

■ Innovation Defines AM's Housing Stabilization Programs

As you know, affordable housing in Pierce County is woefully inadequate – on any given day there are thousands of households awaiting housing they can afford and count on.

But it's not just low inventory that prevents individuals and families from finding and maintaining stable housing. It's also barriers to renting faced by families such as poor credit history and low credit scores, a housing history that includes a past eviction or landlord complaint, low income, criminal background, or even a history of receiving housing subsidies.

Locating and maintaining a solid base of low-income housing is key to helping to find lasting solutions to homelessness. With rents rising every month, the traditional solutions for affordable housing are waning and inventory continues to decline. Within this atmosphere, the AM team continually looks for new ways to end homelessness in Pierce County. Innovation and creativity are two characteristics our staff takes to heart.

Associated Ministries Housing Stabilization efforts provide resources such as rental assistance, relocation services, and application fees to help mitigate evictions for clients housed through our program. Individuals and families have access to Renter's Readiness Certification where they learn tools for tenant success, are prepared for financial success, and have resources to aid them throughout their tenancies.

To say that this team goes above and beyond to innovate within this program is no understatement. It is important that you, as our partners, know the "people behind the desks." Today we're pleased to introduce our Housing Stabilization Program

Manager, Kiesha Triplett.

Kiesha's journey to her current role as Program Manager began when she interned for Associated Ministries in 2016. She worked as an intern for nine months before securing a position at another agency in their landlord engagement program.

Kiesha worked at that agency for almost three years, learning how to build and secure landlord partnerships, case management through Rapid-

Re-Housing, and to build community partnerships by being a positive influence among peers and community partners. Later, she joined the Associated Ministries team to assist in our efforts to rebuild and evolve the Landlord Liaison Program.

During nearly three years of work at AM to secure equitable and safe housing for those experiencing homelessness, Kiesha developed the skills to become our Program Manager of Housing Stabilization in June 2021. Associated Ministries became the catalyst for Kiesha's passion to expand her knowledge

of inequities in the homelessness system and to make equitable changes to the programs she manages so that individuals and families who access our Housing Stabilization services know they are welcome and that they belong.

While working to create new housing opportunities, Kiesha and her team also work to prevent those on the edge from becoming homeless. Their passion helps so many in our community!

To learn more about the good work of Kiesha's team and the rest of AM's programs, visit our website at www.associatedministries.org.



Together

Working together toward lasting solutions to homelessness

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■ A Victory Story: "Our Little Guy is Now Home!"

A Letter of Thanks to Us All

One of the most challenging aspects of our work is that we are not always able to help everyone. We strive to revisit and reevaluate everyone enrolled in our programs to look for any way forward. Our staff has a difficult job, but our clients are never just "names on a list" to them.

Mandi – one of our dedicated team members – recently shared a moving story with us that brings to life a client victory. Often such stories are works in progress, but we have learned that celebrating in all stages of a story is important. We are our clients' biggest cheerleaders! Wins are wins even when we haven't yet reached the end of the story!

I was hired in April 2021 to undertake the Chronically Homeless Master List update project. Over a few months I closed out over 1,000 clients from the CHML due to outcomes such as being housed, relocated, or deceased. But the vast majority were because of no contact. Around 300 clients stayed on the list because we found they were still literally homeless.

Of these clients, one that remained on the list was the Frazier family. When I spoke to them and updated their information in our records, they let me know they were expecting a child. I knew this family would have a better chance of receiving

a referral after their child was born. I did not tell them this but strongly advised them to contact me once their baby was born so we could get their child added to their household.

I did not think this would be as significant as it was, but about a month later, during my first week in AM's Matching and Referral department, I was able to refer this family to Rapid Rehousing because they had moved up drastically on the priority list. It brought me to tears. This family is

now housed and stable. I didn't know their entire story until we received the following letter. I found it so powerful to hear their story, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve this family.

"Hello Everyone.

Our names are Jacob, Shelby and Aurin Frazier. We wanted to take a few minutes to express our thanks for all the

help and blessings we were graced with through Associated Ministries and share a little about ourselves and the path that led us to the point we are in our lives. Our family has been through a difficult situation in the past year. Were it not for God watching out for us and His work through this ministry we wouldn't be here. We deeply thank everyone who has helped us through this hard time, and because of the dedication to helping us



that struggle is coming to a close!

We came up to Washington in October from Boise Idaho to see Jacob's family and for Shelby to see the coast for the first time. It was supposed to be a quick trip and then unfortunately we were in a hit and run accident going to Greenwater. We lost everything.

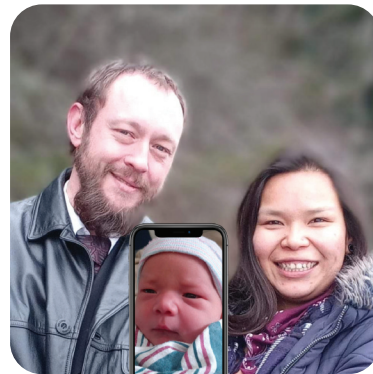
We were living in our car at the time and the vehicle was totally destroyed. Jacob sustained an unstable fracture of the neck at C2. His odontoid process (the dens) was broken and offset. He's lucky to be alive and even luckier to be able to move. He spent four days in the hospital while Shelby, because of the COVID restrictions, was unable to be in the hospital with him.

She was forced to be out in the streets of a city and state she has never been to and knew nothing about. She was terrified for Jacob and scared for her safety. Jacob walked himself out of the hospital against medical advice to help her, risking himself even further to make sure she was safe. This was the most horrifying experience either one of us has been through, but we went through it together. With God's hand guiding us and sheltering us along the way.

We were graced with an opportunity to get into the tiny home village program through LIHI and the city of Tacoma to help get us back on our way. We got married in February 2021 after Jacob was able to be more mobile and we had our son Aurin in July 2021! Having a newborn in a tiny home is quite the experience.... But the closeness was

comforting. We all needed to keep healing and that small space was filled with SO much love. The presence of the Creator was felt constantly. However, the atmosphere of the village is not suitable for a baby and we were needing to find a home, badly. Jacob is disabled, receiving SSI and Shelby, being a new mother couldn't work due to complications in pregnancy. So things were getting harder for us.

We were told in July that we had been given a voucher for a rapid rehousing program through Associated Ministries by a case manager at the tiny home village and we were so excited! This was another blessing to help us get back on our feet and help us become self-sufficient with work and dedication on our end. It's exactly what we needed to help motivate us while allowing us to heal and care for our son for a while, get our bearings and help each other be successful after such a terrible accident.



We still have a little way to go, but the path is clear. We set goals and have a clean safe home for our baby boy and ourselves. We know our way and we know we will achieve what we set out to accomplish now!

Thank you all at Associated Ministries for this opportunity. We can't express how much easier this healing process is now and how happy and healthy our little guy is now that he's HOME!"

With sincere love and blessings,
The Frazier Family

Client Raves

"With the pandemic it became harder to pay bills and we got a little behind. They are giving a chance to get caught up by paying several months rent and our utility bill. Great communication about what was required. Kept me updated with status of payment. Marie was really nice and treated us with respect."

- AM Client Anonymous

Director's Corner

Flexibility, Innovation and Resilience

By Michael Yoder, Executive Director

It has been said that "necessity is the mother of invention." I don't believe that statement has ever been more true than during the past 18 months. No one could have been fully prepared to navigate the consequences of a global pandemic, but I am very proud of the flexibility, innovation and resilience displayed by the Associated Ministries team. We faced many new challenges in meeting our clients' needs, but we consistently found new opportunities to respond. The steadfast spirit of the AM Staff has truly been an inspiration to me.

But the challenges are not over. Many of our vulnerable neighbors will be facing unprecedented needs in the

months to come. Thankfully our spirit of innovation remains strong! In the coming weeks we'll be sharing about a significant opportunity coming to AM that will open new doors to permanent housing solutions for adults and youth alike.

We announced some initial details about this exciting program during our Virtual Breakfast Event on Nov. 4. If you weren't able to join us live that morning, it's not too late to participate! Check out the details on page 4 of this newsletter to learn how you can view our Virtual Event online right now.

The generous response of friends like you has buoyed our spirits and helped all of us at AM to feel valued and appreciated for the work we do every day to come alongside our neighbors in need. Without your consistent support I don't know where we'd be. We've weathered a storm together, and I believe more than ever that we have all been called out to play a part during these unprecedented times. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Much More Than Just the Mail

My Volunteer Story: By Shannon Watts

"Everyone has a different story to tell," Shannon shares. Volunteering at Associated Ministries since May 2020, Shannon's most profound takeaway has been how little we know about someone's current circumstance or their story.

Volunteer Shannon listens to stories from those who have little to no social interaction.

When Shannon arrives at AM for her volunteer shift, she begins by sorting through the day's mail. At 1:00 p.m. she and other volunteers and staff open up the vestibule where clients are called one by one to collect their bills, letters, and government checks. Sitting at her desk, thumbing through mail, she makes a point to talk with clients while they wait behind the window.

Some of the clients know her by now. They seem to appreciate having someone to talk to who will listen. This is not just another errand for someone experiencing homelessness – it's a time for social interaction. As clients wait to hear their name called, they chat with each other – laugh, ask for a light, or holler at a friend across the street. Shannon plays a part in that. "There's so much stigma about people experiencing homelessness and so many people don't understand them. I learn a little more about each person's story every time I talk to them."

Shannon is studying human services and decided to volunteer with Associated Ministries to gain more experience in the field. "I just want to learn how everyone's brain works so I can help them." Shannon has had her own traumatic history and managed to move on from it. She strives to support others in their journey as well. So often we define people by the adversities they have experienced, not their successes, or the way those challenges have given them strength. Instead, we pity, we try to save, or we blame. Shannon appreciates that at AM, "staff are helping clients to be their best selves".

The Homeless Mail/Payee program is one innovative tool that AM offers our clients to serve them in their current circumstance.

Shannon is neither above clients nor below them, but alongside. She is a part of AM's mission, which acknowledges how essential it is that we work together toward lasting solutions to homelessness.

And together with YOU, we will continue to encourage those who need our help to be the best version of themselves.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Upcoming Special Events

(Note: All in-person events will be in accordance with State COVID-19 guidelines.)



Community Quarterly Meeting

to Solve Homelessness (Virtual)
Tuesday, November 23
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM



Project Homeless Connect

January 28, 2022
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Location: TBD



Interfaith Celebration of Gratitude

Annual Event (Virtual)
Tuesday, November 23
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Questions?

Contact Sandy Windley at
sandyw@associatedministries.org

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Creating New & Innovative Ways to House More Families!

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LEAD THE WAY HOME BREAKFAST

**Did you miss our virtual
Lead the Way Home
event on November 4th?**

**Want to share all the
great news from AM with
your friends?**

Log on and watch the replay as your schedule allows!

<https://live.associatedministries.org/>

Please help us share the good news by forwarding this link to your friends!

