



Summer Newsletter 2026

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Get to Know Veronica

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Ways To Make a Difference

Take a look at the back cover!

A Letter from the CEO

Dear Friends,

There is nothing quite like seeing a year's hard work come into view. Our staff and the people we serve standing side by side, and a community that keeps showing up for them. This past year gave us so much of that to celebrate.

In our second year at the **Winter Walk**, Hearth was honored as the #1 fundraising team in the country. I want to be clear about what that number really represents. It isn't a competition we won. It's a reflection of how deeply you believe that no older adult should face homelessness alone. You walked in the cold to make that point, and the country noticed.

That same conviction carried to Beacon Hill this spring, where our advocates made the case for older adults facing housing insecurity. Donors showed up in the cold; advocates showed up at the **State House**. We were focused on the same mission, same heart, same desired result.

And in the quieter moments, like celebrating a resident's first full year in a home of their own, I'm reminded of why we do this. **Stability. Dignity. Community.** Not words on a page, but a life changed.

I'm also thrilled to welcome Stacey Zawel as our new Board Chair. Stacey brings the kind of steady, thoughtful leadership that will carry our mission forward, and I'm grateful to have her guiding us into this next chapter.

There is much ahead. That docket includes our gala and a fall full of momentum. Beneath all of it is the quiet, steady commitment of our **Kindling Club** monthly donors, whose consistency mirrors the very stability we work to give every person we house.

Thank you for being part of this community. The best is still ahead.

With gratitude,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rhonda A. Pieroni".

Rhonda A. Pieroni
President and CEO

A Letter from Our New Board Chair

Dear Friends,

I came to Hearth through Anna Bissonnette, one of our founders, who happened to be a client of mine. Anna has a gift for moving people, and it was that same gift that got Hearth off the ground and drew me in. I joined the board, facilitated our strategic planning, and over five years grew more involved in the work and in the challenge of homelessness itself. Becoming Vice Chair and then chair was a natural next step. The planning work let me know this organization and its staff deeply, and now, as chair, it gives me a way to contribute more broadly.

Our mission is simple. We work to end older adult homelessness, the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population, through prevention, placement, and housing. But the heart of it is something I keep returning to: the indignity of growing old without a home. None of us would want that for our own moms, dads, grandparents, or older friends. We remain centered on our founders' belief that our elders should be cherished, nurtured, and able to live out their lives with independence and grace.

Hearth is the first and only organization in our region focused solely on this work, and that focus matters. Homelessness takes many forms, and older adults can be forgotten entirely if no one is paying attention. We make sure someone is.

Most people misunderstand homelessness. It is easy to pass someone on the street without wondering who they are, how they got there, or that they are someone's mother, father, sister, or brother. We change that by letting our clients tell their own stories. Each year we host an event called Rise Up, a lunch where city leaders and clients both speak. I love it because we sit down together and really get to know one another. You see the bonds between people and how they came to be unhoused. They want what we all want. Connection, safety, and love.

If you ask which of our values resonates most with me, it is dignity. There is always a reason someone ended up on the street. Sometimes it is simply the loss of a spouse, and without that income the survivor can no longer afford rent. A housed life can be that tenuous. No one should have to live without one.

I am hopeful about where we are headed. We will continue our programs while growing our advocacy, exploring new ways to house people, and working alongside the many partners who share this mission. We cannot do it alone. The number of older adults facing homelessness is expected to triple over the next decade, and this issue is not going away. So I will ask one thing of you. Keep helping, through your support and just as importantly by talking about this issue where you live and work. When people truly understand the challenge, they find a way to help.

With gratitude,



Stacey Zawel

Board Chair, Hearth

A Smashing Success for Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Winter Walk Boston

In just our second year participating in Winter Walk Boston, Hearth managed to not only lead all Boston-based organizational partners but finished as the leading fundraiser for the event nationwide. At a time when older adult homelessness rises, this success underscores the commitment from our community to addressing this crisis.

At Hearth, the urgency of our mission fuels our determination to raise awareness for older adults experiencing homelessness. The Winter Walk allows us to engage our supporters during the typically quiet post-holiday season. Most importantly, it gives our community a meaningful way to support our most vulnerable neighbors. This unique event unites incredible organizations under a shared cause, building lasting partnerships dedicated to ending homelessness.

We are most grateful to Winter Walk for providing a platform for our supporters to demonstrate how much they care about our mission. Every step, every dollar raised, and every new acquaintance made a significant difference to those we serve, bringing stability, safety, and community to those who need it most.

As we look ahead this year and beyond, we'll carry the energy of Winter Walk forward, full of hope and determination knowing what we can do when this community pulls together."



Hearth Spotlights

Our Staff: Veronica

Veronica Heywood came to Hearth on purpose. As a senior case manager on the outreach team, she's driven by what she calls a nurturing spirit—and a clear-eyed understanding of what it takes to stabilize someone's life.

For Veronica, that starts with paperwork. "Prioritize getting their documents so you can get them an income," she tells the case managers she mentors. No ID, no social security card, and no income makes further support much more challenging.

Once someone is housed, the real work continues. Veronica watches closely for isolation, especially among clients who were unsheltered. People who lived on the streets were rarely alone. "When you put them in a unit, the lights go off. It's dark. There's nobody to talk to." She makes sure high-risk clients have a TV or radio from day one, and introduces every new tenant to their neighbors before she leaves—but never being more than a quick phone call away from providing support.



"What sets Hearth apart, is patience. Other programs want clients to arrive prepared. We meet you where you are. If you're hesitant, we wait. We don't force the issue."

"Every single day, I know there's somebody counting on me. That's what keeps me doing this important work."

- Veronica Heywood

Our Resident: Holly



"I actually couldn't believe it. That it was finally happening," Holly said when she walked into her new apartment for the first time. "I was going to have my own keys to my own place... I got my own bed. I got my own bureau. I got my own closets. I got my own bathroom."

For over a decade, Holly had a successful career as a controller, working in management and finance. Then, unexpectedly, she became a person with a disability and was forced to stop working. That single event set off a chain that eventually led to homelessness.

Holly spent over a year in a local shelter. She was grateful for somewhere to stay, but the constant lack of security wore on her. She remembers sleeping with her sneakers on, afraid they'd be stolen from under her bed.

Now she's settled into one of Hearth's properties, and the contrast is stark.

"I love it. The whole building is pretty much older citizens... It's been peaceful. It's nice and quiet. I bless myself every day for just how lucky I am."

"Thank you very much for being out there... especially to help the elders, because you'd be surprised how many people that are out there that are really elderly and that need a place."

- Holly

Holly's story is a reminder that housing instability can reach anyone. A stable career and decades of hard work offer no protection from a single unexpected event.

Hearth is committed to ensuring that more older adults like Holly find not just a roof, but a real home where they can age with safety and dignity.

Advocacy in Action

Hearth's Annual Meeting

In April, Hearth's Annual Meeting brought together members of the community to discuss the issues facing older adults across The Commonwealth. Keynote Speaker **Joyce Tavon**, CEO of Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance, expanded on affordable housing and legislative efforts at the state and federal level. **State Senator Patricia D. Jehlen** and **State Representative Thomas M. Stanley** were honored with the *Hearth Housing Champion Award* and spoke of Hearth's critical role in stabilizing and housing older adults in our neighborhoods. The morning was a renewal of our mission: Together, we can end elder homelessness.



Keynote Speaker Joyce Tavon, CEO of Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (left) and LaTanya Wright, Ed. D. VP of Outreach & Partnerships (right)



State Senator Patricia D. Jehlen (left) and State Representative Thomas M. Stanley (right) honored with the *Hearth Housing Champion Award*

Matt DeAngelis, Development Director (left), Stacey Zawel, Ph.D, Hearth Board Chair (center) and State Representative Thomas M. Stanley (right)



Older Adult Lobby Day

In May, Hearth advocates joined colleagues on Beacon Hill for **Older Adult Lobby Day** to make the case for older adults facing housing insecurity. Hearth works each day to ensure older adults experiencing homelessness age with dignity, and that includes being a part of the conversations that lead to systemic change.



Dennis Hohengasser, AARPMA (Speaking at Podium)



Hearth at Harvard



On May 21st, the **Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health** - Initiative on Housing and Homelessness (IHH) convened to present “Preventing Housing Insecurity and Homelessness for Older Adults What Health Systems Can Do.” **Dr. LaTanya Wright**, Hearth’s VP of Outreach and Partnerships participated in an expert panel of national and local leaders.

Housing insecurity and homelessness among older adults is a growing public health crisis shaped by rising housing costs, fixed incomes, chronic illness, disability, social isolation, and gaps in long-term services and supports. Health systems are often among the first institutions to see the warning signs: missed appointments, frequent emergency department visits, untreated chronic conditions, unsafe discharge

situations, food insecurity, caregiver strain, and difficulty affording medications or rent. By identifying housing instability early, building strong partnerships with housing and social service organizations, coordinating benefits and care navigation, supporting safe transitions from hospital to home, and investing in prevention-focused community models, health systems can help older adults remain safely housed, reduce avoidable health crises, and promote dignity, stability, and healthy aging.

Veronica Hayes, Senior Outreach Case Manager, and her client, Anthony, shared their incredible journey. Hearth showed what was possible when expertise meets compassionate care and stability.

The Joy of Music

MusicWorks programming is a weekly treasure and social connection experience for Hearth residents. Volunteers from MusicWorks visit our older adult residents weekly across Hearth sites to share the sense of freedom and community that creating music brings. Their volunteers foster a space for residents to unwind, socialize with their peers, and even dance along to a familiar favorite!



Musicworks, a FriendshipWorks program, uses the joy of song to promote connection and well-being among older adults in elder residential buildings. They host groups that help older adults socialize, move, and engage with their neighbors through music, singing, and dancing. Their program is backed by evidence; an AARP-supported University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging found that 98 percent of adults ages 50 to 80 get some sort of health-related benefit from music. Music can also work to combat social isolation and improve moods. We’re extremely grateful to the MusicWorks volunteers for sharing their musical gifts with our residents.

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.”

- Maya Angelou

Get Involved!

Volunteering at **Hearth** is more than helping us complete a task; it's the difference between an older adult having someone else to talk to that day or not. It's helping older adults to express themselves in new ways and learn the critical skills they need to navigate our changing world.

To view updated individual listings or to explore corporate opportunities, visit hearth-home.org/volunteer-with-hearth

For Individuals, Our Current Openings:

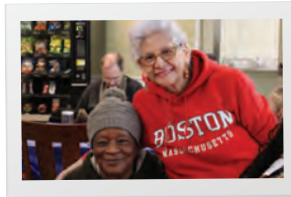
- **Activity Coordinator Volunteer** at Ruggles Assisted Living
- **Arts & Crafts Volunteer** at **Hearth at Four Corners**
- **Haircutting Volunteer** at Ruggles Assisted Living

For Corporate Volunteer Groups, visit the above link to fill out our interest form. Let us know about your team's interests and goals!

Questions About Volunteer Opportunities?

Amanda Miller, Volunteer Manager
amiller@hearth-home.org | 617-369-1553

Thank you to all our amazing volunteers for enabling the people we support to age with dignity and security, rooted in community.



THURSDAY OCTOBER 8

SAVE *the* DATE

INSPIRE ACTION GALA 2026

FEATURING:

A VIBRANT DINNER PROGRAM | TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES |
A PADDLE RAISE | OPPORTUNITIES TO EFFECT CHANGE THROUGH
SILENT AND LIVE AUCTIONS

**Paulina Kusiak Daigle, CEO Winter Walk**
Will be honored with the **2026 Anna Bissonnette Award** in recognition of her leadership in growing one of the largest annual walks to combat homelessness in our community.



This is a night to keep our mission bright!

**SCAN THE QR CODE
To Learn More And
Reserve Your Tickets!**

Donor Highlights — Fueling Our Mission



We would like to recognize the support of the **Mabel Louise Riley Foundation**, a new funding partner for **Hearth**, for providing a \$100,000 gift in support of our Permanent Supportive Housing, Outreach, and Prevention programs. This funding will help furnish apartments for new residents in our Permanent Supportive Housing sites, provide essential household goods that help older adults feel comfortable in their new homes, and offer crucial rental assistance to prevent older adults from facing eviction and displacement. By investing in these programs, the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation is helping older adults maintain their housing stability and access the supportive services that help them thrive, and we are so grateful for their partnership!



We would also like to highlight the **Liberty Mutual Foundation** for their generous gift of \$100,000 in support of **Hearth**. Flexible funding is especially meaningful as it allows **Hearth** to respond to the evolving needs of older adults experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness while sustaining the programs and services that make our work possible. This support strengthens all aspects of our work, including Housing and Outreach services, ongoing case management, stabilization services, and Prevention. We are most thankful for this foundation's impactful support of older adults in our community.

Get Involved

Join the Kindling Club!

As a member of **Hearth's Kindling Club**, our monthly donor group, you provide the reliable, consistent support needed to fuel our mission year round. Most importantly, your dedicated support helps our community thrive year-round.



Join the Kindling Club by scanning the QR Code to the left or visit us:
hearth-home.org/ways-to-give



DIY Events

Did you know you can create your own event AND fundraise for older adults in your community?



Learn more about how your event can help some of our community's most vulnerable by scanning the QR Code to the left or visit us:
hearth-home.org/diy-fundraising