News From The Executive Director

The 4th of July has just passed which means the ‘lazy days of summer’ are upon us. Here at Shared Housing Services, the months leading up to summer have been very busy. We held our Annual Dinner Auction last March at the STAR Center in Tacoma, and due to the generous support from our attendees, donors, and sponsors combined with the incredible dedication and hard work from Board Members, Staff, and Volunteers we raised over $135,000! A huge, heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone that helped to make this event a success.

Much is happening around the world and nationally on a daily basis, but our attention is focused on the widening housing crisis throughout Pierce County. Low inventories of rental units and increasing housing costs, taxes, and services are making it more difficult for people to remain in their homes or to find affordable housing. Over the last five years in Pierce County, median rents have increased by 49% while median household income has only increased by 4.4%. We are seeing an increasing number of people on fixed incomes (seniors and disabled persons) and low-income households inquiring about our programs. Our programs and services are more relevant and needed in the community than ever before in assisting people to have a place to call home.

Because of the current housing environment, I want to take this opportunity to enlist all of you to help spread the word about Shared Housing Services to seniors and others who have a spare bedroom and could use some help to remain in their home or who just want to help out a fellow community member needing an affordable place to live. Together we can truly make a difference in a person’s life.

From all of us at Shared Housing Services, we wish everyone a fun-filled, relaxing and warm summer.

Mark Merrill, Executive Director

News From The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors enjoyed a busy first half of the year, and the next half should not slow down. After participating in the planning and partnering with Staff on our Tenth Annual Dinner-Auction, the Board was pleased with the results, and we thank you immensely for your continued support and generosity.

Some grant funding allowed us to contract the services of a consultant to conduct a campaign readiness assessment to determine the best course of action for future improvements. The process has been ongoing for several months with Board and Staff interviews, surveys, and stakeholders meetings. The consultant has completed her assessment, which will be the focus of the Board and Staff Annual Retreat in early fall. We are looking forward to acting on all the recommendations and engaging the future challenges and opportunities.

We have just completed an extensive Equity workshop led by an expert in the field. The workshop specifically addressed how to explore and develop a shared understanding relating to the concept of equity, and to hone in on what we need to know from the equity concepts to strengthen our organization and to help the clients we serve. The Staff joined the Board for the workshop that proved to be a lively exchange for all of us to appreciate, understand, and respond to the ways our clients are affected by their environment.

This summer, Board members will be concentrating on outreach initiatives in the local community, as well as on initiatives to overhaul our marketing approach, and recruiting new Board members. Please refer to us anyone interested in joining a nonprofit Board, particularly with skills or affiliation in the medical, real estate, retail, or construction fields.

On behalf of my Board colleagues, I wish you a most pleasant summer.

Michel Rocchi, President Board of Directors
Summertime is finally here and our families are enjoying the free local family events in the area such as the Hilltop Movie Nights and Metro Park free lunches. To avoid any school-age summer learning loss, five resident kids are attending the summer camp program with our community partner, The Al Davies Boys & Girls Club. According to one of our residents they are excited their children get to chance to have fun and have something positive to do in summer.

In June SHS was able to fill the last room in “Grandma’s House”. Grandma’s House is a Shared Housing Rainbow among the rain. Originally owned by “Grandma”, the home has been shared by family members and loved ones in need of a helping hand for years. After Grandma passed away, the home was converted to provide housing to low income individuals needing a safe, affordable place to call home.

We also have welcomed a new family of four in our housing program. They have jumped right in working on their financial goals and bettering employment opportunities. Their youngest son is participating in the Hilltop Artists’ Glass Blowing Summer program. The new family has enjoyed their transition and they look forward to gaining the support to making permanent housing a reality in the near future.

SHS has successfully housed Pierce County residents at Grandma’s for the past few years. SHS recently sat down with 4 of the 8 tenants of Grandma’s House to see what they felt is so successful about our program. The tenants were extremely happy with their private rooms, shared bathrooms, and were taking full advantage of the communal living spaces such as the kitchen, outdoor fire pit and the park-like backyard. Several tenants have used their time at Grandma’s House to secure better employment, purchase vehicles and save money towards their futures. Every day we see shared housing continue to be successful!

It pays to be debt free! One of our families has been working hard to pay off ALL of their debt! What an huge accomplishment for this single mom of three!

Back to school we go! Later in the summer we will be partnering with the Auto Warehousing Co. on backpacks and school supplies for our school-age children in our program!

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