Integrating Our Services Under One Roof
A MESSAGE FROM RACHEL SOLOTAROFF, M.D., PRESIDENT & CEO

In March, we kicked off our 40th year of assisting people impacted by homelessness to find better health, homes and employment with an open house event chronicling Central City Concern’s (CCC) evolution since 1979. I’ve been with CCC for a third of its life, and during that time I have witnessed incredible growth and transformation in the organization. This is due to the monumental efforts of the staff, clients and community of CCC.

Attending to both the deeply human and personal roots of homelessness, as well as structural drivers such as a lack of affordable housing and living wage jobs, racism and discrimination, and inequities in education and income, our teams are steadily meeting the high bar of our mission: to provide comprehensive solutions to ending homelessness.

By understanding the causes of homelessness, we are in a better position to find the best solutions. We’ve taken our knowledge of health, housing, employment and social connectedness, as well as 40 years of experience, to build Blackburn Center (located at 12121 E Burnside), a project that integrates all of our signature services under the same roof.

We have learned from our clients that when we give people choices in their addiction recovery, they have a better chance of long-term success. In response, Blackburn Center will offer an array of substance use disorder treatments that include counseling, groups, peer support, medication and wellness classes. Clients can choose the recovery path that works best for them and their families, while accessing other services (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)
Central City Concern (CCC) supporter Kelli Payne helps people through the paperwork for buying, selling and refinancing their homes. She donates five percent of her business proceeds to local nonprofits, including CCC. “I’ve seen and experienced the transformation that happens when people have a loving home,” she says. “I’ve been given the opportunity through volunteering to talk to people impacted by homelessness and mental illness and see my own human struggle and suffering reflected in their stories.”

Kelli finds it easy to share a portion of her earnings. “Giving a percentage makes my contribution manageable and ties my business to the incredibly impactful work of organizations like CCC,” she says. “This amplifies the meaning I find in my work and going about my day.”

When it comes to choosing where to give, for Kelli, the choice was easy. “CCC does life-saving work of helping our Portland neighbors recover from homelessness to live productive lives,” she says. “I have a friend whose son’s life was saved by CCC. It’s an honor to carry their mission with me every day.”

Kelli recommends the percentage model when it comes to businesses sharing with the community. “Contributing a percentage has made it manageable,” she says. “I listened to my own heart song and took the leap, and it has been truly rewarding.”

Donor Profile: Kelli Payne

The last 40 years of hope and healing would not have been possible without our many community partners and donors who support and guide us every day. Thank you all.
On May 8, Central City Concern (CCC) held our annual We Are Family fundraising dinner for Letty Owings Center (LOC) and our Family Housing programs at the Oregon Zoo.

Karen Kern, CCC’s senior director of substance use disorder services, served as the night’s emcee. CCC president and CEO, Rachel Solotaroff, shared several compelling statistics about the impact of these programs.

“More than 1,600 children and their mothers have found shelter and support at LOC. Over 300 healthy babies have been born to mothers who have received support at LOC, with six births just last year,” she announced. “Twelve families moved into CCC permanent housing after completing treatment at LOC.”

In 2018, 142 children who had previously been in foster care stayed united with their families. Nearly 60 children returned to their families from foster care and 54 parents either found or maintained employment with the assistance of CCC staff.

LOC co-founder Nancy Anderson reflected on the frustration she felt more than 30 years ago upon learning about the lack of treatment options for women with children. Focusing her desire to meet these mothers where they were, she connected with another fearless advocate, Letty Owings, to start the program.

“LOC is what happens when two women make a way out of no way,” Nancy said to applause.

Anthony Jordan, a manager in Multnomah County Mental Health and Addiction Services Division, spoke about the crucial partner role LOC plays in the region’s treatment of individuals experiencing mental illness and substance use disorder.

After, guests watched a video about Amber Lakin, a former LOC client who now lives in CCC Family Housing and works as Central City Coffee’s trainee supervisor. In the video, she graciously shared her incredible journey, from being pregnant while in jail to raising a thriving family and serving as a role model to women learning skills through CCC’s coffee social enterprise. “I get to work with women that are in the exact same place that I was and I get to cheer them on,” she shared.

Oregon State Senator Shemia Fagan wrapped up the program, disclosing the traumas of addiction and homelessness she’d experienced in her own family. She spoke out against how difficult it can be for women and families to receive help and find footing on their road to recovery, while praising CCC for breaking down barriers and opening up the channels for long-term change as much as possible.

Entertainment was provided by Jazz Society of Oregon Hall of Famer Shirley Nanette.

“Letty Owings Center is what happens when two women make a way out of no way.”

Nancy Anderson, LOC co-founder
David Brandon grew up in Knappa, Ore., an idyllic community on the banks of the Columbia River. But things didn’t turn out great for him. “I got hooked up with the wrong crowd,” he admits.

David started his substance use with cigarettes when he was 14, then moved on to marijuana and drinking. He dropped out of high school and eventually started using heroin and meth. According to David, “I spent six years partying and couch surfing.” He was essentially homeless and knew it was time to make a change.

David landed in the Native American Rehabilitation Association’s (NARA) residential facility in St. Helens. When it came time to leave, he asked to go to Central City Concern’s (CCC) Richard Harris Building. He had heard from friends in NARA that CCC’s “8x8” recovery program there was a safe and welcoming community with privacy. He was thrilled to move in and began training in CCC’s Clean Start program. “Visiting homeless camps to haul away trash kind of reminds me of where I’d be if I didn’t get clean,” David says. “I was an addict and I hope I inspire others to think, ‘I can do this.’”

David now has permanent housing in the Richard Harris and spends his time going to recovery meetings, Blazers games and hanging out with his mom when she visits from Knappa. His plan is to move up in the Clean Start organization and continue inspiring others.