



Where Life is Sweet

Faith-Based Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes of January 7, 2025

Present were committee members Dan Mahon, Chris Hankel, and James Lafolette; City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong and Council Representative Allen Hayward. Terry Cummings and Council Representative Jackie Linton were not in attendance. Chris opened the meeting in prayer at 4:03pm.

Minutes

Chris moved and James seconded to approve the meeting minutes from November and December. Motion carried unanimously. No meeting was held in December.

Public Comment

Stepping Stones Alliance Executive Director Jessalyn Cole presented their Annual Report (attached) and addressed questions regarding funding, ie: federal, state, grants, and private donations.

Dan thanked Jessalyn for the Annual Report and stated he specifically appreciated the personal stories included in the report.

Business License Information

City Manager Byron Smith spoke regarding the new Business License Policy which requires all businesses, religious and non-profit organizations to register for a license if in, or doing business in Hermiston. However, religious and non-profit organizations are not required to pay fees. Requiring Business Licenses was approved for a variety of reasons including: Needing to establish additional city revenues, hiring additional police officers, and obtain information on who/what businesses and organizations are in the community. Currently, the City is taking an educational approach regarding informing all businesses and organizations that they must register. The idea is also to have a listing of all businesses and organizations, including churches on the City's website.

Committee members thanked Byron for attending and answering questions regarding the business license approach as it relates to churches and religious organizations and mentioned that the listing on the City's website could generate collaborative ventures for the community and help guide persons to attend churches in Hermiston.

FBAC & Faith Community Impact on the City

Committee members spoke regarding:

- Hosting I Love My City two times per year instead of one time
- Brainstorming ways to help homelessness issues, specifically Stepping Stones Alliance
- Supporting First-Responders and Chaplains in what they do
- Host a "Coffee with the Faith-Based Advisory Committee Members", like the City is doing with "City Chats"
- The business license registry could be used as a Faith-Registry to contact faith leaders as faith leaders move in and out of the area to see who is active, meet together, send surveys, etc. Currently about 12 to 20 pastors meet monthly but there are many who also have employment



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obligations that restrict them from attending these monthly meetings.

Chris stated that the goal is to help make the City more successful, the committee agreed and discussed upcoming meetings with other faith leaders in the community like Father Maxwell from the Catholic Church, etc.

Dan stated he will be meeting with Mayor Primmer and Byron soon and will review these items along with the established questions (attached) and present them to the Committee for refinement.

Hermiston School District School Adoption

Dan and James stated they are working on inviting other churches who are currently not participating in this adoption and then updating the list so that more than one church is assigned to each school.

Food Insecurities Update

Dan reported the most recent quarterly lunch in January saw six organizations represented and gave updates regarding types of food being added to food baskets.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 4th at 4:00pm in the Large Conference Room of the 2nd floor at City Hall.

Adjournment

There was no other business, and James adjourned the meeting in prayer at 4:54pm.

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Prepared by:
Jesalyn C. Cole

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Stepping Stones Alliance (SSA) had a big year!

Thanks to the support of PATH, community partners, area organizations, local businesses, and countless individual supporters we can look back at MANY, BIG accomplishments.

January – Purchased shuttles with grant dollars; giving us independence in our transportation needs for guest pick up and drop off as well as member errands and appointments.

April – Moved on site in less than 12 hours.

May – Secured grant funding toward an outdoor common space for members and to purchase appliances for the Navigation Center.

June – Opened the Individual Shelter Units and Navigation Center for members.

August – Hosted a visit from Representative Marsh and other elected officials. Held our first fundraising raffle.

September – Hosted our first annual fundraising gala: Boots & Bling!

October – Selected for a solar panel project sponsored by AWS; installation began.

November – Received grant funding for recreational activities, the outdoor common space cooking area & pergola, and indoor fire suppression system for the Navigation Center kitchen stove.

December – Celebrated 2nd year of consecutive nights' service to guests in the Sleep Center!



SLEEP CENTER

The Sleep Center continues to offer a low barrier solution to those seeking overnight shelter and has been in continuous operation every night since opening in December Of 2023. Transportation is available from a pick-up location at 11th and Poplar or guests arrive independently. They are welcomed into the center, fed a basic evening meal, and given a safe place to sleep for the night. Breakfast is served in the morning before guests depart for the day. Transportation is offered back to the same location at 11th and Poplar.



Cindi Jorgensen
Sleep Center Coordinator



We continue to rely on volunteers to help with morning breakfast and guest check out as well as evening check in procedures. Meals are generously donated by individuals in the community, service organizations, local restaurants, and churches. Our guests are fortunate to have the support from so many.

In December 2023, we contracted overnight security services with Phoenix Protective Corporation. We continue utilizing their team and have been very pleased with the level of professionalism and increased safety this partnership has afforded. We combine staff training opportunities throughout the year to ensure consistency is happening.



SLEEP CENTER NUMBERS

With average nightly stays ranging from 6-16 guests on any given evening, the Sleep Center is offering a much needed service in the region. Over 4,000 overnight stays occurred in 2024.



Once a guest has stayed 14 consecutive nights at the Sleep Center he/she is qualified to transition into membership and works with our Navigation Director on next steps to get into an Individual Shelter Unit.

NAVIGATION CENTER

We were able to open our Navigation Center in June and have continued to build the services and resources available to members staying in the Individual Shelter Units.



Carolina Delgado
Navigation Center Director

Members set and work on goals while staying on campus. Some categories include: employment, housing, budgeting, physical health stability, mental health stability, substance use disorder treatment, obtaining documents and/or benefits. Each member works one on one with Carolina to set and progress on their individual goals. She works hard to link our members with the appropriate resources to meet with success.



Members have access and use of computers, washer/dryer, kitchen, and the group area that includes games, books, and puzzles. Staff is on hand daily to help with resume building, applications, etc. We also offer a shuttle schedule Monday-Friday for members to be able to run errands.

SUCCESS

success

suc·cess /sək'ses/

noun

1. the accomplishment of an aim or purpose.

Are we succeeding in our work?

How do we know?

With the help of your support, we are making an impact in the lives of those who need us. Here are a few examples of their successes.



One of our first members made the decision to enter a 2-month detox program and then moved into a half-way house. She was able to re-unite with her young child. That is success!

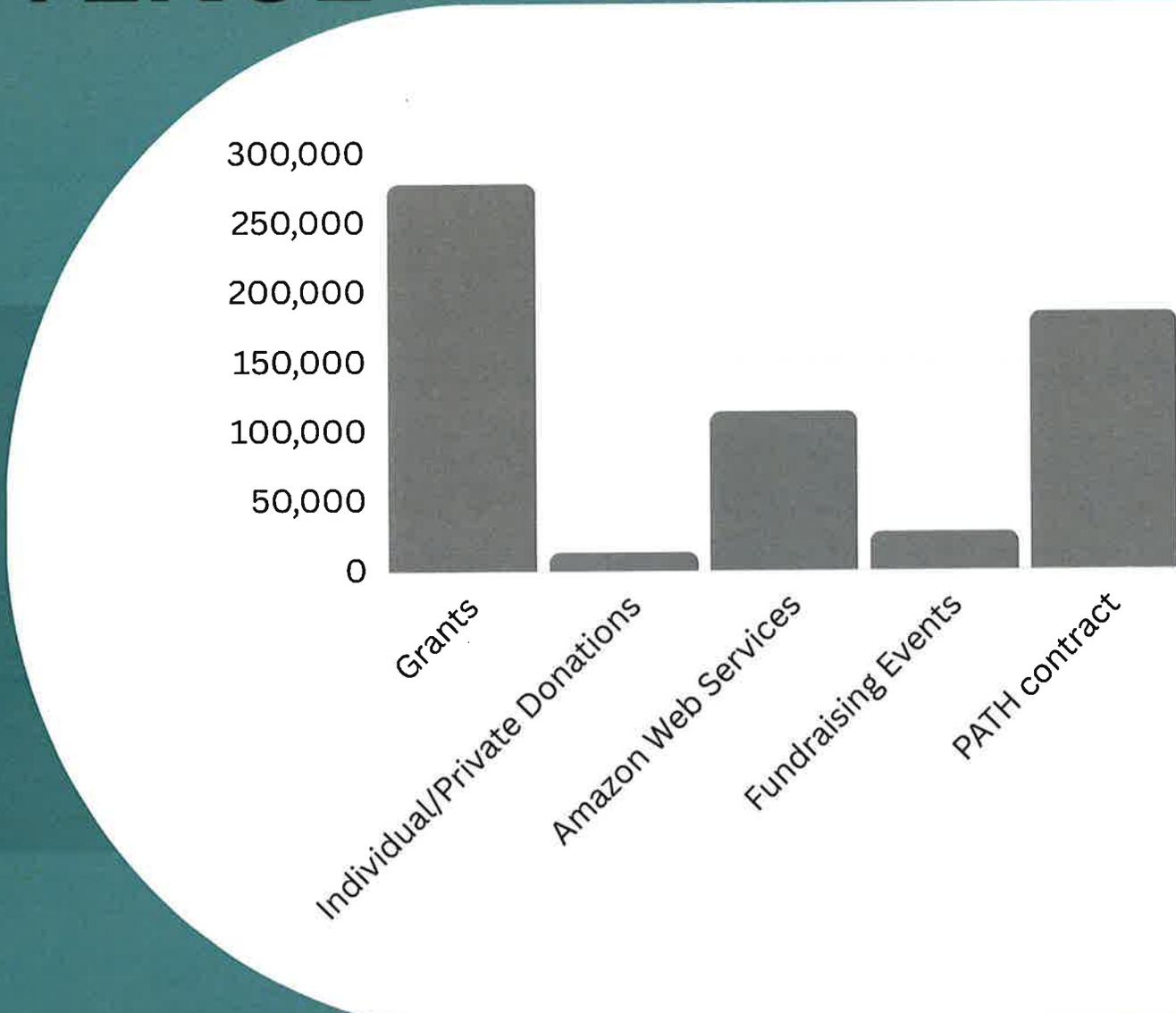
The first family that joined us as members right after we opened our Individual Shelter Units in June of this year were forced to leave their home when the landlord decided not to rent the property anymore. Dad had a steady job, mom stayed at home with the 2 kids, they had 2 vehicles...and all of a sudden they had no home and nowhere to go. They checked into a motel, but knew that finances would not allow them to stay very long. Mom began looking for resources and quickly found Stepping Stones. Carolina met with the family and put together a plan. They moved into one of the units and became contributing members while working with partner organizations to figure out next steps. Within 3 months we celebrated with the family as they moved out and into their own apartment.

There are more who have moved into housing, others who have found jobs and are saving money, a few who have established medical and mental health plans, some are working through probation requirements, and many have obtained housing vouchers and are on wait lists for permanent housing.

Yes, we are succeeding. The time and energy that members used to spend on finding food and worrying about shelter is now spent on next steps toward self-reliance and independence. Their focus has changed and their outlook includes hope. YOU are helping us make a difference and YOUR ongoing support impacts so many!

We couldn't do what we do without YOU!

SOURCES OF REVENUE

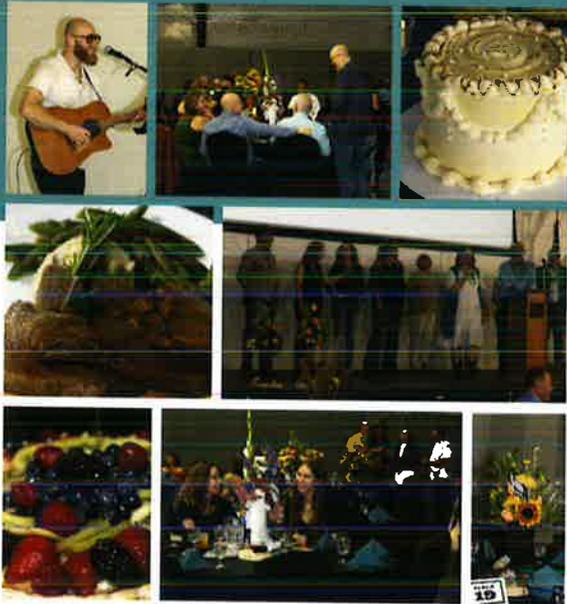


In 2024 we doubled our open hours from 12 hours/7 days a week at the Sleep Center to 24 hours/7 days a week to include the Navigation Center and ISUs. We also tripled our staff from 3 to 9 and added the security staffing. Thanks to every donation, small and large, we are able to offer necessary resources to our guests and members. Funding opportunities for future revenue are constantly being researched and explored. Grants, sponsorships, private donations, fundraising events are all being worked on as we continue to grow and add services.

EIN 84-4739478

ANNUAL GALA

Sponsors and attendees made our first annual gala, the 2024 Boots & Bling, a fun and successful evening for all! With your help, we raised over \$15,000!



2024 Sponsors and Supporters:

AWS InCommunities, Kopacz Nursery, Clayton Homes, C & C Roofing, Riverpoint Farms, Rylee Kaye Photography, Pepsi, UEC, Wheatland Insurance, VegOut, Legacy Financial, Rogers Toyota, Lifetime Vision Source, Delish, Inn at Blackberry Creek, CG Catering, Kirby Nagelhout Construction, Hermiston Kiwanis, Safeway, Specks Printing, Midway Bar & Grill, Evs Sweet Tooth, Sassafras Flowers by Shera, Cupcake Paradise, Julie & Kim Puzey, Susan Ross, Dallin Puzey, Cathy Lloyd, Kalinda Harris, Linda Turner, Blaine Braithwaite, Claude Zehnder, Carey family, Mallory Luther

SAVE THE DATE

for Saturday, October 11, 2025 and join us for an evening in an Enchanted Garden! Watch for more details as we get closer. Interested in sponsoring? Reach out and we'll get you information!

GRANTS & DONATIONS

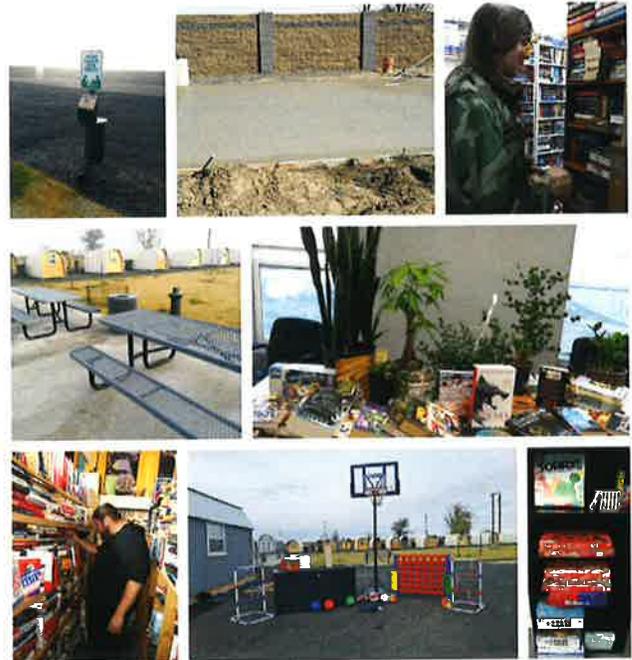


Jesalyn Cole
Executive Director

Overseeing the day to day operations includes securing funds to ensure that the day to day can happen. The community continues to be supportive in MANY, MANY ways from volunteering time, donating meals, dropping off grocery items, making community connections for future partnerships, and giving financially.

Grants in 2024:

Oregon Community Foundation,
Amazon ChangeX,
EOCCO,
Oregon Housing and Community Services,
Ford Family Foundation,
WalMart Store,
WalMart DC,
AgWest Farm Credit



Grant funding in 2024 financed outdoor common area concrete and furniture, outdoor trash cans, dog clean up stations, indoor and outdoor activity items, furniture and appliances in the Navigation Center, and overall operations.

NEXT STEPS

This second annual report takes us through the first full year of Stepping Stones Alliance and the progress that has been made. Our next steps and goals include:

- continued growth in partnerships with area resources
 - financial sustainability and diversification of funding sources
 - volunteer recruitment
 - continued outreach through social media, community events, informational brochures, presentations
 - street outreach
 - assisting members in educational and/or vocational development
 - teaching financial management and other life skills through the Navigation Center
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- completing the outdoor common space with pavilion and cooking area
 - planning for and implementing the next phase of Individual Shelter Units
 - finishing the installation of solar panels
 - completing the suppression system and installing the stove in the Navigation Center



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our board of directors is made up of 6 volunteers who focus on the high-level strategy, oversight, and accountability of our organization. They are responsible for our long-term success, including the mission and financial stability.



Roger Condie
Board Chair



Chuck Barnes
Board Vice Chair



Yuridia Romero
Board Treasurer



Phil Spicerkuhn
Board Secretary



Kire Barraza Ross
Board Member



Carol Jones
Board Member

SITE SUPPORT

Our six staff members oversee our day-to-day operations. They drive, cook, clean, assist members, handle check-in and check-out, oversee the reception area, and so much more!



CONTACT US



SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

<https://stepping-stones-alliance.org/contact/>



WEBSITE

www.stepping-stones-alliance.org



FACEBOOK

@steppingstonesalliance



INSTAGRAM

@steppingstonesalliance



MAIN PHONE

(541) 561-3680



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executivedirector@stepping-stones-alliance.org



Rough Draft of Questions for Faith Community

1. Is serving the needs of the city you are in a high value for your faith community.
2. In what ways do you and your faith community see that you are serving the city of Hermiston. Do you have specific examples?
3. Are there other areas of need in Hermiston that you see in which you might want to serve? Give examples
4. Is partnering with other organizations to serve the city a value for your community? Do you partner with other organizations in serving the city? Faith Based vs. Non-Faith Based?
5. Are there any roadblocks to your ability to effectively serve the city? If so what might those be?
6. Any additional information that you think might be helpful?

Questions for City Leaders

1. What impact do you see that the faith community has in serving the city currently? Give examples.
2. What other areas of need in the city do you think the faith community might be of assistance?
3. In general what is your perception of the faith community's posture toward the city?

Questions for Individuals in Faith Community

1. Do you actively participate in serving the city of Hermiston? In what specific ways and how often?
2. What are pressing needs that you see for the city?
3. Would you be willing to help serve in those areas?