



Heart + Home  
*collaborative*

# Annual Report

2023



# Message from the board

Heart and Home Collaborative was founded with the mission to center the voices and experiences of unhoused women in our community. This manifests throughout our shelter culture, which emphasizes building relationships, co-creating space, and respecting people for who they are. This year was our tenth anniversary as an organization, and reflecting back, what strikes me is how much we've stayed true to this vision.

In 2012, we partnered with LifeMoves to launch our first pilot shelter for a 10-week season. Fast forward ten years. Heart and Home now operates its own shelter, rotating between five local churches for nearly six months out of the year. Throughout, we described our model as client-centered and community-run.

Client-centered means acknowledging shelter as being our participants' home, where they need to feel safe, respected, valued, and be included in making decisions that affect them.

Community-run means volunteers operate the nuts and bolts of the program. Shelter then becomes a focal-point to create dialogue about the experiences of unsheltered women and build relationships between housed and unhoused community members.



None of this is possible without the community that runs Heart and Home: 128 volunteers, 85 individual donors, and 9 grantors made the shelter possible and helped us create a supportive, safe space for 22 women this past winter.

Thank you for all you do to keep this tiny, seasonal organization running, and to continue supporting the one-of-a-kind impact we make on the lives of unsheltered women in our community.

**MARY WISNEWSKI**

PRESIDENT

*on behalf of H+H's Board of Directors*

# Our Mission



Photo Credit: [Palo Alto Weekly](#)

Heart and Home Collaborative (H+H) brings together Palo Alto residents, both unhoused and housed, to create dialogue, leverage resources, and develop services (such as shelter, outreach, and community meetings) that respect and respond to the needs and goals of individuals who are unhoused. Our team members invest themselves in personal relationships and in the creation of a loving and supportive community. Individuals who are unhoused participate in program conceptualizing, planning, decision-making, and evaluation, with the understanding that people who use services are the experts.

## What's New?

This year, we moved our mission forward by offering two new services to better meet the needs of our participants:

1

We opened our doors at 6pm instead of 7pm each evening - meaning participants can be out of the cold for an extra hour each day. Opening our doors at that dark hour brings vulnerable unhoused women indoors where they are safe

2

We started offering in-house case management services. This allows us to meet participants where they're at - literally! Our case manager visited the shelter weekly, helping 68% of participants take big steps towards their big goals like housing placements, job searches, and ID document renewals.



# Our Impact

22

Participants

1,273

Bed-Nights

7.81

Beds Filled per Night

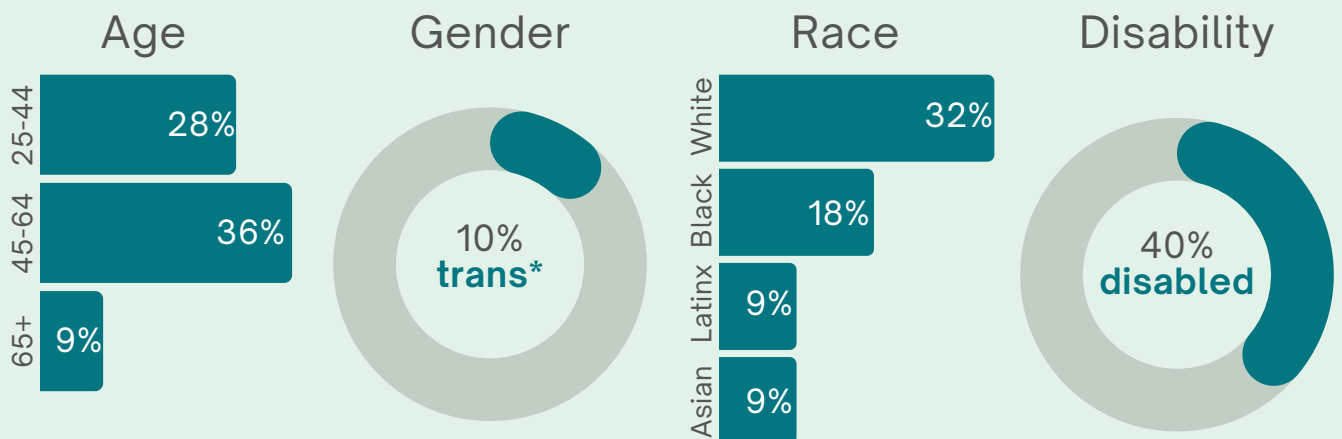
81%

Available Beds Filled

*"It's hard to find nice people in this world, especially when you're homeless... It's a blessing that these people care enough about the women that stay in the shelter to help us."*

*-Christina, a 2022-23 participant*

## Client Demographics





“My mother and I cooked a meal and served it to the homeless women at Covenant Presbyterian. The women we fed were all super sweet and so were the coordinators who helped make the process run smoothly. H+H did a great job setting everything up and helping us through our first experience volunteering. It was cherishing to see the women grateful for the warm meal and we felt glad to have helped as well.”

~ Naomi T, High Schooler and First-Time Volunteer

## Volunteer Impact



**1,215**  
Meals Cooked

**128**  
Volunteers

**677**  
Volunteer  
Hours Onsite



## Christina's Story

Six years ago, on December 16, 2017, Christina Pressley found Heart and Home Collaborative, which she now calls her family. In 2022, Christina was interviewed by Jamey Padojino for an article in the *Palo Alto Weekly*, where she spoke of the kindness and care she has consistently received from staff members, volunteers, and other shelter participants alike.

Last year, a volunteer gave Christina a parka with fake fur around the hood. She often can't find women's clothing in her size and ends up wearing too-large men's jackets. She teared up describing about the parka and the generosity it represents. "It's so warm and so comfy and it actually fits ... It just broke my heart to have someone care enough about me to get me a jacket," she told *Palo Alto Weekly*.

Christina especially praised the dedication of Shelter Director and Case Manager Lori Mills. Lori regularly checks in with all participants, from making sure they have enough clothes, to asking if they need a ride, to checking if they filled out paperwork. "[Lori] works harder than anybody I have ever seen to help the people in here to better our lives and to make sure that we're not forgotten by society," she says.

This season, Lori worked closely with Christina's case manager at another agency, the Opportunity Center, in hopes of finding her permanent housing. But affordable housing is hard to come by in the Bay Area - and like many unhoused women, Christina's Supplemental Security Income is not high enough to meet the requirements for subsidized housing waitlists. Heart and Home fills a critical need for women like Christina who have few other options.

# Our Financials

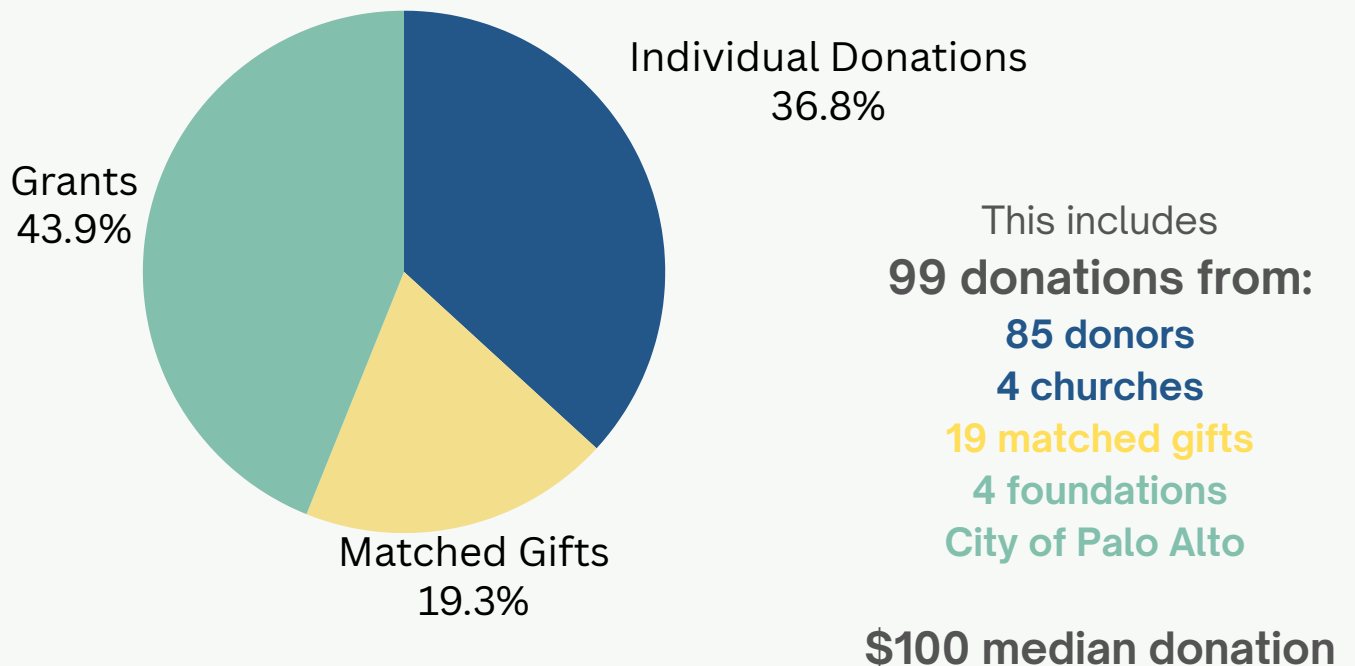
As a community-run organization, Heart and Home relies on donated space for shelter sites and volunteers to keep things running. This means we pay \$0 in rent and utilities, \$0 towards administrative staff, and \$0 in marketing and fundraising. That's why it costs us less than \$80 a night to not only keep a person indoors, warm, and dry -- but also maintain a consistent staff presence to help build community, provide all meals, and offer individualized, onsite case management.

## Last year, housing one person for one night cost us:



Nearly 90% of our expenses fund mission-critical programs including creating a **safe and welcoming community** and **providing essential services**.

We are only able to make this happen thanks to supporters like you!



# Our Partners

## Shelter Host Sites



University Lutheran Church: supporters and host site since 2014.



Peninsula Bible Church: host site since 2018.



Covenant Presbyterian Church: host site since 2021.



First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto: host site since 2019.



Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto: host site since 2017.

## Partnering Organizations





# Recent Grants & Projects

## Grants



## Women and the Built Environment



Our shelter's supplies are housed in a 6' x 12' storage trailer during our off-hours. Each day, 15 mattresses, 20 bags of bedding, at least a dozen suitcases with personal belongings, along with many bins of donated food and toiletries go in and out of this small space.

To help us better manage this process, a group of eight Stanford students and some local high schoolers made several upgrades to our shelter's trailer. These students are taking a course called "Women and the Built Environment" taught by Emily Pilloton-Lam who is the Founder and Executive Director of Girl's Garage.

Over the course of two visits, the students upgraded our shelving to make it easier to stack and locate items, mounted handy baskets for organizing supplies, and installed safety features like LED lights - all while asking insightful questions about our service philosophy and learning about the needs of unsheltered women.



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We thank you for your continued support  
of and participation in our community!

## Contact

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