



Over-the-Rhine Community Housing Where Community Comes First

WINTER 2013 NEWSLETTER

Years ago, when I first became involved in community and affordable housing development, there was a lot of talk about community. I struggled with it; what if low-income people just need housing and that's all? Are we forcing this idea about community on people? On me?

Today, I embrace community as essential, and feel that it is something that develops organically, given the right set of ingredients or circumstances. For us at OTRCH, that means providing affordable housing and support services when they are needed. Community grows naturally, just like things in our garden.

One fall a pumpkin sprouted and grew in our garden at home, completely without our intent. The prior fall we had a pumpkin in our yard as a decoration. We let the pumpkin decompose in place for a time before moving it to the compost. One of the seeds germinated and we were so excited to see the pumpkin vine and flower the next fall.

One day last week, on my way back to the office from a meeting at the Homeless Coalition, I stopped to pick up a coffee and a snack at Coffee Emporium. On my walk, I ran into lots of friends. There were several hellos and waves.

I stopped to talk to Lee McCoy, a StreetVibes vendor. As we were talking James Jenkins, a local photographer, and new friend, came by and offered to take our picture. After our brief conversation we moved on with smiles.

At the intersection of 14th and Race, I saw long-time resident, Ms. Sharon, waiting at the bus stop. She had worked for most of her 31 years in schools at Washington Park Elementary, had been an OTRCH resident, and had retired in May. Now, she lives in senior housing in Evanston, likes it, and is enjoying retirement. She told me to tell Dakenya (OTRCH's Compliance Manager) she said hi. We hugged as we parted, sincerely happy to see each other.



Community is in OTR, especially when you are open to it. Honestly, I don't think it takes much effort, just a willingness to be open to conversations and valuing what is here. The greetings on the street or serendipitous meetings feel just like the flowering pumpkin vine – unexpected gifts.

I feel so fortunate for the experience of community, and to be a part of it in Over-the-Rhine. I am grateful to work for an organization that provides the right environment for community to grow. It is a great gift that I am profoundly grateful to be a part of.

We at OTRCH wish for all our supporters, friends, and family unexpected gifts this holiday season. Consider joining us as we work to assure that the low income residents of Over-the-Rhine will continue to be a part of this community. With you we can provide the necessary ingredients for a healthy Over-the-Rhine community; affordable housing, support, and respect.

MARY BURKE RIVERS

Executive Director



SEEING HOMELESS PERSONS

As the seasons change from autumn to winter and the cold wind and bad weather push most people off the streets of downtown Cincinnati, it's the homeless men and women gathered in tight clusters on corners, or sitting like birds on a wire near the open mouths of alleys that come more into focus. They may look rough around the edges. They may look out suspiciously from under old knit caps. You may notice one of them tucking a half full beer into the pocket of an old coat, or standing willfully against the wind with a sign that reads "Homeless". You may look on at one of these people as you drive down to a football game or a concert, and you may try to imagine why that person is out there, what would I do if I were out there, what in the world could make me stay out there in the wind and the weather, in the mud and gravel, with only sheets of cardboard and a blanket between myself and the cold concrete?

For the last 3 years I have worked with Over-the-Rhine Community Housing and Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Service's *Paths to Recovery* program to offer the people you see on the corner or sleeping out in the cold, an alternative to the street. Through OTRCH's *Jimmy Heath House*, and GCBHS' *Paths to Recovery*, we have been able to offer over 70 of these individuals safe, warm, and sustainable housing, based solely on the hope that the individual will try to leave the "streets" behind them. We have few expectations about their substance abuse, behavior, or their willingness to take part in a "Program". We know that it is their addiction that keeps these people out on streets, it is the damage they've done to their self-esteem and self-respect, it's long histories of incarceration, and estrangement from family that causes the hopelessness that leads these people back to the revolving door of jail, shelter, street, hospital, and back to jail. Asked to comply with rules or programming these individuals will simply walk away, their hope and their will overwhelmed by their addiction.

When you get close to these people, when you attempt to accept them "where they are", you meet souls who time and weather and loss have left vulnerable, and it's the vulnerability which speaks the loudest. Monday afternoon I sat with a tenant in the hospice wing of a local hospital. His eyes were pressed shut, his mouth open, his breaths slow, deep, and rasping. He had been unconscious for days. For almost three years he lived at the Jimmy Heath House and we tried to support him as he struggled with the notion of sobriety, as he wrestled with what he had left of his life if he were to get "clean", and as he bargained with his addiction while it wasted his body.

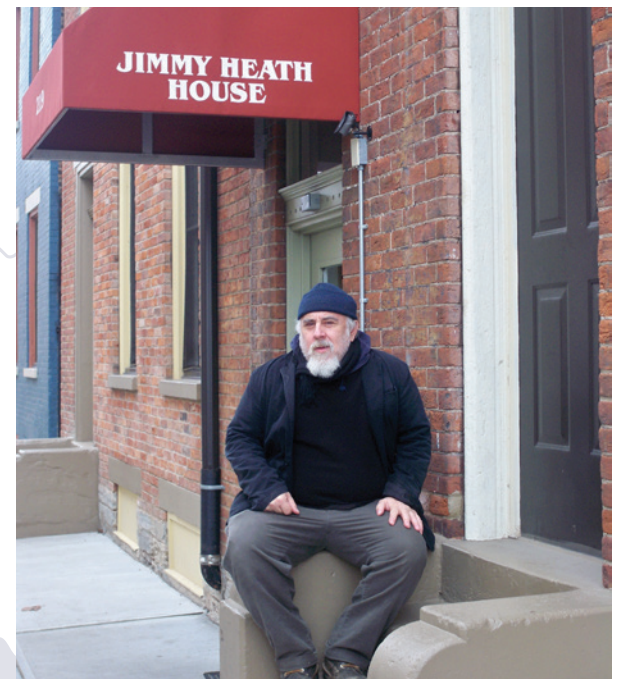
Stripped of his dirty army jacket, his watchman's cap, and his ever present cigarette, laying quietly, looking so small in the large metal hospital bed, waiting for the addiction to take the final thing he has, the vulnerability is obvious. That vulnerability is what I hope you can see the next time you drive past a "homeless" person.

DAVID ELKINS

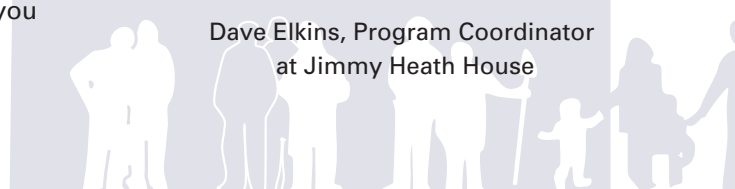
Jimmy Heath House, Program Coordinator



Glenn recently moved into Jimmy Heath House



Dave Elkins, Program Coordinator
at Jimmy Heath House



HOUSING THE HOMELESS, A PART OF OUR MISSION

One day a couple weeks ago, I came into the office from a meeting and saw a middle-aged couple in the conference room signing a lease with our leasing agent, Cynthia Bell. There were representatives from three other organizations also present. After the couple left, I asked Cynthia about the couple. She replied that it was a couple who had just “come off the land”. They, after several years, had left their homeless camp to move into a safe, warm apartment to call home.

I was in awe of the situation for several reasons. First, our leasing agent, who is responsible for leasing all our vacant units, never asked me, the person responsible for our supportive housing for the homeless programming, if I thought it was a good idea. Cynthia understood that housing the homeless is part of our mission. It is ingrained in who we are. Yes, there are many risks to moving this couple right off the streets and into a conventional apartment. But our staff, Cynthia in this instance, see that housing people who are homeless, including taking some risks, is a part of our role in the community.

Second, it is the partnership and commitment of other organizations that provide outreach, services, and rental assistance that inspires me. They find and walk with homeless individuals and families for months, sometimes years, before housing is achieved. They deserve our praise.

Last week, we worked with a homeless shelter case manager to move a homeless woman, who had given birth to twins only a few days before coming to us, into safe, affordable, and permanent housing. Helping her stay in her apartment will require a lot of work, coordination, and, yes, money. But, our staff never gave it a second thought. The deep commitment and dedication to residents by our staff is inspiring.

Thus far in 2013, Over-the-Rhine Community Housing has been able to provide supportive housing with life-changing programs to 245 homeless households. Helping these residents succeed takes strong staff and service partners, along with willing donors. It might seem impossible, and at times it is hard, but then, it is who we are and what we do. Only when we work together can what seems impossible be done, and the hard work made easier.

BUILDING FOR SENIORS CITIZENS HIGHLY ANTICIPATED

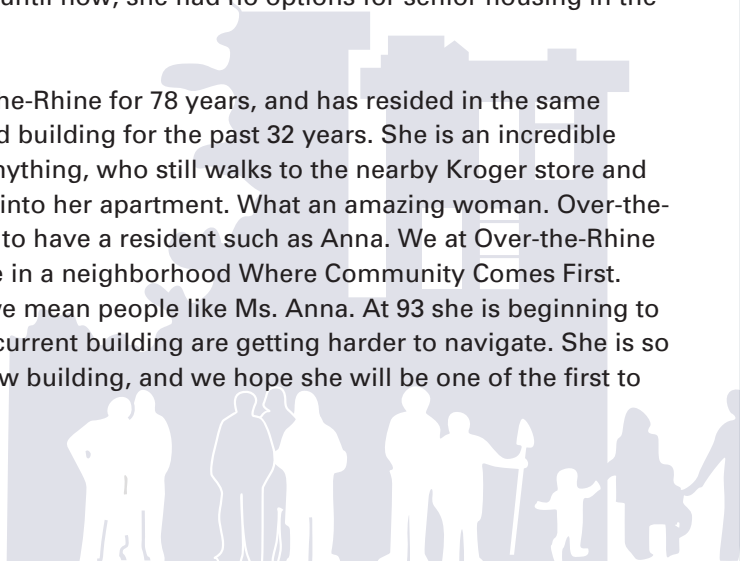


Ms. Anna and fellow building resident, Steve

The calls from long-time Over-the-Rhine residents started coming in over a year ago. Word had spread that we were going to develop the vacant building at 1500 Elm Street into a seniors-only building. That project is Elm Street Senior Housing, and construction is now over 50% complete. With tentative plans to open the building in May 2014, many residents are eager to get their names on the list for an apartment. We at OTRCH are excited that current residents are so interested in the building. We think about residents like Ms. Anna. She is 93 years old and wants to stay in Over-the-Rhine. But, until now, she had no options for senior housing in the neighborhood.

Ms Anna has lived in Over-the-Rhine for 78 years, and has resided in the same OTRCH owned and managed building for the past 32 years. She is an incredible woman, never wanting of anything, who still walks to the nearby Kroger store and makes it up the steps to get into her apartment. What an amazing woman. Over-the-Rhine should be very proud to have a resident such as Anna. We at Over-the-Rhine Community Housing believe in a neighborhood Where Community Comes First. When we say community, we mean people like Ms. Anna. At 93 she is beginning to realize that the steps in her current building are getting harder to navigate. She is so deserving of a unit in the new building, and we hope she will be one of the first to move in.

ANDY HUTZEL
Director of Housing Services



CHILDREN'S CREATIVE CORNER

KIDS LOVE CAMP

The verdict is in. Children's Creative Corner loves camp! In 2013, OTRCH sent a total of 28 kids to Camp Ernst, located in Burlington, Kentucky. The majority of campers spent an entire week at Camp Ernst this summer. A smaller group attended "Lumberjack Weekend" in early November.

Both sleep-away camps provided our CCC kids opportunities to experience activities unique to the camp and a natural setting, and to the kids. They enjoyed such activities as horseback riding, zip-lining, swimming and boating in the lake, archery, arts and crafts, sports, campfires, and team-building games. Returning campers always come back to us with glowing excitement, a few new friends, and proud stories of their personal accomplishments.

Most importantly, camp provides children the opportunity to step away from familiar settings and puts them into a social environment that allows for vulnerability, self-esteem building, and the temporary relief of genuinely challenging life-stressors. Over-the-Rhine Community Housing appreciates the fact that Camp Ernst is a place where our CCC kids can just be kids and values the positivity camp experience encourages in each of them.



Da'Nyah



India



Tavion

SOPHIA CUNNINGHAM

Resident Engagement Coordinator

GIVING TO OTRCH MAKES A HOME

We often say that the problem of providing affordable housing is one of arithmetic. The reason most property developers don't provide housing for low-income persons is simple, affordable rent is lower than the cost of providing an apartment.

OTRCH, and other providers of affordable housing, struggle to find ways to make the arithmetic work. It is possible, and OTRCH has been successfully doing it for over 25 years, thanks to your donations that close the gap. This work, by far the largest part of our budget, provides the "bricks and mortar" apartment for a low-income resident of Over-the-Rhine.

What remains is to make the apartment a home, a place where residents can live and thrive. About half of our residents have the financial resources to do this for themselves. About half need help. Much of that help comes from OTRCH's Resident Services Program. The variety of needs is infinite. There is, of course, the cost of staffing. There is also a never-ending need for items needed to help new residents establish their home. Such items could be large (a bed or other furniture) or small (an alarm to get one of our newest residents up in time to get to job interviews).

This is where financial support from donors in the community is critical. The need is specific and it makes a difference in the lives of many of our new residents. We need and welcome your help as we work to provide both a house and a home to low-income residents of Over-the-Rhine.

ROLAND KREAGER

Director of Development

MAKING A HOME AT 49 E. CLIFTON AVENUE

On September 5, employees and friends of OTRCH gathered to celebrate Mary Burke Rivers' 20th anniversary of service to low-income residents of Over-the-Rhine. As part of the celebration, and in honor of Mary, gifts were made towards our 49 East Clifton Project. The project is a complete rehabilitation of a vacant, single-family home into an affordable rental home, with drywall and interior finish work being done by Elder High School students, led by Roger Auer, OTRCH Board President.

Through the generosity of Mary's friends and colleagues, \$1,400 was given for the 49 East Clifton Project. These funds will go directly to the remodeling of the kitchen, a fitting use for the money, as the kitchen is often referred to as the heart of a home. The funds will be used to purchase gently-used cabinets, to add a pantry, to install new drywall, and to purchase appliances.

In addition to this generous financial gift, the project recently received another wonderful gift, from Schmidt Heating and Cooling. Schmidt donated a new energy-efficient furnace and air conditioning unit to make the home more comfortable and less costly in utility expense for the residents. Schmidt not only donated the furnace, but the time and labor to install the unit, run new ductwork, and run new gas lines for the kitchen stove and dryer in the laundry room.

In addition to receiving a new HVAC system and venting, there have been a few other major improvements to the building thus far in the construction process. New energy efficient windows have been installed throughout the building. The damaged box gutters and downspouts have been repaired and replaced to make the building water-tight. All of the plumbing has been roughed-in. Also very important, as the days get shorter and darker, the building is completely rewired and ready for new light fixtures. The Elder students are also back in the building almost every Saturday and have begun closing up the new walls, closets, and ceilings with drywall.

We are so very grateful for all of these donations to help make this project a success.



49 E. Clifton Avenue



ROTHENBERG PREPARATORY ACADEMY CELEBRATES DEDICATION!

On Wednesday October 23rd Rothenberg Preparatory Academy celebrated its dedication in the historically renovated Rothenberg School Building prominently located at the corner of East Clifton Avenue and Main Street.

It was a beautiful day of celebration and achievement. The spirit of academics and community was strong and inspiring as students sang their new school song, written by fellow students.

OTRCH has been involved in the plans to renovate Rothenberg School since 2000. We, along with many community residents and advocates, have held on to hope over the past decade that the school would be developed as promised.

While the newly renovated school is beautiful with all its architectural glory, the school's academic achievements are equally compelling. The school is rated 'Continuous Improvement' a significant achievement that is the result of strong leadership provided by Principal Alicia Smith.

Congratulations to the Rothenberg Community and best wishes for continued success! The community of Over-the-Rhine is better for your hard work and dedication.



Rothenberg Preparatory Academy

YOU ARE ONE OF THE FORCES OF NATURE

In 2013, the OTRCH Volunteer Program has hosted 36 volunteer groups. These groups brought 540 volunteers, who have volunteered 1,606 hours. The impact on the community is immeasurable.

Many people in Over-the-Rhine daily walk through rubbish, weeds, and uneven surfaces to get home from work and school, or to walk to the grocery store. The city has long forgotten these spaces, and they've been left unmaintained, but not unused.

We have teamed up with *Spring in Our Steps* to clear some of the historic alleyways and stairwells in the East Clifton neighborhood. Spring in Our Steps, winner of the 2013 community-wide Keep Cincinnati Clean and Beautiful Award, is a non-profit formed by Christian Huelsman and Pam Sattler in December 2011 "to take back pedestrian infrastructure".

Together with groups from Moeller High School, St. Xavier High School, Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, the University of Cincinnati, Miami University, and Xavier University, we successfully cleaned S. Wendell Alley, Sharpe Alley, the Peete Street stairs, and Peete Alley. We will continue working together until all of our neighbors have safe and accessible pedestrian paths.

Volunteers play a vital role in the physical upkeep of our community. They also act as ambassadors on behalf of Over-the-Rhine to their families, social groups, and schools. Preconceived notions and economic separation disappear when students, maybe for the first time, reach out their hands to help a stranger.



East Clifton Avenue alleys
Before Cleanup



Volunteers and a Clean Alley

Photo Credit: Pam Sattler

JODY BUCKMASTER
Volunteer Coordinator

CELEBRATING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY - 2013



Barb Otting, Bonnie Neumeier, Roger Auer, Margaret Quinn, Butch Otting, Michael Flood

Over 200 friends of Over-the-Rhine Community Housing filled the Corbett Tower of Music Hall on October 17 to *Celebrate Our Beloved Community*.

Guests enjoyed an eclectic meal provided by Kaze, S&J Bakery, Shadeau Breads, and Coffee Emporium Catering. Friends and employees of OTRCH provided delicious home baked pies for the centerpieces, and local businesses provided raffle and door prizes.

Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing, represented by Hall Keller, and Barbara and Butch Otting were recognized as organization and individual *Partners in Building our Beloved Community*. OCCH has partnered with OTRCH on several affordable housing developments. In total, they have invested over \$90 million in Over-the-Rhine, which has created or preserved 882 units of affordable housing! Beyond this very important monetary investment in bricks and mortar, they also support resident development efforts including block parties, Children's Creative Corner, summer camp and a computer match program. They have also supported our asset and property management efforts through the provision of technical assistance and training. Over our 18-year relationship, they have been a true partner in building our Beloved Community!



The Centerpiece for Each Table

Barb and Butch Otting have, for over 30 years, fulfilled many volunteer roles at the Drop Inn Center, with ReSTOC, and now with Over-the-Rhine Community Housing. They have always been dependable, loyal volunteers and supporters of our work in Over-the-Rhine. Barb and Butch are generous, humble, compassionate, and unassuming people. Our community in Over-the-Rhine and our greater Cincinnati community are much better because of them.



Simón Sotelo, PNC Bank,
Master of Ceremonies

Videographer Barbara Wolf shared a video presentation, *Honoring Connections: Old Friends and New Friends Coming Home* (available on Youtube and soon via the OTRCH website), highlighting the strengths, passion, and importance of Over-the-Rhine Community Housing.

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.

We provide 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.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

non-profit organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Cincinnati, OH
Permit 4652

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

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: _____

Second Name: _____ E-mail: _____

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!