



# KALAMAZOO HOUSING ADVOCATES

Visit us at



## 2024 Newsletter



### MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Working in housing can be tough, but we're here to make a difference! Every day, we push forward, knowing the housing crisis is real, yet we refuse to accept that there's no solution. We dig deep, navigating community resources, and when we work hard enough, we find answers. Are you a veteran? Let's get you connected to VOA or a VA rep. Struggling with a disability? We'll explore PSH. or subsidized housing. There are resources out there, and we are determined to tap into them.

People often ask about the homeless, "Why don't they just get a job?" But the real challenge lies in understanding the deeper psychological impacts of homelessness and poverty. According to Seager et al. (2007), every human being has five universal needs: to be loved, listened to, belong, achieve, and to have hope. These are the building blocks of life—but they are not as attainable when someone is struggling to meet basic needs like food and shelter.

At KHA, we meet our clients with compassion and understanding, by fostering these needs and building trust. Only then can we begin growing their housing stability. This is where we see our clients start to shine again- as they begin to smile more often! It's tough work, but it's incredibly rewarding. Remember, we are all in this together and together, we can turn the tide.



With Love,  
Sarah

### Our mission is to...

Support, educate and advocate with those who are unhoused and/or in housing that is unstable. In collaboration with landlords and community partners.



“  
**EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS FIVE UNIVERSAL NEEDS:**  
  
**TO BE LOVED,**  
  
**LISTENED TO,**  
  
**BELONG,**  
  
**ACHIEVE,**  
  
**AND TO HAVE HOPE.**  
  
**SEAGER ET AL. (2007)**”





## EMPOWERING FAMILIES: FROM CRISIS TO STABILITY

In August 2024, Pre came to KHA, unhoused, evicted, and facing a daunting future. Pregnant with twins, caring for two young children, and on unpaid parental leave from her two jobs, she was in a dire situation. Immediately upon her delivery, KHA collaborated with First Presbyterian Church to secure temporary housing for her family in an Extended Stay residence, ensuring her safety and stability right out of the hospital. From there, KHA facilitated her application to HRI's rapid rehousing program, securing full move-in costs and a five-month rental subsidy so she could focus on caring for her newborns.

KHA's commitment and collaborations made the difference: staff visited apartments on her behalf (using video call to help her view apartments) and located a supportive, mission-aligned landlord who prioritized renting to Pre. KHA's partnerships continued, working with Sparrow and Nest to fully furnish her new home, providing beds, cribs, dishes, and more so that Pre could move into a welcoming, turn-key space. Through KHA's efficient, compassionate advocacy, Pre's family moved into a safe, comfortable home in under two months, allowing her to begin a new chapter with peace of mind and the support she needed.

Ciera is a mother of four who had been living in substandard conditions for over five years. She has a Housing Choice voucher, which helps pay part of her rent, but due to the poor living conditions, the voucher could no longer cover payments to the landlord, who had not addressed the necessary repairs.

Ciera reached out to KHA for support in finding safe, sustainable housing. We were able to locate a home for her and her children through one of our partnering landlords, Longhorn Management. Now settled into her new home, Ciera is ready for a fresh start!

These, and many other success stories, are why we do what we do!





# WELCOME TO OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS



## MEET MALIHA

Maliha joined our team last quarter as our Operations and Development Director. We are so thankful to have her presence and expertise at KHA. She comes with extensive knowledge and experience on non profit development and strategic planning as well as grant writing. Since she has joined us, she has raised over \$200,000 in grants and donations. With her help we have been able to keep a roof over our head, pay our staff and overhead, and provide financial support to our clients as needed. What would we ever do without her? Thank you, Maliha!

## MEET MARLA

We are so excited to welcome our newest Housing Advocate, Marla Lemae. She comes to KHA with a lot of compassion and love for our community and the people that we serve. Marla has vast experience and knowledge working with the unhoused in multiple arenas as a VA housing social worker, Kalamazoo Public Defender Chief Client Navigator, and a Community Health worker at the County. We are blessed to have her on our team.



## MEET JOHN

John is a student at Western Michigan University, currently studying to get a bachelor's degree in accounting and soon to be studying for the CPA. John has 4 years of experience doing bookkeeping for organizations. John's responsibilities include daily bookkeeping, financial planning, building budgets, and managing cash flow in order to help KHA thrive in our community.







Pat Maye  
Chair



Taylor West, LLMSW-Macro  
Secretary



Tracy Whaley  
Treasurer



Kat Sharp  
Board Member

## OUR BOARD

Our diverse and dedicated board comprises eight members, each bringing unique perspectives and expertise. Together, they represent a rich blend of racial backgrounds and professional experiences, including social work, mental health, substance abuse recovery, public defense, and journalism.



Chris Shepard  
Board Member



Tony McReynolds  
Board Member



Reid Williams  
Board Member



Kristin Rinehart Totten  
Board Member

## MEET OUR INTERN & VOLUNTEER



### MEET JACOB

Jacob McCann is interning with Kalamazoo Housing Advocates through Western Michigan University's BSW program. As an aspiring social worker, he is passionate about gaining practical experience in serving vulnerable populations, particularly those facing housing instability. His current responsibilities are broad and introductory, but as his time with us progresses, he will focus on more targeted areas that align with KHA's mission to provide support, advocacy, and long-term stability for individuals and families in Kalamazoo.

### MEET HEATHER

Heather brings extensive experience in community engagement and a profound commitment to empowering vulnerable populations. Her professional background includes immigration law and justice, complemented by her board service with the YWCA of Kalamazoo. Heather is deeply passionate about KHA's mission to support the unhoused and those facing housing insecurity, as well as the comprehensive assistance we provide to our clients. We are thrilled to welcome her to our team and look forward to the impact she will make!





## 2023-2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



**Clients served**

**135**

**Funds raised in government and philanthropic grants**

**\$213,323**

**Housing Retention Rate**

**97%**

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



We extend our heartfelt thanks to Deals Unlimited for their generous contribution of \$5,000 in support of our mission to assist the unhoused in Kalamazoo County. Your generosity will make a meaningful impact in providing stability, hope, and resources to those who need it most. Thank you for standing with us in this critical work!

Shout out to all of our wonderful community churches



First Congregational Church



Trinity Lutheran



First Presbyterian

A huge shout-out to our incredible community churches, especially the First Presbyterian, the First Congregational and Trinity Lutheran, for their unwavering partnership and advocacy. Not only do they actively support our clients, but they've also generously support us with financial help for specific client needs. Their dedication to collaboration and community impact exemplifies the power of working together to create meaningful change. We are deeply grateful for their ongoing support!





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"It has been a true pleasure and one of my favorite parts of this work to get to know all of our partners, but I have been so truly blown away by your work at KHA in particular and wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate you one more time. Your team not only does the incredibly hard work of creating safer, more accessible, more equitable housing opportunities in this community, but you do it with so much compassion, individual attention and acknowledgement of each client as a person. Wishing you so much due pride and purpose in your awesome work."

**Agency Partner**

REMEMBER TO DONATE ON

**Tues, 2 December**

All Day

# GIVING TUESDAY

Save the date

## WAYS TO HELP – THE 3 T’S

- 01 DONATE YOUR TIME – VOLUNTEER
- 02 DONATE YOUR TREASURE – MONETARY
- 03 DONATE YOUR TALENTS – SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE

## WISHLIST

- 01 BUS TOKENS
- 02 GAS CARDS
- 03 CLEANING SUPPLIES (I.E. MOP/BUCKET, BROOM/DUSTPAN, DISH SOAP, LYSOL SPRAY)

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# THANK YOU FOR AN INCREDIBLE YEAR!

## **Dear Donors, Partners, and Friends of Kalamazoo Housing Advocates,**

Thanks to your support, 2024 has been a phenomenal year for us. Every milestone we've reached is a testament to your consistent generosity, and we are profoundly grateful. With your help, we served 134 clients, housed 16 individuals and families, prevented eviction for 36, and assisted many others with essential services like budget counseling, landlord mediation, and warm handoffs to other agencies, empowering them on their housing journey.

This year, our housing retention rate was an outstanding 97%. This means that nearly every client we helped secure or maintain housing has managed to retain their home—an essential step toward breaking the cycle of generational homelessness in Kalamazoo County. None of this progress would have been achievable without your involvement.

A warm, safe place to call home—a space to rest, to heal, and to rebuild—is a gift we often take for granted. For our clients, it's transformative. Your contributions, partnerships, and advocacy have made this possible. You have been the foundation of this transformation, and as the year draws to a close, we hope you take pride in the profound difference you've made.

We're thrilled to share our first annual newsletter with you, showcasing the impact of our efforts and introducing you to the dedicated team behind this work. As you celebrate this season in your warm home surrounded by family and friends, we hope you'll take a moment to reflect on those still in need and join us in our mission to end homelessness in Kalamazoo. If you're just getting to know us, we'd love to share more about what we do and how you can join us in our mission. If you are already a donor, please consider increasing your impact by becoming a "major donor" with a gift of \$1,000 or more. If that's not feasible, any amount you can give makes a difference.

**Inside the newsletter, you'll find a QR code for convenient and secure donations.** Please continue championing this vital work so that, together, we can keep transforming lives.

With heartfelt gratitude,  
**The KHA Team**