

# ATTAIN NEWS

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER



*Bringing our community together to partner with homeless families by providing affordable housing and empowering them with practical case management and hope.*

## Home is *Still* Where the Heart Is

How you can support our Virtual Week of Giving, September 18-24

We won't sugarcoat it. 2020 has been a mess. It's been a tough year even on those who are financially stable, so you can only imagine how hard it's been on low-income folks struggling to keep a roof over their heads. The first COVID-19 cases in North America were reported at the nursing home directly next door to one of our housing properties in Kirkland. The families in our transitional housing program have been hit hard with 50% losing their jobs or having their income negatively impacted. Many families' ability to pay rent has been drastically reduced.

Our Fall Fundraiser has always been our biggest event of the year, and a vital source of funding for our operations. Since we can't gather in person for a luncheon like we've done the past few years, we're holding a Week of Giving from September 18 through September 24. All you have to do to participate is sign up for our mailing list if you haven't already, and consider your gift.

During our Virtual Week of Giving you will learn more about our mission to serve vulnerable families with children through transitional housing and case management services, as well as the Stable Home rental assistance program. Throughout the week, you will receive short videos with inside perspectives and heartfelt stories that will bring you closer to Attain's work and mission.

We invite those who are able to stretch a bit this year. We've previously asked for those attending our luncheons to give a gift of \$175 or more. Given the financial impacts of COVID-19 this year on our client families, donors who give \$250 or more will help their struggling neighbors cover rent and remain housed and supported. Of course, no gift is too small! Will you help us find stable housing for even more families?

Our goal is to raise \$180,000!

Your support and connection will be the driving force that allows Attain Hous-



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### Save the Week!

ATTAIN HOUSING PRESENTS

Home is still...  
where the *Heart* is  
**WEEK OF GIVING**

Friday, September 18 - Thursday, September 24  
Kick-Off Virtual Event | Friday, September 18

visit [www.attainhousing.org](http://www.attainhousing.org) for more details

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ing to raise the needed funds to further our mission. We could not do this without your help!

Sign up at [AttainHousing.org](https://AttainHousing.org) to stay connected with us during our Week of Giving.

**Want to go above and beyond? Be an Attain Housing Ambassador and help us spread the word about our Week of Giving!**

Your goal is to encourage your friends, family, colleagues, and your broader circle of connections to sign up for our mailing list to receive our Week of Giving videos and fundraiser updates, as well as pledge to make a donation. Our Ambassador Toolkit has all the resources you need to help you spread the word. Download the Toolkit at [AttainHousing.org/Fall-Fundraiser](https://AttainHousing.org/Fall-Fundraiser).



**Current Attain Housing client Lena and her five children pose for a photo in front of a newly repaired retaining wall, donated by Downtown Kirkland Rotary. Lena and her family will be featured in our Week of Giving videos, which will be sent out to our mailing list subscribers Sept. 18-24.**





# A Message from our Executive Director



Hello friends!

I believe we are currently in the 51st month of 2020. Or so it feels like it! Summers in the PNW are always good for the spirit and even during a pandemic, that warm sunny day can make even the worst things seem more enjoyable. As summer comes to an end and the "school year" gets started, I'm reminded of how much I love September. Crisp mornings, sun-

ny afternoons, and no kids hanging around the house (not the case for many parents this year, and I feel for you!) September is also the beginning of the march to the end of the year and getting out of 2020 and all of the challenges it has presented.

I am also excited about our upcoming Fall Fundraiser, "Home is 'Still' Where the Heart is." Our normal Luncheon event can't happen, but during our Week of Giving, we will have some great content for you to view at home with family and friends. We have had several incredibly generous donors step up to offer matching funds to help everyone's gift go a little further. We have a great keynote speaker in Lauren McGowan, who is a mentor of mine working at United Way of King County. We have clients, past and present sharing their stories, their struggles, and their successes. Our focus for this event is on racial inequities in housing and in our society at large. We hope you will find it informative and inspirational and feel moved to make a donation to the work of Attain Housing.

Even during all of this craziness of 2020, Attain continues to grow to serve more families. Our new Master-Leased property Totem Lane, which was introduced to you in our Winter Newsletter, is now fully occupied with Attain client families. While this was a huge feat to turn over these apartments and bring in new families during a pandemic, move-ins went well and our new families are becoming a friendly community all their own. We continue to look for four more apartments to lease so that we can grow to serving 41 families before the end of the year.

Stable Home has been kept busy with people seeking rental assistance and we've raised our average award from \$546 to just over \$1,000 to cover the need. We have had incredible support from many donors this year and I'm especially grateful to Overlake Park Presbyterian Church who started up a rental relief fund and has donated over \$13,000 to help us survive this economic downturn. While we haven't been able to host a Community Supper since March, we are not giving up on starting this up again in early 2021. It might look different, but we will prevail!

All in all, we are adjusting and figuring out new ways to do things just as well, or even better than before. The need is great and we want to be there to continue serving families who don't have stability in housing. Please consider helping us with a gift during our Week of Giving. And enjoy the videos!

*Kathy*

Find us on social media!



Facebook.com/AttainHousing



@AttainHousing



IG: @AttainHousing



# 7 Hills Riders and Fundraisers: Thank you for SHIFTING GEARS with us!

Due to COVID-19, our usual big Memorial Day bike ride fundraiser became a month-long fundraiser and self-directed ride where participants could track their miles and become eligible for weekly prizes for taking on mileage challenges.

We want to give a huge thank you to our 2020 riders and fundraisers. The re-invented event raised over \$25,000 for Attain Housing and the vulnerable homeless families we serve. 132 riders rode a total of 8,077 miles, climbed 1,105,591 feet of elevation, and spent a total of 678 hours riding (or 28 days of nonstop pedaling)!



## #WhyIRide7Hills

We asked riders to tag us on social media during May and tell us what inspires them to ride 7 Hills of Kirkland year after year. Here are a few responses from some dedicated riders!

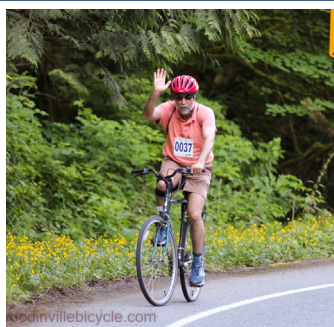
## A Special Thank You to our 2020 7 Hills Shifting Gears Sponsors!



"I've ridden 7Hills for about 10 years and it's become a staple of my Memorial Day. 7 Hills is always a well-run, scenic, and fun way to kick off the summer riding season. I love supporting a good cause like Attain Housing and I was eager to help raise funds this year. I can't wait to get back out there next year and see the bagpipe guy at the top of Winery Hill." - Ed Muir



"I am riding because homelessness is a problem which needs money and attention. I enjoy cycling and after several years away from organized rides I have decided to come back to do a ride I loved from the past the 7 hills. It will be different as I will be alone, but I can do it." - Michael Golebiewski



"I love the outdoor opportunities our area offers. It is great to see the valuable work Attain Housing is doing for the community. If I can add my small contribution through fundraising, I feel fortunate. And hope that a few fellow souls will benefit during these uncertain times. Thanks for giving me the opportunity." - Harpreet Sawhney



"I ride for the challenge and fitness, but most of all to support programs which provide for homeless and at-risk families in King County. I have been participating in the 7 Hills ride for the last ten years. I am keeping track of my own mileage for the month of May. So far it's 117 miles and 7,898' elevation!" - Judy Jesiolowski

# Staff Spotlight

Katie Galasso



Katie (right) delivers donated boxed meals with a volunteer in April 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 Stay Home order.

*Case Manager Katie Galasso came to work for Attain Housing about two weeks before the first COVID-19 cases in the United States were confirmed at the Life Care Center in Kirkland. We made the switch to working remotely for staff and client safety, so it was not your average first few months on the job for Katie. But, she has persisted, worked hard, and has already developed great working relationships with her clients, meeting remotely and or outdoors in person whenever possible.*

*We asked Kate if she could put her first 90 days on the job in her own words, given the unique circumstances. Take it away, Katie!*

I was thrilled to get my job as a Case Manager with Attain Housing. After an exhausting several years of nonstop travel, I was excited to return to work doing something I deeply care about.

Obviously, I did all the new job things; I bought clothes, got a haircut and a new bag. However, after my first week of work I was shocked to learn that

due to COVID-19, I would be working from home. Five months later, I only visit the office weekly, mostly out of concern for my husband who is high-risk.

It's difficult to describe the experience of remotely starting a new job, but I have learned a lot. First, I never realized how much information you absorb just from daily interactions with your fellow coworkers. Quick questions and concrete examples asked over coffee or just "popping in" make a significant difference in learning something new. Not being able to meet with clients face-to-face concerned me. I wanted our clients to feel comfortable asking for help and working with directly with people is what I love doing most.

Luckily, my team has been very supportive and our clients are patient. I feel confident I've gotten the help I needed to make this awkward transition. I love working at Attain Housing and even in the midst of pandemic, I'm very happy to be here.



# Attain Housing Initiates an Ongoing Staff-Led Social Justice & Anti-Racist Educational Resource Discussion



Behind the scenes shot of activist, philosopher, and author Angela Davis during the filming of “13th” – Image copyright: Netflix

Attain Housing provides transitional housing, case management services, and rent assistance services to all vulnerable families with dependent children who are either experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of losing their housing due to hardships. Due to the historical and current systemic inequalities that exist within this country’s governing, financial, law enforcement, and employment systems, the majority of people seeking our housing services are people of color. Currently, 71% of the families in our housing program are people of color, with 59% of them being Black. 62% of recipients of Stable Home rent assistance funds are also people of color. Our staff and board of directors are predominately white. We realize we have a lot to learn about the inherent racism baked into our society. We want to keep the conversation going and learn about the context of the oppression and how we can more effectively work to promote greater equality.

Our Executive Director Kathy Fleming released our organization’s statement on Black Lives Matter on June 2. We decided as a staff to take the next steps and work on educating ourselves on the issues at hand. Every other week, a staff member picks out one piece of educational media on social justice or racial inequity for everyone to digest and then we discuss it during our weekly staff meeting. We wanted to share the resources we’ve reviewed so far, and will continue to post

new resources in the blog section of our website and on social media. We want to keep the dialogue about racism going and also to better serve and understand the perspective of the many different people of color that Attain Housing provides services for.

That said, here’s a listing of the resources we’ve discussed so far as a staff. Links to all of these resources and more can be found at [AttainHousing.org/get-involved/news-publications](https://AttainHousing.org/get-involved/news-publications). Let us know what you think!

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- **13th – Documentary by Ava DuVernay (Netflix)**
  - **Radiolab – The Liberation of RNA (NPR podcast)**
  - **Community Voices: King County Equity Now (YouTube video)**
  - **It’s Been a Minute featuring Tracee Ellis Ross (NPR podcast)**
  - **The Search for Racial Equity with Nikole Hannah-Jones (YouTube video)**
  - **Life Kit - Microaggressions Are A Big Deal: How to Talk Them Out and When to Walk Away (NPR podcast)**

# Stable Home Update

## How our rental assistance program is adjusting to the unique challenges of 2020

Our Stable Home rent assistance and eviction prevention program is continuing to evolve in 2020. In 2019, our program had a huge spike in the number of households we assisted with rental assistance funds. The first two months of 2020 were moving along at a fairly similar pace as the year before, but the COVID-19 shut-down and the accompanying eviction moratorium drastically lowered the number of people who were seeking immediate assistance. The requests that were coming in were usually for higher dollar amounts, which we've been mostly able to accommodate and stay within our budget due to the lower number of requests.



Volunteer Kim Convertino works the phones for our Stable Home program.

Governor Jay Inslee recently extended the statewide eviction moratorium to October 15, and barring a further extension or federal government bailout on leases and mortgages, we anticipate a massive crisis of people facing eviction in the fall and winter.

In the meantime, our staff has become an extremely strong resource referral guide for those seeking assistance other than rent during these difficult times.

"People are out of work and waiting on unemployment," Greg said. "They have missed work either due to shutdowns or illness, and children have been at home more and will continue to be at home more now that most school is virtual

which effects the ability to work," Greg said.

Thanks to our staff, the guidance of our Board of Directors, and the incredible support of our donors, our Stable Home program stands as ready as it can be for whatever the rest of 2020 holds!

"We have bumped our average assistance from around \$500 to \$1000 in order to meet the demand," Program Services Manager Greg McLeod said. "We have been requested additional funding from the Eastside cities we serve and from King County to meet the need and have received some assistance from them so far."

# Attain Housing Alumni Group

## A new resource for former client families!

Creating a stronger Alumni Group for former Attain Housing client families has been a long-standing goal for Attain Housing staff and board. We hope to create a network that allows past clients to both keep in touch with each other and be able to reach out for support when they need it from folks who have gone through the same kinds of situations they have.

In early August, Program Services Manager Greg McLeod organized the first virtual meeting of former clients of Attain Housing. Former client Meghan Poree, who now works as a Housing Navigator for Seattle Housing Authority, volunteered to lead the conversation and pass on feedback from the other former clients. We were able to get 5 members of past client families to participate and the meeting provided the needed foundation for how Attain Housing can best move forward with the Alumni Group. We hope to use this momentum to get more former clients involved and use their feedback to continually improve our case management services and transitional housing program.

Are you a former client interested in joining? Please email [Greg@attainhousing.org](mailto:Greg@attainhousing.org).



Former Attain Housing client Meghan Poree is helping leading the charge in forming our Alumni Group.



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