A Transformative Year
2020 ANNUAL REPORT

ending homelessness
The world is different now. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted everyone, but especially vulnerable populations. For Housing Forward, our historic way of meeting basic needs of shelter was upended. As the crisis unfolded, we were confronted with extraordinary challenges unlike anything we have experienced in our 28-year history.

While the COVID crisis shook Housing Forward to its core, it also provided the building blocks for transformative change. Our response to this unprecedented emergency resulted in a multi-pronged approach - prevent, respond, and stabilize. **We grew our capacity, strengthened our partnerships, made deeper impact, and improved lives.** A few of the highlights included:

- Distributed $384,475 in emergency rental and utility assistance to households impacted by COVID.
- Implemented a new “diversion” service model to mitigate imminent homelessness.
- Launched a 24-7, non-congregate, 50-bed Interim Housing Program in a former hotel in downtown Oak Park and a three-unit apartment building providing Interim Housing to large families.
- Expanded our health partnerships to offer COVID isolation beds and 19 new medical respite care beds.
- Created a 15-unit housing program for Veterans and a 22-unit program for Transition Aged Youth (ages 18 to 24).
- Housed 88 individuals from the streets and stabilized 447 others across our housing programs.

In our Annual Report, we share these and other highlights which resulted in our year of transformation.
Dear Friends,

In this Annual Report, we look back on an extraordinary year that was comprised of inconceivable challenges and unanticipated opportunities. We highlight this year of transformation through the stories of the individuals and families we serve. Their experiences underscore the vital importance of addressing homelessness at all levels. We strive to prevent homelessness whenever possible, we respond to the crisis, and work to stabilize those facing homelessness with permanent housing.

We also recognize the strategic partners, community stakeholders, our amazing staff, volunteers, and donors. These dedicated friends and partners responded to the COVID-19 crisis by helping in new ways to keep safe the men, women, and families who are experiencing homelessness and housing crisis.

None of this is possible without the ongoing support of our community. You make the difference. Your support gives us the resources we need to be innovative and creative, going above and beyond when needs arise.

With great appreciation,

Lynda Schueler
Executive Director

Heidi Vance
President of the Board of Directors
Cynthia was already having a challenging year. Her arthritis pain had become so unbearable that she had to stop working full time as a nanny to undergo a total knee replacement. The surgery went well, but as she was recovering in her Northlake apartment, a fire broke out and after that, her life totally changed. Although family members welcomed her temporarily, there were often too many stairs to climb, and it was challenging. She began moving from place to place—becoming more and more depressed. After reaching out to the Red Cross, she was referred to Housing Forward.

Our Outreach & Diversion team saw immediately that Cynthia’s living situation was very unstable. More health challenges, including diabetes and the need for a second surgery made her a fit for a medical respite unit at Sojourner House.

Now healing after her second surgery, she is supported by her case manager, has medical team visits, and access to healthy food. “The people here are amazing,” she says. “They help when I need it, and if I ever start to feel down, they are here to look in on me.”

Cynthia is looking for her own place—hopefully on the first floor. She wants to tell her story to help others who might find themselves in a housing crisis. “This is a new chapter for me,” she says, “but I really don’t know what my living situation would be if the staff hadn’t gone to bat for me. I’m so blessed to be part of this program.”
When Luis lost his construction job during the pandemic, he immediately worried about also losing his Elmwood Park apartment. His unemployment benefits and stimulus check were running out, and he was falling behind on rent and utilities; he didn’t know what to do.

Luis was so desperate that he told a friend about his situation. The friend suggested he contact Housing Forward. Luis was skeptical at first—thinking he wasn’t eligible. Fortunately, his friend encouraged him to call anyway.

Luis was connected to a Homeless Prevention Case Manager and began sharing his situation over the phone. They immediately started working on a plan to turn his situation around and keep him in his home. Luis received assistance to help cover his expenses for several months. “My landlord didn’t believe me at first, but Housing Forward was really professional to work with. Now he is happy.”

Luis signed up with a temporary work agency while he searched for a job. After a few months on a temp assignment, he was offered a full-time job as a crane operator. “It worked out beautifully,” he said, “but without Housing Forward’s help I probably would have ended up homeless.”

Because he is so grateful, Luis wants to share his experience with others who might be having a hard time. He knows firsthand that asking for help and doing what needs to be done can be hard, but he also knows people care and want to help. “I am so thankful for that.”
Rousse was among the first participants to enroll in our new Interim Housing Program. It was here that she found the support she needed to take steps that would move her from homelessness to a permanent home in the community. The program’s focus is to assist clients like Rousse in making connections to housing resources and ending their homelessness as soon as possible. In addition to accommodations and meals, Interim Housing provides structured programming which helps participants achieve a housing destination in the course of their 90-day stay.

Working with her case manager, Jennifer, Rousse outlined her housing goals and created a plan to achieve her next steps while in the program. Jennifer helped her to successfully apply for an Oak Park Housing Choice Voucher (formerly known as Section 8), a program which assists individuals and families to rent a house or apartment in their community. This voucher will provide long term assistance that will allow Rousse to maintain permanent housing for herself and her family. A Housing Navigator is working with Rousse to find an apartment that will provide room for her two teenage children.

After several years of shifting between staying with family, friends, and at various shelters, Rousse is eagerly looking forward to reuniting her children. It has not been an easy road to maintain her family while coping with a housing crisis, but she thinks her perseverance is paying off.
### A Year of Transformation

From the moment the COVID-19 crisis began to take root in our community, we were presented with one significant milestone after another. This timeline of a Year of Transformation highlights some of the events and activities that changed our world in 2020, both for Housing Forward as well as for the world-at-large.

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<thead>
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<th>JAN</th>
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<th>APR</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JANUARY 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>FEBRUARY 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARCH 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>APRIL 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>MAY 28</strong></td>
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<td>WHO announced mysterious Coronavirus-related pneumonia in Wuhan, China</td>
<td>U.S. declared public health emergency</td>
<td>Federal government declared COVID-19 a national emergency</td>
<td>Global COVID-19 cases reached 1 million</td>
<td>U.S. COVID-19 deaths passed the 100,000 mark</td>
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<td><strong>JANUARY 21</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARCH 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARCH 27</strong></td>
<td><strong>APRIL 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>MAY 22</strong></td>
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<td>CDC confirmed first US Coronavirus case</td>
<td>Housing Forward met with the Oak Park Department of Public Health regarding COVID-19</td>
<td>Federal government signed $2 trillion CARES Act into law</td>
<td>Community members began to donate breakfasts and lunches for the clients living in individual motel accommodations</td>
<td>U.S. COVID-19 deaths passed the 100,000 mark</td>
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<td><strong>JANUARY 31</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARCH 17</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARCH 20</strong></td>
<td><strong>APRIL 20</strong></td>
<td><strong>MAY 28</strong></td>
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<td>WHO issued global health emergency</td>
<td>The rotating PADS emergency shelter model was modified to one 24/7 shelter</td>
<td>The number of individuals in temporary motel accommodations grew to 96</td>
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**JUNE 17**
The Hotel to Home Initiative was launched, focused on transitioning people from temporary motel accommodations into apartments.

**JULY 22**
Ohana House Interim Housing for Families opened its doors.

**AUGUST 3**
The number of individuals in temporary motel accommodations grew to 120.

**SEPTEMBER**
Interim Housing Program began at the Write Inn Hotel in Oak Park.

**SEPTEMBER**
Bridge For Youth housing program for transition-aged youth was launched.

**OCTOBER**
Victory’s Path housing program for veterans launched.

**DECEMBER 31**
27,219 nights of temporary motel accommodations were provided between March 20 and December 31. 76,657 meals were provided to clients in temporary motel accommodations between March 20 and December 31.
Last winter, Sherman was staying in a house without heat. He thought his space heater was sufficient until a bitter cold spell hit. He started to have shooting pain in both feet. When the pain became unbearable, he went to Stroger Hospital where he was diagnosed with severe frostbite and an acute infection. The only treatment was a double, below-the-knee, amputation. This surgery was life-changing.

After a month of recuperation, Sherman was well enough to be discharged. The hospital connected him to our Medical Respite Center which provides short-term accommodations to individuals experiencing homelessness who are well enough to be discharged from a hospital stay but too ill or frail to recover on the streets. The Center was launched in partnership with Cook County Health, which supervises all aspects of medical care and oversite in order to ensure each client’s recuperation. Housing Forward provides accommodations and three meals a day, as well as case management which assists clients in defining a plan for their post-respite housing and then connects them to the resources they need to succeed.

Over the course of his stay, Sherman and his case manager have been working to locate a wheelchair accessible and affordable apartment in Sherman’s home community. With this unexpected change in mobility, Sherman wants to live in a familiar neighborhood where his natural support system is located. Once he is situated, prosthetic legs are next on Sherman’s list. The care team at the Medical Respite Center say he is a strong candidate and Sherman is excited to learn how to walk with these new devices. Knowing it won’t be easy, Sherman remains undaunted. “I want to go back to work. Learning how to walk is the first step!”
Thornton is the lead worker on Housing Forward's Interim Housing Program sanitation crew. Every weekday, he supervises a crew of six workers to clean and sanitize the facility so that it will meet COVID-19 protocols. "The program participants clean their own rooms," said Thornton. "But keeping the common areas of the building clean at all times keeps us very busy. When a person graduates from the program, our team sanitizes the room from top to bottom, to get it ready for the next resident."

Thornton was one of the first people to enter our workforce development program when it was launched in October 2020. This new project was made possible through a Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership Disaster Relief Employment/Temporary Jobs grant to expand job opportunities for residents of Cook County who have become unemployed as a result of or during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to providing temporary employment, Housing Forward's workforce development program focuses on helping participants build marketable job skills and support their permanent employment search. While participating in the program, participants also attend classes focused on conducting a job search and interviewing.

Thornton takes great pride in his work. "I want to leave at the end of the day knowing that I've done my best. Some of the days are long and not always easy, but that's not an excuse not to do my best."
Meet Heather & Joe

Some of the first people affected by COVID-19 worked in the service industry—people like Heather, a waitress, and Joe, a furniture mover. They were earning enough to get by and paying a friend to stay at his place. “Our buddy kicked us out when we both lost our jobs,” said Heather, “and we ended up sleeping in cemeteries and churches in Broadview and Maywood.” Their world turned upside down overnight. “We couldn’t even buy coffees and sit in a fast-food place to keep out of the rain.” After connecting with Housing Forward, the couple was offered motel room as part of our temporary accommodations due to the pandemic.

When the Interim Housing Program opened in September, Heather and Joe were among the first to be accepted into the program. With encouragement of their case manager, the couple began to work on their goals for permanent housing. Eventually they were ready for their own studio apartment in Cicero, with the support of our Rapid Re-Housing Program.

“It may look like baby steps but things for us are so much better now,” shares Heather. “We’ve started feeling more like the adults we actually are.” According to Heather and Joe, working with Housing Forward has helped them in more ways than they could ever fully express. It wasn’t always easy, but they appreciated that their case manager helped them to get their priorities aligned. “Our lives are so different now. We just feel so much more normal.”
Revenue and Support

- Government Agencies: $8,764,273
- Contributions & Private Foundations: $1,966,046
- Special Events: $277,751
- Program Rent & Other: $287,723
- In-kind Contributions: $625,897

Total Public Support: $11,921,690

Expenses

- Coordinated Entry: $677,783
- Outreach & Diversion: $210,600
- Interim Housing & Shelter: $2,870,498
- Emergency Assistance: $624,070
- Housing: $5,169,915
- Supportive Services: $109,015
- Employment Services: $177,838
- Management & General: $1,177,905
- Development & Communications: $536,973

Total Expenses: $11,554,597

Change in Net Assets: $367,093

To request a copy, please contact our Chief Financial Officer at 708.338.1724 ext. 263
Our Impact

In 2020 the lives of 1,778 clients were positively impacted.

136,865 nights of housing
$384,475 in direct assistance provided to avert a financial crisis
96,195 meals served
109% increase in employment counseling sessions

Our Clients

1,532 adults
56% male
44% female
3 transgender
246 children
54 veterans
144 chronically homeless
588 people with disabilities

Our Partners

20+ service partners
40+ congregations
47 corporations
12 AmeriCorps members
Housing Forward is the leader in supportive housing and emergency safety net assistance for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in the area. Since our inception in 1992, we have helped thousands of individuals and families forestall and overcome the devastating experience of homelessness.
We gratefully acknowledge all of the funders and donors who made the work of Housing Forward possible in fiscal year 2020. This list includes all donors who made contributions between January 1 – December 31, 2020.
$100-$249
End of the Line Humanists
River Forest United Methodist Church

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Russell Brown
Elizabeth Bruner
Jeanne Busch
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Ann H Armstrong
Armando Smith
Art and Carol Albores
Asha and Isaiah
Baby to be!
Barbara Schmitt & Susan Huffman
Becky & Steve Somsel
Ben Albrecht
Beth and Steven Mrkvicka
Betsy Bowen & Kevin Olson (3)
Briana Daley’s super coaching efforts
Camille’s birthday
Carol Doody
Caroline & Alana Slade
Carolyn Watson
Carrie Bankes (2)
Casey’s Hair
Gate Reading
Cathy Lund
Charlotte Cacciatore
Chris Martinez
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Cori Kodama
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Isaac and Eleanor’s lemonade and cookie stand
Donna DeAvila
Residents of East Avenue & Sarah Jolie
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Elan Long & Doug Watt
Ellen Petrick
Emilia Saam
Erica Gross
Federal Tax Relief Payment Sharing
Frida Siegel
Front Steps Project
Gale Zemel
Gale Zemel and David Mausner
Have-a-Heart Gala
Heidi Vance and Jayne Ertel of Team Blonde
Henry Fulkerson
Holly Rotmain-Zaid
Instead of dining out and giving H.F. only a percentage, I prefer to give it all to H.F.
Jacob Crell
James Fair
Jasmine and Amani Dola
Jay Champpeli
Jennifer Marling
Jerry Daly
Jewel Otten
Judith Kraus
Julian Foster’s Birthday
Julie O’Shea
Karen Mayer
Karen McGirr
Kate Kraft
Kathleen Clark
Kelsey
Kelsey Nelson
Kendal Cross, Elizabeth Lohmann and Laura Ullman
Kendra Kozak Perry
Lauren Burns
Leah Paskar
Linda & Adam Miller
Lisa Ginet and Bob Spatz
Lois Bonaccorsi
Loyola ABSN Class / December 2019
Maggie Harmon
Margaret Scullion
Margery Kemper
Marjorie and Stephan Benzkofer
Mark Kuczewski
Mark Kuczewski & Kate Nolan
Mary & Rob Bartaone
Mary F. Peranteau
Mary Lou Dwyer
Mary Watson & Josie Maewesother
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Sean and Therese Byrne
Sheldon Liebman
Sherry & Tim O’Toole and Jenny Mokhiber
Sofia Villafuerte Daly
Soren Olson, in honor of his 10th birthday
Sr. Callan
Housing Forward Staff & Leadership: Lynda, keep up the good fight!!
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Zoe and Jerry’s birthdays
Housing Forward makes every effort to recognize the donors who supported our mission with gifts of $100 and higher in 2020. Please accept our sincere apologies if we have made an error or omission on this list. Please contact a member of our development team so that we can correct our records.
The progress we are making would be impossible without our community of partners and supporters. Please join us. To give a gift, visit www.housingforward.org/give