



## Still Standing, Together: Stacie and Diana's Story

When you walk into Stacie's apartment, one thing is immediately clear: everything has a home. Her bed is perfectly made. The counters are spotless. Even the refrigerator is neatly organized. It's the kind of space that feels welcoming, calm, and cared for. "Right when I got here, I unpacked everything," says Stacie. "I've had enough chaos in my life."

Across the way, you'll find Diana's apartment. Walking through the building, she made a point to show off the laundry. "Not everyone has that," she smiles, pointing at the machines. Having recently moved in, Diana's space isn't quite ready; boxes are stacked throughout, but she was quick to get one room in order: "I haven't finished unpacking, but the first thing I did was make my bed."

Often in Stacie's apartment, you'll find the soft-spoken Diana. Both are graduates of Victory Programs' Women's Hope, and today they're neighbors in Marlborough, living in housing secured with support from Paths to Victory, one of our Community-Based Housing programs.

For many years, Diana's life in Boston was marked by instability. "I was homeless for a lot of years," she shares quietly. "It was awful... It was really scary."

Despite all she endured—including childhood trauma, depression, substance use, and a serious car accident that caused a traumatic brain injury and required her to learn how to walk again—Diana fought hard to find the support she needed, eventually making her way to Women's Hope.

"I loved being at that program," says Diana. "I got close with the staff, and I made friends. It was really nice." A woman of few words, to help process her difficult emotions, she spent hours drawing, often gifting her creations to staff.



*"When I wake up, I look in the mirror and say, 'This is going to be a good day'. Then I remind myself: I'm sober. I'm healthy. I'm alive. That's huge."*

– Stacie



*From left: Stacie, Alice, Diana, and Sara*

"Diana is just the kindest, sweetest, gentlest person," says Sara, Care Coordinator at Women's Hope. "When she loves, she loves hard. She always brightened my day."

But perhaps the most meaningful connection Diana made was with Stacie.

As a child, Stacie learned early to be independent and hide her pain. Abuse in childhood, followed later by an abusive relationship, eventually led her into addiction. After being prescribed Percocet following an assault, she unknowingly became dependent on the medication. "It took me five years to realize it was a problem," she reflects. "At first, it was for the physical pain, but when that went away, I kept taking them. I guess it helped with all of my pain, you know?"

For years, she cycled through detox programs and periods of sobriety. When her brother was murdered in 2018, her grief sent her spiraling. "That was my best friend," she says through tears. "When that happened, I just didn't care anymore."

Eventually, after returning to treatment once again, this time at Women's Hope, she was determined to approach recovery differently. "I realized I couldn't keep doing the same thing over and over again," she explains. "This time, I was going to use every resource I could... I joined a grief group, and that changed my

*continued on page 2...*

# A Message from Sarah Porter, President and CEO

This past winter brought more snow than we've seen in years. Storm after storm rolled in, blanketing the city and testing all of us in different ways. I'm writing this during one of February's most fierce snowstorms, when the wind is so strong, and the snow is piling up so fast that I can barely see outside my window.

Days like this test an organization like ours. I've heard from staff leaders staying overnight in residential programs to keep participants safe, since getting the next shift of team members to work is nearly impossible. There are no rideshares available, and parking spots are hidden under snow banks. Some programs are handling the snow themselves. Groups of residents, working together, are digging out emergency exits and helping each other get cars out of the snow. When our facilities team arrives, the gratitude and relief are palpable. Running nearly 30 residential programs during weather like



“*...safe housing is not a luxury. It is stability. It is dignity. It is protection when conditions are at their worst.*”

this takes extraordinary coordination. It takes flexibility. It takes sacrifice. And it always takes a team effort.

Three separate times, someone has quietly asked me what happens to people who don't have housing in storms like this. Are they safe? I am grateful those questions are being asked. They reflect something fundamental about our community: that even in the middle of managing our own crisis response, we all want to make sure everyone has what they need during tough weather—especially a safe place to stay.

Storms like this make visible what is true year-round: safe housing is not a luxury. It is stability. It is dignity. It is protection when conditions are at their worst.

As the social safety net continues to weaken, caring for each other—our neighbors—matters more than ever. Not just for their needs, but for our own well-being, too. Winter reminds us how vulnerable we can be—and how powerful we are when we show up for each other.



Stacie



Diana

## Stacie and Diana's Story

...continued from page 1

life. For the first time, I started talking about everything instead of stuffing it down.”

Today, she starts each morning with a different mindset.

“When I wake up, I look in the mirror and say, “This is going to be a good day,” she smiles. “Then I remind myself: I'm sober. I'm healthy. I'm alive. That's huge.”

Throughout our conversation in Stacie's apartment, Stacie instinctively helped Diana navigate little tasks: heating up food, sorting through her mail, answering questions. “Knowing how Diana has been treated, I could never treat an elder that way,” Stacie shares. “We look out for each other.”

Sara has seen their relationship develop since their days at Women's Hope. “The support Stacie gives Diana is invaluable,”

she explains. “It's beautiful to see.” During her time in the program, Stacie became someone others looked up to. “Stacie was always a role model and leader at Women's Hope,” Sara adds. “Very put together. You could always count on her.”

Alice, Housing Case Manager with Paths to Victory, noticed something equally important when the women moved into their apartments.

“It means so much that there's a community here,” Alice explains. “They're not just moving somewhere with strangers. They have people they know and trust nearby, and they help each other.”

In her tidy studio apartment, Stacie welcomes Diana like family. Together, they're a powerful reminder that recovery doesn't have to happen alone. It happens in friendship, in community, and in quiet acts of care.

To learn more about Women's Hope and Paths to Victory, visit [www.vpi.org/programs](http://www.vpi.org/programs).

# A Little Glam, A Lot of Joy



Wanda

Victory Programs' residential recovery home, Shepherd House, was transformed into a beauty studio thanks to our nonprofit partner, Give'N'Glow. The women of Shepherd House were treated to makeovers by volunteer makeup artist Victoria and gifted bags filled with brand-new luxury beauty products.

Residents gathered around the table chatting, laughing, and cheering each other on as they took turns in the makeup chair. For women rebuilding their lives in recovery, moments like these, where they are cared for, celebrated, and pampered, can mean everything.

Wanda FaceTimed her sister during her session to share the moment. Having never had her makeup done before, she became emotional as the makeover began. "It's just so nice to be pampered. I didn't want my sister to miss this."



Kristina

Kristina was especially excited to be pampered ahead of a special visit. "I can't wait to get my makeup done today. My daughter's coming to visit, and I haven't seen her in months. I'm so excited!"

For Angie, the moment was a rare treat. "This is the first time I've had my makeup done since my wedding seven years ago."

Throughout the day, smiles and words of gratitude echoed through the room:

"This is so fun."

"I love this."

"You girls made us feel amazing."



Angie

We are deeply grateful to Give'N'Glow for reminding the women of Shepherd House just how bright they shine.



To learn more about Give'N'Glow, visit [www.givenglow.org](http://www.givenglow.org).

To learn how you can get involved, visit [www.vpi.org/volunteer](http://www.vpi.org/volunteer).

# Where Community Comes Full Circle



*"We laugh, we enjoy food together, and we get it done. We come together as a loving, wonderful community. That's the Living Center," says Phylee (left).*

At the Boston Living Center (BLC), community doesn't just mean showing up; it means showing up for one another. Longtime members Phylee and Wilson embody that spirit every day, volunteering at the place they call home.

When Phylee first became HIV positive, she says the BLC "took me in their arms like a warm, comfy blanket when I didn't know where to go or what to do." Today, she gives that same love back in the dining room. "I just wanted to give back because they gave me so much," she shares. Whether cooking alongside staff or greeting friends when giving out pantry bags, Phylee shows up with joy. "I will give my very best each and every day. I just have so much fun here."

Wilson has been a member for more than 17 years. "This is like home," he shares. After receiving support with housing, meals, and community through the Latino support group, he felt

called to give back. "I'm giving back what I get." From prepping meals to serving on the line, Wilson treasures the moments of connection. "I like serving meals because then I get to see my friends and meet new people. It's like a full circle; you're a member, and you get to help other members."

To learn more about the Boston Living Center, visit [www.vpi.org/blc](http://www.vpi.org/blc).

## DONATE

Visit [www.vpi.org](http://www.vpi.org) to make a gift today. Questions?  
Email [development@vpi.org](mailto:development@vpi.org)

## VOLUNTEER

Visit [www.vpi.org](http://www.vpi.org) to learn more or email [volunteer@vpi.org](mailto:volunteer@vpi.org)

## CONNECT



@victoryprograms

Phone: (617) 541-0222  
[www.vpi.org](http://www.vpi.org)



404 S. Huntington Avenue  
Boston, MA 02130

NON PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PEABODY, MA  
CITYMAIL



Spring 2026 Issue

The Doorway: Your access to Victory Programs news & information