



SAINT LOUISE HOUSE

Build. Believe. Become.

2011 Annual Report

Letter from the Executive Director

*“When you have the wings to fly,
then you fly.”*

—Sr. Helen Brewer, Saint Louise House video

The words of Sr. Helen Brewer, a Daughter of Charity and Saint Louise House supporter, came to mind a few weeks ago as I encountered a mother preparing to exit our program. Her expression of gratitude was effusive as she named the skills she had acquired, the confidence she had regained and the stability she had established for herself and her children. “I’m on the right path now,” she shared. She is a woman ready to “fly,” and she made it clear to me that Saint Louise House helped her find her wings.

Our commitment to long-term supportive housing continues to be affirmed by the successful outcomes of Saint Louise House families, not just mothers but their children as well. When mothers feel safe, secure and confident, their children thrive. We see children who were once failing in school excelling in their studies and eager to learn. They’re winning science fairs, receiving scholarships and being recognized as leaders.

Mothers and their children tell the stories of their transformation best, so I hope you’ll take the time to read the three in this report. As we continue to increase the number of families we’re serving, we trust you will continue to support our efforts in empowering the most vulnerable families in Central Texas to overcome homelessness and achieve long-term stability. **Together, we can give them the wings to fly!**

Sharon Buser

Executive Director



OUR MISSION: *To empower women with children to overcome homelessness in Central Texas.*

Starting a New Life: A Mother’s Story

Before coming to Saint Louise House, me and my children were homeless. I had no job, very little income and really no sense of direction. I did what I could to stay strong and keep me and my kids together. We slept in my car, at friends’ homes and in shelters. It was exhausting and stressful, but I was determined to fight and keep my faith. That’s when I was introduced to Saint Louise House. The day I was accepted was the start of a new life for me and my kids. The program opened a lot of opportunities for me. I had a safe and secure place to call home, a team of great case workers that helped with my needs and made sure our transition was comfortable. Being in the program I gained self-confidence, motivation and independence. Throughout the program I was able to attend college, secure a full-time job, daycare and a knowledge of resources.

Saint Louise House gave me a second chance at life. I’m on the right path now; I have my own place, a stable job, a college education for me and my child. She just finished her first year in college. We are thankful for everything Saint Louise House has given us. It’s a great program that helps women like myself gain independence, motivation and resources to a better life. Thank you all for the support and caring staff. My children thank you. You will forever be in our hearts and prayers.

—2012 Saint Louise House alumna

Saint Louise House was founded in 2000 to address the drastic shortage of safe housing and supportive services for homeless women and children. It has grown from five apartments in 2001 to two 24-unit apartment complexes in South Austin with the capacity to house 46 families. We provide affordable and supportive housing for extremely low income homeless women and their children with the goal of helping families develop long-term stability.



*When there's a problem, we look for a solution.
When there's a better way, we find it.
When someone needs help, we give it.
When we need help, we ask.*

More Than Happy: A Teen's Story

We had nowhere to go, to live. The only thing we had was a car. We slept in the car for several nights. We had to ask family or friends to let us take a shower at their houses. My mom heard about SafePlace, so she applied and we got accepted. We stayed there about three to four months. My mom applied to Saint Louise House at this time, and after a couple of months they called my mom and let her know her application was approved. My mom only worked two to three days and was sad. When she heard the good news about getting into Saint Louise House, she was really excited because she had suffered. My sister had suffered. I had suffered. My little brother had suffered, too.

Once we were at Saint Louise House, my mom got more days at work. I got stronger grades at school and was climbing the mountain to college. My sister and brother improved their habits. My mom saved money to buy a better car, because the car we had didn't work. Now, I thank my mom for never giving up on us. She believed in herself all the time even though our life was sometimes rough. My entire family is now more than happy, because we have our own space. I can't thank Saint Louise House (and God) enough for their hard work and impacting my life in many different ways.

—Saint Louise House teen, age 13



Feeling Safe, Being "Green": A Child's Story

My mom and I moved to Saint Louise House when I was five. Even though my new home was cool, I was scared to be alone in my new home. Everything was new. I stayed with my mom in her room. I even slept in her bed. It felt safer. A few months ago, I started playing in my room more. My mom would be downstairs and I would be upstairs playing, but I didn't feel afraid.

My new school was really hard for me at first. I had a hard time keeping my hands to myself and I kept getting red days. A red day means I was bad. This year, though, I'm in kindergarten. I've been getting lots of green days. That

means I've helped the teacher that day or been nice to the other kids at school. I used to not be able to sit on the carpet for very long at all when the teacher read to the class. Now I can be still for the whole time!

I like Saint Louise House because the people in the office play with me when my mom has a meeting. Sometimes we play outside and I climb trees. One time, I helped work in the garden and picked peppers. It was so fun! My favorite thing about Saint Louise House is family nights and my apartment.

—as told by a Saint Louise House child, age 6

Saint Louise House Volunteers Value Diverse Opportunities & Impact of Their Work

It was a simple question that was raised in Matthew Balthazar's Bible study. *How do you live out your faith by serving in addition to learning about it?*

Matthew has been volunteering with his Bible study group at Saint Louise House (SLH) for six months. He has spent time landscaping, preparing flowerbeds, painting and organizing games for an Easter celebration for SLH families. In six short months, he can see the impact of his volunteer work. "It's nice to know that helping in any way possible contributes to something that has a great mission," Matthew said.

Another active volunteer, Maria Kiehn, shares her talents in the office making updates and improvements to the donor acknowledgement database. Maria's first volunteer experience was with a group of moms and young children. She began making cards and cooking meals for incoming families with her children.

Four years later, she has transitioned

to helping with administrative duties and takes initiative to attend meetings in the community to learn more about the database system. As much as Maria has been able to contribute, Saint Louise House has also given her an opportunity to grow in her volunteer duties.

"Every time you volunteer, it's not taken for granted," says Maria. "There is room for all types of people whether you volunteer one time, once a month or once a year or for a special event."

Without the work, dedication and skills of volunteers, the mission of helping families overcome homelessness would be much more difficult to achieve. Whether it's painting apartments, answering phones, running errands or baking cakes—these activities free up the small SLH staff to do what they do best: help families gain the skills they need to achieve long-term stability. Regardless of the tasks, volunteers like Matthew and Maria are actively involved in the work of



helping the most vulnerable families in our community overcome homelessness.

"It doesn't matter what you can do—babysitting, cooking or landscape work—you're helping to contribute to better the lives of the women and children at Saint Louise House," Matthew says.

—Elizabeth George

More than **5,000 volunteer hours** were logged in 2011.



“ God bless their (volunteer) hands. They care about us so much. Most people do nice things for people they know...the amazing thing is they don't even know who we are, they haven't seen our faces. ”

—Saint Louise House mom

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“With your supportive construct and consistent work, you have allowed me to come back to the happy, professional woman I am inside.”

—Saint Louise House mom

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“ We are now in a warm, comfortable home, my children are once again excelling in school and have made several friends, and I feel safe and supported by every single person I’ve met from Saint Louise House. ”

—Saint Louise House mom

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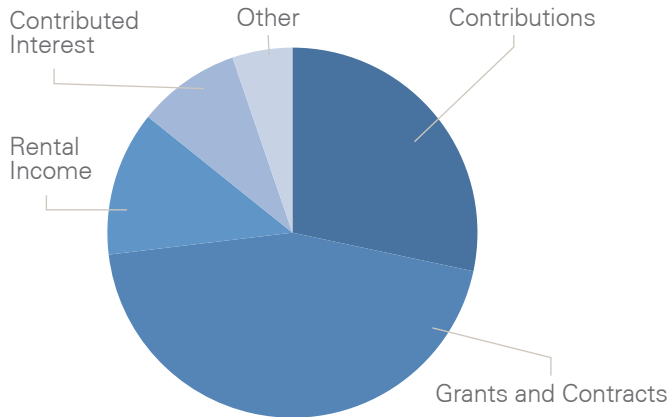
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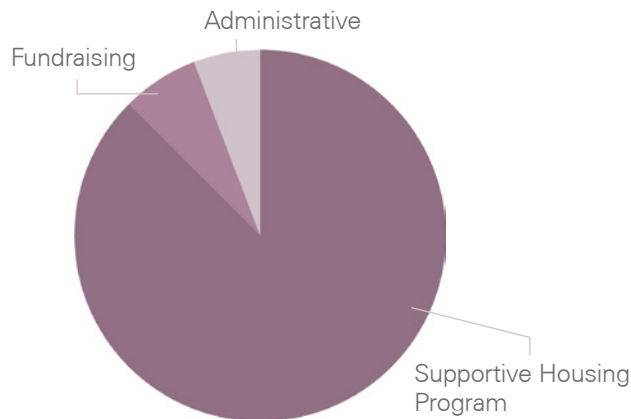
2011 Financials

REVENUES



Contributions	\$257,486
Grants and Contracts	\$406,580
Rental Income	\$115,000
Contributed Interest	\$81,632
Other	\$47,700
Total	\$908,398

EXPENSES



Supportive Housing Program	\$840,347
Administrative	\$64,189
Fundraising	\$55,844
Total	\$960,380

Signs of Success

126 families

have called Saint Louise House "home" since Oct. 2001

31 families

including 65 children and 1 grandmother received housing and supportive services

100% of families

have access to on-site employment services, case management and life skills training

90% of families

remain safely housed at Saint Louise House or move into stable housing as a result of receiving services

100% of families

have sufficient nutritious food

95% of all mothers

work, attend school or both

90% of families

improve financial stability while in residence

100% of families

increase their access to healthcare resources

100% of families

have access to on-site educational sessions on nutrition, financial literacy, parenting and healthy relationships

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