

The Road Home

STORIES OF *HOPE* FROM THE ARLINGTON LIFE SHELTER

**Arlington
Life Shelter**

WINTER 2022





Stephanie R. Melchert
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend,

I’m so grateful to be celebrating the beginning of 2022 among friends like you. This special time of year is good for reflecting on our past, present and future – and I couldn’t be more thankful for everything you have done and continue to do for the Arlington Life Shelter.

Your support is what’s gotten the Shelter as far as it’s come today. Thanks to generosity from neighbors like you, we’re proud to be celebrating our 35th year of service.

You’ve made this possible.

To honor our 35th birthday, we’ve started a brand new monthly giving group – Sustainers House. You can now give to the Shelter all year long... Consider this the easiest New Year’s resolution ever!

Please join us in celebrating this momentous occasion by enjoying this issue of The Road Home, and know you were the one who inspired action with your generosity.

Thank you for your commitment to nurturing strength in our community.

Gratefully,
Stephanie Melchert
Stephanie R. Melchert
Executive Director

Our Mission: To promote self-sufficiency by providing shelter, employment programs and transitional services for North Texans impacted by homelessness.

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Arlington
Life Shelter

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Your Support Rejuvenates Neighbors in the New Year

Jacqueline has always worked incredibly hard for the people around her. Born and raised in Fort Worth, she had a successful property owners’ business for 25 years before a major car accident left her disabled.

Jacqueline had to have several surgeries over the span of 15 years as a result of this accident. Because of this, she lost clients and hours and wasn’t able to work like she needed to. Soon after, Jacqueline and her mother who lived with her were evicted from their apartment.

She needed to make sure her mom was safe, so Jacqueline used all the money she had

left to move her to a senior living home.

“That’s when I started sleeping in my car,” she says.

For the last two years, Jacqueline experienced homelessness.

“I was calling around to find any sort of help when someone told me about the Shelter,” Jacqueline shares. **“The Shelter has allowed me to keep on going.”**

Every week, she explains, staff members help Jacqueline get where she wants to be by referring her to programs and providing all the support possible. But this help is only

available because of donors like you.

“[You have] given me a spark and a rejuvenation of the human spirit,” Jacqueline says. “I’m very grateful.”



CELEBRATING 35 YEARS IN SERVICE TOGETHER

On a very cold night in 1987, volunteers opened the doors of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington to provide a home for our neighbors without shelter.

In 1988, we moved to our current location, which was renovated in 1993, nearly doubling its capacity to serve 87 community members at a time.

In 2019, construction began on the Shelter expansion and became fully operational on June 4, 2020. Bed capacity increased to 120; and an additional 20 guests can be housed during nights of inclement weather. This newest facility includes seven family bedrooms, expanded children’s programming space, and expanded classroom/day use space for guests.

In 1987, most guests were men, often challenged by alcohol or mental illness. Today, women and children make up nearly half of the Shelter’s population. Changing demographics have seen the Shelter expand from providing cold weather shelter to the comprehensive rehabilitative services offered today.

Thank you for all you’ve done to help expand the Arlington Life Shelter’s reach to what it is today. This year, we’re celebrating you, our devoted supporters who are committed to making our community one of the best places to call home.

Arlington
Life Shelter

35
YEARS

You've Transformed Lives Like Stephanie's for 35 Years

Stephanie and her kids knew about Arlington Life Shelter from a previous stay in 2015. Back then, the Shelter helped Stephanie transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency, and she and her family couldn't have been more grateful.

Since leaving the Shelter, the family had most recently been living in an extended stay hotel with several pets. The family was doing well until the hotel's management changed and the building's pet policy was rewritten.

Suddenly, Stephanie's family was once again experiencing homelessness.

"We were able to move from hotel to hotel," Stephanie



shares. But soon, she knew had to relocate her family to a place that would provide a chance to start over again.

"[The Shelter] is great about taking care of all the details on the way in ... and the way out," Stephanie says. "We appreciate the staff, volunteers and donors. Without [you], who knows

where we would be. **It's a blessing to all of us."**

Thank you endlessly for your generosity that helps families like Stephanie's regain security. Neighbors like you have made huge life changes possible for the past 35 years – I can't wait to see what we accomplish together over the next 35.

Welcoming Gregg Wilkinson as the Shelter's New Board President

You wouldn't know it from looking at him, but Gregg Wilkinson came from a very modest background. When he was young, he lived in a trailer house with his father and brother, and, back then, the family had to do its best to simply survive.

"I know what it's like to need help," Gregg says honestly.

Despite the hardship he faced growing up, Gregg and his wife Nancy grew an incredibly successful accounting business together. For the last 27

years, the business has been expanding and going strong. To add to his list of impressive accomplishments, he and Nancy also own the just-as-successful No Frills Grill & Sports Bar restaurants.

What brought Gregg and his wife to the Arlington Life Shelter several years ago was a holiday fundraising event. Gregg and Nancy immediately knew they wanted to become more involved. Gregg got a position on the board and, a few years later, was asked to be Secretary.



Gregg Wilkinson
PRESIDENT

Gregg now looks forward to bringing his business savviness to his new role as Board President, hoping to "fall into the leadership position easily."

"I am humbled and honored to be the new board president," he says. "This is a heartfelt organization.... We are stronger than we have ever been."