

Our Mission

Stephen Center partners with the community, families and individuals to overcome homeless, addiction and mental health challenges.



STEPHEN
center
HELP • HOPE • HEROES

A BRIDGE OF FAITH

Regina, 27, was born in Omaha, Nebraska. After being removed from the custody of her birth parents as a child, she entered into the child welfare system and subsequently struggled to find a place to belong. She felt different than other children her age. She wasn't allowed to play outside and was abused starting at a young age. The relationships in her life were often either temporary or forced.

"I've never had a family who loved me or any real choice about what happened in my life. I always wanted a family like everyone else, but never had one," Regina said. Feeling like there was nothing left to lose, she removed herself from foster care and became homeless for the first time at 16 years old.

Regina spent the next four years literally living on the street, occasionally enjoying the luxury of a friend's couch. At 20, she became pregnant and gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Martel. At the time she intended to focus on being a mom, but shortly after her son was born she was introduced to methamphetamine by her son's father. **"I didn't know what I was getting into," said Regina. "If I knew what was going to happen I would have never touched it."**

Through her early twenties, addiction ensued. Though she managed (at times) to find housing for her and her son, Regina returned to homelessness after she was arrested for drug possession, and her son was removed from her custody in the process. With nowhere to go after being released from jail, she remained homeless. To complicate things more, in 2021 Regina became pregnant for a second time.

After surviving the winter, pregnant under a bridge in South Omaha, Regina decided that she wanted something better for herself and her children but didn't know where to start. She contacted Stephen Center for help and was promptly welcomed into the Pettigrew Emergency Shelter program. Upon entry, she began case management services to help her with goal planning to address her needs and ultimately find permanent housing.

[continued on page 3](#)



Regina and Faith

In this Edition...

- 1, 3 A Bridge of Faith: Regina's Story
- 2 From the Desk of the Executive Director
- 3 Volunteer Spotlight
- 4 New Coat to New Lease
- 5 Stephen Center Guild
- 6-7 Memorials & Honorariums
- 8-11 Thank You to Our Donors
- 12 Wish List

From the Desk of the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Mission Matters

Stephen Center recently completed our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan which included a deep dive into our mission and vision. The planning included board members, leadership, volunteers and front line staff members. All staff were provided with a number of new proposed mission and vision statements to better reflect our current state of affairs.

As Stephen Center looks to the future, we have a vision of **"transforming lives by inspiring hope and creating pathways to success."** We aim to fulfill this vision every day at Stephen Center by treating clients with respect and dignity while linking them to community supports.

Stephen Center's updated mission statement is **"Stephen Center partners with the community, individuals and families to overcome homelessness, addiction and mental health challenges."** The new updated mission statement is similar to the former statement; however, the change that was made is quite significant. In recognizing the population we serve, the addition of "mental health challenges" speaks to the more than 60% of individuals entering homelessness self-identify as having at least one mental health condition.

HERO Addiction Recovery Services provides inpatient and outpatient services with nearly 100% of individuals entering with a mental health diagnosis. Permanent Supportive Housing apartments are largely dedicated to individuals and families that take a longer than 30-60-90 days to identify the root cause that lead them to homelessness or addiction. Mental health is often one of these challenges.

In this newsletter, you will read stories of clients that echo the changes in our mission and the inclusion of "mental health challenges." You will see how important our community partnerships and collaborations are in carrying out our mission and vision.

We invite you to visit, tour, volunteer or donate to see firsthand what your support does in serving Omaha's most vulnerable.

Thank you for your continued faith and investment of our services and mission.

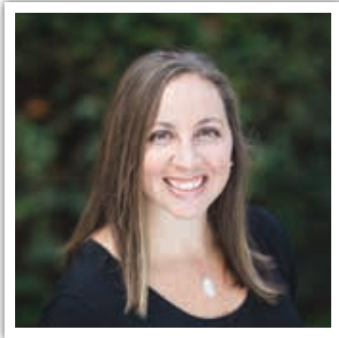
Sincerely,



Michael Wehling

Volunteer Spotlight

MEET DR. KYLIE WIDHELM



Dr. Kylie Widhelm

Dr. Kylie graduated from Creighton University in 2009 with a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy and has been providing occupational therapy (OT) services throughout our community for over a decade. She made the transition to academia in 2020 and is now an Assistant Professor at Creighton

University. Kylie also serves as the Nebraska Occupational Therapy Association's Vice President of Mental Health and Wellness.

In the summer of 2021, Kylie was instrumental in launching a community pro bono Occupational Therapy Clinic at Stephen Center with the College of Saint Mary. Since then, she has supervised 9 fulltime OT students on Stephen Center's campus equaling 4,200 hours of OT services to 138 individuals.

In one year we have been able to see a shift in our culture with her dynamic leadership qualities. Not only is Dr. Kylie able to empower her students, but does a wonderful job empowering Stephen Center staff and guests. She is an educator and is willing to take time out to teach in all situations. The impact we have seen in one short year is very rewarding. We have seen clients experience radical life changes through the various services being offered through the clinic.

For the future, we are excited to watch these services progress as Dr. Kylie returns through Creighton University's Occupational Therapy Department with students ready to meet guests where they are and continue to walk alongside them as they recover from homelessness, addictions and mental health challenges.

A Bridge of Faith Continued from page 1

Regina was connected with resources to sign her up for benefits such as Social Security Insurance, Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance. She began to learn the essential life-skills in a supportive environment with the main goal being self-sufficiency. She now has conflict resolution, mental health hygiene, personal hygiene, spirituality and self-care, nutrition and housekeeping skills.

"She knew that the environment that she was in was not going to be good for her and the baby she was carrying," said Case Manager LaDell Maple. "She came here and stayed focused on her goals to secure stable housing as well as be reunited with her son Martel. I believe that being here has been a Godsend for Regina."

Regina now lives in one of Stephen Center's 61 Permanent Supportive Housing apartments. In July, 2022, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl. She appropriately gave her daughter the name Faith. Additionally, she now has unsupervised visit privileges to see her son, Martel. Regina's primary goal is to regain custody of him, and to unite her family.

"Stephen Center taught me how to love myself. I didn't love or value myself before I met them,"

Regina says. "Now I believe in myself as a person and as a mother. I'm breaking the cycle of dysfunction so that my children will have the family that I never had. My case managers at Stephen Center have become my only family, and now I know how to give that to my children."

NEW COAT TO NEW LEASE...

Stephen Center helps with both

It's the simple things in life that bring Travis joy, whether it's a new coat, coloring or puzzles. Travis became homeless following an eviction from a group home in Iowa which landed him at two shelters prior to coming to Stephen Center. Being autistic and having mental and physical health issues, Travis was quite distraught upon arrival. He needed stability and a routine.

In 2021, the average length of stay in our Emergency Shelter was 32 days with 77% of our participants moving to a "positive housing destination." Travis, like a number of emergency shelter clients, required more than 32 days to get to the root cause that led him to homelessness... let alone the supports and solutions required to transition him to a community group home where he would be safe and secure. Case managers worked with Travis on big and small goals. Even the little things meant a lot to Travis.

"I came to Stephen Center with one set of clothes and the Stephen Center has done good work with helping me get things that make me smile. The coat was the best ever because the food is so good I couldn't fit in the old one."

Along with Stephen Center's intensive case management, Travis was connected to community partners for the supports and solutions required to move him safely out of homelessness. Students from College of Saint Mary's Occupational Therapy program provided daily living skills education such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, mobility and setting reminder alarms on his phone for medication management. Together, Inc. assisted with Travis's identification needs and Community Alliance assisted with Peer Support, budgeting and behavioral goals.

All that work culminated in Travis signing a lease to move into a new group home in June. He is forever grateful to Stephen Center and the supportive people that rallied around him through this process. Travis will be dearly missed and we wish him the best of luck on his new journey!



Travis in New Coat



Travis Signing Group Home Lease

HEARTS THAT HEAL

Stephen Center Guild

The Stephen Center Guild was established in 1991 by Bunnie Kizer Skradski and Margaret Johnson (originally called "Stephen Center Sponsors"). Guild members serve as volunteers and valuable fundraising partners organizing client holiday parties, staff appreciation events, seasonal decorating throughout campus, collecting Welcome and Exit Baskets for the shelter, serving meals and hosting an annual fundraiser to benefit Stephen Center.

The Guild members volunteer thousands of hours each year and the Guild President is a voting member of Stephen Center's Board of Directors. We value their investment in our mission and future.

This year the guild partnered with vinNEBRASKA Foundation to host the 32nd annual Grand Wine Tasting event held on April 8-9, 2022 putting Cruise Away on hold



Stephen Center Guild Dinner

for three years. We are proud to announce that the event proceeds were record setting not only for the Guild, but also vinNEBRASKA, raising \$325,000!

To learn more about how you can get involved contact Teri at teri.corcoran@stephencenter.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Memorials & Honorariums

The Latest Word

January 16, 2022 through
July 15, 2022

You can memorialize a loved one or pay tribute to someone special in your life while helping those in need in our community. When you make a Memorial or Honor Gift, Stephen Center will send an acknowledgement card to the family or honoree. Gifts are also recognized in this newsletter. You may use the enclosed envelope to send your gift.

in memory of:

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July 15, 2022**

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