



HEARTH

ENDING ELDER
HOMELESSNESS

Summer Newsletter 2025

Meet Our Community
Engagement Manager:

Shemariah

Page 6

**Hearth Housing
Awards**

See page 3 for more information.

**Save the Date:
Hearth Gala 2025**

See page 7 for more information.

**Winter Walk
2025**

See back cover for more information.

CEO Letter: 2025 — Hope Rising

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past several months at Hearth, one thing is clear: we are at a critical crossroads. The housing crisis continues to escalate, and older adults are among those being hit the hardest. According to HUD's latest Point-in-Time count from January 2024, older adults are now the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population facing homelessness: 1 in 5 individuals counted were age 50 or older. That stark reality underscores the urgency of our work.

And yet, amid these challenges, we see progress. We see momentum. We see community.

Whether it's raising over \$43,000 during this year's **Winter Walk**, welcoming over 60 residents to a joyful **Community Day** celebration, or advocating at the State House for systemic change, we are reminded that real impact happens when people come together with purpose. Our recent recognition in **The Boston Globe** highlights both the severity of the crisis and the significance of our mission: to ensure that no older adult faces homelessness alone.

With strong partnerships, community support, and the unwavering dedication of our staff and volunteers, Hearth continues to be a place of hope, safety, and dignity. From expanding our outreach and supportive housing services to hosting events that connect and uplift, we are building not only homes—but belonging.

As you read through this newsletter, I hope you'll be as inspired as we are by the stories of action and perseverance. And if you're moved to do more, whether through volunteering, sponsoring an event, or making a gift, we welcome your partnership in this work.

Together, we can make sure that every older adult in Greater Boston has a place to call home.

With gratitude,



Rhonda A. Pieroni
President and CEO

2025 Mid-Year Updates: Momentum, Advocacy and Action

At Hearth, the first half of 2025 has been marked by one powerful theme: momentum. From citywide walks and legislative advocacy to community celebrations and national recognition, we continue to drive our mission forward ensuring older adults can age with dignity, safety, and the stability of a home. The following highlights showcase the strength of our community, the depth of our partnerships, and the lasting impact of your support.



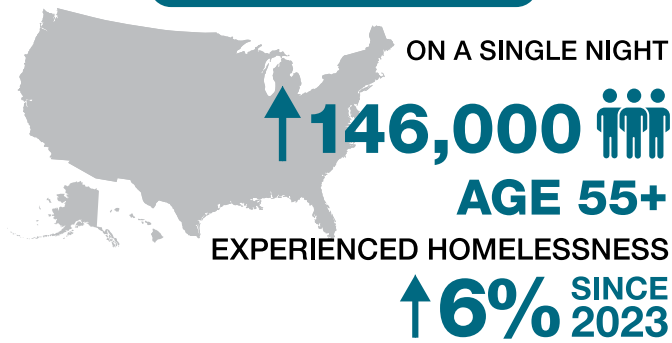
Meaningful Progress

Recognizing Champions: Hearth Housing Awards

At Hearth's Annual Meeting in April, we came together under a simple but powerful theme: *Perseverance in the Face of Challenge*. And there is no challenge more urgent or faster growing than the rising crisis of homelessness among older adults.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Jennifer Molinsky, *Director of the Housing an Aging Society Program* at Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies, shared sobering data:

NATIONALLY IN 2024



IN MASSACHUSETTS ALONE



We believe that ending homelessness is within our reach, but it requires action. This year's annual meeting launched the **Hearth Housing Champion Award**, honoring leaders who advance affordable housing and advocate for the complex needs of our older adults. This year's recipients, **Senator Lydia Edwards** and **Representative Christopher J. Worrell**, have championed Hearth's mission, from securing critical funding to advocating for systemic change at the state level. We are deeply grateful for their partnership.

Their partnership reinforces the critical connection between grassroots work and government leadership—and helps ensure more seniors can find a safe place to call home.



Making Headlines: Boston Globe Shines Light on Older Adult Housing Crisis

In a major moment of public awareness, *The Boston Globe* published a feature titled "*The Housing Crisis is Aging, and Older Adults Are Paying the Price*" (by Kay Lazar—May 21, 2025). This article validated what Hearth sees every day: older adults are disproportionately impacted by housing instability, too often one rent increase or health scare away from homelessness. As the article states: "*hefty housing/rental prices, lack of affordable homes, and an aging population have proved a potent mix.*"

Hearth's prevention program provided an average of \$1,640 to 119 people in 2024. These dollars prevented these individuals from becoming homeless. The cost of prevention is far less than the cost of homelessness. Sometimes just a relatively small amount of money to help pay a late utility or tax bill, or basic house repairs, can prevent or delay homelessness. Hearth relies 100% on grants and donations to support its prevention program.

We were proud to be featured as a leader in this fight. The article sparked statewide conversations and reinforced the need for systemic solutions.

Championing Elders In Need

Inspiring Action Across Our Community

This year, Hearth staff across departments didn't just support the mission, they activated it. Employees took the initiative to form new partnerships with local businesses, resulting in impactful fundraising campaigns and greater awareness of Hearth's work in the community. Our new partners include: **Covet Consignment** raised \$15,000, and **Flour Bakery & Café** raised a total of \$7,875 towards Hearth's mission. Hearth is currently partnering with **Hearth and Hug Bakery** in Boston, **Ready My Lips** (pop up shops in Boston/Cambridge/Somerville) and **Well House Coffee** in Boston. These efforts demonstrate the power of community-led support and how every department at Hearth plays a vital role in driving our mission forward.

Leading the Conversation: Hearth at the National Level

Dr. LaTanya Wright, our *Vice President of Outreach and Partnerships*, took the stage at the **2025 National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference** in Los Angeles in February. Her participation on a panel, *Innovations & Solutions for Ending Unsheltered Homelessness*, offered real-world strategies for reaching and supporting older adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness, from effective outreach to tailored housing solutions.

Dr. Wright's leadership highlights Hearth's national voice in the conversation and our dedication to knowledge-sharing in pursuit of a broad impact.



Lifting Voices: Older Adult Lobby Day at the State House

On May 13th, Hearth joined **Mass Aging Access** and hundreds of advocates at the Massachusetts State House for **Older Adult Lobby Day**. CEO Rhonda Pieroni delivered a powerful message about the need to invest in prevention and remove barriers to affordable housing.

By meeting face-to-face with legislators, we helped elevate elder homelessness as a statewide priority—and reminded policymakers that solving this crisis requires bold, collective action.



Together Forward

Connection in Action: Community Day with Point32Health

In June, we hosted a joyful *Community Day* at our Olmsted supportive housing site in Dorchester, bringing together nearly 60 residents from all seven Hearth housing sites for a day of community. Residents enjoyed a barbeque lunch, prepared and served by Hearth staff. There were interactive games, music, bingo and prizes, and wellness screenings provided by **Mass General Brigham's Community Care Van**.

This day wouldn't have been possible without the direct support of **Point32Health**, our incredible volunteers, and partners like **Mass General Brigham** and **The Goddard House**. It is an understatement to say the day was a resounding success. Residents went home with thoughtful gift bags, complete with fitness trackers and other wellness related gifts. This event demonstrates how we can nurture health and happiness through community.



Rise Up: Bonding Over Lunch

On June 24th, Hearth hosted its annual *“Rise Up: Bonding Over Lunch”* event, bringing together Hearth clients, residents, community partners, and elected officials. This event celebrates our clients and their incredible journey from homelessness to housing and stability. For many, the journey was long and challenging, filled with obstacles and uncertainties. Yet, despite the odds, they persevered with courage and determination, inspiring us all with their strength and optimism.

At Hearth, we are honored to have played a part in their journey. We are humbled by the trust and confidence our clients have placed in us, allowing us to walk alongside them as they navigate the path towards a brighter future. It is their fortitude that motivates us to do everything in our power to support and empower those we serve.

This event serves as a powerful reminder of how vital community is in working towards our mission.



Strengthening the Network: Sailors' Snug Harbor

This spring, Hearth's CEO, Rhonda Pieroni, was honored to present at the **Sailors' Snug Harbor Annual Grantee Luncheon**, sharing our integrated approach to housing, outreach, and prevention. Hearth has been a grant recipient since 2006. The generosity of the foundation has helped Hearth expand its reach and impact. Presenting alongside other mission-aligned organizations reminded us; the more connected our network, the stronger the safety net for older adults in need.

Meet Shemariah: Hearth's Community Engagement Manager

A new position at Hearth is that of the Community Engagement Manager. This important role acts as a bridge between the organization and the community it serves. It involves fostering relationships, building support, and facilitating communication to advance the organization's mission and impact. This includes designing and implementing engagement strategies, organizing events, managing feedback, and representing the organization in various forums.

Hearth is a multifaceted organization, providing 228 units of housing (6 supportive housing and 1 assisted living site) and comprehensive outreach and prevention services. This vital work benefits from community support and advocacy efforts. The Community Engagement Manager's role is to share information and advocate for the organization's mission in the community. Leading the charge, is Shemariah Winters, known to her friends as Shem. Her insights reveal a deep passion for bringing people together and making a real difference in the lives of older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Shemariah sees community engagement as more than just a phrase; it's about actively bringing people together to help those Hearth serves. She defines community as *"a feeling of connectedness with others, a sense of fellowship,"* and engagement as *"to participate or be involved in something."* These two ideas are at the heart of her important work. Shemariah understands an important part of her role is to help everyone understand Hearth's work. She notes that the vital work happening inside Hearth often goes unnoticed by the wider world and that needs to change. Her mission is to spread awareness about Hearth's work, create partnerships and turn those connections into practical benefits for residents, from providing activities and services, to arranging heartwarming visits with volunteers.

A key part of Hearth's outreach is its Community Days (Page 5). These lively events truly show the power of teamwork. Shemariah stresses that these valuable experiences for residents wouldn't be possible without the strong network of community partners she thoughtfully builds.

Finding partners happens in many ways. While some relationships, like those with **Ethos** and **Goddard**

House, have been around for a long time, Shemariah actively looks for new collaborations, especially with businesses in the community. She highlights the beneficial give-and-take of corporate social responsibility (CSR), where companies understand their impact extends beyond just profits. Companies, with their resources, can offer crucial support to non-profits, while their employees gain a strong sense of purpose by volunteering. Shemariah is focusing her efforts to showcase Hearth's work to corporations with an emphasis on CSR. It is important that corporations share Hearth's strong commitment to its residents. Besides **Community Days**, Hearth also takes part in awareness events like the **Winter Walk** and the **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk**.

Looking ahead, Shemariah, who jokingly calls herself the *"friend maker of all of Boston,"* imagines a future where these relationships become regular, impactful connections. Her main goal is to inspire volunteers to return and become advocates for Hearth's mission. She plans to achieve this goal by growing Hearth's outreach to potential partners, making appearances at more local events, and taking valuable feedback from those participating.

When asked about her favorite part of the job, Shemariah's answer is immediate and heartfelt: the residents and clients. She describes them as *"wonderful and kind and generous,"* saying their stories inspire her every day. For Shemariah, the benefit of working for a mission driven organization is the privilege of interacting directly with those it serves. She gets to witness the joy on their faces and the clear improvement in their quality of life. This deep connection is what fuels her passion and love for her role at Hearth.



Inspire Action — Hearth's Annual Gala 2025



Hearth is excited to announce the date and honoree for this year's fundraising gala. The planning started months ago with a special invitation to **Dr. Howard Koh, Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership** at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health (HSPH). Dr.

Koh is the Inaugural Chair of the **HSPH Initiative on Health and Homelessness**. He is the former *Assistant Secretary for Health* for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Obama administration. He has vast experience in the field of public health, earning numerous awards. Hearth is inspired by his work and his compassion.

On this special evening, Hearth will honor Dr. Koh, whose work and advocacy reflects Hearth's core values, with the ***Anna Bissonnette Award***, named after one of Hearth's founders.

With dinner, music, and a live auction, the Gala is both a celebration and a call to continue the critical work of ending elder homelessness.

*“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”*

- Helen Keller



**Please Join Us For Our Annual
Hearth Gala - “Inspire Action” themed**

Thursday, October 16, 2025

Venezia Restaurant: Boston, MA



**Tickets & Sponsorship
available at**

hearth-home.org/2025-gala

← Scan with your smart phone.



Determination on Display: Winter Walk 2025

On February 9, approximately 17 partner organizations and more than 4,000 walkers gathered on the Boston Common in fierce winter conditions to stand in unity with people experiencing homelessness and challenging its stigma.

A first-year partner organization, **Hearth** made a powerful entrance at the *Winter Walk*, raising an impressive \$43,152, the second highest total of any participating nonprofit in 2025. The funds raised support **Hearth's** housing and prevention programs, and the spirit of solidarity that day will forever remind us why our work matters.



More than just numbers, this moment symbolizes our core belief: no one should face the bitter cold as a daily reality.

We look forward to building on this momentum and hope you will join us in 2026!

Standing Up for Safety: Elder Abuse Awareness Walk

In June, **Hearth** partnered with **Central Boston Elder Services** for the *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk* at Franklin Park. Our staff welcomed walkers, distributed water and sunglasses, and shared essential information about our programs and services.

Our presence underscored a shared mission: raise awareness about the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults, and work towards prevention and support. This day serves as a call to action for safety, dignity, and respect for all older adults. This partnership reflects our deep commitment to addressing complex elder issues through community and collaboration.

Donor Highlights — Fueling Our Mission



Hearth received a two-year **Safety Net Grant** totaling \$50,000 from **The Boston Foundation**. This generous funding of \$25,000/year supports **Hearth's Outreach Initiatives** which include housing search, stabilization services, and homeless prevention support to older adults in Greater Boston. These funds will allow us to provide critical support to older adults at risk of becoming homeless, and help us connect more older adults to stable housing through search assistance and case management.

The Boston Foundation is one of the nation's first and most impactful community foundations. Partnering with community members, donors, the public sector, businesses, and nonprofits, it exists to close the gaps caused by the city's greatest disparities, to advance economic justice, and to help build a better Boston.



Hearth is delighted to announce that it has been selected as the recipient of a three-year **Cummings Grant** totaling \$150,000 from the **Cummings Foundation**! This significant funding will bolster **Hearth's** ongoing efforts to eliminate elder homelessness through its vital prevention, placement, and housing programs.

This grant will enable **Hearth** to expand its reach and provide even more older adults with the safe, stable homes and comprehensive supportive services they deserve, allowing them to age with dignity.

Thank you to the **Cummings Foundation** for their commitment to our mission and for helping us continue to make a profound difference in the lives of vulnerable seniors in our community. This transformative support fuels our outreach, placement, and housing programs, reinforcing our belief that every older adult deserves a safe home.

Get Involved: Make a Difference This Summer There Are Many Ways To Support **Hearth**:



Volunteer Days

Corporate teams can schedule impactful volunteer experiences—from beautification projects to game nights with residents. **To Learn More Email:** swinters@hearth-home.org

Make a Gift

Donate once or become a **Hearth Sustainer** with a recurring monthly donation. Every dollar supports our mission to end elder homelessness.

Please scan the QR code or visit to hearth-home.org/donate give today! Thank you. →

