



**CREATE OPPORTUNITIES.
REBUILD LIVES.**

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*HOW empowers individuals
and families to break the cycle
of poverty and homelessness.*



Up To Date

Fall 2020

HOW's Community of Caring
Together We Can Accomplish So Much

The Year in Review
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A Virtual Event Centered on the Eviction Crisis

Grant a HOW Client's Wish This Holiday Season
Help Make the Season Bright



**Happy Holidays
from HOW**

HOW Up To Date

Fall 2020

HOW's Community of Caring *Together We Can Accomplish So Much*



*A collaborative work of art which
hangs in HOW's office.*

As the holiday season approaches, we know it will likely look different this year as many of us stay home, modify cherished traditions, or find new ways to celebrate. During times like these we discover the resilience and adaptability of our own communities. **Here at HOW we see housing as the most fundamental factor in stabilizing one's health and wellbeing, but we also recognize the powerful benefit of being part of a community.** Having someone who knows you and your family, recognizes what you need, and is there for you can make all the difference. For HOW's more than 1,300 clients, the HOW staff fulfill this vital role which took on even more importance in 2020.

This year we mobilized our broader community of support through donation drives securing hard-to-get facemasks, hand-sanitizer and other high-priority items. So, when a client who is an essential worker said, "I can't get anything to disinfect my home," we delivered a basket of cleaning supplies. We connected students with the technology and resources needed for remote learning. So, when a parent told us she was worried about her son falling behind, we were prepared to help. We assisted clients when enrolling in benefits and stayed up to date with the healthcare system's evolving offerings. So, when an elderly client couldn't figure out how to get his medications delivered, we had a solution.

HOW's one-on-one Case Management model and wholistic service offerings create a layered network of support. We know every individual who walks through our doors is unique and it takes time to learn about who they are. In doing so, we form

trusting relationships which enable clients to feel comfortable asking for support. **As one of our long-time Case Managers recently said, "A client has to let you into their life— you have to listen instead of talk, you have to show them you care."**

It's because of the generosity of people like you that HOW has accomplished so much during this tumultuous year. **Your support plays a key role in HOW's story of resilience and success.** While we don't know exactly what the future will look like, we know with your help, we will continue to provide stable housing and services to those who need it most. **Please consider donating today to support our ongoing work.**

The Year in Review

New Hurdles, New Heights

2020 has been a year unlike any other with the COVID-19 pandemic hitting low-income communities of color and medically compromised people the hardest. Remarkably, **HOW clients have experienced very low rates of infection even though they are among those most vulnerable**. This outcome affirms what we have long known, housing is a protective factor and improves people's health and safety.

HOW will serve over 500 children and 800 adults this year, ensuring they not only have housing, but also the resources they need to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Throughout our 37-year history, the organization has relied on its values and mission to create opportunities for thousands. **Over the course of the last 8 months this has meant changing the way we work to ensure the health and wellbeing of all our clients amidst a pandemic.**



HOW Staff collecting donated items.

Employment Program

HOW's Employment Program quickly adapted to a virtual landscape and moved its activities online in March. Employment staff continued helping clients to assess strengths and barriers to securing employment. This included providing workforce development trainings such as HOW's intensive five-day Job Readiness Course which is now run virtually. Despite the difficult employment market and an uptick in clients who lost jobs, the team focused on industries that were hiring, conducting employer outreach and seeking job placements. In this challenging climate, the program continues to prepare clients to be better equipped and resilient in seeking employment, retaining it, and advancing their careers.

Youth Program

The primary goal of HOW's Youth Department for the past year has been to ensure all students continued their education without interruption. With transitions to online learning the Youth Team helped over 100 HOW families prepare for Chicago Public School's "remote reopening" ensuring they had Wi-Fi and devices to participate in online lessons. Throughout the pandemic HOW has connected volunteer tutors with students via Zoom, hosted online enrichment meetings to socialize and play games, and sent weekly communications to parents with additional supports and resources. For the 2021 school year, HOW is offering additional mental health, mentorship, tutoring, and exercise options for students through newly created partnerships.

Health Program

The expansion of HOW's Health Team coincided with one of the largest public health crises this century. The team's growth enabled HOW to provide targeted health case management to an estimated 1,000 individuals this year. The Health Team assisted with telehealth, changes to insurance, rapid response education, access to personal care items, and medication compliance, among other services. Critical assistance in securing health care coverage and additional benefits, such as SNAP and mental health resources, proved to be invaluable in keeping clients safe and healthy. 100% of HOW clients received health and prevention support related to COVID-19 from their Case Managers.



HOW Case Manager connecting with a client from home.

HOW's Luncheon Offers Insights

A Virtual Event Centered on the Eviction Crisis

On October 15th community members, partners, and supporters of HOW gathered virtually for the organization's annual fall luncheon ***Locked Out: A Closer Look at Our Eviction Crisis***. The conversation began by highlighting the individual toll of eviction and sharing the story of Monique, a current HOW client who came to the organization after losing her job and apartment in 2018. The event then transitioned to the panel moderated by WBEZ's Steve Bynum, featuring: Sol Flores, Deputy Governor, State of Illinois; Dennericka Brooks, Director of the Housing Practice Group at Legal Aid Chicago; Steve Thomas, President, 5T Construction Inc.; and Wendell Harris, Vice President of Lending Operations at Chicago Community Loan Fund.

With the eviction crisis on the minds of many due to COVID-19's effect on the housing landscape, **the panel offered attendees insight into the country's longstanding eviction history and highlighted the pandemic's amplifying effects on renters, owners, and lenders alike**. Covering related issues such as a lack of affordable housing and economic inequity, the group also offered solutions to this seemingly intractable crisis. These solutions included increased collaboration across sectors, investing in lenders from diverse backgrounds, increasing the amount of affordable housing necessary to receive tax credits, and modifying existing tax benefits for lenders and contractors.



Panelists in discussion at HOW's fall luncheon.

Proceeds from the ***Locked Out*** luncheon will support HOW's housing stability and homelessness prevention efforts. **Even if you missed the luncheon, you can still view a complete recording at www.how-inc.org/lockedout.**

Grant a HOW Client's Wish This Holiday Season

Help Make the Season Bright

Holiday Wish is a chance to share the holiday spirit by purchasing gifts for HOW families and individuals to support their celebration of the season. Many clients live on very limited incomes and don't have the means for gifts at the end of the year. **Due to the impact of COVID-19, the need among our clients is more significant than ever before**. As such, we are hoping to see a record number of people signing up to sponsor a family or individual in response!



As one Case Manager shared, **"I have a client in her early 50's who lives alone and received a gift through Holiday Wish. As I delivered it to her, she told me it was the first time she'd gotten a present for anything since she was a little child. She was very touched."**

For many clients, a **Holiday Wish** delivery is the only gift they will receive all year. These gifts have a lasting impact and help spread the joy and gratitude that accompanies the season. Be sure to save a place on your holiday list to grant a wish for a HOW client! **Learn how to participate by visiting www.how-inc.org/holidaywish.**