

History and Services

History

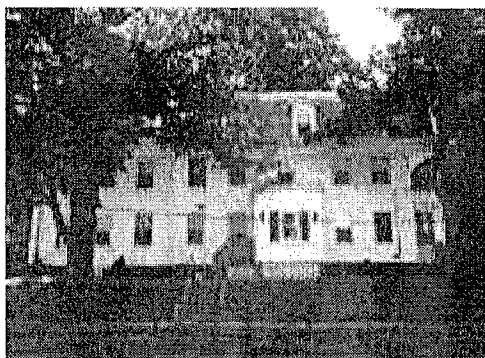
Incorporated in 1983, Our Father's House (OFH) has proven longevity as a nonprofit with a successful track record in assisting homeless individuals and families in Northern Worcester County. A founding group of dedicated individuals worked tirelessly to purchase a city owned property from the City of Fitchburg and then renovated the structure to become the first homeless emergency shelter in North Worcester County.

OFH has grown from "a shelter of last resort" which provided a bed and a meal, to an agency that offers comprehensive case management services to the homeless. Although the Emergency Shelter Program is partially funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development, our fund raising efforts are critical and ongoing to keep the Shelter operating. The government funding does not cover any capital expenditures, such as repairs/maintenance, renovations, nor the entirety of some operating costs such as food, electricity, heat and any administrative expenses. The bulk of our share of costs is paid through an Annual Fund Drive, conducted by the Board of Directors, each September.

Last year, we provided shelter and transitional housing to approximately a combined total of 950 individuals and families.

Overview of Programs

Emergency and Transitional Shelters



Emergency Shelter

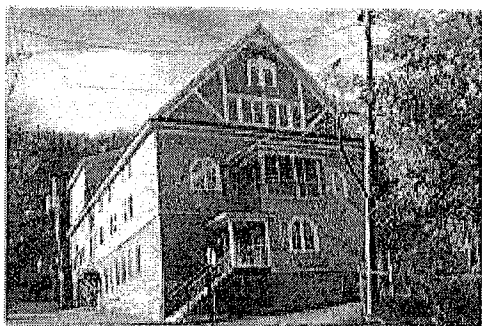
Incorporated in 1983, the Board of Directors negotiated with the City of Fitchburg for the sale of the property located at **55 Lunenburg Street in Fitchburg** for a nominal fee. The Emergency Shelter formally opened on March 4, 1985, providing meals, shelter,

housing search, and advocacy services in the spirit of hospitality to homeless men and women.

The Emergency Shelter program is designed to offer a temporary shelter opportunity to homeless men. It is a "dry shelter" in that guests are not allowed to use alcohol or drugs. Guests who can work are expected to be looking for a full-time job if they do not already have one. Through case management, guests are offered assistance with needs assessment and goal planning.

The length of stay — between 1 and 90 days — is determined on an individual basis. If at any time during the stay the guest has not lived up to the contract, or has violated serious house rules, or has used alcohol or drugs, he will be asked to leave.

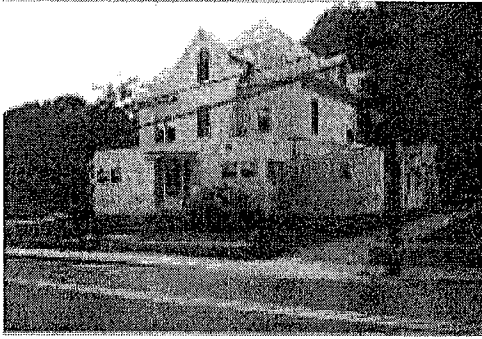
The Lunenburg Street Transitional Shelter Program for Women offers homeless women the opportunity to participate in a program for up to six months (180 days). The average length of stay is three months. This program is designed to reduce the recidivism rate (guests returning to the shelter). In its first year of operating, OFH had reduced the instance of guests returning from 50 percent to 10 percent. This success is due to the more intense services — involving the guests in the operation of the program from food shopping, to menu planning, cleaning the facility and a very high emphasis on addressing underlying problems contributing to their homelessness. Guests are required to participate in weekly house meetings, four workshops a month, and to attend AA/NA daily if substance abuse is a problem. Each woman is assigned house chores, which include cooking the evening meals. Any assignments are a group discussion — once again, attempting to empower and encourage responsibility. There is a slightly different approach to providing services in the Transitional Program.



Leighton Street

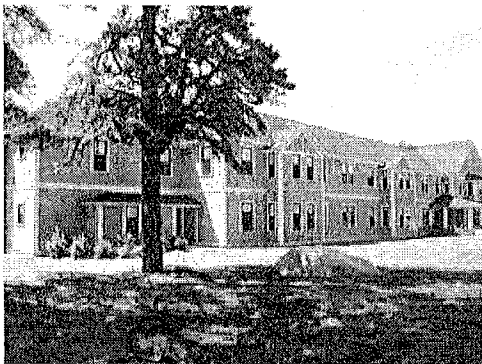
On Feb. 12, 1993, OFH opened a Permanent Housing Program for Homeless Men in Recovery located at **4 Leighton St. in Fitchburg**. Case Management is provided.

~ The Administrative Offices are also located there.



Elizabeth House

On July 1, 2000, OFH assumed the management of Elizabeth House, located at **76 Mechanic St., Fitchburg**. This program provides transitional housing to homeless women in recovery and is modeled after the Leighton Street program for men. Case Management is provided.



Transitions at Devens

OFH assumed the management of a family transitional housing program located at the former Ft. Devens in September 2006. This program is for single, female-headed households who are homeless with children. Transitions at Devens, located at **18 Cavite St., Devens**, offers each family up to a four month stay during which time we provide Case Management Services through collaboration with the Montachusett Opportunity Council.

Street Outreach

Our Outreach workers strive to build relationships with people living on the streets to encourage them to use local services and resources. We also respond to calls for assistance from law enforcement, businesses and concerned citizens. Our outreach efforts are focused in the Montachusett area.

The Street Outreach Program offers referral information, crisis intervention, counseling and case management to the unsheltered homeless. To break down the barriers and build trust, Outreach workers go to locations where homeless gather. We frequent

wooded areas, parks, underpasses, abandoned buildings and other areas to meet with homeless people where they live.

Our workers are equipped with food, clothing, hygiene supplies, first aid, and referral information. We assist those with mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and unmet social service needs and coordinates services for those individuals.



The primary goal is to increase access to services for all individuals. Whenever possible clients are moved to an environment where their immediate physical, mental, and emotional needs are addressed. Whether it's detox, the emergency room, or emergency shelter - the program works tirelessly to assist those in need.