

# Piloting Change

## Conrad's Journey:

# From Challenges to Resilience and Hope

Conrad, a proud native of Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, celebrates his sixty-sixth birthday this year. He carries with him a rich family history, proudly tracing his lineage back to his third great-grandfather, who once served as governor of Louisiana. Despite his Southern roots, Conrad ventured far from home, eventually settling in Oregon. Raised by his grandparents, he now serves as the patriarch of a large family, boasting eight children and twenty-two grandchildren. His face lights up with pride as he shares photographs of his family.

However, Conrad's journey has been marked by challenges. Despite his strong work ethic, financial difficulties led him down an unconventional path. To make ends meet, he dabbled in various occupations and also sold drugs. Though he managed to balance regular employment with his side ventures, legal troubles in the late 1990s resulted in over a decade of federal incarceration. Emerging from this dark period, Conrad made a solemn vow never to return to selling drugs.

For Conrad, selling drugs was merely a means of survival; he never struggled with personal addiction. With many connections in that world, it provided a way to support his family during tough times. Yet, he remains steadfast in his resolve never to return, declaring, "I will never go back to that life. I will be homeless before I ever go back. I'm living for my grandbaby and kids now."

His post-incarceration life brought its own challenges, including homelessness and difficulty securing housing due to his criminal record and limited income. Undeterred, Conrad enrolled in college, determined to complete his associate's degree. He hopes to use his experiences to inspire and assist others, drawing wisdom from his unique life journey.

Turning to NWPP for assistance, Conrad worked to overcome barriers to housing access. With his crimi-



*Conrad enjoys bicycling in his neighborhood*

nal record expunged and armed with determination, he secured an apartment, using the bulk of his Social Security retirement income to cover rent while awaiting subsidized housing.

Though the rent poses a challenge, Conrad finds solace in the support of NWPP staff, particularly Jason LaBrado, his case manager, and Jason Coulthurst, the Housing Access Manager. Conrad feels truly supported for the first time in his life, emphasizing that he and "the Jasons" make a formidable team.

Looking ahead, Conrad eagerly anticipates the day he comes to the top of subsidized housing waiting lists for truly affordable housing. In the meantime, he cherishes moments spent with his grandchildren, pursuing his education, and enjoying bike rides and basketball games.



From the  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
 Laura Golino de Lovato

Dear Friends

Happy 2024! Thanks to you, our year end fundraising – including the *Williamette Week Give!Guide* – was robust! We are so appreciative of you because these funds allow us to provide additional support in a flexible way to our clients to meet *their* needs.

In this newsletter, we are excited to share with you a couple of inspiring stories that showcase the remarkable resilience and strength of the individuals we serve. Conrad’s and Becky’s journeys exemplify the incredible grace and determination with which they have faced life’s challenges, and we are truly grateful to them for allowing us to share their stories with you. Through their experiences, they shed light on crucial advocacy areas that are at the core of our mission.

Be sure to flip to pages 4 and 5 to get the scoop on our revamped annual event! We’re thrilled to unveil the exciting new iteration and promise it’s going to be a real hoot!!

*Laura*

*Celebrating Wendy Rudman:*

**20 Years of Dedication to NWPP**

The process from homelessness or unstable housing into affordable housing is often an arduous one that involves gathering documents, filling out lots of paperwork, and waiting months – even years – to finally move into a permanent home. When one of our clients is finally offered the chance to move in, we want everything to go as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Yet there are so many last-minute details. Will the client have a deposit and a prorated rent in hand for the lease-signing? Will they have basic furniture, bedding, and kitchen

supplies? Can they reach their case manager on a working cell phone if anything goes wrong?

For the past twenty years, Wendy Rudman has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure our clients and staff members have everything they need in those final frantic days leading up to the move. Over her long tenure, Wendy has touched virtually every part of our organization. From taking notes for our Board of Directors’ meetings to setting up staff phones, from writing checks to landlords to working with volunteers donating items, Wendy’s job descrip-

tion has grown longer and more complex with each year. Wendy does a lot of things at NWPP, and she does them well.

But what makes Wendy exceptional, as an Executive Assistant and as a person, is her unwavering commitment to the clients we serve, and to the mission of our organization. Somewhere within her long list of responsibilities, Wendy has played a part in every single homeless prevention or housing placement service that has happened in the 20 years and three months since her first day at NWPP. We counted, and that is 9,121 older adults who moved into or remained in permanent housing with Wendy’s help.

Wendy will be bidding farewell to NWPP on March 28, 2024, embarking on a well-earned retirement to cherish moments with her family. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Wendy for her unwavering dedication, efficiency, and steady presence, often accompanied by her delightful wry humor. Moreover, we extend our thanks for her invaluable contributions to the lives of 9,000 older adults who have been profoundly impacted by her tireless efforts, even if they didn’t know her name.



*Wendy receiving donations of bedding*

## Unlocking Doors: Navigating Affordable Housing Challenges for Seniors

On the cover story you met Conrad, one of the older adults we are helping with the often arduous, complex and confusing process of accessing housing that is truly affordable to someone on a very low fixed income. It is challenging enough to try to find a decent apartment with rent that doesn't eat up more than 30% of your income, but this challenging process is compounded when you have a past eviction, poor credit, accumulated debt, or criminal history, like Conrad.

These issues are often barriers to getting through the rental housing application screening process, a process that many of us have been through without a hitch when applying for an apartment. But the seniors we work with who have one or more of these barriers often are denied housing by not meeting the "screening criteria."

Enter NWPP's housing team of case managers and housing access specialists. Our housing team members are engaged daily in direct service—directly working with our clients to secure housing they can afford along with a variety of services— but they are also advocates for our clients, doing what we call "small 'a' advocacy."

Unlike public policy work, small 'a' advocacy is about breaking down barriers to housing that so frequently arise during the application and move-in process. Sometimes this advocacy is a phone call to the landlord; sometimes it's what's called a 'reasonable accommodation': a written case submitted to the landlord explaining why their client shouldn't

be denied housing. This kind of advocacy can take time, and it definitely takes persistence, but it is usually successful.

Other ways that our housing team members advocate for our clients is by working with our partners to ensure that all the paperwork for the apartment application or the rent subsidy is available in a timely manner, or accessible to our client in a format they can use. For example, many of our clients don't use email but the

paperwork is sent electronically by default. Our housing team ensures the paperwork is available in hard copy and also assists the client in filling out the application.

Advocacy comes in many forms, and advocating for clients is as critical as advocating for policies that provide access to rent assistance or in-home care. Small 'a' advocacy is part of our service commitment to our clients, and why we can't do our work without dedicated, committed staff.

### Meet NWPP's Advocacy Team

Just as with our direct services work, NWPP could not engage in successful advocacy work without our dedicated and hardworking staff.

**Katie Warden**, Public Policy Coordinator, joined NWPP in December 2022, to track key information from the City of Portland and Multnomah County about changes to homeless services,

and policies that affect our work. Katie also works with key partners to track housing and senior related legislation during the state legislative session, and drafts and manages any testimony from NWPP.

**Yoni Kahn** joined NWPP in August 2023 and brings a wealth of experience about fair housing laws, and deep knowledge of how health systems work. Yoni's been leading our work to advocate for streamlined integration of our housing work with the health systems, especially Medicaid, that our clients need to access to stay healthy. Read more about this work on page 6.



# Join Us for the Housing Seniors Hootenanny

## Sunday, May 5th, 1pm

The Housing Seniors Hootenanny is our exciting new event, replacing the Walk-A-Thon. This is a chance to rally together to support NWPP's mission of providing hope and dignity to low-income seniors through housing solutions, and reconnect through our shared commitment to older adults.

### 3 Ways YOU can make a difference:

- 1 Register to be a **virtual fundraiser** – it's quick, simple, and free! Just visit <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/hootenanny24/>. Then set up your fundraising page and inspire your community to donate generously through the month of April.
- 2 Join us at the Housing Seniors Hootenanny to celebrate NWPP's achievements made possible by all of our supporters! We'll share lunch, present awards, honor our fundraisers, enjoy family-friendly activities, and applaud NWPP's impact in the community.
- 3 **DO BOTH!** Be a fundraiser and attend the event. **RSVP** for our Housing Seniors Hootenanny at Oaks Park when you sign up as a fundraiser or by email at [rsvp@nwppilotproject.org](mailto:rsvp@nwppilotproject.org). Let us know your name, the number of adults and children who will be attending the event with you. Or call 503-486-6518.



# A Celebration of Community & Support!



NWPP's new event, the **Housing Seniors Hootenanny**, celebrates our supporters, donors and their families and friends. Join us at Oaks Amusement Park for fun, prizes and lunch. It's going to be a HOOT!



## **Fabulous Prizes**

This year, we're again thrilled to offer exciting prizes for top fundraisers and community partners.

**Top individual fundraising prize is a \$500 Air B&B gift card.** Click the QR code for more details.

**Ride bracelets** will be provided for all participants, granting access to the park's thrilling rides on May 5th.\*

**Parking is plentiful and FREE!** Use code 1969 at the parking meter on May 5th.

**Sponsorships available!** Step up your support. Explore great sponsorship opportunities and benefits. Contact Laura Golino de Lovato, NWPP Executive Director, at 503-478-6868 or [laurag@nwpilotproject.org](mailto:laurag@nwpilotproject.org).

*\* roller skating and go-carts excluded*



**Bring your family and friends to celebrate and support NWPP!**

# Connecting Health and Housing: A Pathway to Stability for Vulnerable Populations

NWPP clients are some of the most vulnerable people in our community. As we've shared with you, about 70% of those we serve have at least one disability, and with aging comes the need for additional health care and health services. And we are seeing more clients with a higher level of health acuity and need.

Homelessness and even unstable housing can aggravate aging, making it true for many that "50 is the new 70". Our goal is to support clients with rent assistance, case management, and access to services so they can live independently for as long as

possible. A key service our clients need is health care, and what is missing for many is an easy way to connect to basic primary care services, care coordination, behavioral health, or substance use disorder treatment.

Many of our clients have existing health and wellness challenges, and we feel strongly that they should not have to wait for these challenges to cascade into a catastrophe that jeopardizes their housing stability. Instead, we are collaboratively bringing different partners together to explore a more proactive approach through the integration of health

and housing services. A key goal of health and housing integration is to support long term housing retention for our clients. The health needs of our clients who have been homeless are typically significant as homelessness exacerbated aging and degrades health. Without an easy way to access care, clients who are housed by us often remain at-risk for eviction due to the exacerbation of health conditions that could have otherwise been addressed upstream.

We envision a streamlined health care access process for our clients as one that supports clients eligible for the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) – Oregon's Medicaid program – that is free from as many barriers as possible and that allows NWPP, as the case management agency, to connect to health care services (primary care, behavioral health, substance use disorder treatment, oral health, medication management). Simply put, it would be a process that allows both our client and us to proactively address healthcare needs.

By empowering housing services staff to be aware of and communicate with an existing client's health plan, we would have the ability to better serve clients who struggle with health conditions such as diabetes, COPD, or behavioral health conditions.

We are currently working with a group of other social and human services providers, and with the Coordinated Care Organization (CCOs) to identify key information about a client's health coverage: both the CCO and specific plan that a client



## Remembering Ruth Schuld

May 19, 1921 – March 8, 2024

For over forty years, Ruth was a rock-solid supporter of Northwest Pilot Project, setting an inspiring example for many. She didn't just talk the talk; she walked the walk – literally! Ruth participated in many Walk-A-Thons, raising over \$150,000 to help our community. Beyond that, she generously gave her time volunteering and spreading the word about our mission.



In 2021, as she approached her 100th birthday, Ruth was interviewed by a local newspaper. When asked about her secret to a long life, she simply said, "Take it slow." Her wisdom resonated with many. Despite facing the challenges of aging, she remained grateful, recognizing her privilege and the struggles of others. She highlighted the importance of organizations like NWPP in assisting those in need.

As we prepare for this year's virtual fundraiser, Ruth will be in our thoughts. Her legacy of kindness and dedication will continue to inspire us all.

has enrolled in or been assigned to. Housing service providers need to know this information to ensure:

- 1) that a client who is eligible for OHP is actually enrolled; and
- 2) to verify or learn the health plan in order to actually access health care information and assist clients with making appointments, etc.

If a client eligible for OHP is not currently enrolled, the plan for access should ensure that the individual is enrolled (without placing further administrative burden on the housing service provider), and the housing service provider is informed of the CCO and health plan when that information becomes available.

NWPP also believes that a comprehensive strategy should define clear access pathways for housing service providers to communicate with CCOs and health plans. There is opportunity to think through designated entry points for social workers to communicate with health systems about a client's health care needs while also identifying the least disruptive mechanisms for health systems to refer individuals to social service providers in order to optimize health system capacity.

Robust care coordination or case conferencing is also needed for clients with complex and high acuity health conditions. To achieve the kind of access to health care that we envision, it will be necessary to establish a two-way referral system that would enhance accountability and efficiency between social services and health systems. De-siloing housing services and health systems will lead to greater connectivity where housing service providers and health systems collaborate and track outcomes together.

By working together, housing service providers and health systems can identify strategies to maintain the essence of the work we all do while maintaining confidentiality and enhancing mutual goals. NWPP has committed planning and resources to lead new system change discussions. We will continue working with lead-

ership in health systems and jurisdictional funders like Multnomah County to think through how we can better promote access to care as part of a broader housing placement and retention strategy.



## Overcoming Challenges to Find Stability and Support

Becky's journey to finding a stable home was incredibly tough. For four years, she tried everything to secure a permanent place to live. Even at the age of sixty, she returned to college, hoping student loans and work-study programs would cover her rent. Despite her efforts, she found herself moving between temporary places, sometimes staying with friends or in shelters.

Adding to her challenges, Becky faced health problems, needing a wheelchair for mobility and insulin that required refrigeration. But Becky persisted, refusing to give up even when things seemed impossible.

Unfortunately, the system let Becky down multiple times. There were moments when it seemed like she might get help, but it always fell through. She was evicted while waiting for her Social Security Disability application, and her situation worsened when she ended up in the hospital with pneumonia. Despite doctors' doubts, Becky fought hard and pulled through.

Seeking a solution, Becky reached out to NWPP for assistance. We enrolled her in our Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program, which offers more than just housing. It provides a stable home along with the support she needs to stay there.



With the help of people like Lyneth, a case manager at NWPP, Becky's life began to stabilize and so did her health. Lyneth helped Becky navigate complicated systems and access resources to rebuild her life. Thanks to PSH, Becky can set goals for herself and work towards a future of independent living.

Becky is living proof that with the right support, even the toughest situations can improve. She's in her own place, paying rent with income from Social Security Disability. Though modest, Becky feels safe, secure, and supported. Her story highlights the power of resilience and the importance of supportive programs like Permanent Supportive Housing.



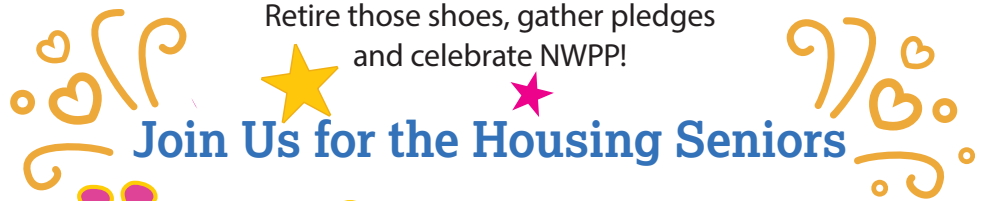
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A fun new event that replaces Walk-A-Thon.

Retire those shoes, gather pledges  
and celebrate NWPP!



**Join Us for the Housing Seniors**

# Hootenanny

**Sunday, May 5th, 1pm**

See pages 4 and 5 for details



*It's Fun! It's New! It Will Be a Hoot!*