

Looking Forward to Her Future

Your support for HousingPlus helped Heaven through a time of grief

HousingPlus tenant Heaven will never forget how having a home impacted her mother. “Before we got to the shelter, the place we were living in was in terrible condition,” says Heaven. “When we were in the shelter my mom was very depressed. We lost pictures, shoes, clothes, everything. When we came here, we finally got to fulfill our needs.”

Once the family moved into their HousingPlus apartment in early 2022, Heaven’s mom would start the weekend with a joyful ritual: “My mom, Tina Guinty, was amazing. Early in the morning, she would put on loud music—she wanted to clean the house. She really wanted to keep it clean because where we lived before, it was awful.”

While living in this apartment, Heaven was able to begin working on her long-term goals. During her Summer Youth Employment job, she had the opportunity to learn alongside a local Brooklyn business owner. “I knew I wanted to work for myself,” says Heaven.

In September 2022, as Heaven was starting her senior year of high school, her mom passed away due to complications of Type 2 Diabetes. “When I was at my lowest, the staff at HousingPlus were really helpful,” she says.

Heaven’s case manager connected her with financial aid and a local food pantry, and was also a phone call away for support. “They helped me so much in the first few months after my mom’s passing,” she says.

Two years later, Heaven’s perseverance—and the stability of having a place to call home—has helped her continue forward. “Because I was in a shelter, I did not think I had what it takes to be in college,” she says. But Heaven worked to access scholarships.



Today, she is attending Mercy University, majoring in Business Administration and Entrepreneurship.

Heaven has also built a business idea—first formulated during her senior year—into a source of passive income. Her idea was inspired, of course, by her mom, and her mom’s experience as a diabetic. Heaven thought of a way to provide healthier snacks to high school students by stocking an onsite vending machine with more nutritious options. Heaven says she knows that teenagers love to eat junk, which is why she made sure that in *her* vending machine, the prices for unhealthy options were higher than healthy options. “I want the pricing to be opposite from what it’s like in grocery stores,” says Heaven.

The vending machine idea isn’t her only idea: Heaven also has a passion for cooking and hopes to one day be able to open a food truck that serves fresh, nutritious foods.

We do not doubt that Heaven will continue to thrive, thanks, in part, to the stability we can provide because of our friends’ and donors’ support of HousingPlus.

“HousingPlus helped me so much in the first few months after my mom’s passing.”

Exec's Corner: Rita Thanks You As She Announces Her Next Chapter

Rita Zimmer, Founder of HousingPlus, has announced she is moving on—or as she calls it “reinventing myself.”

HousingPlus seeks a Chief Executive who, during this pivotal time, will sustain what we have accomplished and help us to broaden our reach to serve even more individuals and families in New York City.

Since founding HousingPlus in 2002—Rita has always said, “Home is where we start. This is at the cornerstone of what we do—developing safe, affordable housing with services nearby so that people have what they need to succeed. Our vision is that by creating a home, each person will make their own fresh start.”

HousingPlus is working to significantly expand our reach. Starting in January 2025, we will begin an expansion project that will add close to 500 new units of housing—more than doubling the number of apartments in our portfolio.

We have begun the search for our next determined leader, and are pleased to announce that the esteemed executive search firm Phillips Oppenheim will be leading the effort to identify a CEO.

In making this announcement, Katie Brown, HousingPlus Board Chair, said, “We are at an exciting juncture as we seek a new Chief Executive Officer with consummate leadership skills. We are confident that our next leader will be committed to carrying the mission forward, amplifying the voices of those we serve, and building upon the foundation so carefully laid.

“Forever in my heart, I will do whatever I am asked to carry on the vision of HousingPlus.”



Credit: Ann Rosen Photography

The Board of Directors is enormously grateful to Rita—she is a visionary. As the founder of HousingPlus, and its leader for 22 years, she has always asked of herself and each of us, “What will be different in the lives of our tenants, our clients, and our staff because of our work?”

Rita responded, “Forever, in my heart, I will do whatever I am asked to carry on the vision of HousingPlus.”

Housing Plus Newsletter

Editor: Michelle Bova, michelle@housingplusnyc.org

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Have an idea for a story? Wish to share your feedback on our new newsletter? Email Michelle at michelle@housingplusnyc.org

From a Devastating Break-in to Building a Business

Housing, and donors like you, helped a mother and Veteran find a place to grow

Tea and her son spent years without permanent, stable housing. As a Veteran, Tea sustained a traumatic brain injury and lived with PTSD. When her son was just a year old, Tea lost her apartment in New Jersey. Not long later, she was robbed while attempting to move into a new place.

Today, thanks to your generosity, Tea has been in her HousingPlus apartment for eight years. It has given her a place to raise her son through his teenage years and into young adulthood. Now, at age 23, Tea's son has completed a training course to become a security guard and started a new job in late September.

Having a home helped Tea begin to think of her destiny differently. She and her wife, Mars, realized they were losing time with their kids due to their hectic schedules in the restaurant industry. Mars has a son who is four years younger than Tea's.

At HousingPlus, Tea received assistance that led to her and Mars opening their own business called "Tea on Mars." The two business owners have focused on selling handmade items by Indigenous and African creators, including products such as waistbeads, sage smudges, and crystals.

Tea on Mars started as a street vending business, but they plan to move to a primarily online shop. In the coming months, Tea and Mars also hope to be able to travel to meet some of the creators of the goods they are selling.

Tea recognizes that the help she found at HousingPlus influenced her life. "Everything you need help with, they have solutions to move forward. Not just for me as a Veteran, but as a woman...It's a safe space, everyone is here to genuinely help you."

"Everything you need help with, they have solutions to move forward... it's a safe space, everyone is here to genuinely help you."



Tea (left) and wife Mars

Serving Veterans at HousingPlus

HousingPlus has been serving Veterans since 2011. We are now the largest provider of permanent supportive housing to female Veterans in New York City with 70 units. We will be dedicating additional units specifically for female Veterans in our new housing developments going forward.

Moving Day

We're excited to show you our new location for residents in one of our Justice Works housing sites



Staff gathered to welcome tenants at our newest location

Mary is making a new start. Thanks in part to generous gifts by donors like you, Mary has her own space to call home for the first time in decades.

As our staff visited tenants and welcomed them to their homes at our new location in the Bronx, the tenants shared what they planned to prepare for dinner, taking full use of their kitchen spaces.

We are so excited to see how the new space will transform the lives of tenants both past and present, including Mary, whose story we hope to share with you in more detail in the coming months.

From this new space, staff will work directly with tenants from an office in the building, providing a place for every resident to come to get advice and assistance as they need it. As justice-involved individuals, housing can be extremely difficult to find. We are so thankful that we can provide transitional apartments to give people leaving incarceration an opportunity to find community and increase their chances of obtaining and maintaining employment.

Since entering the Justice Works program, some tenants have regained visitation rights with their children, gotten employment, found permanent housing, and stayed sober. It is a testament to their strength, the incredible work of our team members, and finally, to you, our donors, who continue to support these life-changing programs. Every individual deserves a place to call home, and at our new location, dozens more individuals and families will be able to do so.



Tenant Mary



HousingPlus Board Chair Katie Brown (right) visits tenants in the Bronx



Thank you, Marble Church!

*Students starting school
year with supply-filled
backpacks from a
long-time supporter*

A special shout-out to Marble Collegiate Church for providing backpacks filled with school supplies. With this gift, our tenants' school-aged children started a successful new year in style. Marble Church has supported our programs for many years. We are so grateful to the Church—and to HousingPlus Board Member Mamie McIndoe, who serves as a Deacon at Marble Church and has helped us sustain this partnership over time.



You're invited!

On December 4, 2024,
you are enthusiastically
invited to join HousingPlus
Board Members Katherine
Maughan and Alena Silberman
for a casual meet and greet
with friends new and old at our
Winter Gathering.

At this cocktail reception, you
will have the opportunity to
network, unwind, and learn
more about and contribute to the
HousingPlus mission.

Tickets for this event start at
\$150 and will help HousingPlus
continue providing safe, stable
homes for women, families,
and gender-expansive people
throughout New York City.

JOIN US AT THE WINTER GATHERING

DECEMBER 4, 2024
6:30PM - 9:30PM

RAINES LAW ROOM - CHELSEA
48 W. 17TH STREET, NYC, 10011

To join us, please contact
Aldervan Daly at (347) 817-5856 or
aldervan@housingplusnyc.org.

Become a “Homes with Heart Hero”

Make a monthly gift to HousingPlus today!

With your support, we can provide under-served women with housing so that they can create real homes, help them find suitable jobs, and address the traumatic events that may have led to their homelessness.

Your monthly support also allows us to anticipate, plan, and maintain sustainable resources, creating the greatest impact for our tenants and their families.

You can easily enroll by making your special gift to HousingPlus on our website at www.housingplusnyc.org/donate.

For more information, please call Renee Jamerson at (347) 529-2403 or email rjamerson@housingplusnyc.org.



Sneak Peek!

Coming soon: Shepherd Glenmore

We can't wait for you to see our newest building, which has been co-developed by HousingPlus and is our first partnership project with Spatial Equity. Shepherd Glenmore will support 123 units of housing and is slated to open in January 2025. We are grateful to our partners, including Spatial Equity Director Teghvir Sethi.

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