

# 2011 Cameron Award Winner

## HopeSpring

**HopeSpring** exists to promote self-sufficiency for homeless women and children in Washington County by providing housing and social services through a collaborative community effort.

**Lutheran Community Services Northwest, LifeWorks NW, Community Action, and Domestic Violence Resource Center** have worked closely together for the past sixteen years to provide HopeSpring, a service-rich, transitional housing program for homeless mothers and their children who have experienced domestic violence or drug/alcohol abuse. The program offers rent and childcare assistance, mental health counseling, domestic violence education, parenting education, and relapse prevention support. The program's ultimate goal is self-sufficiency - a fresh start - for the women and children it serves.

In 1994, staff at LifeWorksNW, Community Action and Domestic Violence Resource Center identified a need that wasn't being addressed in the community - many mothers with children do not have a safe place to go once they've completed residential chemical dependency treatment or are discharged from a temporary shelter. Lutheran Community Services Northwest joined the conversation and together they decided to create a program to fill this gap. They were all committed to making it happen and felt strongly that housing the families in rental units where they could remain after completing the program would be most helpful to the families.

In February 1995, the first families moved in to apartments at Kinnaman Townhomes, an affordable housing complex in Aloha. Since then HopeSpring has expanded to housing clients in additional complexes in Tigard, Aloha and Hillsboro. HopeSpring has long-lasting partnerships with two complexes/housing providers in particular – Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) and Willow Springs Apartments. Because of the strong partnerships the program has developed with apartment complexes, they are able to get families housed who otherwise would most likely be turned away. And, because the women are being housed in private apartment complexes, they are able to remain in their units upon completion of the program. This unique method of providing transitional housing enables families to better maintain their stability.

Each collaborative partner of HopeSpring contributes unique expertise and resources. Lutheran Community Services NW provides the program manager, mental health counseling, support staff and raises and manages the funding. LifeWorks NW provides the chemical dependency services and provides funding to help pay for housing. Community Action provides all of the case management services and links clients with all of their other services (childcare referral, energy assistance, etc.) as needed. Domestic Violence Resource Center provided case management services for the first seven years of the program and now participates in the oversight of the program.

HopeSpring partners share leadership and oversight at all levels. The Executive Directors of all partner agencies meet at least annually to review program issues, funding possibilities



*“HopeSpring gave me the chance to get back on my feet.”*

*“Beth” came to HopeSpring with her six-year-old, and was six months pregnant with her second child. When she had refused to have an abortion, the father became emotionally, physically and verbally abusive. He finally abandoned them, leaving them unable to afford to stay in their apartment. HopeSpring gave Beth the support and stability to help her have a healthy baby, keep her job, and move toward self-sufficiency. She now has affordable housing and childcare, and is taking the first steps toward a new life with her children.*

*“Elaine” fled from her abusive husband, taking her two young children with her. When they first came to Lutheran Community Services’ HopeSpring program, they had been homeless for a year and Elaine suffered from serious depression. With the help of LCS staff, she emerged from her depression, worked hard at being a good mother, and gained the skills to become more independent. Today, Elaine has maintained stable housing for two and a half years, has found employment, and has even received two promotions at work.*

and provide guidance as the program evolves. An Oversight Committee, that includes representatives from all four partner agencies, a former client and sometimes a community member, meets quarterly to share information that will have an impact on the program or the clients, to review changes in policies and program activities, and

ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of their clients and organizations. The direct services staff from each agency meet every other week to ensure that each staff member knows what the other team members are doing with each client, how they assess progress or lack of progress, consider resources the client might need, and problem solve difficult situations. These close working relationships enable HopeSpring to provide holistic services in a unified manner ensuring the best possible outcomes for each client.

HopeSpring has served 339 families who have primarily come out of shelters or chemical dependency treatment. 79% have completed the program. Of those approximately 80% maintain housing stability 12 months after program completion, more than 70% are employed, and 98% retain custody of their children over the next several years. At entry, 55% have had open child welfare cases and, of those, 95% have had their case closed while in HopeSpring. By going through chemical dependency treatment and then having the extra support they get in HopeSpring, women with a history of involvement in the criminal justice system are able to avoid future involvement. The counseling and parent coaching services help the moms do a better job of responding appropriately to their children’s needs, which improves children’s behavior. Less disruptive behavior increases the chances for each woman to hold a job, for the children to be able to graduate from high school and for the family to maintain stable housing. This reduces the cost to the State for supportive services for the family, reduces the level of demand on the schools and opens the door to a brighter future for the children.

In addition to the strong program outcomes, working collaboratively has had other important benefits. Having the support, commitment, diverse points of view and problem solving capabilities of the collaborative partners has helped HopeSpring weather economic ups and downs and adapt to whatever funding realities are at a given time. In addition, because all four agencies are vibrantly linked, benefits of this collaboration spill over into the organizations’ ability to offer the best services to their clients in other programs as well. The partners have strong working relationships at many organizational levels and use each other as resources as they problem solve in different programs and with different kinds of clients. HopeSpring has often served as a model when the partner agencies are putting together new programs. They use the experience gained from this 16 year-old effort as they create new collaborations and work to sustain them over time.

Local community support has been a vital piece of the funding puzzle that has sustained HopeSpring over the last sixteen years. In addition to federal, state, and county funds, The Collins Foundation, the Portland Women’s Foundation and Women’s Care Foundation have been loyal and critical funders. In addition Calvin Presbyterian Church, Southminster Church, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Emmanuel Lutheran Church and a number of committed individuals have also been essential funders.



*“We are so thankful to HopeSpring for being a shining star in our darkest time.”*

**HopeSpring**

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