



Over-the-Rhine Community Housing Where Community Comes First

SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER

Someone asked me recently as I stood atop a snow-covered hill in Clifton while children sledded down, my son included, "What is the state of affordable housing in our city?" I could speak on this forever. How do I do that in a casual conversation with a parent (or anyone) that I have just met? Can I tell the sad truth and still be hopeful, and instill hope?

My response was that it is not nearly good enough here in our city, and that the same is true across the country. There just isn't the commitment to making affordable housing available to everyone who needs, and qualifies for, it. Don't we as a community have a responsibility to make housing available for everyone who needs it? Why is housing a commodity rather than a basic right?

Why is affordable housing so difficult to develop? The program used most widely is the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. It provides tax relief to banks and insurance companies for investing in affordable housing development. The program is complicated, requires layered financing, sophistication and many professionals to succeed. It is not easy. It is inadequate. And, the LIHTC subsidizes the development, but not the operation, of newly developed housing. The local organization, Affordable Housing Advocates, reports that 1 in 5 households that qualify for assisted housing in Hamilton County have it. This is the sad truth.

Can I still be hopeful, and instill hope? Yes, I am hopeful, and the projects that we are celebrating will, I think, instill hope. We celebrate the beginning of construction of Beasley Place, 13 units at 1405-07 Republic Street. We will celebrate the completion of Elm Street Senior Housing, 15 units, in a building once owned by Christian Moerlein, at 1500 Elm Street. We are planning a community celebration, in mid-May. Watch for announcements.

However, the sad truth is never far; for every unit we make available, we have many more people seeking housing. What does this mean for the future of our city, our country? I'm not sure. I do know that my 5 year old son knows about homelessness, and fortunately not from personal experience. We have been approached by people asking for money several times. We see people holding signs at the entrance and exit ramps to highways and at intersections saying, "Need help. I'm homeless." We talk about it.

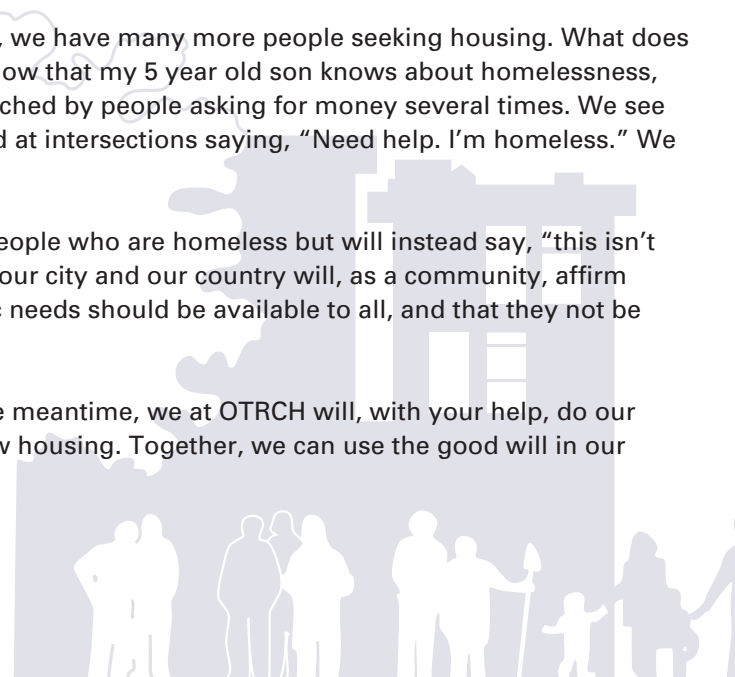
Yet, there is always hope. Maybe his generation won't be afraid of people who are homeless but will instead say, "this isn't right," and do something about it. Something big. I am hopeful that our city and our country will, as a community, affirm that we all need access to food, clothing and shelter, that these basic needs should be available to all, and that they not be contingent on the amount of money in our pockets.

There will finally be Housing Now for all. I know it can happen. In the meantime, we at OTRCH will, with your help, do our part. Together, we can tell the sad truth. Together, we can create new housing. Together, we can use the good will in our community to care for all those in need.



MARY BURKE RIVERS

Executive Director



JIMMY HEATH HOUSE MEMORIAL SERVICE

On February 18, Over-the-Rhine Community Housing and Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services' Paths to Recovery program held a memorial service for the 13 program participants, and 1 staff, who have died in the first three years of the program. Rev. Fred Cook officiated at the service. The following homily was his message to the gathered community of about 60 persons.

"Gathering to remember those in the Jimmy Heath House community who have died in the past three years is a great celebration of the life-sustaining mission of the Jimmy Heath House. To me, it is Noah's Ark. You know the story. It looks much like the story of the residents of Jimmy Heath House before you all moved in; things aren't going well and they promise to get worse. In a tweak of conscience, God hatches a plan. It is a plan of life, hope, renewal, possibility, community and responsibility. He tells Noah to build an ark. It's a crazy idea, part of a crazy plan. People said the same thing about the Jimmy Heath House too. But we built it.

Noah gathers up all the animals, all the wildlife of creation, and when the ark is built, welcomes them all onto the ark. How strange, all the differences, everyone made powerless by the shared worry and danger. The predicted threatening and death-dealing flood rains, wind and waves came. They come now. But all the animals were safe. And so are we safe. In odd and determined community, we share the safety of the ark, we live in promise of a future born of our patience and willing care for one another.

The Jimmy Heath House, like Noah's Ark, is a place of welcome to all, and accepts the gifts of the amazing diversity of creation. Safe aboard is life. It is a place of security and safety for all of us who are willing to be embraced by the hopes and dreams of a community that says everyone matters. No matter the winds that blow, the rains that fall, or the waves that crash, all of us on the ark will, together, be OK. Better than OK, we will be the hope and trust and opportunity of the future.

While still a refuge for us all, there came a time for Noah when the ark came to rest. Noah sent out a bird to see what it was like out there ... to see if the water had receded. But the bird came back, the water was still too high. After a while Noah sent another. The bird came back with an olive branch in its mouth, the waters were going down. Noah sent yet another, and it never came back. The land was dry. It was safe now. No more storms or waves or destructive flood. Those who have died are not coming back. But in their not returning is the sure message that we have nothing to fear. Go ahead and open the door, you're going to be alright."

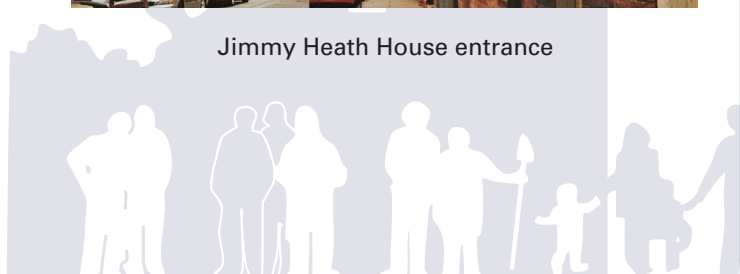
Pastor Cook was the pastor for many years of First Lutheran Church, 1208 Race Street. He is presently the pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Lebanon, OH.



Rev. Fred Cook officiating at the JHH memorial service



Jimmy Heath House entrance



PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

ANNA LOUISE INN

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is honored to be a part of the Anna Louise Inn (ALI) legacy. We serve as co-developer of ALI's new home with Cincinnati Union Bethel. The Model Group is the general contractor and consultant to the project.

It was four years ago, March 2010, when Steve Smith of the Model Group and Steve MacConnell of Cincinnati Union Bethel attended our board meeting and invited us to participate in the redevelopment and preservation of the ALI. We were honored, and never could have predicted where the journey would eventually lead.

Congratulations to the ALI team; the dedicated funders, Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing, Ohio Housing Finance Agency, City of Cincinnati, Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati and Strategies to End Homelessness; and the many supporters who persevered with the project over the past four years.

Located at the corner of Reading Road and Kinsey Street in Mt. Auburn (across the street from the United Way building) the new Inn will provide 85 units of affordable housing with support services. Construction completion is scheduled for summer 2015. Cincinnati Union Bethel, thanks for including us in your journey. We are truly honored.



Representatives from all ALI partners at the groundbreaking



Over 125 people participated in the groundbreaking program

CUTTER APARTMENTS

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing has partnered with Wallick-Hendy Development to redevelop Cutter Apartments in the Pendleton neighborhood. Cutter Apartments is an existing, 40-unit scattered site affordable apartment community. It is comprised of eight historic buildings. While the buildings were renovated in the 1990s, they are in need of improvement to meet today's living and safety standards.

Proposed upgrades include:

- LEED silver-certified energy improvements including Energy Star lighting and appliances,
- New unit fixtures, cabinets, and flooring,
- Updated exterior including new community patios and improved exterior aesthetics,
- Enhanced security,
- Improved electrical and HVAC systems,
- Improved fire safety.

We have partnered with City Studios Architecture, a local architecture firm that specializes in historic renovation. The project is federally subsidized for the next 19 years through the HUD Section 8 program, which means that no resident will pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent. Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is excited to be a part of this project and to continue our mission of developing quality affordable housing!



Two of the eight Cutter Apartment buildings

ELM STREET SENIOR HOUSING

As of the first week of March, the Elm Street Senior Housing (ESSH) project is approximately 80 percent complete. Construction is going well and is on schedule. The apartments are really beginning to take shape now that flooring is being laid and cabinets and bathroom fixtures are installed. If you have driven by the site recently, you probably have noticed that all of the new windows have been installed, the historic wood storefront has been completely reconstructed, and the elevator addition is constructed. The next two months of construction will bring many more exciting visible exterior changes and finishing touches, including a fresh coat of paint for all of the gorgeous decorative stonework and the new storefront, the reinstallation of the historic stained glass windows in the storefront, new exterior doors, and siding for the elevator shaft.

The construction of the new outdoor courtyard in the area behind the building is perhaps the most exciting exterior change that will begin in the next month or so. It will be a wonderful space where residents can gather, enjoy nature, and garden. We are so very thankful to Mark Manley and Annette Januzzi Wick who are sponsoring the construction of the outdoor courtyard, in honor of Annette's father, Ettore Januzzi.

According to Annette, her father was a skilled, passionate gardener and a supporter of affordable housing. He was named to the board of Lorain County (Northeast Ohio) Metropolitan Housing Authority, and elected chairman, and served in that position for twenty-five years.

We have started taking applications for ESSH. Applicants must have at least one member aged 62 and older, on a limited income, and seeking affordable housing in the Over-the-Rhine community. This project has been designed for seniors' every day conveniences. There will be two community rooms, a large lobby, an on-site laundry room, an intercom entrance; it will be handicap accessible, have wide entrances, have well lit hallways, energy efficient stoves, refrigerators, and microwaves, 24-hour maintenance, an elevator, and the outdoor garden and courtyard.

So far the interest in ESSH has been outstanding. Applicants have been long-time residents of Over-the-Rhine, need subsidized and supportive housing, find themselves needing durable medical equipment to stay independent, and wanting a new living environment.

Applications are available at the OTRCH weekdays 9:30 - 4:00. Please bring a valid picture ID and birth certificate. A social security card is not required but is recommended.

The ribbon-cutting and public opening of Elm Street Senior Housing will be held in May. The building will be open at this event for public tours. We hope you will all come and celebrate this wonderful project with us! Watch for more information regarding the date and time for this event.



Unfinished interior of an ESSH apartment



ESSH entrance and north along Elm Street



ESSH from 15th Street, March 3



ESSH back and future courtyard, March 3

BEASLEY PLACE

We are very excited to announce that closing on financing for our Beasley Place project, located at 1405-07 Republic Street, starts in late March. This is a \$2.9 million project. OTRCH owns the building and will serve as project developer. HGC Construction will be the general contractor and CR Architects serves as project architect. Construction will begin in April.

Beasley Place will be an historic rehabilitation of two buildings into 13 affordable units. The project will contain 6 one-bedroom units, 4 two-bedroom units, and 3 three-bedroom units. Apartments range in size from 681 to 1,402 square feet. The project will include a new elevator and common laundry room, as well as approximately 1,200 square feet of first floor commercial space. Once complete, the building will meet enterprise green communities requirements and will have Energy Star appliances and lighting.



1405-07 Republic Street -
Beasley Place

The project has several funders including state and federal historic tax credits, City of Cincinnati HOME funds, City of Cincinnati Lead Education and Remediation (CLEAR) funds, Housing Development Gap Financing from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, and a grant from the Robert H. Reakirt Foundation. First Financial Bank will be our equity provider and will finance both our permanent and construction loans. Cincinnati Development Fund provided pre-development financing.

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is naming the 14-unit affordable housing project at 1405-07 Republic Street in recognition and memory of Willie and Fannie Beasley who were long-time residents in that building. Their roots ran deep on Republic Street. I could tell because everyone lifted a hand to wave at them, and call out their names, Willie and Fannie. You'd see them often on the steps at the entrance.

Georgia Keith, another long-time Republic Street resident said, "Willie always looked sharp. There wasn't a crease in his pants because Fannie kept them ironed." Willie would get up early in the mornings, way before anyone else ventured out into the streets. He would be out there sweeping the sidewalks on Republic Street and whistling to the rhythm of his broom. Willie's whistling would be my morning wake up call. It was a peaceful sound I learned to appreciate, for it was a daily ritual that carried a much deeper meaning over time. They had a presence on the street that was palpable.

Willie and Fannie were a pair of old timers, and I mean that with the deepest sense of respect. They made you want to live on that street because you wanted to be connected to its strong roots, which came from the people who made it home. They loved their home, this building, this place on Republic Street where they befriended neighbors. They even had a room, some called a "juke joint", where comradery was experienced through playing cards, conversation, listening to old time music and sipping down a cold drink on a hot day.

I miss Willie and Fannie. They were not people expressing lots of words; it was their daily presence and how they cared for the life on this street that made them so special. It seems very fitting that we call 1405-07 Republic Street The Beasley Place, a small sign of our gratitude for their significant contribution making Republic Street a welcoming street, and Over-the-Rhine a welcoming neighborhood, to all who ventured down its path.

BONNIE NEUMEIER

OTR neighbor to the Beasleys and OTRCH board member

FROM HOMELESS ON THE COURTHOUSE STEPS TO A JOB AND A HOME

2008 began as a good year for Dorina Sherrill. She and her husband had a house in Price Hill. Their two adult sons lived in town, and her job as an administrative assistant for a local home builder was going well. However, by the end of the year things had seriously fallen apart.

Her marriage had ended. She was laid off from her job (the Great Recession had begun that fall). Without an income, she was unable to maintain a roof over her head. Her youngest son had entered the military. She was homeless, stressed and depressed.

She made her stay at the Drop Inn Center until January when her extended time available ran out. She then stayed at the Cold Shelter above the Drop Inn Center until that closed the end of February. When that shelter was closed, she was then sleeping in her truck as it was still quite cold outside. The truck, however, ended up being ticketed and towed. As she did not have the money to retrieve it, she lost it. She was homeless, on the streets during the day, and sleeping on the steps of the courthouse at night.

Last fall, the county sheriff, in response to public pressure, began the removal of everyone staying at the courthouse. Thankfully, the removal was not just moving people off the steps. It included help. Dorina was connected with an outreach worker to the homeless, Annie Coleman, who helped her get back into the Drop Inn Center. From there she was referred to Over-the-Rhine Community Housing for an apartment. In January Dorina moved in.

In all this time, she had continued to fill out job applications. She was limited because she had no transportation to get to work, so could apply only for jobs to which she could walk. Finally, in October 2013, she got a part-time job at the Kroger store on Vine Street in Over-the-Rhine.

This is Dorina's story. In these last five years Dorina has learned a lot, most of it about herself. First, help is available. It is not always available when, where, and in the way she needed it. But, in time, the right people were there to help her get the pieces of her life back together.

She learned that she is stronger than she had ever imagined. Her regular mantra was, "I'm going to get through this. I'm going to get through this". This has made her very determined. Six years ago her goal was simply to survive. Now her goal is to thrive. The greatest problem of her experience with homelessness was uncertainty. Without certainty, no plans could be made, very little could be counted on. Now, thanks to Over-the-Rhine Community Housing, she has an apartment. Her apartment is a place of safety and security, exactly what she has not experienced in the past five years."



OTRCH apartment building (not Dorine's)

CHILDREN'S CREATIVE CORNER



Thursday evening regulars Bird and Eukyndie



Characters with charisma at CCC

Children's Creative Corner stands poised for Spring. Winter has been a blast, but CCC is looking to turn up the heat on 2014! This year marks CCC's seventh, and with exciting new projects and re-invigorated investment, the months ahead on East Clifton are looking bright.

In the year ahead, CCC will undertake a slate of new subject-specific youth programming. In addition to attending year-round, twice-weekly classes, neighborhood children will have the chance to participate in one of three enrichment programs centered on cooking, environmentalism, and woodworking. Each course will last five to ten weeks and culminate in an educational class field trip. Whether it's through baking a pie, learning about the importance of conserving water, or building a birdhouse, children will acquire and build upon basic life, listening, and trade skills.

Over the past year, CCC has worked alongside nearly one hundred kids ages five to fifteen. Many an evening our humble classroom space swelled to capacity with energetic youth. And yes, such vibrant energy sometimes necessitates a nudge in a positive direction. Many of the children who attend class bring more than just smiles, laughter, and good humor through the door. Often, the stressors of life and relationships manifest as raw emotion. Tapping into and constructively channeling that emotion is not easy. Frequently, one of the hardest truths for a child to understand is empathy. Heck, many adults struggle to grasp such an idea.

As instructors and educators, working with a child to see the world through the eyes of another proves daunting. CCC has been, and will continue to be, a part of the developing minds and hearts of our neighborhood youth. Thus, as the onset of renewed life arrives with the coming Spring, so too arises continued growth and achievement for the OTR children CCC proudly works with. So bring on the warmth, and bring on the challenges of growing up, the kids are ready to Spring forward!

BILL HAIGH
CCC Coordinator

MISSION

Over the Rhine Community Housing is a non-profit organization that works to build and sustain a diverse neighborhood that values and benefits low-income residents. We focus on developing and managing resident-centered, affordable housing in an effort to promote an inclusive community.

OTRCH is a non-profit community development organization that provides a wide spectrum of affordable and supportive housing options with life-changing programs that help low-income residents in Over-the-Rhine succeed. For over four decades, OTRCH has never wavered from its commitment to: 1) Build a sustainable, diverse neighborhood that values and benefits low-income residents, 2) Create an inclusive community in this evolving historic district, and 3) Advocate on behalf of its residents. To meet this mission, OTRCH has restored 86 properties (410 housing units) and assembled a broad mix of 20+ service providers/agency partners and 800 volunteers to ensure that residents receive affordable housing along with access to health care, job services, education, faith-based services and community associations that strengthen their ability to succeed.



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HOW TO SUPPORT OVER-THE-RHINE COMMUNITY HOUSING

BE INFORMED.

- Receive our regular, informational emails. Visit our website homepage to sign up.
- Follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/otrch) and/or Twitter (www.twitter.com/otrch).

GIVE TO OUR ANNUAL CAMPAIGN.

- Make a one-time or sustaining gift via our secure, online form.
- Make a gift of cash. Please return the form below.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

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Address: _____ Phone: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail check to:

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing
c/o Roland Kreager
114 W. 14th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

THANK YOU!