



November 26, 2013

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Dear SALUTATIONS,

A few weeks back, while driving the tree-lined streets of Eugene and admiring the vibrant yellows, reds and oranges of the changing autumn leaves, I saw a bumper sticker that spoke to me.

*"Nothing can be loved or hated unless it is first understood." – Leonardo da Vinci*

Understanding.

It's a powerful sentiment, and a concept that has been at the forefront of our community's discourse on homelessness, especially in recent months. **As a ShelterCare advocate, we know you have taken the time to understand the challenges many of our homeless friends and neighbors face every day.**

And we thank you for this.

As a ShelterCare supporter, you know people are homeless for many different reasons. **Fortunately, your empathy, understanding and support for our work continues to improve the lives of our most vulnerable friends and neighbors.**

Many families in Eugene and Springfield rely increasingly on your generosity to survive their difficult situations. ShelterCare has been helping families who are homeless since 1970, and each family arrives at the agency with their own unique background and set of challenges. During the past fiscal year, we helped more than 1,700 people – including 238 families. **In fact, 73 percent of the families and individuals in our emergency housing program graduated to permanent housing last year.**



*Image Courtesy of D. Sharon Pruitt/Flickr.com*

**Our agency's programs continue to face dramatic demand for services, and your help is needed more than ever. Will you answer that call?**

One of those families included a young, single mother named Rachel, who was struggling to raise her two boys: Nelson, 8, and Liam, 6. Prior to becoming a resident of our Family Housing Program in Eugene, Rachel had a difficult and challenging life that included severe, deteriorating health conditions, developmental disabilities and no reliable mode of transportation.

Coupled with a recent job layoff, this perfect storm of roadblocks was too much to overcome. With no immediate family in the area and few friends, Rachel faced limited options in meeting her family's needs.

**Enter ShelterCare's services, empowered by supporters like you.**

Once enrolled in our agency's emergency shelter, the family's life changed overnight. There were no more worries about where to sleep in the cold, damp weather, or how they would keep their clothing clean for school or upcoming job interviews.

Instead, ShelterCare offered a safe and stable environment where they could start to rebuild their lives.

While Rachel's story is hers alone, her experience at ShelterCare is shared by many agency families. When they arrive for their two-month stay, families transition into a private unit with its own kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom. Together, Rachel, Nelson and Liam were welcomed into an environment that included a few key items to aid them in re-starting their lives, such as personal care supplies, cleaning products, fresh bedding, and a warm welcome from staff.

**Recovery requires more than housing.** We begin by offering the safety of shelter – but that is just a start on the path to recovery. Families must address the causes of their homelessness and begin the work with ShelterCare's counselors to connect to services and resources. Consistent oversight and collaboration with ShelterCare staff members is critical. During these interactions, plans are forged regarding household budgets, employment searches and permanent housing.

**Our goal is to end the cycle of homelessness for a lifetime, and not just for the moment.**

Just as there is no single cause of homelessness, there is no single solution to ending it. The first step toward recovery is in understanding the causes of homelessness for each family. **Understanding and safety: that's what ShelterCare gives to families.**

With your help, we provide families with the best possible opportunity to succeed. As the only agency in Lane County where homeless families can live together until they are able to return to homes of their own, ShelterCare's Family Housing and Brethren Housing Programs keep families like Rachel and her children safe *and* together.

In fact, the family is now permanently housed – all because community members like you gave her the helping hand she needed to get back on her feet, and a fresh start.

**Will you help us give others like Rachel a fresh start this holiday season?**

Your contributions are more important than ever as the need among families in our community continues to grow.

\$100..... Helps a family pay a utility bill.

\$250..... Provides one week of funding for the Children's Resource Center at the Family Housing Program.

\$500..... Supports 10 nights of emergency shelter in the Family Housing Program.

\$1,000..... Covers one-time financial assistance provided to families in our Homelessness Prevention Program.

\$2,500..... Offers a flagship level of support that allows ShelterCare to build new and innovative programs.



**Please take this opportunity to continue your support by making a donation today. No contribution is too small or large, and every gift gives the promise of hope to someone in need.**

When people are heard, they feel understood. That's the significance of the quote I cited at the beginning of this letter. The impact has not as much to do with "love" and "hate" as it has to do with the power of understanding. Without an effort to first understand, we cannot find solutions.

Counselors in our programs often describe their roles in simple terms: "We give people the confidence and courage to change the course of their lives."

Changing course begins with understanding. As a ShelterCare supporter, you understand the human cost of homelessness and the roles we can all play in supporting families like Rachel's in overcoming the barriers in their lives.

Thank you for understanding the need and responding with support. This important journey from homelessness to home begins with you.

Sincerely,

Susan Ban  
Executive Director

P.S. I recently came across a startling Oregon Department of Education statistic that 2,300 homeless students attended public schools in Lane County during the 2011-12 academic year. **We have much work left to accomplish, but with your help, we can assure these young family members that they are not alone.**