

The cover of HOW's 2021 Annual Report is artwork created by clients and HOW intern Ash Roth via a community art project at the opening of our Pitner building. Clients and staff created smaller pieces based around the idea of home - the result was this mural.



The throughline of HOW's work in 2021 was the growth of our mission to support change for families and individuals that are homeless and at risk of homelessness. Some indications of this growth include:

- · 99% of permanent housing clients served by HOW retained their housing for at least 12 months. 79% of clients that exited a HOW housing program exited to safe, stable housing.
- · Among its programs, HOW added 55 new units of housing for homeless households including the acquisition of a new property in the South Shore neighborhood.
- ·2021 also saw 73% of heads of households gain access to and/or maintain their public benefits. The acquisition of public benefits is an essential foundation for clients to begin stabilizing economically and building financial independence.
- · Case managers supported personalized goals for all clients and ensured households received essential support items including uniforms, clothing, pre-paid public transportation cards, coats, internet hotspots and cleaning supplies.
- · Continuing a multi-year trend, 90% of clients surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that "the case manager I work with is helpful when I need them."

### **Our Values**

# Compassion • Justice • Integrity • Innovation • Collaboration

# A Letter From Our CEO, Britt Shawver

Looking back at 2021, as we saw many aspects of life adjust to a new "post pandemic" normal, we also saw that some things changed - perhaps permanently. Critical systems of support failed to meet essential needs. As the pandemic receded into an accepted part of many of our lives, it continued to amplify very real inequities for others:

- Stress on the medical system left chronic health conditions unsupported and increasingly more life-threatening
- Education systems were compromised, and academic paths interrupted with reading and math scores for students down across the board
- Shifts in the labor market made access to jobs difficult without appropriate training and technology

In 2021 HOW worked to address these equity deficits for hundreds of families in the Chicagoland area, in partnership with you.

In this year's Annual Report we highlight some of the moments that characterized the incredible resilience of the households we served, and HOW's continuing commitment to be here in the future for those who need us.

Thank you to all of you for continuing to make this possible. We look forward to continuing the work together.



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1342 total clients served, including 572 children.

656 total households served.

96% of all children were covered by health insurance.



98% of youth are up-to-date with doctor wellness visits.

# Youth and Family Services



Not only were 132 more clients served than in 2020, but HOW Case Managers ensured that 100% of our clients were connected to primary and mental health care within 30 days of coming to HOW.

All students in need of technology received hotspots and tablets to support remote learning.

"As we slowly began to emerge from the pandemic, it was clear that remote learning and the isolation that came with it had had a particularly negative impact on our teens' mental health. Several HOW students expressed feelings of hopelessness, anxiety and sadness. To help serve them, our Youth team added a focus on wellness to the agency's monthly teen group curriculum. It included discussions about recognizing and addressing negative feelings, a focus of control and self-advocacy, as well as the importance of sleep, diet, exercise and minimizing time on social media. Students readily engaged in these discussions, especially the opportunities to meet individually with youth specialists and to begin to participate in in-person activities again."

-Kristine Anderson, Youth Services Coordinator

## Meet Kimberly Bradshaw - HOW Case Manager

"I'm a strong believer in that you have to practice what you preach," says Kimberly Bradshaw, HOW Youth and Family Services case manager for nearly eight years. "I couldn't continue to tell my clientele, my nieces and nephews or anybody, that this is what you need to do - I can't preach it if I don't do it myself." Kim is referring to going back to school to finish her sociology degree at Chicago State University: no small feat during a global pandemic, as course program platforms shifted entirely. "I have nieces and nephews that are going into college and I needed them to see that no matter what, whatever you start you need to complete."

This is the kind of commitment that Kim applies to her work as a case manager at HOW every day; championing her clients to meet their goals despite any setbacks, providing support, accountability, and connecting them to the resources necessary to make changes.

Kim's initial professional focus was on child welfare and she soon transitioned into working with the homeless population. Nearly 1 in 20 CPS students experience homelessness each year, living either in shelters, on the street, or doubled up with friends or family. Children who have spent time in a shelter or living on the street are more likely to face acute and chronic health problems and struggle socially and emotionally, and are twice as likely to drop out of school, compared to children with stable housing. HOW's youth team served 101 households in 2021, focusing on connecting children to the technology they needed to successfully navigate remote learning and offering

outcomes: 96% of all children were covered by health insurance, and 98% of children assessed in HOW housing programs were current with wellness visits and vaccines.

Kim notes that observing the journey of the families that she serves is what helps keep her work meaningful: "Seeing where they start, to where they are now. You can see the difference, especially in the children; they are happier because they're in their own space. They're not confined to the rules of someone else's house. So you see a difference in the kids' behaviors: just being free. It's their own, they don't have to worry about whether they've got to pack up and leave. It's theirs."

The emphasis that HOW's mission places on empowering families to succeed is personal for Kim as well. After losing her mother to ovarian cancer in 2004 and her grandmother the following year, a family friend customized a graduation stole with a photo of the two of them embossed on it for Kim to wear at her commencement ceremony; shares Kim, "It felt like they were there with me."



# Chantal's Story and the Impact of FIT

When approaching HOW client Chantal's home, it is immediately obvious that kids live here: bright hearts and butterfly clings adorn the windows; gym shoes line the entrance hallway; a wall decal proudly boasts, "This home is built on love and shenanigans." When asked about her children, Chantal's face immediately lights up. Her children are five and nine and have been obsessed with Roblox and Beyblades this summer as they wait for school to start. "She's excited, she's counting the days down," Chantal shares about her daughter transitioning from kindergarten into first grade in the fall. "She likes math and she likes to write. And she's into art too - she loves to draw."

Chantal and her children were referred to HOW from Matthew House, a shelter and supportive housing partner. "Initially when she came in - she was nervous, didn't know what to expect," shares Chantal's case manager, Kim Bradshaw. It soon became clear that the family would be eligible for the FIT (Families in Transition) program: a joint initiative that braids the resources and talents of Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, the Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund (CLIHTF) and supportive housing partners like HOW.





Many FIT clients live doubled up – staying with relatives or friends – and are at increased risk of further housing instability. To qualify for the FIT program, families are initially identified by Chicago Public Schools as homeless. FIT works to disrupt the cycle of homelessness, alleviating the trauma of experiencing extended periods of instability as families wait for a placement through Chicago's Coordinated Entry System. Through individualized case management, HOW assists these clients with locating a safe and stable unit to rent, ongoing maintainance of the unit, and reaching other goals that support the family and children's academic outcomes.

Supporting the family in all of its needs is the goal. Chantal's family was one of the many that HOW supported for summer camp stipends and enrollment. And during the school year, the trained school services access team helps parents advocate for equitable resources for their kids.

"The program always kept me informed, and there are always things to do for my kids - like right now, my kids are in day camp and they love it. I'm very appreciative of the program, they helped my kids out a lot," shares Chantal, who has also been diligent about staying on top of her son's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) as he transferred schools, making sure he was receiving the same quality of assistance at his new school.





HOW Youth clients were able to enjoy more in-person activitiesincluding a college visit to Bradley University, a visit to Funtopia, a climbing wall facility, trips to the beach and parks, and a volunteer activity at a food pantry.

"They've been doing really well in school, too," she shares about her children, pride evident in her voice. Chantal was also instrumental in facilitating an online chat group for other parents to help cope with the challenges of transitioning to remote learning during the pandemic, creating a safe space for parents to wind down and offer each other support.

"Her kids are phenomenal, she's phenomenal. She's a model client...she really made the FIT program look exactly the way you would want it to look. Someone comes in, maybe has had some struggles before, but then utilizes all the resources offered to get to the point that they want to get to," says Kim of Chantal's unwavering dedication to her family.

Chantal also attributes her placement in the program with regaining some of her own self-confidence: she was able to take continuing education classes and renew her cosmetology license. "Everything started falling into place and I felt more and more comfortable," she says. When asked about her favorite part of cutting hair, she responds, "meeting new people...being able to make them smile."

As everything came forward I realized this is exactly what we need - me and my kids.

# How's In-Kind Van: Expansion of Access

In 2021, HOW was able to realize a long-time agency dream - the acquisition of a van for the express purpose of making in-kind donations accessible to clients in their own homes! HOW clients are geographically spread out across the city, representing a multitude of Chicago's diverse neighborhoods. Given this geographic distribution, many clients have struggled over the years with obtaining transportation to HOW offices. In addition, a number of clients are unable to pay the costs associated with public transportation, further limiting their access to HOW resources, including in-kind donations, fresh produce, time with case managers, and social events.

Safety concerns associated with the constantly evolving COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated these issues of resource accessibility; many clients found themselves unable to leave their homes, much less travel across the city on public transportation.



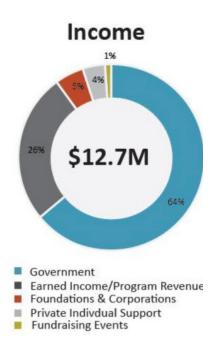


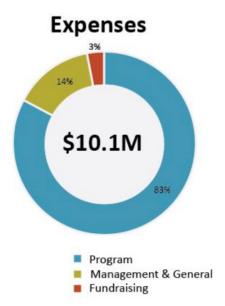
The HOW van helps mobilize the organization's continued community engagement efforts and expressly supports in-kind donation programs, in turn helping case managers and volunteers transport vital resources like cleaning supplies, toiletries, and childcare items directly to clients. Mobilizing donations also extends direct access to our services and places more emphasis on choice, allowing clients more freedom to choose firsthand what they need.

The van purchase was made possible by the continued support of The Clarence Wallace and Dolores Lynch Wallace Family Foundation, HOW partners since 2019. Our partnership with the Wallace Family Foundation has been critical to covering gaps in our programming as we work to continue providing life-saving services to individuals experiencing poverty and housing insecurity in the Chicagoland area.



### **Financials**





# Assets Type 2021 Assets \$12,461,344 Liabilities \$5,176,465 Total Net Assets \$7,284,879

If you'd like a copy HOW's full audited financial statement, please contact us at (773) 465-5770.

Ramit Kreitner

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