**Lenny and the DreamMakers**

**Annual Report 2023**

Lenny and the DreamMakers (L&D) Board of Directors and general membership intentionally include a truly diverse group of people. Perhaps most importantly, people who were formerly homeless once themselves. All of them give L&D a good perspective on advancing equity and inclusion in the work that we do.

Equity and inclusion are not always visible in finding affordable housing in our community. It is difficult at best, and sadly, not the end of the difficulties facing people transitioning from homelessness to stable housing. Often, they have little to no money for the most basic necessary household items like dishes, pots and pans, bedding, towels, or toilet paper. We believe that if we can provide some of the basic items, the household has a better chance of being able to continue successfully. And it is in this manner we hope to become a small part of the solution to the difficulties of homelessness.

The way our Welcome Box program works is that when an apartment or house is rented, the case manager gives our list of items to their client and then returns it to us with their requests. We then do our best to fill the order. The many items needed even for a minimal set up to make everyday living easier and more comfortable can be overwhelming. Even soap, lotion. or toothpaste and toothbrushes quickly add to the expense of moving into or starting a new home.

**This year alone (2023) L&D provided basic necessities for 118 households, which translates to 298 people, $40,000 worth of donated goods and over $5,000 worth of purchased goods. Many of our recipients are single; many are veterans; and many are families. We do not prioritize one group over another. We take each request as it comes to us. Most often we can complete each order in about a week with a little something extra that is not on the list, like a lamp, an extra blanket, or a donated radio.**

The other major project we facilitate is the monthly meal and donations to the Stability Site, a shelter that houses about sixty-five adults. In 2023 we delivered about 780 meals and over five thousand pounds of clothing and personal needs items to the Site which, is owned by the city of Tacoma and staffed by Catholic Community Services.

**A few of the other highlights for 2023:**

ü *We helped a family of six who lost everything in a fire. We found and delivered furniture, bedding, household items, and food for them.*

ü *We donated a small refrigerator to the Stability Site. They currently only have three for sixty-five people.*

ü *We distributed a large donation of dog and cat food to shelters and individual families.*

ü *In August we collected over 1300 pieces of school supplies for kids in public schools.*

ü *We made and put together bath bags as holiday gifts for the sixty-five residents at the Stability Site and purchased sweatshirts for the twenty-nine staff members there, as well.*

It was a remarkably successful year for Lenny and the DreamMakers with both Revenue and expenditures running higher than anticipated. This allowed us to plant more seeds of kindness in our community. (See budget on the following page.) And it also allowed us to plant many more seeds of kindness than we thought possible. What we know for sure is this. When we plant seeds of kindness, we harvest happy hearts, both our own and others.

Our slogan for Lenny and the DreamMakers has always been:

***Face to face, hand to hand, heart to heart.***

***Touching one life at a time with simple acts of kindness.***