



FRESH *off the STEPS*

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

*A place for help, a place for
hope, a place for healing...*

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www.firststephome.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & BOARD CHAIR

As we look back at our Fiscal Year July 2020 – June 2021, we know that it will go down in our history as one of the most challenging, as well as, one of the most successful years ever.

Although the staff was under difficult COVID restrictions, they were able to maintain the stability and structure needed to continue our substance abuse treatment programs and services — so that the women at First Step Home (FSH) were able to continue their work at seeking sobriety. Strict COVID safety procedures are in place at all times to protect the health of our residents and staff; and to keep our number of COVID cases low.

The overdose rate last year in the U.S. and locally was the highest ever, and many potential clients during the pandemic were concerned with the congregate-style living environment on our campus. Consequently, like many agencies, we found that we had fewer beds filled. Despite the many challenges and setbacks of 2021, we continue to move forward to enhance the programs and services we offer our women and children.

Currently we are seeking staff for our new Withdrawal Management Program as well as completing the renovation of a wing in the main treatment center. These dedicated rooms and special nursing staff for the women will be used during the crucial first days of recovery, and FSH will now be able to provide basic emotional and nursing support during the side effects of withdrawal. This program is due to launch in September/October of 2021.

Our Family Unity Center renovations will also soon be completed and we will officially open this winter. The Family Unity Center offers mothers, children, and families integrated services that will promote healthy social, emotional, and physical development. We look forward to hearing the feedback from our families about how these parenting tools/skills are helping them during recovery.

It is exciting to note that even through all of the challenges that were presented, FSH was able to announce that over \$2 million dollars was received in grants/-gifts from government and private foundations, individuals, and corporations this past fiscal year — the highest ever!

As we look ahead to the new fiscal year, First Step Home continues to have a deep commitment — more so than ever — to providing integrated care, such as mental health and physical care for our women and their families. We are very proud of the staff, board, donors, corporate partners, and volunteers that are dedicated to the work at First Step Home every day, and we want to thank everyone for helping make this past year such an amazing one!

MARGO SPENCE
President & CEO



MARY SCHWADERER
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HOUSING

First Step Home (FSH) housing currently consists of twelve buildings, and we continue to stay very busy with the repairs to bring them up to specifications. The 23 unit apartment located at 2160 Fulton, opened over two years ago has maintained near capacity. 2160 provides a second chance for women. Living at 2160 allows the tenant to establish a good rental history, while living in safe, permanent supportive housing. If they are in need of services, FSH offers treatment, right across the street.

In June of 2021, FSH successfully secured the needed zoning change to begin the renovation at 2215 Fulton, known as the Family Unity Center. This house will offer services in our Child Resiliency Program, family therapy, provide the additional office space, and space for therapists in one location. All of the required documentation, including bids are being prepared for State approval, with a targeted date of the fall of 2021, and completion in winter 2021-2022.

We have been planning over the last 6 months to adjust our model of delivery services for women who enter treatment in the Residential Program. After several planning sessions and with board approval, we have designed a level of care that will treat women at a moderate level of social detoxification basis. After an assessment is completed, the client will enter into the 3.2 Withdrawal Management Program. The unit can house up to four clients. This unit is being renovated and is located on the second floor of the Residential building. The target date for the unit to open is September/October 2021.

Renovations are winding down in the Residential Facility at 2203 Fulton. The new roof was completed in 2020. COVID played a large part of the elevator being delayed with final completion in September. Work will then begin on the front desk, which will finalize the project over the next couple of months. The funds have been made possible by OHMHAS (Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services) and the Spaulding Foundation.

CLIENT STORY

Sam was using heroin every day – and meth if she had enough money. It became more important than her apartment, than her daughter and even the baby she was pregnant with. She sold anything she could to get drugs – including herself. She was living in an old car for four months when her water broke at 26 weeks. She was put in the hospital, where they tried to keep the pregnancy going but she got an infection, so they had to go forward with delivering her daughter, Toni, who was in the hospital for three months.

She had been in the hospital for a week, on methadone, and her head began to clear. She didn't want to die any more – she wanted to keep the baby and get well. She called to see if she could come back to First Step Home... a second chance was given.

She didn't know if the program would work – but she felt she would either get sober or die. Sam had gone back to drugs after her mom died and when she had a miscarriage. She knew other programs and First Step Home was the only one that was long enough, “30, 60, or 90-day programs weren't long enough to get past people, places and things. They'd all be there luring me back into the life,” said Sam.

At First Step Home Sam realized that she's not just getting sober for herself, but for her kids. She moved from residential treatment to campus living, to sober living and she's soon to move into the apartment building at 2160 Fulton. She is celebrating her first year of sobriety. Sam says, “If you want it (sobriety) First Step Home goes above and beyond to help you.”



DEVELOPMENT

We are extremely grateful to all the foundations, individuals and corporations that supported First Step Home in FY 2021. Together, we raised over \$2 million dollars during this first year of Covid 19. Our Development Committee, chaired by Sara Breiel, includes Mary Schwaderer, Carol Montrou Myles, Brent Dapper and Greg Ebel. They did some heavy lifting this year, for which we are grateful. We also appreciate Maureen Heekin and Mary Schwaderer, among others, who helped so much with our virtual benefit broadcast on WCPO: Channel 9 in May. We netted \$95,000 from that important event – our first ever TV program! Special thanks to everyone who donated.

The foundations and grantors who helped support us so much include: an anonymous gift of \$122,725; The Rosenthal Family Foundation, who gave \$100,000; bi3, who gave a total of \$100,000; the George B. Riley Trust, who donated \$65,000; Anthem Foundation, who gave \$50,000; Sheila M. Conway Charitable Fund, who granted us \$50,000; Interact for Health, who gave \$65,000; Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation, who gave \$25,000; L&L Nippert Charitable Foundation, who gave \$25,000; Spaulding Foundation, who gave \$25,000; and the Deaconess Association Foundation, who gave \$20,000. Other important foundations who have supported us over multiple years include the Ed and Joann Hubert Family Foundation, the Andrew Jergens Foundation, the Marge and Charles J. Schott Foundation and the Williams Foundation. Thank you all so very much.

We were also awarded \$994,070 through the State Opiate Response (SOR) funding. For gifts from \$10 to \$100,000 we are truly appreciative – thanks for sticking with us!

Consider a legacy gift to First Step Home

For more information contact Rachel Lyon.

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FINANCIAL

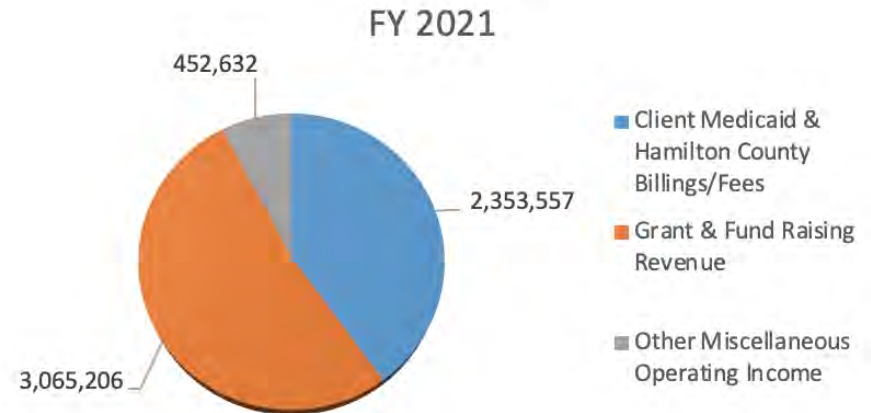
FY2021 definitely has been a year full of challenges and surprises. During FY2021, the COVID pandemic seemed to occupy every sector of First Step Home including finance. By July 2020, First Step Home was taking every possible precaution against COVID, yet the potential impact on finances was still a large concern. We had not really experienced an impact on client census as the end of FY2020 was wrapping up. As the organization put into motion a host of actions in FY2020 & FY2021 to ensure the health and safety of both clients and staff, changes in our census were beginning to surface.

By mid-summer FY2021 our client residential census was starting to slowly decrease. Rules put into place about clients not having off campus passes as well as not allowing visitors coming to First Step Home, made the program safer but more restrictive in the eyes of potential clients and the existing clients in residential and campus. Many of our referral sources were mainly working from home including the courts and jails. Our residential census averaged in the low teens and occasionally dipped down into the single digits, a trend that still continues today.

On the expense side we have been very good at watching our expenses and our salary/wage expense has been slightly under budget as we have incurred hiring issues just as the rest of the country has seen.

As the months went by, the one increasing revenue area for First Step Home was in grants and donations. We have been blessed in FY2021 with State SOR grants, Federal Cares Act funds, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and funds and donations from foundations that are too many to enumerate. The outpouring of support from these sources definitely kept First Step Home in the black financially. Our pre-audit financial statements as of 6/30/2021 appear to be as strong as ever.

In typical First Step Home style, the leadership has been very busy with the start of two new large programs that will not only provide expanded and enhanced clinical care but will expand billing and revenue opportunities.



CLINICAL SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that drug overdose deaths in the United States rose 29.4% in 2020 to an estimated 93,331, including 69,710 involving opioids. With growing numbers there are greater needs and louder cries for help. At First Step Home, we remain focused, providing the best care and treatment interventions in order to be the help that is so essential to women, their children and families. What does help look like? It is that physical presence that shows you are not alone. That unspoken presence in the room that speaks when no words are spoken. The feeling that says, “I am safe here.” A staff that stands ready and on the alert with the right services for recovery. They recognize we are partners to the individuals we serve, because we listen, pay attention and give aid to expressions of trauma, depression and triggers of addiction.

With increasing needs, we have not stood still, but continued to build and grow our core services for greater efficiency for our client population. The Maternal Addiction Program remains a primary support, for educating moms on infant development and medical care for them and their child. Individual parenting services and weekly visits with the pediatric nurse compliments and enhances group services. The Child Resiliency Program has broadened its services and success in treating children who experience Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome though encouraging self-soothing and managing emotions, while educating moms on care for ongoing developmental symptoms. Terry Schoenling Home for Mothers and Infants has entered its fourth year as a nurturing environment for moms to bond with and care for their children. The home offers onsite medical follow-up for infants. The programs support our focus on continuity of care. The excitement continues with planning during the past year to include 3.2 Withdrawal Management to help clients with moderate withdrawal symptoms. In further emphasizing our continuity of care, a Family Unity Center is on the horizon to expand clinical treatment to clients, children and families and prevention services to the community.

First Step Home is an organization that thrives on relationships with community partners, who engage and support our client care programs. Our many partners include, Child Protective Services, Crossroads, Good Samaritan Hospital's HOPE Program, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) and the Addiction Services Council.

