

# LYDIA'S HOUSE // SUMMER 2025 + ANNUAL REPORT



To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope.

Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve  
and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing.

Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness,  
that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present,  
but is able to see a tomorrow.

-Pope Francis



LYDIA'S HOUSE  *offering hospitality in the Catholic Worker Tradition*





# HOUSE NOTES

by Mary Ellen Mitchell

When last we left off, the holiday season was in full force. I saw a Substack recently that called Halloween through Valentines Day “the mom Olympics” and it does feel like a herculean task to pull off all those special days for so many people. In early January, we hosted our annual after-Christmas party, noting that January is an easier time to schedule an event and, overall, in need of some cheer. We took many families for a pool day at the **Jewish Community Center’s** indoor water park, and babies floated with interns in the lazy river while moms chatted in the hot tub. It was a welcome respite from the grey freezing weather. We also did a night we called “Laundry Love,” where guests brought as much laundry as they could transport to the local laundromat and we provided quarters and childcare to help chip away at winter’s mass of dirty clothes.



January also brought hard news to our community as we realized that federal budget cuts would mean it was unlikely that any new Section 8 housing vouchers would be released this year, making rent affordability nearly impossible, especially for our pregnant and postpartum guests. We began working hard to think up alternatives and created a new rental assistance program, “Amplify,” which we will use to make rent

(more) affordable while we wait for the federal government to untangle.

February saw a major event in the life of the community: a mom gave birth (accidentally) in one of our apartments, with only **Tiffany and Marion** there to help. Mom was a rockstar and was holding her new daughter when the ambulance and crew of a dozen men arrived! Still bleary eyed from childbirth accompaniment, the young staff hosted a Galentine’s event the next week. The night included manicures and a waffle bar and was well attended, including a special guest: the new baby from down the street. We were also pleased to partner with **Drive to Thrive** to place a vehicle with a young former guest who was struggling to make her job and childcare work while living far away from public transportation. Because February is notoriously hard for parents of young kids, we did a Friday night bowling party and offered free bowling to any current or former guest who wanted to brave the cold and come out, bumpers and pizza included. We were also thrilled to see our volunteers **Elizabeth Hatchett, Brendan, and Izzy** recognized for their service at the **Norwood Together** Gems of the Community awards. Over President’s Day weekend, **Mary Ellen and Annie** traveled with sodality members **Alison, Amber, and Hannah** to New York for the Communion and Liberation “Encounter,” and found the talks on refugees, loneliness, and distraction to be both depressing and reflective of our reality here in Cincinnati. Thanks to **Nick and Brian Ginsberg** for hosting us.





March brought new guests to the shelter and some hard exits. The constant coming and going of Lydia's House families can be a lot to hold, and we counter the challenges of walking



alongside destitution with daily prayer and now a new, weekly "Clarification of Thought" time with our young staff. We were strengthened by reading Dorothy Day's Loaves and Fishes and many articles from Plough Magazine, the Bruderhof community publication. We also watched *Babette's Feast*, *Romero*, and *Of Gods and Men*, all excellent films about sacrificial faith.

Into April we had a sweet Seder dinner with moms and kids, including kids washing moms' feet. Our guest **Jada** (featured again in this newsletter) took the role of Jesus and **Rosalyn** assumed the role of Peter. After we lit the candles symbolizing Jesus rising from the dead, Rosalyn broke into the classic VBS song, "I've got the joy, joy, joy down in my heart." The rhythm of sorrow and joy, Cross and resurrection, is not lost on us in our own pattern of hope and disappointment, childbirth and open child protection cases, housing placement and eviction. We are grateful to share these ups and downs with our weekly crew of volunteers: **Xavier students, Joan Meyer, and Carol Carlin**, who make the burden of room turnovers, meals and dishes lighter.



We ended April with an Easter egg hunt, the Liturgy of Light, and a Pentecost celebration. Special thanks to many donors who brought Wednesday meals to our large gatherings,



especially **Maria and Robert Krzeski** who offer drinks and desserts to every event, year after year, and **Laura Jackson and her church friends**. For the last half of the month, we were glad to give Meridith 3 weeks off to work on projects for her MDiv and do some liturgical writing for the house. Thanks to the **Transfiguration Sisters** for offering her a retreat space. After Easter, Ben and I took a short trip to Los Angeles for the **LA Catholic Worker** 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, delayed 5 years because of Covid. Thanks to **Matt Harper** for coordinating our visit. We entered May with a Pentecost celebration and saying a heartfelt good bye to our (nearly) 2 year volunteers, **Debbie and David Baumgartner** and our Bruderhof friend, **Marion**.



As we look to summer, we have many happy plans in the works. With the support of **St. Timothy Episcopal Church**, we will be launching our own weekend family camp for Lydia's House families. We'll also reprise free summer daycare/day camp for kids including daily swimming lessons at the Norwood Recreation Center (thanks **Michael Gabbard** for working with us on this), cooking classes, and a new partnership with **Trout Lily Montessori Forest School**. Many thanks to **Camp Joy** for offering 20 spots for our kids to attend camp in early June, sure to be a highlight of the summer. We will also be launching a new initiative, Family Fun Nights, on Mondays and we have invited guests from the **Opera, The Museum Center, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, a line dancing studio, Nobbe Farm**, and more to come perform on our new backyard stage!





# JADA'S STORY

By Jada Davis, former Lydia's House guest

My name is Jada, and Lydia's House became my safe haven when I needed it most. It wasn't just a shelter—it was a place that helped me rebuild my life piece by piece, with kindness, patience, and unwavering support.

Before I arrived, life felt overwhelming. I moved to Cincinnati looking for a fresh start, hoping to build something stable for my children and myself. But things didn't go as planned. Housing fell through, and I found myself struggling to juggle everything—parenting, searching for resources, and just trying to survive. I had just been hired as a Pre-K teacher and was awaiting my start date, but in the meantime, I had no stable place to stay and no support system to lean on. My biggest challenge was that my 8-year-old daughter, who is on the autism spectrum and has special needs, required services I couldn't access on my own. At the same time, my 4-year-old son was displaying behaviors I didn't understand. I knew he needed help, but I didn't know where to turn. On top of all of that, I had lost important documents, making it difficult to apply for assistance or secure stable housing. I felt like I was constantly running in circles with no way out. That's when I found Lydia's House.

They connected me with the right resources for my son, and he was diagnosed with an adjustment and impulsivity disorder. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to get him the help he needed. They were also incredibly



patient with my daughter, helping me find services for her as well. As a mother, nothing is more important than seeing your children get the care and support they deserve, and Lydia's House made that possible.

But their help didn't stop there. They assisted me in obtaining lost documents, scheduling doctor's appointments for myself, and even watching my kids so I wouldn't have to bring them with me. They made sure my children had warm clothes for the winter, which was a huge relief. Even now, as an aftercare client, they continue to check on me, offer essentials, and provide financial assistance up to four times a year. They even connected me with housing resources, helping me furnish my home. I come most Wednesdays to their Wednesday night faith program, and they provide 1:1



support for my daughter to participate.

Most important to my starting over, Lydia's House leased a three-bedroom apartment to me. They own apartment buildings and provide stable housing for women like me who need a fresh start. Having a place to call my own, where my children can feel secure, has been life-changing.

Over the last year, my journey has been one of growth, healing, and learning to stand on my own two feet. My finances have improved as I've been able to access resources and better plan for the future. Spiritually, I feel stronger—I've found hope again, something I had lost along the way. My relationships with friends and family have also changed. Before, I felt isolated and overwhelmed, but now, I feel like I have a real support system, both from Lydia's House and from the people in my life. I've learned to ask for help when I need it, and I've gained confidence in myself as a mother and as a person. Now, with my new job as a Pre-K teacher, I finally feel like I'm stepping into the stability and success I've been working toward.

To any woman feeling lost and uncertain, I want to say this: you are not alone. Lydia's House doesn't just offer help—they offer hope. They gave me a foundation to build on, and I will always be grateful for the ways they supported me and my children. Because of them, I can finally see a future where we are not just surviving but truly thriving.





# LET THE POOR EVANGELIZE US

By Amber Lapp

In the summer of 2010, my husband David and I moved from New York City to a small town in southwestern Ohio to embark on a summer research project interviewing young adults about their views on relationships, marriage, and forming families. Two years later, we found ourselves making a permanent move to the town that had been our home base—a neighborhood known for drug overdoses, low-wage work, and broken families. The people, the place, their stories drew us back. Somewhere along the way our research interest had transformed into a desire to live in solidarity with those who make up much of the American population but whose lives still seemed hidden somehow, not part of the mainstream public conversation. We sensed that we had much to learn—not just *about* our new neighbors, but *from* them—and we wanted to make ourselves available.

Around that time, Pope Francis issued his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. His words, spoken for all the faithful in all the world resonated with the reality we were beginning to see in our little town of less than 5,000:

“This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.”

Pope Francis was echoing an idea common in Latin American theology, as well as a concept with deep roots in Catholic church teaching. As Clemens Sedmak outlines in his book *A Church of the Poor*, “an option for the poor understood as ‘giving special attention to the poor,’” can be found in numerous church documents, including *Rerum novarum*, *Centesimus annus*, *Gaudium et spes*, *Populorum progressio*, and the American bishops’ 1986 document *Economic Justice for All*, as well as in Catholic Social Teaching’s theory of the universal destination of goods. Catholic theologians through the centuries have had much to say on the relationship between the rich and the poor, among the most well-known

St. John Chrysostom’s homilies on the poor man Lazarus who lay at the gate of the rich man.

But what might this mean for my American family in an economically-depressed town in Ohio in the twenty-first century? What mysterious wisdom do our poorer neighbors have that we may not? One lesson I’ve learned from my friends who have less is a detachment from material goods—which makes room for generosity and values persons over things. In watching them and learning from them, I’ve seen Gospel values come to life and begun to understand teachings of Jesus in a way that reading the Gospel alone could not impart.

Lynn’s belongings fit in the trunk of the car, and she was used to moving them from place to place: her boyfriend’s dad’s apartment, her grandma’s house, the homeless camp out in the woods. She told me one day while we drank coffee at McDonald’s that she doesn’t believe in “the perfect American dream.” “We’ve become too consumed with everything that the world values.... the dollar has taken over everything,” she said, visibly disgusted. She sees a love of money at the root of a social apathy that in her view does little to help the weakest in our society—the elderly, the unborn, addicts dying of overdoses.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis says “that the most beautiful and natural expressions of joy which I have seen in my life were in poor people who had little to hold on to.” Though not universal, there may be a tendency among the poor for a genius for joy that comes from simplicity.

When I was newly out of college, there was an explosion of talk in both Christian and secular circles about “voluntary simplicity.” This, perhaps, meant choosing not to eat out or opting to drive older vehicles, typically with the goal of working less or retiring early. By contrast the simplicity of the poor is not chic and comfortable. It is imposed, a form of “directed knowledge” that overwhelms and leads the person to places not chosen.

As such, it can be a terrible knowledge. It is therefore important, lest we romanticize malnutrition and violence and death, to make



a distinction between destitution and a kind of Gospel poverty. Lynn's journey, including her homelessness, is neither quaint nor intentionally designed for my instruction; it is, however, a posture from which she has learned to consider the birds of the air or the lilies of the field, cared for but without access to the economy. I wonder, what can Lynn know that I may never know, and then quickly I also wonder where I can fit into Lynn's story. As Fr. Thomas Dubay writes, "Jesus did not favor or promote destitution. Rather he demanded that his disciples do all they can to rub it out by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the ill and the imprisoned. Precisely because he did require a most liberal sharing of possessions did he promote personal frugality." Dorothy Day wrote in *Loaves and Fishes*, "We know the misery being poor can cause. There is a difference between inflicted poverty and voluntary poverty." Voluntary poverty, which she chose, she associated with St Francis' "lady poverty," an elegant rejection of worldly opulence. The poverty that her Catholic Worker house worked to alleviate she referred to as destitution, a state of being in need of correction.

What I hope to learn most from Lynn is not how to suffer better or be grateful should I face destitution, though she is often is grateful, but rather how to use detachment to allow for generosity, for an openhandedness with my own time, space and goods, because she is also generous. This observation about Lynn finds resonance in larger data about the rich and the poor. During the Great Recession the lowest-income Americans increased their charitable giving while the wealthiest Americans gave less. In 2011, Americans with earnings in the top 20 percent gave an average 1.3 percent of their income to charity. The bottom 20 percent gave 3.2 percent. Poor people are also more likely to give food or money to a homeless person. Part of the explanation may be the empathy born from experience.

Lynn, herself a former addict, sees it as her duty to help care for the children of friends affected by the heroin epidemic. She helps with homework and even raised another friend's baby for a year while his mother was in rehab. When she found out that a former coworker in another town was pregnant and not getting help from the baby's father, she started planning a baby shower. I've seen again and again that those who have faced eviction do not hesitate

to welcome evicted friends and family into their homes for extended stays, even when space is tight. Another neighbor, Lance, and his wife have helped out numerous friends, even when it proved financially costly, like the time another couple borrowed their van and then left it broken down on the side of the road.

This generosity could be called foolishness, but I wonder if it is not more akin to what Pope Francis in his visit to Kangemi slum in Nairobi called "the wisdom" of the poor. His address is worth quoting at length:

"It is a wisdom found in poor neighbourhoods. A wisdom which is born of the 'stubborn resistance' of that which is authentic (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 112), from Gospel values which an opulent society, anaesthetized by unbridled consumption, would seem to have forgotten. You are able 'to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome' (ibid., 149).

The culture of poor neighbourhoods, steeped in this particular wisdom, 'has very positive traits, which can offer something to these times in which we live; it is expressed in values such as solidarity, giving one's life for others, preferring birth to death, providing Christian burial to one's dead; finding a place for the sick in one's home, sharing bread with the hungry (for 'there is always room for one more seat at the table'), showing patience and strength when faced with great adversity, and so on' (Equipo de Sacerdotes para las Villas de Emergencia, Argentina, *Reflexiones sobre urbanización y la cultura villera*, 2010). Values grounded in the fact each human being is more important than the god of money. Thank you for reminding us that another type of culture is possible."

The experience of poverty may cultivate certain virtues, like compassion and generosity, and facilitate the formation of a culture that values persons over things.

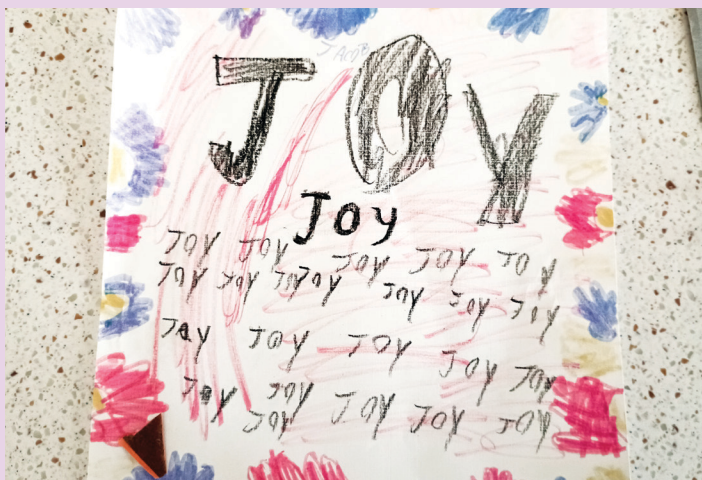
When I've let myself be evangelized by the poor—entering into cross-class friendships not with a "god-complex" but with an openness to learn—I've found a Gospel truth that can inform



the larger culture and enrich our lives together in the Church. By looking to these friends and neighbors, I've had the opportunity to consider how my own wealth—be it material or social—may be an idol, best relinquished for the love of the other.

Amber Lapp is a Lydia's House atrium volunteer, donor and member of our support sodality. A longer form of this piece was originally presented at the Catholic Women's Forum Symposium on Poverty.

**The art below was produced by Lydia's House guest and former guest children in the Wednesday night faith formation program.**







## TAX PREPARATION: A MINISTRY

By Meridith Owensby

I rise to greet the stranger as she enters. She comes clutching a sheaf of papers, a child in tow. We exchange names, I remind her how the process will proceed, and we settle into our chairs. She begins to speak, telling me about what's happened in her life. She answers my questions, providing a fuller picture of her decisions and regrets, and I use my knowledge to put the narrative into a meaningful form.

I am not a doctor nor a confessor. No, for this hour, at least, I am an unpaid tax preparer.

My commitment to this unusual volunteer gig came from my own taxpaying experience. In my first year of college, I received a W2 from a summer job and a 1098-T from my university. I was unsure how to calculate my taxes and feared making mistakes, so I made an appointment with a nearby paid tax service. The appointment took about 30 minutes and cost \$250.

My impoverished student self was appalled at the price tag, especially for what felt as simple and necessary as an oil change. I vowed never again to use a paid service for basic tax prep. When the next tax season rolled around, I gathered tax forms and instruction booklets from the library along with the 2001 edition of *Taxes for Dummies*. I parsed the difference between credits and deductions, earned and unearned income, feeling accomplished as I mailed the completed return. After graduating college, I continued to prepare my taxes, learning more complicated calculations for charitable giving and interest on student loan repayments.

Several years later, I spotted a sign at the library advertising free tax prep. Curious, I called the number on the flyer. I learned that my local United Way sponsored a program called VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance). Volunteers with the VITA program underwent IRS-certified tax training, becoming proficient at preparing basic or advanced returns. The program was open to taxpayers under a certain income.

In 2006, I became a VITA volunteer for the first time, an annual practice I continue to this day. Our routine goes like this: On a tax prep day, volunteers arrive early at a community tax site, usually a school or recreation center. We are provided with laptops and workstations that allow for semi-private conversations. A trained greeter welcomes clients, helping ensure prospective taxpayers have the documents necessary to receive help.

When clients sit at my station, we talk about big things: birth, graduation, retirement, and sometimes even the death of a

spouse. We review the documents they've brought, listing interest received on a checking account, payments for dependent care, or 1099s received from gig work. I check boxes and enter numbers in the tax software during the conversation. Once all the questions are answered, a second tax volunteer reviews my work, ensuring the screen numbers match the taxpayer's documents. We then tell the taxpayer how much is owed or how much of a refund they'll receive. For a refund, we may enter bank account information for a direct deposit. Almost inevitably, the taxpayer shares plans for the refund, from car repairs to a family trip.

Preparing a return is discrete and clear, and for low-income families, the return often ends in a payment more significant than any other they'll see in a year. I am proud to know they do not have to give a portion of that return to a paid service because of my efforts.

This year, at my urging, my coworker Laurel elected to get certified as a tax preparer. A recent college grad, Laurel will be able to offer tax help to a new generation of women. It makes me feel like a tax grandmother, seeing this new preparer launch into her life of helping others. Because of Laurel and others like her, future low-income individuals and families will have more money at tax time.

**If you'd like to join in this needed service check out VITA <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/irs-tax-volunteers> or reach out to me for more details: [meridith@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:meridith@stlydiashouse.org)**





# BECOMING A JOINER

By Laurel Stoltzfus, Lydia's House Mercy Volunteer

***It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent  
enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete,  
which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.  
- from "Oscar Romero's Prayer"***

I used to think that if I was really going to commit to doing the most good I possibly could in the world, I would have to join the most broken organization I could find. I imagined myself becoming a prison chaplain or a nurse in a state-funded home, carrying a whole organization heroically without support. I knew that burnout existed, but figured it was just part of doing serious good work in the world.

Thankfully, before I set myself up in a situation like that, I recognized that I simply don't have the indomitable spirit needed to be a hero. If I tried to fix a whole organization without support, I would burn out quickly and hardly be of any service to anyone. Instead, I accepted my shortcomings and signed up to serve at Lydia's House, where I would join and support a group of people already doing wonderful work. I've been at Lydia's House since August, and the experience of being part of such a good community has made me seriously reconsider my idea of what total service to Christ looks like.

When I first came to Lydia's House, I saw service and suffering as a 0-sum game; to decrease the suffering in the world as much as I could, I basically needed to work in situations where I would suffer a lot. I thought of Lydia's House as a sort of training ground where I could learn to do hard work with support and eventually overcome my weaknesses and be able to move on to the aforementioned difficult places and do serious service – hard work without support. Realistically, I thought, I might never be capable of the life I imagined and would probably have to settle for something less saintly. Perhaps I was destined for second-rate Kingdom citizenship and living an easier and happier life.

As I settled into Lydia's House, learned my role, and became a fuller part of the team, I started noticing that I thrived in such a strong Christian community and realized that I could serve people much better when I was thriving. Thinking practically, I saw that I could be of more service to others when I was working in a healthy environment with a joyful group of people. Then, thinking theologically, I remembered that there is something inherently good about working in community.

I still hold that joining the coming of the Kingdom does mean interacting closely with suffering, evil, and sorrow, but I don't believe that is the most important part. My new realization is that it's not all about working against evil; it's about working for goodness and joy and real community right where we are. Previously, I saw the suffering and the need for Christ in the world, but I didn't realize that *He is the one who carries a broken world on his own*. My part is not to be Christ; my job is to follow and join in!

To get less abstract: I can be more helpful to the Lydia's House guests by meeting them with joy and excitement instead of dragging myself through the work of case management as a dour obligation. Cleaning in the shelter goes much faster when held with a sense of camaraderie and gratitude for the celebrations that left the mess. Lydia's House has shown me that Christian community bears us up to do good work, makes us able to do more good work, and is also in itself a way that God's Kingdom is made real in the world. I see that flourishing in doing hard work in community and with rest and joy is not a personal failing; it's part of being human and it's how I was created. It's a relief to give up on my ideas of heroism, fully trust in the coming of the New Creation and remember that I'm not responsible for making it come on my own.

In the living room of Lydia's House, there is a photo of Sister Thea Bowman along with a quote from her: "I think the difference between me and some people is that I'm content to do my little bit. Sometimes people think they have to do big things in order to make change. But if each one would light a candle, we'd have a tremendous light." My time at Lydia's House so far has made me much more content to do my little bit and know that real Kingdom citizenship is about being part of something much, much bigger than my own life.

***If you're interested in being a 1- or 2-year  
volunteer with Lydia's House we have an  
opening starting in August 2025.  
Please email [maryellen@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:maryellen@stlydiashouse.org)  
for more information***

# LYDIA'S HOUSE 2024 REPORT TO PARTNERS

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2024 was another brimful year for Lydia's House! As a result of work and prayer, the fruits of last year included:

## Guest Care and Aftercare

- Explored new data tracking systems and exported existing data to "Notion" for guest outcome reporting
- Created a new guest exit survey to improve the experience of future guest families
- Added summer camp to our offerings, including swimming, reading, and life skills supports for guest and former guest kids ages 3-12
- Partnered with Trout Lily Montessori, Bellarmine Chapel, and Procter Episcopal camp for family enrichment
- Created a float and walked in the Norwood Day Parade with Lydia's House kids
- Provided temporary housing outside of the shelter during shelter expansion
- Maintained shelter occupancy of 88% during renovation

## Administration, Staffing and Fundraising

- Hired Rachel Burgess as director of administration to support the core staff
- Updated our fiscal policies and personnel policies manuals
- Completed our solar install through Sonlight Power
- Oversaw an audit of our 2023 finances
- Created partnership with University of Notre Dame for intern placements; hosted 4 summer interns
- Fully funded all elements of the expansion plan, expanding our footprint with zero debt
- Sold 2005 Mills Ave to fund future housing expansions
- Celebrated 10 years of hosting guests with an epic event, including an ice cream truck
- Hosted our first In-Via German gap year student for a 1-year internship
- Implemented a new staff evaluation process and job description grid system as well as daily tracking for guest care and shelter management tasks

## Affordable Housing and Shelter Expansion

- Completed our shelter expansion, adding capacity for guests and aftercare activities
- Collaborated with Hamilton County to oversee construction administration of the addition

- Renovated 2028 Mills Ave to expand the shelter yard, streamline staff housing, and consolidate offices for improved supportive case management/care. Moved office from 2005 Mills to 2028 Mills
- Completed and implemented our campus master plan including a new playset, prayer garden, and outdoor dining area
- Completed the Bread and Roses mural on 1801 Mills Ave affordable housing building
- Developed a new landlord partnership and legal paradigm for property management of non Lydia's House owned units; moved 2 families into landlord partnership building
- Moved 3 families on to new landlords at the end of their 3 years stay in Lydia's House affordable housing; replaced those families with existing shelter guests to reach 100% capacity on our affordable housing units
- Partnered with Over the Rhine Community Housing for affordable housing placement for other shelter guest families
- Responded efficiently to the Section 8 moratorium by creating our own housing subsidy
- Enrolled 2 people in the Family Self Sufficiency program to help them save for home ownership

## Strategic Partnerships

- Continued our partnerships with Bellarmine Chapel, The Moose Lodge, The Smith Family and the Cornish Scott Family for Holiday Festivities
- Hosted the Bruderhof youth for a work weekend; received produce, baked goods and needed items from the Bruderhof community
- Partnered with Artworks for a backyard sports court surface mural
- Hosted Tim Hochstetler for swim lesson and first aid training
- Partnered with St Timothy Episcopal Church, Christ the Savior Orthodox Church, Calvary Episcopal Church, Norwood Jazzercise, Trilogy Fitness, The Beauty Shop, TriHealth, Norwood Recreation Department and many more for drives for needed items
- Took an outing to Gorman Farm courtesy of the Aerni Family



- Continued our partnership with Drive to Thrive for car placements for our families
- Sent a large group of kids to Camp Joy
- Swam and trick-or-treated with the Norwood Department of Recreation
- Published an article in Comment 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 Bloomington Catholic Worker discernment project
- Offered meals and childcare to the Nurturing Communities conference
- Took meetings with potential collaborators on a new daycare for Lydia's House families

### Spirituality, Atrium, and Adult Programming

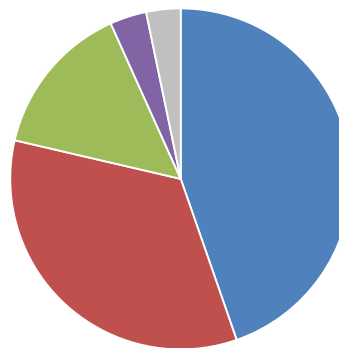
- Added on-site classrooms for family faith program
- Sent 2 staff members through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training, level 1
- Developed a new staff faith formation program
- Developed and implemented an adult faith formation program for guests and former guests
- Created a sodality support group to support Meridith and Mary Ellen personally, professionally and spiritually
- Hosted guests at our home churches in an effort to connect families to the larger Christian community

## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT FINANCES

### INCOME 2024

Individuals	\$350,351
Private Grants	\$266,338
Earned Income	\$114,706
Churches and Religious Orders	\$27,259
Cash Reserves/Interest	\$25,534
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$784,188 *</b>

\*Note: Additional fundraising was applied to the renovation at 2028 Mills Ave. and is booked as an asset in our accounting.

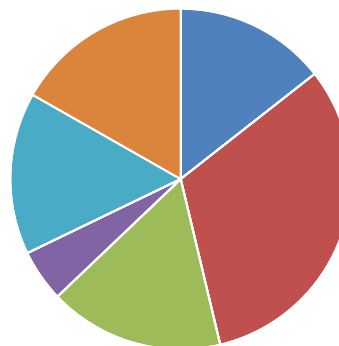


### INCOME 2024

Individuals
Private Grants
Cash Reserves
Earned Income
Churches and Religious Orders

### EXPENSE 2024

Stabilization (includes utilities, food, bus passes, insurance, personal care spending)	\$73,548
Support (includes expenses related to guest support personnel)	\$162,557
Community (includes spiritual and family programs, outings, newsletter, aftercare)	\$84,751
Admin and Fundraising (includes office expenses and supplies, software and hardware, accounting professional expenses, admin professional expenses)	\$25,323
Maintenance and Upgrades (includes yards, furniture, building maintenance and maintenance staffing)	\$78,531
Depreciation/Other	\$85,551
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$510,261</b>



### EXPENSE 2024

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

# Lydia's House 2024 Y

## 43 served in shelter + 113 aftercare

### Emergency Shelter at Lydia's House



19 Families were provided Emergency Shelter for stays between 13 and 30 days  
79% 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 = 23.5 Years
- Average ACE\* Score = 5.7
- 21% Experienced Domestic Violence in the Past Year
- 21% Spent time in Foster Care as Children
- 11% Had a Mental Health Diagnosis
- 79% African American; 16% Caucasian, 5% Other category
- Shelter guests named an average of 1.8 people in their social support network \*\*

### Transitional Housing Program at Lydia's House



15 Families Continued onto Lydia's House On-Site Transitional Housing Program Transitional housing is offered for those that stay in shelter longer than 30 days



64%  
Received  
Needed  
Mental Health  
or Medical  
Care



91%  
Obtained and/or  
Maintained  
Employment or  
Entered Job  
Training



82%  
Obtained  
Government  
Benefits



64%  
Obtained  
Necessary  
Documentation

### Guests shared advice for future LH residents:

" Know you have a lot of support and many people rooting for you."

"Keep your head up. Whatever you do, don't stop, because it does get better."



\*ACE = Adverse Childhood Events, A tool used to assess traumatic events individuals experienced during childhood, higher scores correlated with negative health outcomes, Score 0-10\*\*As measured by the Sarason Social Support Questionnaire - Short Form, among those who completed their stays and questionnaires in 2024"



# 4 Year in Review


## rcare = 156 Individuals Served




Average Total Length of Stay: 100 Days 91% Moved into Stable Housing



18% Received Legal Assistance



64% Received Assistance in Enrolling Children in a New School or Daycare



5 Guests Supported in Pregnancy



"Help others but help yourself more, stay on your path."



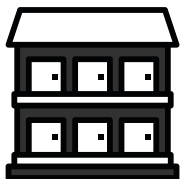
### Lydia's House Aftercare Program

#### 38 Families Served



- 8 Parties Offered to Aftercare Families (Epiphany, Norwood Day, Pool Party, Stricker's Grove, 10th Anniversary, Thanksgiving, Breakfast with Santa, Christmas Karaoke)
- 7 Families Attended Family Camp and 33 kids attended LH's first in-house summer camp
- \$50,000 Spent on Aftercare Families
  - \$31,000 Provided in Financial Assistance, such as Rent, Utilities, and Bills
  - 46 Children Provided Funding to Strengthen Family Bonds, including Birthday Parties, Vacations or Family Outings
  - 9 Families Provided Annual Memberships to Local Attractions, such as the Zoo or Norwood Pool
- 5 Families Provided Legal Assistance, including Trained Tax Preparation
- 6 Families Provided Case Management
- 24 Families Provided Social Support outside of gatherings
- 15 Families Provided Assistance in School or Daycare enrollment, School Supplies or Uniforms
- 2 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



13 Families Housed, including 23 kids

- \$4,000 Provided in Rental Assistance to Tenants

### Shelter Expansion

Our shelter addition opened this year, adding class rooms, guest rooms, a staff apartment, and a larger dining room.

We now own three contiguous lots, creating our own shelter campus!



### Thank You to Our Financial Donors January 2024 - March 2025

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## SUPPORT OUR WORK

In late March we submitted our application to the state of Ohio for licensure of our new venture, Christ Light Day Nursery, a childcare focused on homeless and formerly homeless children. Our staff member Tiffany Nirschel has taken the lead on this project with support from early childhood educator Amanda Nobbe. Community Playthings granted us a large donation of top-of-the-line preschool furniture supplemented by donations from Vineyard Central Church and The Sisters of Mercy. We are grateful to an anonymous donor for offering seed funding for our teacher/ administrator position. **We are still hoping to raise \$100,000 to cover the first year of operations.** All donations given in the enclosed envelope will be applied to the day nursery. In light of current cuts to programs offering support to the poor we hope this venture will allow single mothers to work more, while their children are cared for well. We plan to open September 1.