found the Drop Inn Center again in 2006, and with help from several staff, he got back on his feet. He again began volunteering, living at the shelter, then moving into transitional housing, then becoming an employee at the Center. While Terry dropped out of college after 2 years, he is proud of his "grassroots degree" and feels that helps to bring a diverse perspective to the Center. In 2007, Terry made his way to Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (OTRCH) to seek safe, affordable, and permanent housing. OTRCH was glad to open its doors to Terry, who has remained one of its tenants to present day.



Terry doesn't look for praise, preferring privacy and keeping to himself, "Any success I have had is attributable to the team I work with at the Drop Inn Center." But Terry is the kind of person this changing neighborhood needs, someone who has overcome struggles and difficult experiences, with ties to what was, and a model of hope for what can be, for those still on the streets to those living in the new town homes and condos.

—Andy Hutzel

Teaching, Learning, Living in Over-the-Rhine

"You just have to believe that every child can learn, and that they will learn," says Greta Benton, retired teacher and resident of Over-the-Rhine for more than 70 years. Ms. Benton was one of the first residents to move into OTRCH's 1500 Elm Street Senior Housing project earlier this year. She chose to stay in Over-the-Rhine because she believes in the strength of the community that has existed here for decades, despite the rapid influx of new development and new people.



Two of Greta's neighbors celebrate the opening of the Elm Street Senior Housing

Greta and her family moved into the West End from Kentucky when she was in kindergarten. Since then, she has made the conscious choice to remain in the neighborhood she has loved throughout her life. For 54 years, she called a building at the corner of Liberty & Vine home. During this time, she formed a friendship with a fellow tenant named Barbara Menefield. When

that building needed significant repairs, the two households were asked to move and both women moved into 1500 Elm, continuing their life-long friendship as neighbors.

"I could have left OTR years ago, but I didn't," says Benton, "I love walking around this neighborhood and feeling connected to people." Many of the faces Ms. Benton continues to see around the neighborhood are former students or families she knows from the school community.

After spending the majority of her career teaching second and third grade at Washington Park Elementary (the highly ranked public school that formerly stood in the now renovated Washington Park), Ms. Benton now enjoys her job as an educational Intervention Tutor at Roberts Academy in Price Hill. This role allows her to connect with students individually and with more attention paid to each child's specific needs.

"I try to sit at their level," she says of the children she works with, "I look into their eyes and I try to understand them."

—Sophia Cunningham, Resident Engagement Coordinator



NON-PROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 CINCINNATI OH
 PERMIT NO. 4652

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing
 114 West 14th Street
 Cincinnati, OH 45202
 513-381-1171

HOW TO SUPPORT OVER-THE-RHINE COMMUNITY HOUSING

There are many ways to support OTRCH and our work on behalf of low-income residents of Over-the-Rhine.

Donate!

All of the following information and “hot” links are available on the OTRCH website, www.otrch.org. Click the Support Us! tab on the homepage.

- Make a one-time, or monthly, gift online via the secure form.
- Make a gift by check: Over-the-Rhine Community Housing, 114 W. 14th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202
- Make a gift, online or by mail, to memorialize a person or to honor a person(s) at special times (holidays, birthdays, weddings).
- Have fun and be a fundraiser for us! Call me, I’ll give you some ideas and then use Crowdrise to create your own fundraising page and campaign. You can also use Crowdrise for alternative giving at special times.
- Remember OTRCH when you begin the Required Minimum Distribution from retirement accounts.
- Make a gift of stock, or wire funds from a cash account
- Remember OTRCH when naming beneficiaries in your life insurance, annuity, and estate documents.

Use Community Resources to Help OTRCH!

- Make OTRCH the beneficiary of your Kroger Rewards card. You can either get a Kroger Rewards card or change the beneficiary to OTRCH on your existing card.
- Make your Amazon purchases by using AmazonSmile. 0.5% of your purchase price will be donated to OTRCH.
- Use Goodsearch as your search engine. For every internet search you do Goodsearch gives a penny to OTRCH. Check out other ways that Goodsearch provides to support OTRCH.



Be Informed!

- Receive email updates.
- Like us on Facebook

Be Engaged!

Invite a church, school, business, or friends group to join you in a volunteer project in Over-the-Rhine. Contact Jake Merritt (jmerritt@otrch.org) for information. If you don’t have a group, Jake can help you find one.

