



Fall Newsletter 2025



2025 Anna Bissonnette Award Honoree

Dr. Howard K. Koh

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CEO Letter: Fall 2025

– Together We Can End Homelessness

Dear Friends,

As we turn the page on fall and look toward the end of the year, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we've shared together.

Just a few weeks ago, we gathered for the Inspire Action Gala. It was a night filled with hope, stories of transformation, and a deep sense of community. We honored Dr. Howard Koh, whose lifetime of leadership in public health embodies the very spirit of Inspire Action. And we celebrated the perseverance that has carried Hearth—and the people we serve—through times of challenge and change.

The truth is that the past two years have been a rebuilding season for Hearth. We rebuilt our foundation, expanded our reach, and renewed our vision for the future. Through it all, we never lost sight of the older adults at the heart of our mission. Their needs guided us, their perseverance inspired us, and their stories reminded us why this work matters.

Now, we are entering a new phase: one defined by growth and action. But the challenges are only becoming greater. In Massachusetts, more than 2,200 older adults experienced homelessness on a single night last year, a staggering 17% increase. Behind every number is a person who deserves safety, dignity, and stability.

This is where you come in. As we approach the end of the year, I ask you to stand with us once again. Your generosity ensures Hearth can provide housing, healthcare, and hope to older adults who need it most. **Together, we can turn perseverance into progress and Inspire Action into lasting change.**

Thank you for being part of this mission. We cannot do it without you.

With gratitude,



Rhonda A. Pieroni
President and CEO



The Relentless Need to Keep Going

Inspired by Ernest Hemingway's reflection on resilience, this issue honors the quiet courage of those who keep moving forward.

“ The hardest lesson I’ve had to learn as an adult is the relentless need to keep going, no matter how shattered I feel inside. ”

This truth is both raw and universal. Life doesn't pause when our hearts are heavy, our minds are fractured, or our spirits feel like they're unraveling. It keeps moving—unrelenting, unapologetic—demanding that we move with it. There's no time to stop, no pause for repair, no moment of stillness where we can gently piece ourselves back together. The world doesn't wait, even when we need it to.

What makes this even harder is that no one really prepares us for it. As children, we grow up on a steady diet of stories filled with happy endings, tales of redemption and triumph where everything always falls into place. But adulthood strips away those comforting narratives. Instead, it reveals a harsh truth: survival isn't glamorous or inspiring most of the time. It's wearing a mask of strength when you're falling apart inside. It's showing up when all you want is to retreat. It's choosing to move forward, step by painful step, when your heart begs for rest.

And yet, we endure. That's the miracle of being human—we endure. Somewhere in the depths of our pain, we find reserves of strength we didn't know we possessed. We learn to hold space for ourselves, to be the comfort we crave, to whisper words of hope when no one else does. Over time, we realize that resilience isn't loud or grandiose; it's a quiet defiance, a refusal to let life's weight crush us entirely.

“Yes, it's messy. Yes, it's exhausting. And yes, there are days when it feels almost impossible to take another step. But even then, we move forward. Each tiny step is proof of our resilience, a reminder that even in our darkest moments, we're still fighting, still refusing to give up. That fight—that courage—is the quiet miracle of survival.

- Unknown Author

Hearth's Mission in Action: Together We Can End Older Adult Homelessness!

Hearth created a video which features candid conversations with Hearth's residents, outreach clients, and leadership. These stories are a glimpse into the courage and perseverance it takes to endure the devastation of homelessness. It is also a testament to how together we can change lives.



View the video at
[hearth-home.org/video](https://www.hearth-home.org/video)

Inspire Action - Hearth's Annual Gala

October 16, 2025

This year's Inspire Action Gala was a night that reminded us of our shared resilience and collective responsibility. Advocates, supporters, staff, and dedicated partners gathered to celebrate the connect-edness of our community, stand together to face the crisis of older adult homelessness, and renew their commitment to a future where older adults have the stability and dignity they deserve.

Each year, Hearth honors a special guest with the Anna Bissonnette Award. Named for one of our founders, the award is bestowed upon an individual or organization that has had a profound and direct impact on changing the lives of Boston's homeless and at-risk populations. This year, we proudly presented the Anna Bissonnette Award to Dr. Howard K. Koh, a lifelong advocate for public health and equity.

Dr. Howard K. Koh is the Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.



He serves as inaugural Chair of the Harvard T.H. Chan Initiative on Health and Homelessness, Co-Director of the Initiative on Health, Spirituality and Religion at Harvard University, and is a member of the Faculty Executive Committee of the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative. He previously led the School's Center for Public Health Preparedness.

*“A wonderful evening; the best ever! Thanks to all who planned it and contributed!
Dr. Koh was so special! I can't tell you how proud I am of what the organization is doing!”*

- Anna Bissonnette, Founder and Board Emerita





Dr. Koh spoke of his experience and connection to the crisis of older adult homelessness, citing decades old encounters with one of Hearth's founders, Anna Bissonnette. Most importantly, he reminded the audience of the shared responsibility of those both in the room and across the Commonwealth. The problem of older adult homelessness is a complex one, but together we can solve it.

Following Dr. Koh's speech, the evening culminated with a live auction and paddle raise in support of our Housing, Outreach, and Prevention programs. Together, we raised more than \$200,000 for the Hearth Community!

The evening reminded us what "Inspire Action" truly means – turning compassion into commitment, and hope into tangible progress. We thank Dr. Howard Koh not only for his lifelong service, but for his life of action. His work and his words inspire action every day. We are most grateful to friends like you who make our critical work possible.

"Truly spectacular! Thank you to all the Board members who attended, brought guests and supported our beloved Hearth. A hearty very well done to all. And Dr Koh: just straight out wow! What a generous speech and presence. Bar is set very high for next year. "

*- Douglas Poutasse, Board Chair, **Hearth***



"What a tremendous gala! The spirit in the room was wonderful. It was fantastic to reconnect with Anna after all these years. And it was so special to see so many friends from so many parts of my life that I hadn't seen in so long. Look forward to many more great collaborations and thanks again! "

- Dr. Howard K. Koh

Vital Partnership for a Shared Mission: Compassion

Hearth and People Making A Difference: A 25-Year Partnership



When Lori Tsuruda, founder of People Making A Difference (PMD), attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Hearth's Anna Bissonnette House, she didn't realize it was the start of a relationship that would span more than 25 years. At the time, she simply lived around the corner.

Lori founded PMD in 1992 to offer flexible, high-impact volunteer opportunities. They partner with organizations like Hearth, letting the partner define the need. PMD's support for Hearth is most visible through the four meals its volunteers provide to ABH residents each year: a Martin Luther King Day social, a St. Patrick's Day meal, a summer cookout, and a full Thanksgiving dinner.

PMD manages the entire project "soup to nuts". Volunteers fundraise for all the groceries, plan the menu, and manage the cooking, allowing Hearth staff to focus on residents.

The first Thanksgiving meal PMD served in 1997 was quiet. "Almost no residents came down," Lori remembers. "But I heard that by the next morning most of the food was eaten because the residents engaged in that time-honored tradition of raiding the refrigerator."

Today, the atmosphere is completely different. PMD volunteers are a welcome, familiar presence. Their goal is to serve with kindness, providing food Lori would be "proud to serve in my house." This means listening to residents' feedback and ensuring that all dietary restrictions are considered, so that everybody can take part in PMD's meals.

It's this attention that transforms a meal into a community event. Volunteers are encouraged to sit and chat, and residents have brought down photo albums, sharing stories of their lives. After a recent cookout, a resident noticed a neighbor who "never misses a meal" was absent. He went up, rang her doorbell, and she came down to join the celebration.

*"I love that kind of thing. It's a real testament to all the good work that **Hearth** does and all the residents do from what Martin Luther King would call the beloved community."*

- Lori Tsuruda, Founder of PMD



Learn more about
People Making A Difference
Visit: pmd.org

Hearth's Dr. LaTanya Wright Appointed to MHSA Member Advisory Board

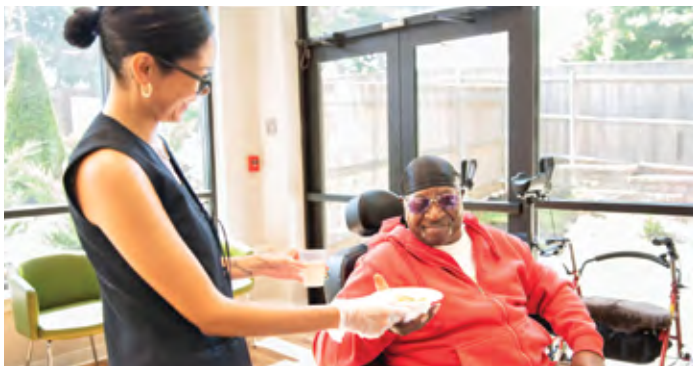


As homelessness among older adults rises in Massachusetts, amplifying their voices in policy decisions has never been more urgent. Hearth is proud to share that Dr. LaTanya Wright, our Vice President of Outreach and Partnerships, has been appointed to the Massachusetts

Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) Member Advisory Board.

Partners Make Every Hearth Success Story Possible

Her appointment ensures that the unique challenges facing older adults will be front and center in conversations about ending homelessness.



There are 1,700 homeless adults in the Boston area over the age of 50.

The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) is a key partner in the fight to end homelessness. The Member Advisory Board plays a crucial role in this effort by focusing on advocacy, shaping policy, and brainstorming solutions to the systemic issues individuals face.

Dr. Wright's new role on the advisory board allows her to network more deeply and bring back knowledge and resources that will benefit Hearth and its clients. It ensures that the unique challenges facing older adults are represented in broader conversations about homelessness.

*“Dr. Wright’s appointment is not just an individual achievement; it reflects **Hearth’s** growing role as a leader in the movement to end older adult homelessness. Her voice and advocacy on the MHSA Member Advisory Board will help create systemic change, ensuring every older adult has a safe, stable place to call home.”*

*- Rhonda Pieroni, CEO of **Hearth***

As we celebrate this milestone, we also recognize that it is made possible by the ongoing support of our community. Your partnership empowers leaders like Dr. Wright to bring the needs of older adults into statewide conversations and to drive real, lasting change.

Hearth Board Member Awarded House Call Educator of the Year

Hearth is proud to share that long-time board member, Dr. Alan Abrams, was recognized by American Academy of Home Care Medicine (AAHCM) as House Call Educator of the Year at their annual meeting in New Orleans this October. AAHCM is the national professional organization for providers who deliver medical care in patients' homes. The organization's mission is to advance home care medicine by promoting high-quality, compassionate, and cost-effective care to patients who need it most.

Dr. Alan Abrams has been a valued member of Hearth's Board of Directors since 2007. A graduate of NYU School of Medicine, Dr. Abrams earned a Master's in Public Health from Harvard School of Public Health. He is also board certified in internal medicine and geriatric medicine. Dr. Abrams has dedicated his 40-year career to geriatric medicine to improve the health and quality of life of vulnerable seniors.

The House Call Educator of the Year recognizes an educator who mirrors the highest standards of excellence in teaching home care medicine, has made significant educational impacts on the academic advancement of students studying home care medicine, and has made long-standing contributions to the profession in the academic setting.

We are honored to have Dr. Abrams on our board. Congratulations, Dr. Abrams!



Finding Friendship: Carol and Mark's Story

On their floor at Hearth's Anna Bissonnette House, Mark King and Carol Wilkerson are more than neighbors. They're each other's support system. "He's like my support person," Carol says. "I know that if I'm sick... I can call him, he can call me."

This friendship is built on a shared understanding. Both Mark and Carol know the profound shock of experiencing homelessness later in life, a reality neither of them ever expected.

For Carol, it began with a layoff in 2016. After exhausting her savings and unemployment, she was evicted. She found herself at the Woods Mullen shelter, where she stayed for nearly 18 months. The system was rigid; to get a caseworker, she had to stay for one full year without missing a day. "If you were out for one or two days," she recalls, "the clock started all over again." On her last day, the other women in the shelter gave her a round of applause. "I had made it out of there," she says.

Mark's path was different, but also one of profound challenge. After his mother passed away, his brother's mismanagement of the family estate left him with nothing. "I basically was thrown into the streets," he says. For ten years, he navigated the shelter system, losing contact with family as phones were lost or stolen. "Worrying about dying in the streets is real," he reflects. After a decade, while he was in the hospital for health issues, his case manager from Vinfen came with news: they had an apartment for him. "Lo and behold, they took me right out of the hospital and into Hearth," Mark says. "It was like an oasis... a real rescue."



Today, life is defined by a new sense of peace, freedom, and belonging. For Carol, that freedom is tangible: it's the simple power of having her own key. "I was like, 'Wait, I have a key. I have an apartment. I can stay out as long as I want,'" she says. "Freedom, exactly. Freedom and some type of normalcy back in my life."

For both, the greatest gift has been the community. "It's given me a family," Carol says. Mark agrees, noting how Hearth brings together people from all races and backgrounds. "Hearth has been bringing people together," he says. "You're not just waiting to die, you're waiting to live."

Considering Making An End-of-Year Gift?

You can make a tax-advantaged gift that helps older adults experiencing homelessness find safety, stability, and community at Hearth.

Below are a few meaningful ways to give that can also provide tax benefits to you.

Donor-Advised Fund

- Contribute to your DAF before 12/31 to qualify for a current-year tax deduction.
- Recommend grants to your favorite charities, including **Hearth**, at your own pace.
- Take advantage of the higher charitable deduction limits under current tax law.

Stocks

- Donating stock held for more than one year can increase your giving by up to 20% compared to selling and donating cash.
- Avoid capital gains taxes by donating stock directly to **Hearth**.
- Deduct the full fair-market value of your donated stock from your taxable income.

IRA Rollover or Qualified Charitable Distribution

- If you're 70½ or older, you can donate up to \$108,000 directly from your IRA.
- This gift counts toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) without increasing your taxable.
- Reduce your tax burden while supporting **Hearth's** mission to end elder homelessness.

The Impact of Your Giving

Your Generosity Helps Keep Our Promise: To End Elder Homelessness

Giving Tuesday, December 2th

You can offer the stability and security that only a home can provide.

For older adults in our community who have faced the uncertainty of homelessness, a home is the foundation for everything else. It is a place of safety, a source of dignity, and a space to heal and reconnect.

Your support on this global day of giving directly funds Hearth's mission to provide and maintain permanent, supportive housing. Your gift, of any amount, helps ensure our residents have the critical services and stable environment they need to thrive.

Your generosity helps end older adult homelessness, one person at a time, by providing a permanent place to call home.



Donate Now to Hearth for Giving Tuesday.
Please visit
hearth-home.org/donatetoday
or use the enclosed envelope.

2026 Winter Walk, February 8th



Mark your calendars and find your warmest gloves! On Sunday, February 8th, 2026, Team Hearth will proudly participate in the annual Winter Walk as a partner organization for the second consecutive year. The funds raised by Team Hearth go directly to Hearth's programs and services.

The 2-mile walk through Boston is a meaningful show of solidarity and a vital fundraiser raising awareness of homelessness. Last year's outpouring of support demonstrated our community's deep commitment.

This year, we invite you to join us. Your participation, whether you walk with our team or support us with a donation, sends a clear message of hope. It shows our neighbors, including the older adults Hearth serves, that they are not forgotten.



Help Us Brave The Cold To Support Our Mission.
To register for Team Hearth or make a donation. Please visit:
fundraisers.winterwalk.org/teams/hearth

Stronger Together

Donors, Funders, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Volunteers

Transforming Lives: First Parish of Cohasset Helps Turn Apartments into Homes In partnership with the Forbes Building in Jamaica Plain, Hearth helped house 15 individuals who had experienced chronic homelessness. For each resident, this move is more than just a roof over their head. It's the start of a new chapter, one rooted in safety, stability, and community. To make these apartments feel like home, Hearth's Furnishings Fund provides essentials such as beds, tables, and other household items. It costs an average of \$4,000 to fully furnish each unit. "This contribution means the world to our residents. It's not just furniture; it's dignity and comfort. Our goal is to ensure that every resident has a welcoming space to call their own," said Dr. LaTanya Wright, Vice President of Outreach and Partnerships at Hearth.

This transformation was made possible by community support. We extend our sincere thanks to the Outreach Committee and an anonymous donor from First Parish in Cohasset, Unitarian Universalist, whose generosity furnished four new homes. The Outreach Committee leads the congregation's charitable giving, supporting nonpartisan social initiatives. Over the years, First Parish members have been steadfast Hearth partners, helping furnish new apartments through Adopt-a-Room campaigns to furnish newly built apartments and joining us at the Winter Walk.



To learn more about **Hearth's mission** or to support future initiatives, please visit: hearth-home.org/ways-to-give

Partnership and Connection Through Community Days

In September, we hosted another **Community Day** at our Anna Bissonnette House (ABH) in the South End. Residents from across our Hearth homes gathered not just for games and ice cream, but for connection, laughter, and belonging. Our Sweet Summer Sendoff was made possible with the support **AEW Capital Management** and their incredible volunteers. We would also like to thank our partners at **Gather Health** and **The Goddard House** for being there to support our residents' wellbeing. Residents and volunteers enjoyed the afternoon filled with games and conversation, highlighting the importance of engaging our local community to advance our mission.



We're excited to welcome volunteers from **Loomis Sayles** in November and **Blue Cross Blue Shield** in December for upcoming Community Days, where they'll lead Bingo for our residents.

Each Community Day at Hearth is a reminder that while housing ends homelessness, it's community that restores hope.

Volunteering at Hearth

Volunteers Make A Huge Difference

Volunteers make a huge difference in improving the everyday health and quality of life of our residents. Whether serving Thanksgiving dinner at Olmsted Green, raking leaves at the Elsie Frank House, playing Bingo at Ruggles Assisted Living, creating works of art at our Anna Bissonnette House, or gardening at Four Corners, the positive impact on our residents is evident. **Companionship can change someone's day for the better.**

At Hearth, we have a wide variety of opportunities available, both direct contact with our residents and administrative tasks that keep Hearth's operations going. Hearth volunteer opportunities are listed on Idealist (formerly VolunteerMatch).



**Volunteers
play an
important role
at Hearth,
become a
volunteer
today!**



Interested in volunteering?

Please visit:

[hearth-home.org/volunteer-with-hearth](https://www.hearth-home.org/volunteer-with-hearth)



*"I just love how much joy
the program brings to the residents
and how much they look forward
to art days."*

- Lisa, Volunteer with Ruggles Residents



If you would like to suggest a volunteer activity or community event, please reach out to our Community Engagement Manager:

Shemariah Winters

(617) 369-1562

swinters@hearth-home.org

A Special Thank You

Our mission to end elder homelessness is powered by the commitment of compassionate leaders. At our recent Inspire Action Gala, we were humbled by the generosity of our top sponsors. Their support is not just a donation; it is a direct investment in the safety, stability, and dignity of the older adults we serve.

Hearth is incredibly grateful to the following individuals for leading the way and making a profound impact:

Doug Poutasse and Elaine Mittell

Anna Bissonnette and Marion Kenneally

Marilyn Miller

Pete and Mary Parker

Tania Phillips, M.D. and Jeffrey Dover, M.D.

Our Most Sincere Gratitude To The Trustees of The S.W.A.N. Society

Hearth extends its sincere thanks to the S.W.A.N. Society in Boston (Senior Women at Need) for a recent generous grant that provided brand new replacement mattresses for more than 20 female residents. A clean, comfortable bed is essential for health and is a key part of making an apartment feel like a true home. This wonderful gift directly impacts the well-being and dignity of the older adults in our housing, ensuring they have a safe and supportive place to rest. Thank you, S.W.A.N. Society, for this impactful partnership.



Get Involved: Make a Difference This Fall/Winter
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. →

