



Lydia
PLACE
every family deserves a home

He Needs You

TOGETHER WE CAN END HOMELESSNESS FOR LOCAL FAMILIES

Giving Thanks for Our Village



Emily O'Connor

Executive Director, Lydia Place

Dearest village,

As I reflect on the rapidly closing year, I am filled with gratitude for this amazing community I have the privilege of calling home. This year, like many before it, has flown by at an alarming rate and yet so much has happened at Lydia Place. We passed the million dollar mark for our annual operating budget, celebrated our 27th birthday, purchased two new housing facilities in ten months, expanded our parenting program, launched a counseling pilot program, completed our first ever capital campaign, and set our sights on a clear goal...ending family homelessness.

These achievements are worthy of celebration and a moment of reflection.

In a year that bore a 40% rise in our unsheltered homeless population, we saw zero increase in the number of homeless families with children. This is a testament to the dedication of our community. In what has become a media storm of publicity and debate about how to address the crisis of homelessness, our community's commitment to homeless families is clear.

And yet, we have a ways to go, 80-100 ways in fact. That's the number of families with children who are struggling with homelessness at any given time, often trying their hardest to be invisible.

As I walk through the halls at my daughter's elementary school, I look into the faces of the children I pass and wonder which of those sweet faces spent last night in a car, tent, or emergency shelter.

As she works through the many challenges and stressors of adjusting to life as a kindergartener, I can't help but think about the roughly **100 literally homeless school age children and 75 infants and toddlers** in our community who are trying to keep up with their peers while wondering if and when they will have a home again or enough food to eat.

Amidst these heart wrenching realities, I take my inspiration from all of you: our Lydia Place village, who do not turn away from these issues, but instead join with us year after year, to do what you can to make it better. It is your support, your dedication, your encouragement that keeps us dreaming big.

Next year, we are dreaming bigger than ever. After 27 years of serving homeless families, we know what needs to be done and we are closing the gap.

I have no doubt that with your help we can end homelessness for families with children in Whatcom County. It truly takes a village. Thank you for letting Lydia Place be a part of your village, and for being a part of ours.

Together, we can ensure bright futures for our children and our community.

With endless gratitude,

Emily O'Connor
Executive Director, Lydia Place

What's New at Lydia Place

WHAT YOU HAVE MADE POSSIBLE THIS YEAR

Parent Support Program

THE NEED: TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY BY EQUIPPING PARENTS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT THEY NEED, REDUCING ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES, BUILDING RESILIENCE, AND PROMOTING BRIGHT FUTURES

THE SOLUTION: In 2015, Lydia Place launched the Parent Support Program aimed at ending the cycle of poverty for the families we serve by bettering childhood outcomes. This program includes intensive, flexible, and evidence-based home visiting services focused on equipping parents with the knowledge and resources they need to parent their children into successful adults.

Services include in-home and classroom parenting education, child development coaching, early childhood educational advocacy, and therapeutic interventions for children and youth. Parent support services are available to families in any Lydia Place housing program as well as those in any partner agency housing program.



Mallory and Savvy, November 2016

Housing alone is not enough to break the cycle of poverty. We know that early intervention with parents and children is key and that is what our Parent Support Program does. We have the science and the passion. Now we need the commitment of the community to help it grow.

- Jennifer Hooper, PSP Supervisor

Bell Tower

THE NEED: MORE PROGRAM SPACE FOR OUR HOUSING TEAM, MORE HOUSING FOR WOMEN, SPACE FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

THE SOLUTION: In 2016 Lydia Place purchased Bell Tower Studios. This landmark property is comprised of five units of permanent supportive housing located in downtown Bellingham. These units provide affordable options for women exiting homelessness who cannot afford the rent of a private market apartment. The second floor will be the new home of our Housing Program Team, providing on-site support, education, and community events hosted in the Bell Tower Community Center.



Baker Place

THE NEED: MORE FLEXIBLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST VULNERABLE

THE SOLUTION: In late 2015, Lydia Place partnered with Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS), with support from the City of Bellingham Housing Levy Fund, to purchase Baker Place. Baker Place is a campus of three structures, including a seven-unit apartment building. These apartments are operated by Lydia Place and provide permanent supportive housing to women experiencing homelessness who face a multitude of disadvantages. The other two structures are operated by DVSAS and provide emergency shelter for women fleeing domestic violence. For both Lydia Place and DVSAS, this endeavor was a natural extension of their existing partnership where Lydia Place provides housing assessment and case management to the women and mothers at the existing DVSAS Safe Shelter.



These housing units will help us to serve vulnerable women who are living on the street. Because we own these properties, we're able to provide on-site and comprehensive support to our clients living there, increasing their chances for success. Adding to the available housing units is integral in accomplishing our long-term goal of ending homelessness.

- Ashley Thomasson, Housing Program Supervisor

Grateful for Axel

Malinda and Axel,
October 2016

While most families awoke with excitement to begin to prepare their 2015 Thanksgiving Day meal and gather with family and friends, twenty-year old Malinda awoke to labor pains and contractions. She made her way to St. Joseph Hospital where, at 10:39am on Thanksgiving morning, little Axel was born.

Though a joyous occasion for the new mother, her celebration was tempered by the reality that she and Axel had no permanent place to return to after being released from the hospital. Malinda and Axel were a breath away from falling into the cycle of generational poverty that haunted her past.

In elementary school, concern for their safety resulted in Malinda and her siblings being removed from their home. Malinda shared, "I grew up in a trailer with my parents and my brothers. My parents got into drugs, the power was turned off, there was no food in the house, and CPS got involved. I moved in with my aunt and my brother moved in with my Grandma. I lived with my aunt until she started getting into drugs, and so I went on my own from there."

Now, seeing her son for the first time, Malinda knew that the life she wanted for her son would be vastly different than her own. "I didn't have a childhood. My parents started doing drugs when I was very young and they didn't take care of my siblings and me. Their addiction took everything away from me, from them...I don't want Axel to grow up the way that I grew up. I want Axel to have a better life than I did."

Malinda was connected to Lydia Place through the Opportunity Council when Axel was about five months old. She was immediately enrolled in the Lydia Place Parent Support Program and assigned a housing case manager. Meetings with her Parent Educator, Rachel, began long before her housing was secure, with Malinda and Axel meeting Rachel at parks and Lydia Place offices while they waited for a housing opportunity.



When Malinda first started in the Parent Support Program, she wanted to learn as much as she could about parenting and development while also working toward finding a place for herself and Axel to call home. Each week, she met with Rachel to engage with her son in play activities, talk about parenting and development, ask questions, and learn new things. While Malinda cheered Axel on and helped him grow, she also worked with her housing case manager to find a home of their own.

- Jennifer Hooper, Parent Support Program Supervisor

For the next few months Malinda focused all her energy and strength on finding housing and taking care of her new baby. A trusted friend only had space for one person, so each night Malinda dropped Axel off there and slept on the streets and in cars, putting the safety of her son first. Early every morning Malinda picked up Axel, and spent the day caring for her son, navigating applications, and searching for available housing.

Finally, the day that Malinda and Axel had been waiting for arrived. “After waiting for five months, I got the call from the housing management company and Lydia Place. They said they were ready to do my briefing and that I would get my own apartment. That same day I went and signed the lease and got the keys. I was so excited. I love our new home.”

Malinda qualified for a permanent supportive housing unit within the Lydia Place Family Services Program. This program features intensive in-home support, continued sessions with her parent educator, weekly case management meetings, and subsidized rent for as long as she needs it. The goal of the program is to tailor services to meet each family’s unique needs and help them achieve their dreams. With hard work and the right support, Malinda and Axel will transition to unsubsidized housing, the next step towards the future she wants for her son.

Today, Malinda and Axel are able to meet with their parent educator in their new home and are looking ahead at future family goals for education and employment.



Axel, October 2016



“Malinda is a true champion, both for herself and for Axel. She is working so hard to make a good life for her family, doing everything she can to ensure that they are secure, safe, and happy. All of the love and support that Malinda pours into Axel overflows back to her, and it’s been heartwarming to watch that process over the past few months. They have a really special bond and it’s clear that they have a lot of fun together. I feel lucky to be able to support their journey.”

- Rachel Schmidt, Parent Support Program, Parent Educator

Malinda’s experience with the Lydia Place Parent Support Program, combined with her own history, have influenced the way she intends to raise her son and ensure that the cycle of homelessness and childhood trauma stops with her. “My biggest hope is that he doesn’t grow up the way I grew up. He comes first in my book. I make sure that each month he has diapers, he has wipes and clothes, and I make sure he has the food he loves to eat. I will not buy anything for me, the money goes to bills and him. I’ll go without.” Her dedication to Axel and selflessness showcase a mother willing to do whatever it takes to ensure her child has everything he needs to grow and thrive.

When asked what she wants Axel to remember about this period of their lives, she looked into the distance and said, “I want him to be able to look up to me, that I was there for him his whole life; that I never turned my back on him...I just want him to know that I’ll always be there for him.”

This Fall, Malinda and Axel are preparing for their first Thanksgiving in their own home. Malinda’s walls are decorated with pictures of her and Axel, smiling reminders of the joy, plans, and possibilities that lay ahead. When thinking about the future, she says, “For me, I want a career as a nurse. I don’t want to live in an apartment my whole life. I want a house and big enough space for Axel to run around. I’m so grateful for Axel. I don’t know where I’d be without him. Axel and Lydia Place have totally changed my life. I can’t begin to explain how thankful I am.”

Your gift will ensure happy endings and bright futures for children like Axel. Give today.

Thank You!

You provided housing and support to 300 households this year & with your continued partnership we can end homelessness for families and children in Whatcom County.

Individuals

Adam & Eileen Finfer
Al Gill
Alan Kemble
Alana Hunetmer
Albert Chasson
Alex & Mindy Gravley
Alexa Lambert
Alice Brakke
Alice Litron
Alison Malfatti
Allan & Karen Mackay
Allen Kirschenbaum
Amanda Bettis
Amanda Meliah
Amanda Richardson
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Ann Reading
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Anneliese Floyd
Annette Richardson
April Barker
Aridana Baader
Arla & Dick Fowler
Ashley Kilmer
Ashley Stephans
Ashley & Brian Thomasson
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& Frank Mitchell
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Beverly Arnold
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Bill Henshaw
Bill McGinnis
Bonnie Dick
Brad Wilske
Brandon Wolfe
Breanna & Todd Thramer
Brenda & John Riseland
Brenda Anderson
Brenda & Matt Dennis
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Brian & Dana Hardy
Brian & Morgan Rhodes
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Martin Mitchell
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Mary Chenoweth
Mary Jothen
Mary Kay Robinson
Mary Oherron
Mary Spady



Having been homeless many times as a child, Lydia Place holds a very special place in my heart. I'm so grateful to now have the means to support such an amazing organization. We are so fortunate to have Lydia Place in our community.

- Melanie Pysden, Branch Sales Manager for Pysden Team-Caliber Home Loans

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 First Federal Foundation
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 Signs By Tomorrow Bellingham
 Social Fabric
 Sojourn
 Spencer Group Inc
 St John Glass
 Sterling Insurance
 Sterling Rentals LLC
 Sue Hilton-Faust
 Summerland Style
 T-Mobile - Bakerview Team
 The Beauty Institute -
 Schwarzkopf Professional Bellingham
 The Bellingham Herald
 The Chipper Bird
 The Chrysalis
 The Grotto
 The Henifin Family Of Companies
 The Racket
 Third Planet
 Trayvax Enterprises, LLC
 Triple Wren Farms
 Uber
 Umpqua Bank
 Unity Care Northwest
 Vanderpol Realty
 Veritas Media
 Vinostrlogy
 Waddell & Reed
 Washington Federal
 Washington Federation State Empl #1060
 Wave Broadband
 WECU
 Western Solar
 Whatcom County Assn of Realtors
 Whimsey
 Whole Foods Market
 Windermere - Bellingham
 WPN
 Yorky's Market
 Zig Zag & Rags

Thank You to Our Many Community Partners



WE ARE COUNTING ON YOU

23

Percentage of Whatcom County's homeless who are children

70

Percentage of the Lydia Place budget that comes from individuals like you

375

Number of children Lydia Place served last year

10

Percentage of Whatcom County's homeless who have yet to celebrate their 4th birthday

42

Percentage of families in Whatcom County struggling to meet basic needs

8

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) that lead to a 33% chance of experiencing homelessness as an adult

10,000

Number of volunteer hours donated to Lydia Place by our amazing community members each year

175

Number of literally homeless children on any given day in Whatcom County

2020

Year by which we, with your support, can bring the number of homeless families with children to zero

WONE

The most powerful number of all. It is one gift at a time that makes the difference. Make yours today. Thank You!