

LYDIA'S HOUSE // SUMMER 2024 + ANNUAL REPORT

Celebrating 10 Years



OUR COMMUNITY AFFIRMATION

This is my community. It is composed of people just like me. It will be kind if I am kind.

It will be forgiving if I forgive. It will patiently endure wrongs if I endure them.

It will be a community of loyalty, love, faith and service if I who make it what it is am filled with these.

Therefore, with God's love, I dedicate myself to the task of being all these things I want for Lydia's House.



ARE CHILDREN A GOOD IDEA?

WRESTLING WITH NATURE, OUR TIMES, AND THE PROGRESSIVE CULTURAL CONSENSUS

BY MARY ELLEN MITCHELL

A text came in this morning at 9:00 a.m. from my neighbor Wanda: “Any baby news yet from Emily?” I happened to be in the process of wrapping a tiny raincoat for the same expected child. Without realizing Wanda was texting, my husband Ben asked, “Did Alex and Emily have their baby?” None of us know this couple well, but we can see their house from our front porches. Earlier this year we had noticed Emily’s figure changing from a size-2 waist to something else. During one of our happy-hour gatherings we were bold enough to yell across the street, “Emily, what’s new?”

We cheered when she announced that her firstborn would come in winter.

It’s a curious thing that Wanda, in her sixties, and Ben and I, in our forties, are anxiously awaiting the birth of a baby by a couple we barely know. It reminds me of my surprise when, fourteen years ago, two different neighbours brought over handmade blankets for my firstborn. I had never met either of them, but I know now that they were watching my bump just as I am watching Emily’s, working on handmade gifts as I suffered through stretch marks and insomnia. At the time, I was touched but confused by their sweet gestures. The twenty-eight-year-old me wondered, “In a world where child-rearing is totally private, why do these folks care that I brought a baby home?”

Psychologists recently published a study of parenting in the Congo among the hunter-and-gatherer Mbendjele people. Here, children are cared for by an average of eight alloparents, or other parents. Instead of privatizing child-rearing, Mbendjele parents share both the joys and the responsibilities of helping newborns grow from helpless beings to contributing members of society.

My own children have been raised in what, at least for white Americans, is an unusually large community. Lydia’s House invariably enmeshes our family in all kinds of comings and goings. We are also in a loose intentional community with some of our neighbors. We see our extended family often. But even so, reading the study, I found myself getting jealous of the Congolese parents and their



Debbie, David and Sam

children. After blankets were dropped off for baby Annie fourteen years ago, I rarely saw our gift-giving visitors, probably because I bought into a private parenting narrative and didn’t bother to remember their names. I look back on the winter of 2009 as a lonely and depressing one, marked by walking at the mall.

It was in the context of this “do it yourself” ethos that Ben and I decided that three children were the max we could handle. We could house three, educate three, and suffer the indignities of discipline with three. Our

child-bearing years corresponded with the Obama presidency, and our circle of Christian friends became increasingly progressive and secular. With pressures of work-life balance, private Montessori schools, attachment parenting, and the complexities of urban living, three new humans in our care even seemed a bit excessive. Months after our youngest was born, Donald Trump was inaugurated. A childless friend told me, “This is why I’m not having children.” Separately, my father said, “I’m glad I won’t be around to see what a mess my generation made of the future . . . but your kids will be!”

My thinking around whether children are a good idea triangulates between the excitement I share with Wanda as she and I gaze out our front windows for signs of a baby, my readings on societies where children and their needs are shared by a larger community, and anticipated apocalypse. It seems that many of us implicitly feel that children are a good idea and hope they are born, even if we wouldn’t lay this hope out logically. There’s just something timeless—perhaps primordial—about the weary rejoicing when a baby shows up.

A lesson recently taught me by “Other Feminisms” scholar Leah Libresco Sargeant is that we were all once children, so we all have a responsibility to children. The lesson my soul is teaching me as the people of Carter Avenue gaze out the front window for signs of a neighbor’s baby is that we do want children to come into the world, our neighborhoods, and our churches, even if they are messy, loud, and time-consuming.

But somehow our sentiment toward children as a collective has soured. As I've longed for more support in my own child-rearing and wondered why we don't have eight alloparents, I've concluded that American society is skeptical of children. As individuals, most of us maintain a localized hope for babies, but when it comes to those "powers and principalities" that shape a cultural mood, we assume burden before gift. Children on a macroscale have become a consumer decision, a luxury item not unlike an expensive mortgage or a Tesla: good for you if you can afford them, but don't ask for help with that. The result is a collective lack of willingness to sacrifice for children that are not our own. Adults-only communities are popping up across America; my dad lives in one. At my church, staff make regular pleas for people to work in the nursery. They have trouble filling the slots even though they pay people to do the work.

As self-fulfillment, leisure, and personal accomplishment become the water many in the upper middle class swim in, it's no wonder that both the affluent and the aspirational think children will be a slog. I'd argue that for any woman to wholeheartedly say yes to children, even as more and seemingly better things can be done with time and money, we all need to say a wholehearted yes to children.

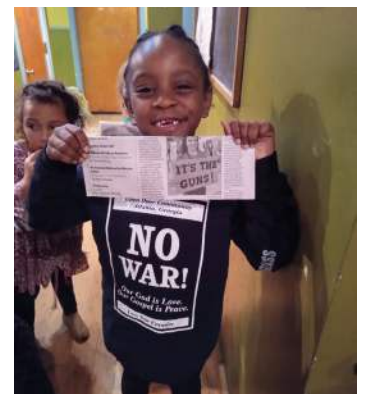
Of course, this doesn't mean that I should have ten children, or that you should have any at all. Saying yes to children doesn't mandate freezing eggs to guarantee later fertility or engaging in any number of challenging things to have your own biological children. Saying yes to children means celebrating every new life, planned or unplanned, and understanding that our work as humans has always involved caring for children, whether ours or someone else's. It isn't my job simply to keep my children in my house or in a school for careful instruction, supplemented by time playing in fenced-in parks. The childless person isn't to be relegated to evening silence while devoting their

margin to entertainment and travel and lamenting the noise and taxes associated with other people's children.

Our best life, I'd argue, looks more like the community in Congo, where reporting shows a smaller physical footprint and less emphasis on worldly accomplishment. I imagine this different value system and relationship to physical space creates more slack: more time to say yes to formal child care and yes to informal relationships with children one knows and cares about.

As I consider what a better way might look like here in Cincinnati, I'm reminded of a new couple who are living and working with Lydia's House. Having spent their formative years at an intentional community called Jesus People USA in Chicago, they became accustomed to children roaming in and out of their apartment. When they moved into our neighborhood, they wanted to show my children their musical instruments, build scale models of houses with my architecturally interested seven-year-old, and drop off granola for my kids' breakfast. They aren't formal or paid child-care providers for us, and their own children are in college, but they are enriching and concerned adults. I hope my children, too, enrich them and keep them agile as they experiment with the freedom of their post-child-rearing years. Wanda, my baby-gazing neighbor, also shows me glimpses of another way, using my children as tasters for her recipes and inviting them to play Uno. My husband helps her move heavy things, and I bring her items from our food-pantry excess. This network is not perfect, but had I experienced these small examples of the beloved community earlier in life, and known support to be consistent and reliable, I would have considered a larger family. If support and shared care were the norm, not the exception, I think many more well-off young women would think children are a good idea.

Continued on page 4



Lydia's House Atrium participants on All Saints Day, dressed as Thea Bowman, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Dorothy Day and Murphy Davis.

Continued from page 3

While I lament the affluent's choice to privatize children, the loudest alarm bells go off in my mind when I see the poor shamed for having them at all. In over a decade of co-directing Lydia House, many adults of varying political and religious persuasions have suggested to me that the women we help—or the men who father their children—should receive forced or compensated sterilization. In an age of contraception, we assume that those who can't afford children should forgo them. After all, if these women don't have houses, why are they having babies?

But something deeper is going on than poor planning or contraceptive sloppiness. What I've learned in doing this work is that children are one of the few ways that women in our circle of care have of saying yes to the goodness of life and relationships. Indeed, they are often excluded from the things of the "good life" and cut off from healthy relationships; approximately 14 percent of guests at Lydia House spent time in foster care growing up, and a quarter of them experienced domestic violence in the last year. Children create family and meaning and bring joy. When all other trappings of the world are wiped away by material poverty, this truth seems to rise up.

In the early years of helping to shepherd this community, I often marveled when my co-worker Meridith, herself childless and offering her margin to these families, would rejoice at the announcement of a coming child. As she'd proclaim, "I'm so happy for you," I'd sneer at the mother-to-be in the background, thinking only of the costs. It was humbling, then, when I told Meridith of my own third pregnancy, seemingly superfluous (I already had a boy and a girl) and no doubt a tax on our fragile organization. She offered her typical joy and remained supportive even as I developed severe complications and was out of commission for months. In the end we welcomed Jacob, who is a true community kid, a total extrovert, and a best friend to many children who have lived at the shelter.

I know of another Catholic Worker couple discerning marriage and debating whether they can and should welcome children. The man feels that children will distract him and his bride from the work itself: serving in the soup kitchen, writing, labour organizing. I can't answer for them whether they should bear children, and of course biology will play a role in determining their path. What I did say, though, when he asked my opinion, is that our choice to have children will never stop the Kingdom from coming; indeed, all signs point to the

fact that more thoughtful and cared for humans will help it on its way. You may conclude that children are not for you personally to bear, as many saints and monastics have, but you need not conclude that children are a bad idea. That conclusion leaves mothers isolated, the childless devoid of the joy that comes from proximity to children, and children themselves without the beloved community that God intended for them.

Dorothy Day once said about community life, "Everybody wants a revolution but nobody wants to do the dishes." Since I spend my life supporting women with toddlers, I might edit that to say, "Everybody wants a revolution but nobody wants to work in child care." Consequently, our little revolution at Lydia's House includes stints of child care for everyone! We also make a point to bless every baby born and to celebrate each new mother with a ritual and gifts. Our circle of care includes ongoing support for mothers after time in shelter, and we have a Wednesday-night family program of children's catechesis for three- to twelve-year-olds. As I teach the kids in our circle about the life of faith, we always linger on the Bible story of the visitation—the visit of a newly pregnant, teenage Mary with her older, more pregnant cousin Elizabeth. Our clay models show Elizabeth filled with joy as she touches the belly of Mary. I'm struck that a visit between these women is a story that we all should know and remember in the church and the liturgical year. Perhaps it is because the need for support in pregnancy, for joy at one's expectant state, is a timeless feature of the human experience. I'd like to think the Scripture writers knew, and my church (at its best) endorses, that every baby deserves a celebration and every mother supportive companions.



Note: A Copy of this article is published online in Comment Magazine

PROJECT UPDATES

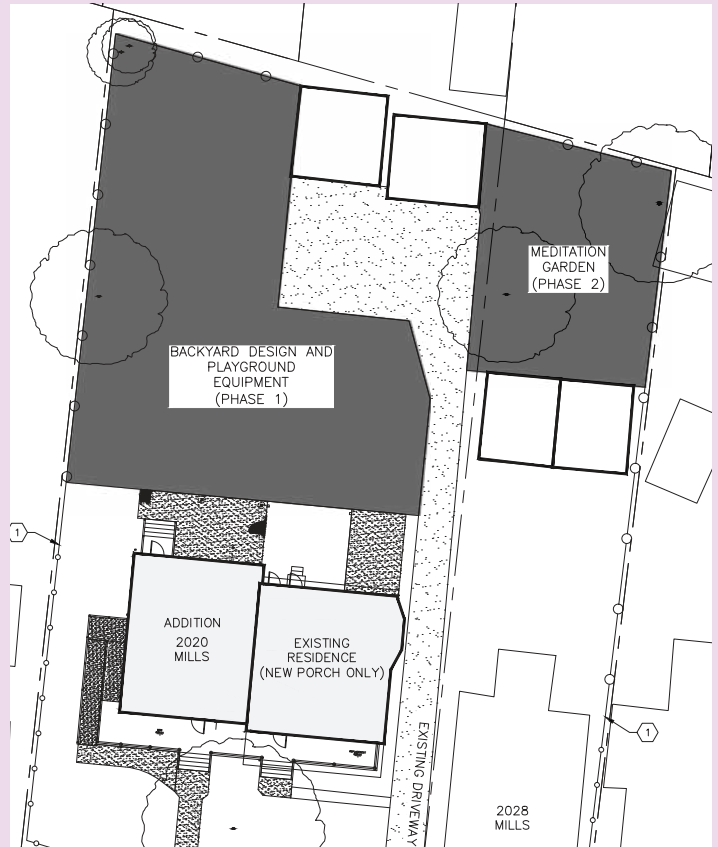
It would hardly be a newsletter without sharing about the many things that are happening with our physical spaces. Our addition is moving right along, with a scheduled September completion date. As of publication the structure is built, the walls are torn out between the two buildings, and the interior is being finished. This week the porches are being finished, framing is complete, windows are being fixed in place, and mechanicals are being installed. We're very pleased with our construction partner, 8k, and grateful to Hamilton County Community Development for funding support through this long process!



Our 2028 Mills Ave (yellow house to the right of the shelter) renovation is almost complete. Thanks to the leadership of Ben Eilerman and David Baumgartner and many volunteers and donors, we were able to upgrade 2028 Mills Ave with new HVAC, plumbing, a more usable floor plan, hardwood floor refinish, new insulation, and a fresh coat of paint. We'll be moving 2 of our staff apartments to this location, as well as meeting rooms and flexible space. We are really grateful for the campus feel 3 continuous properties offer us and the ability to offer services to our families without crossing a busy street!



Finally, our yard and gardens are in the works. Our new playset will be installed in June. Our driveway sports court has been designed by Artworks and will be installed this summer. Our new garage layout is well on its way, with plans for concrete upgrades and a workshop. Our landscaping crew will be installing a new landscape layout this



summer, thanks to the hard work of our design crew team from DAAP, led by Will Midtbo, with consult from Charlie Weber, Landscape Architect and Chris Manning of Human Nature Landscape Design. Our Stations of the Cross art have been completed by Jacob Boehne and will be mounted in the yard. We plan to have Jacob also design and implement a garage mural at the end of the stations, completing the life, death and resurrection narrative with inspiration from Isaiah 11, "The Peaceful Kingdom."

Down the street from the shelter we're in the permitting process to install a mural on 1801 Mills Ave, with the theme "Bread and Roses" for the workers strikes of the early 1900's (We want bread and roses too!). We're so grateful to Elizabeth Hatchett for her volunteer work designing the mural as a gift to the West Norwood neighborhood,



and we'll be hiring Laura Yrigoyen, longtime friend of our community and atrium volunteer, to implement it, with some help from the Lydia's House families and staff. We're also grateful to ArtsWave for funding this effort.

It's fair to say, season to season, we're as amazed as anyone else at what the Lydia's House crew of staff, volunteers and supporters are able to accomplish. In our children's religious education program, we teach the children "The Kingdom Parables" including the parable of the Hidden Treasure, the Mustard Seed and The Yeast. Needless to say, it's not lost on us how much these parables apply to the Lydia's House story. Small things have grown into bigger things, almost miraculously, and seemingly useless fields and buildings have proven to have treasure in them. An idea grew into multiple homes

where many people can find rest. At times, our vision "To be a demonstration of God's Beloved Community," is already here, though as Kingdom things go, it's also not yet complete.

We'd be remiss to offer this update and leave off a thank you to our Capital Campaign Donors and Core Renovation Volunteers:

- Hamilton County Community Development and Steve Johns
- The Office of Denise Driehaus
- ProBono Partners/ Jeannette Maxey
- Dennis and Georgia Bishop
- Dane Miller
- Dan Aerni
- Julie VanBergen

LYDIA'S HOUSE TIMELINE

2012

The Mitchell-Eilerman family and Meridith Owensby begin serious conversations about starting a house of hospitality for homeless women

May: The ministry is christened "Lydia's House," referencing the New Testament story of Lydia, a woman who welcomes the apostles into her home after hearing the Good News from Paul (Acts 16:13-15)

October: 501(c)(3) status is granted by the State of Ohio



2013

Remainder of funds is raised and Lydia's House makes an offer on 2024 Mills Avenue of \$40,000. The offer is accepted, contingent on zoning approval



2014

First homeless guest and her son move into Lydia's House



2015

The Jean Donovan House renovation is complete and Lydia's House expands into a second property



September: Lydia's House welcomes two new associates to the main property and Dr. Anne Housholder moves in to the Jean Donovan House with Meridith, bringing our core support community to 5. We welcome four young moms over the course of the fall, bringing our total guest population to 8, including 4 babies



2016



Meridith represents Lydia's House at national conference, "The Wild Goose Festival," speaking on "Hospitality as a Feminist Act"

2017

Lydia's Purchases 4502 Carter, becomes a Community Housing Development organization, and works with Hamilton County to develop 8 units of housing



UC DAAP/ Will Midtbo, Trinity Tobe and Sarah Geiger
 Human Nature Architecture/ Chris Manning
 Charlie Weber
 Ben Eilerman and Over the Rhine Community Housing
 David Baumgartner
 The Greater Cincinnati Foundation
 The Kohnen Family
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 The Zlatic Family
 The George Riley Trust
 Susan and Derek Van Amerongen
 Monica Eargle Ray
 Patricia and Don Hinkley
 Arlene Keller
 Mark and Beth Killian
 Liz Maxwell
 Patty Willits

We are still raising money for these projects. Donations can be given through the attached envelope!

2019

Lydia's House opens permanent supportive Housing, christened "Virginia Coffey Place."



2021

Lydia's House develops the Dorothy Day Fellowship Program and recruits new "fellows" under a stronger professional framework. Atrium grows and adds adult programs. Laura Menze leaves for professional OT work.

2020

Meridith takes a sabbatical; In response to Covid 19 Lydia's house continues to operate in "Family suites" and we work with the county to rapidly house families and pay rent with Covid funds; we develop a relationship with Mercy volunteers to provide new help; we add the Atrium program and operate it out of the (otherwise closed) living room of the shelter; we buy 1801 Mills Ave for 4 more units of housing for our families



2022



We open 1801 Mills Ave with 4 units. We put up our first mural, Sacred Birth, on 4500 Carter. With a strong crew of Fellows in place, Mary Ellen takes a 5-month sabbatical. We finalize plans for an addition and work with the county for funding. Anne, our long time live in volunteer, moves to Kansas.

2023

We strengthen our in-house rules with a feedback mechanism for failed obligations with our shelter guests. We move the atrium program to 4500 Mills Ave to our classroom space and add a 7-10 year program. Mary Ellen visits a number of Catholic Workers and we discuss how to strengthen our Catholic Worker identity. We add set times of staff daily prayer, monthly spirituality nights and more staff "fun" nights. We (finally) start construction on our addition. We purchase 2028 Mills Ave and start planning a shelter campus.



2024



We develop a formal partnership for voucher placement with Over the Rhine community housing. We see our addition go under roof and complete a renovation of 2028 Mills Avenue. We renovate the outdoor spaces of the combined 3 yards.



TEN YEARS OF TRAVELING WITH LYDIA

By Meridith Owensby

Back in 2011, Mary Ellen and I were searching for a name for our new Catholic Worker house. Since we as women would be hosting women, we scoured the few stories with named women in the Bible, looking for a worthwhile patron.

“How about Ruth and Naomi?”

“Too long. Can you imagine answering the phone with ‘Ruth and Naomi House’ every time?”

“Tamar’s House?”

“Eh, too tragic.”

“How about Dorcas’ House?”

“Now I know you’re joking.”

After much debate, Lydia of Thyatira came out as the clear winner. The pureness of her impulse toward hospitality after hearing the Good News from Paul spoke to what we hoped to do: provide hospitality from a place of faith in God. Plus, she had an excellent color scheme.

Here’s the scripture describing Lydia’s conversion:

Acts 16:11-15

We (Paul and Silas) set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there.

A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.” And she prevailed upon us.

Lydia’s House welcomed our first guests in 2014. In the ten (!) years of hosting that have followed, I have come to appreciate Lydia more and more. She’s been a good patron in ways I never imagined, and I like to think something of her spirit infuses our work, which is bathed in prayer and supported by many faithful hands.

My first realization of parallels with Lydia’s House

and Lydia came via her chosen profession. A recent article in the New York Times (“In Israel, a 3,000-Year-Old Purple Factory”) described the ancient method of making purple dye from the glands of snails. This dye was costly because of the smelly, time-consuming process, as only a tiny amount could be extracted from each snail. Once applied, however, the colorfast dye would “grow brighter with weathering and sunlight.”

When the dye-making Lydia dove into forming a new Christian community, she undoubtedly found many parallels to her professional life. Creating a space that welcomes the hungry, the naked, the sick and dying, those recently released from prison, the widow, and the orphan is a costly, messy process. It’s safe to say that the form of Christianity Lydia heard about from Paul implicitly included all of that mess.

When we started Lydia’s House, we had yet to learn of the costs and messiness we would encounter. Surprisingly, at least for me, most of the messiness came not from external sources like guests or volunteers but from internal realizations. If we had thought before Lydia’s House that we had reached a certain level of maturity or love of neighbor, the early years of Lydia’s House showed us how far we had to go on all fronts.

If the long-ago Lydia worried that she was in over her head, if her children protested at the attention paid to these new, needy Christian friends, if she counted the cost, if she made resoundingly bad decisions along the way, we don’t know. If she got into counseling and went on antidepressants after she snapped at one too many sister congregants, we don’t know that either.

But, as Lydia was human, it’s no disservice to imagine that she found solace in her knowledge of dye making. “This process is worth it for the beauty that it creates,” I can picture her saying. She knew the lasting vibrancy that resulted and trusted that God would undergird her efforts.

I can’t help but marvel at the parallels as our relational and spiritual colors become more profound and vibrant each year. Becoming the community we are has been incredibly difficult and expensive beyond anything we’d initially imagined. Yet, the product is more beautiful than when we’d begun, and we are not nearly finished gazing at it yet. It seems counter-intuitive to have work take on new aspects rather than fade to an echo of the original tint, but I am here to tell you it is so.

There is no way to make a community without expense or sacrifice. And there is also no way to make a community without the smelly parts. Yet, it is worth it for the unexpected, constantly changing hues and highlights at the end. Lydia knew this. Perhaps it is why she recognized the gospel's truth at Paul's first telling in her town.

I would be curious to know if her newfound faith was challenged after Paul and Silas' departure, however. I don't know what Lydia thought would become of her houseguests when they left her home, but it likely wasn't jail time. Yet, the following scripture passage tells of Paul and Silas running afoul of authorities and ending up in the jail's innermost cell with their feet shackled. This is after they'd endured being stripped and beaten in front of a crowd. Picking up the following day:

Acts 16:35-40

When morning came, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." And the jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, "The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace." But Paul replied, "They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves." The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. After leaving the prison, they went to Lydia's home, and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there, they departed.

Once they are out of jail, the two evangelists return to Lydia's home. Since news travels faster than people, likely, news of the arrest had already reached Lydia. Did she hesitate to open her doors to these recently incarcerated pair? Did her recently baptized family wonder about the company she'd elected to keep? Did she chide herself for insufficiently preparing the pair for their reception in the region?

This story of hardship following hospitality is not an unfamiliar dynamic within our community. When women leave Lydia's House, it is not uncommon for difficulty to follow. In a way, this seems unremarkable; after all, a three-month stay in a shelter does not undo years of trauma, systemic racism and inequality. Yet, it still feels deeply personal when I get a tearful call from the Hamilton County justice center, hear from a mom who has lost her children to the child protective services system, or follow up with an out-of-communication guest who discloses she is working two jobs and visiting her ailing dad in the hospital while trying to parent.

The worst-case scenario is when former guests apply for shelter with us again. This signals a return to homelessness, even though during the first stay, we ensured access to subsidized housing, income, and mental health care where appropriate. A return to homelessness was not the outcome we hoped for, not the abundant life we imagined might be possible for our families with enough support in place. We can shore up every loose end we find; still, the odds are that trouble and hardship will follow our families.

I recently met with a Lydia's House mom on the cusp of moving to her own place with her one-year-old. An external processor, she weighed the pros and cons of attending a training program for four months, when in the end, she would stand to make three or four dollars an hour more than she was currently making at a sandwich shop. We looked at the likely effects on her food stamps, Section 8 rent amount, and the increased amount she would be paying for childcare.

"This doesn't work. None of this works. If I make more, I make less. And what if DeShaun gets sick and I lose my job? I'm not even sure I can get through this training, because you can only miss three days in four months. DeShaun's been sick with an earache all week. I can't do this."

I know this guest will likely come back to us for help when she can't pay her rent or utilities or starts her new job and has to go the long stretch from hiring to first paycheck. Or she will lose her job when the employer cannot permit one more sick day, and she will need an advocate to tell Section 8 that she cannot pay the \$250/month she's responsible for. She will build, it will fall, and she will build again. She may have more children, as she is young and in love.

Yet even in her unexpected returns, there will still be cause for rejoicing. This young mom will encourage us, just as Paul and Silas reportedly did those assembled in Lydia's home. DeShaun will grow into a precocious, good-natured boy who loves his mom and exclaims, "I remember this!" when he spies his old favorite truck in our living room. We will be glad to see them for as long as they want to come around. And we will work out what it means to be the body of Christ together, perhaps in several hue changing iterations.

This life makes me grateful to God and grateful for our patron saint, Lydia. Thank you, Lydia, of long ago, for answering this novel call of God and living as if Jesus came to save the world, every last person in it. You've provided vibrancy and pungency and assured us that this experience is nothing new. We thank you for this life in all its odiferous, violet glory.



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Morgan McCullough
Paul and Pam McDonald
Suzanne and Phil McHugh
Amanda McLaughlin



Cynthia Meiners
Gregory Mellor
Anne and Marcus Mescher
Mary Ellen and Jim Millar
Dyah Miller
Hannah Miller
Evan Mills
Christoffer and Francesca Molnar
Sally Monroe
Sharla Moody
Keith Moore
Samantha Mossing
Marianne and Gerald Mundy
Sandra and Michael Murphy
Beverly Neff
Janet Neidhard
Phyllis Nelson
Network for Good
New City Presbyterian
New Jerusalem
New York Community Trust
Niehaus Financial Services, LLC
Anne and Martin Niehaus Mader
Rhonda Noll
Norwood Christian Church
Norwood Homegrown Handmade Sale
Norwood Police Association
Abraham Nussbaum
Nutz & Boltz
Kathy O'Malley
Tammara O'Donnell
Tom and Mary Beth Ottke
Marcia and Daniel Pardekooper
Karen Patterson
Lucy Pavlik
Hazel Pegues Williams
Elisa Perin
Barbara and Nathaniel Pieper
Heather Pine
PNC Charitable Trusts
Paul Polger
Viola Powers
Mary Lou and Ang Puopolo
Heather Quinley
Jill and John Quinley
Laura Ramsey
Deborah and Michael Rathsack
William and Debra Reeves
Rita Reichert
Renaissance Charitable Foundation
Fred and Judy Reuter-Wimberg
Catherine Riggs
Patricia Rittenhouse
River Readers Book Club
Carol and Don Roberts
Melissa Roberts
Laurie and Dan Roche
Beth Ronan
Clara Russell
Kevin Ryan
Brendan Ryan
Patti and Donald Sand
Pamela Sanders
Steve and Mary Anne Schlewinsky
Anne and Steve Schoelwer
Chris Schroder
Robert and Cheri Schuh
Roger Schwartz
Krista Scott
Sr Augusta Seibert
Janice and Bruce Seidel
Cheryl Seta
Leslie Sexton
Nick and Melissa Shaver
Phillip Shepard
Rebekah Sides
Sisters of Charity
Douglas and Laura Skidmore
Calista and Anthony Smith
Angie Snelling
Society of the Transfiguration
Jan and John Spaccarelli
Theresa Spath
Mary Speed
St John the Baptist Catholic Church
St. Timothy Episcopal Church
Sr. Donna Steffen
Harry and Pamela Steinkamp
Anny Stevens-Gleason
Judy and Edward Strickland
Sue and Bob Ramsay Family Fund
Lynn and Thomas Sweeney
Rebecca Tehan
Susan and John Tew
The David and Sara K. Weston Fund
The Sauerland Foundation
The Shop Barber and Beauty
The Spaulding Foundation
Jerod Theobald
Charles and Carol Thiemann
Third Protestant Memorial Church Endowment Fund
Judy Thomas
Trudelle Thomas
Thrivent Financial
Kenneth and Patricia Tonnis
Anthony Traum
Ursulines of Cincinnati
Susan and Derek Van Amerongen
Mary Pam Venable
Amy and John Vennemeyer
Marilyn Vennemeyer
Lydia and Christopher Wagner
Nathaniel Washatka
Bonita and Richard Weber
Kathaleen and David Weyer
Lisa and Larry Wharton-Bourgeois
Linda Wheeler
Amy and Steve Whitlatch
William P Anderson Foundation
Jalonda Williams
Barbara and Douglas Williamson
Patty Willits
JoAnn Denzler and Cheryl Winningham
Wohlgemuth Herschede Foundation
Hilary Wolkan
Carol and Bruce Yeazell
Carol and Lee Yeazell
David and Tessa Yi
Celia Yost
Courtney Young
Ryan Zhang
Zion United Church of Christ

LYDIA'S HOUSE 2023 REPORT TO PARTNERS

2023 was another brimful year for Lydia's House! As a result of work and prayer, the fruits of last year included:

Guest Care

- Improved Access data tracking for increased communication with former and current guests
- Created a new housing online check-in system to support shelter guests in expediting their move to permanent housing
- Streamlined first month of residency goal achievement including a focus on eligible benefits and services
- Advocated to elected officials to expediate childcare vouchers for working guests
- Improved our shelter to housing trajectory to make the Section 8 voucher process smoother
- Added new referral partners for vision and dental care
- Created a guest care team approach with a weekly team meeting
- Improved communication on house rule infractions to allow guests more agency to appeal and self-advocate

Administration and Fundraising

- Automated bill pay to reduce administrative burden
- Meridith became a notary
- Streamlined our credit card system by reducing the number in circulation among staff and adding designated gas cards
- Did an overall assessment of utility use and made strategic decisions to save on gas bills
- Changed our insurance to Mennonite Mutual, saving 33% on insurance bills
- Utilized our online screener and relational resources to recruit a new class of Dorothy Day Fellows
- Created new partnerships with Brethren Volunteer Services and InVia for volunteer placements

Affordable Housing and Shelter Expansion

- Broke ground on and started construction for our shelter expansion
- Collaborated with Hamilton County to oversee construction administration of the addition
- Responded effectively and efficiently to property damage in one of our affordable units
- Created and enforced new policies around smoking cessation in our units
- Improved maintenance response time by bringing on a full-time, in-house maintenance professional
- Purchased 2028 Mills Ave to expand the shelter yard, streamline staff housing, and consolidate offices for improved supportive case management/care (Thanks to our volunteer lawyer, Jeannette Maxey)

- Reached 100% capacity on our affordable housing units
- With the help of Probono Partners received tax exemption on the combined properties of 2020 Mills Ave (the addition) and 2024 Mills Ave (the shelter)
- Worked with DAAP students and Human Nature landscape architecture to create a "campus master plan" for the new expanded yard
- With the help of Ben Eilerman, created a renovation plan for 2028 Mills Ave
- Utilized skilled and unskilled volunteers for demo and renovation of 2028 Mills
- Enrolled 2 people in the Family Self Sufficiency program to help them save for home ownership

Strategic Partnerships

- Worked with the Mason's Lodge as their "Charity of the Year" to provide gifts and programming to families at Christmas
- Continued our partnerships with Bellarmine Chapel, The Moose Lodge and the Cornish Scott Family for Christmas Festivities
- Continued our partnership with Christ the Savior Orthodox church, St. Timothy Episcopal Church and The Shakespeare Theatre for drives for needed items
- Partnered with The Beauty Shop, Underpants for All, Stones Lanes, and Joseph Chevrolet for drives for needed items
- Worked with an Inspiring Purpose Day Program for Christmas stockings
- Created stronger partnership with New Vision Missionary Baptist Church for food and needed items
- Cut Food costs by revisiting St. George Food Pantry for monthly food items
- Revisited our partnership with Every Child Succeeds
- Outfitted numerous families with winter coats thanks to Upspring's coat closet
- Took an outing to Gorman Farm courtesy of the Aerni Family
- Swam and Trick or Treated with the Norwood Department of Recreation
- Are beneficiaries of the Philanthropy program at America's Best Optical, Hyde Park
- Partnered with the Bruderhof for a summer intern; worked with Bruderhof to host a Christian Community Development gathering; Published an article in Plough Magazine
- Continued our partnership with Xavier Eigel Center for weekly student volunteers

- Supported the regional Catholic Worker gathering and offered childcare to the extended community; visited the LA Catholic Worker; supported the Catholic Worker family discernment project
- Hosted tours in partnership with the Christian Community Development Association
- Attended CCDA and offered insight into faith based affordable housing
- Took meetings with potential collaborators on a new daycare for Lydia's House families
- Improved mom's programming with new offerings of spiritual support with Pastor Kathy of Winton Community Free Methodist Church
- Welcomed Bruce from Samaritan Car Clinic to teach guests about car ownership, Tango Northside for dance instruction, and Tiffani from Community Action Agency to help guests understand credit
- Received training in Catechesis Level 2 and set the stage to expand our Catechesis program to include 7-11 year olds
- Utilized community resources to create Level 2 materials, including the Library makers space, St Timothy Church, St. Margaret of York church, University Christian Church, XU Montessori Lab School, Organized Living and The Bruderhof Community
- Introduced a daily noon prayer practice and added a monthly staff spirituality night

Spiritual, Atrium, Adult Programming

- Renovated our commercial space to create two classrooms for Lydia's House programs
- Worked with Good Shepherd Montessori and the Montessori Step Up training program at Xavier to outfit the new atrium space and create materials
- Offered space to the Vineyard Church for their weekly children's religious education program
- Added professional musical programming for children in our religious education classroom

2023 ANNUAL REPORT FINANCES

INCOME 2023

Individuals	\$221,452
Private Grants	\$164,244
Cash Reserves	\$43,395
Earned Income	\$101,284
Churches and Religious Orders	\$28,809
TOTAL	\$559,184

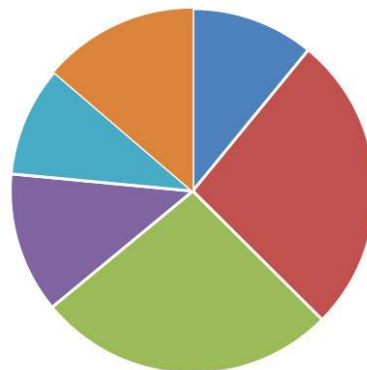


INCOME 2023

Individuals
Private Grants
Cash Reserves
Earned Income
Churches and Religious Orders

EXPENSE 2023

Stabilization <i>(Includes utilities, food, bus passes, insurance, personal care spending)</i>	\$61,119
Support <i>(includes expenses related to guest support personnel)</i>	\$148,295
Community <i>(includes worship, outings, newsletter, aftercare)</i>	\$148,565
Admin and Fundraising <i>(includes office expenses and supplies, software and hardware, accounting professional expenses, admin professional expenses)</i>	\$69,850
Maintenance and Upgrades <i>(Includes yards, furniture, building maintenance and maintenance staffing)</i>	\$54,667
Depreciation/other	\$76,688
TOTAL	\$559,184



EXPENSE 2023

Stabilization
Support
Community
Admin and Fundraising
Maintenance and Upgrades
Depreciation/Other

Lydia's House 2023

49 served in shelter + 124 after

Emergency Shelter at Lydia's House



21 Families were provided Emergency Shelter for stays between 14 and 30 days
71% Continued into Transitional Housing or Safe Stable Housing

Each Family Received:

- On-Site Staff Support
- 24/7 Shelter Access
- Nutritious Meals
- Private rooms
- Case Management Services , including Applying to Housing and Benefits Navigation



Women Served:

- Average Age = 25 Years
- Average ACE* Score = 5.5
- 29% Experienced Domestic Violence in the Past Year
- 14% Spent time in Foster Care as Children
- 10% Had a Mental Health Diagnosis
- 76% African American; 19% Caucasian, 5% Other category
- Shelter guests named an average of 1.4 people in their social support network **

Transitional Housing Program at Lydia's House

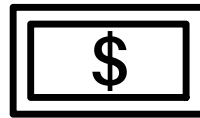


15 Families Continued onto Lydia's House On-Site Transitional housing is offered for those that stay in s

Average Total Length of Stay: 87 Days
73% Moved into Stable Housing



73% Received Needed Mental Health or Medical Care



73% Obtained and/or Maintained Employment or Getting Job Training



73% Obtained Government Benefits



91% Obtained Necessary Documentation

67% Cited Improvements in Reliable Social Network**

"I learned how to become more socially involved."

" It's never too late to improve things with yourself & daily tasks."



*ACE = Adverse Childhood Events, A tool used to assess traumatic events individuals correlated with negative health outcomes, Score 0-10
**As measured by the Sarason Social Support Questionnaire - Short Form, among the questionnaires in 2023

Year in Review

Care = 173 Individuals Served

Program

Transitional Housing Program
shelter longer than 30 days

ays
g



18%
Received
Legal
Assistance



73%
Received
Assistance in
Enrolling
Children in a
New School or
Daycare



8 Guests
Supported in
Pregnancy

n
k

y

"You take back your own power when you
live your life differently than what others
expect for you."

experienced during childhood, higher scores

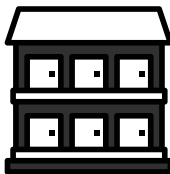
ose who completed their stays and

Lydia's House Aftercare Program 43 Families Served



- 9 Parties Offered to Aftercare Families (Epiphany, Galentine's, Pentecost, Norwood Day, Pool Party, Fall Festival at Camp Joy, Thanksgiving, Breakfast with Santa, Mason Christmas Party)
- 8 Families Attended Family Camp and 6 kids attended summer camp
- \$55,000 Spent on Aftercare Families
 - \$37,000 Provided in Financial Assistance, such as Rent, Utilities, and Bills
 - 37 Children Provided Funding to Strengthen Family Bonds, including Birthday Parties, Vacations or Family Outings
 - 10 Families Provided Annual Memberships to Local Attractions, such as the Zoo or Norwood Pool
- 10 Families Provided Legal Assistance, including Trained Tax Preparation
- 8 Families Provided Case Management
- 22 Families Provided Social Support outside of gatherings
- 19 Families Provided Assistance in School or Daycare enrollment, School Supplies or Uniforms
- 5 Individuals Participated in Car Program to Have Affordable, Reliable Transportation with credit building car loans now provided by Wright Patt credit union

Virginia Coffey Supportive Housing



11 Families Housed,
including 20 kids

- \$3,300 Provided in Rental Assistance to Tenants

Three in a Row

With the support of Hamilton County, Lydia's House embarked on an expansion of the Mills Ave shelter. Additionally, we acquired the house located at 2028 Mills Ave.

At the conclusion of construction, our campus will consist of 3 contiguous buildings!

LYDIA'S HOUSE
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Cincinnati, OH 45212

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LYDIA'S HOUSE

CELEBRATING LIFE TOGETHER

10th Anniversary Event

Sunday, October 6

3:30 p.m.

Ecumenical Service at Vineyard Central Church

1759 Mills Avenue

Norwood, OH 45212

Following the service our buildings will be open for prayer and opportunities to learn more about our work. At 5pm we'll do a house and playground blessing at 2024-2028 Mills Ave and we'll conclude with a cookout starting at 5:30 in our new yards (weather permitting)

Other events to celebrate 10 years that we have in the works include:

- A mural for our 1801 Mills Avenue Building and 2028 Mills Garage
- A Norwood Day Parade float
- A reunion of former staff and guests
- A photo exhibition of 10 years of our work and the families of Lydia's House
- A community art project celebrating our community affirmation
- Installing an outdoor "Station of the Cross" and publishing a prayer liturgy, lifting up the lives of families experiencing homelessness

Stay tuned via our e-newsletter for more information on all of these happenings.

Sign up at stlydiashouse.org