

The Journey Home

It is startling to contemplate the magnitude of the crisis families are facing. Massachusetts is sheltering 3,000 homeless families, with 1,011 of them in motels. That means kids, who had very likely already been doubled up in housing with other family and friends before entering the shelter system, will be uprooted at least several more times before they end up “home.” The cost is huge. Financially, the state is spending over 2 million dollars a month on motels. And there are the other costs not so readily apparent and yet more damaging. Seventy five percent of homeless kids are in elementary school. Every time a child changes schools he or she falls farther behind and is more than twice as likely to drop out later. Fifty percent of homeless kids suffer from anxiety and depression.

In our family shelter, our moms (women are still twice as likely to be poor as men) worry about the impact of homelessness and poverty on their children. Without exception, every parent wants to provide a better life for their kids. Children are a family’s treasure. At Wellspring we also understand very deeply that all of the world’s children belong to us. And in this time and place, we have been given particular families to journey with as they work to create a new life and home.

There is no doubt that homelessness is a traumatic crisis for a family. It is often the latest and most wrenching symptom of an ongoing poverty. The crisis is a doorway, and for twenty-eight years, Wellspring has brought to bear the best that our hearts, minds, and resources can create to make it more possible for the individual and family to open a locked door. Practically speaking, that means affordable housing, education for living wage jobs, and the kind of family support that nourishes healthy relationships.

The practical things provide the circumstances for the real purpose of our work, which is to encourage the opening and transformation of the heart and mind. That is what happens when the mind lays aside the crippling beliefs of unworthiness and the haunting fears of nothingness. Happiness arises. That is the Journey Home. And it is by grace and good fortune that we travel that road with you. With deep gratitude for your company and generosity, on behalf of our families, I wish you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season and journey.

Kay O’Rourke, Executive Director

Insert box: Wellspring House welcomes three new members to our Board of Directors: Polly Knowles, Ellen Shaine, and Jennifer Warry.

Insert photo of schoolgirls and caption: Two girls were ready for school—thanks to Bingham McCutchen’s Boston office, which ran a backpack drive for Wellspring. More than twenty backpacks, loaded with clothes and other back-to-school essentials, were distributed to children from the Shelter and Wellspring Cape Ann Families. *Photo Credit:* Mimi Reeves