



HOUSING HAPPENINGS



Thank you for your participation and support of First Step Families at the February 2nd Pancake Dinner!

LIFE IN A FOLDING HOUSE

Life in a foldable as described by current resident

First Step's current "Mom" reported "the foldable house is fantastic for my needs - the bedroom, bathroom, the shower!!!!"

She stated: "the extra space after couch surfing [with an infant] was amazing. It has a little less storage space than a trailer - which had cupboards everywhere, but so much more space to move around (and it doesn't have leaks)!"

Speaking to the challenges of a foldable, Mom stated, "keeping it warm enough without tripping the breakers." She added, "it's definitely nicer to have a stand alone home."

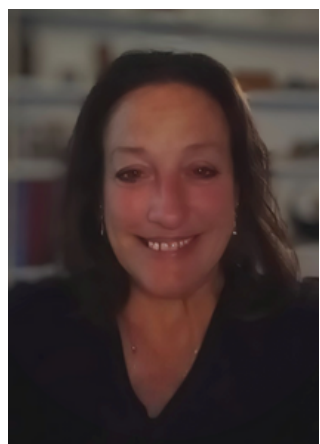
When asked what she might do differently to provide assistance to someone with

with children in transition, Mom stated she couldn't think of anything that First Step could do differently. She reported "everyone [Board, Staff] has been a tremendous help getting her ready to transition into her own place as she has been able to live safely and build savings - keeping her and her daughter progressing forward!"



WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER, RACHEL SACHS

Rachel Sachs grew up in Albany, Oregon and has been a Florence resident for fifteen years. Rachel expressed interest in serving on the First Step Board of Directors because she understands “how important a safe place to live can be for decompression and healing.” “I like to see families in safe environments” and hopes to see First Step continue to grow and offer even more help to more families. Rachel expressed knowing herself and understanding that she “works best behind the scenes to help a team reach its goals.” Rachel’s personal goal serving on the Board is to “learn as much as she can and give back to the community that has helped her in the past.” In her free-time, Rachel enjoys gardening, baking and decorating cakes. Rachel is “grateful for the opportunity” to serve on the Board of First Step Florence.



Board President Insights

As we celebrate our 8th year, we are thrilled to continue our work with families in Florence. Our Folding House remains a unique feature, sparking many thoughtful questions from our community. Not surprisingly, it functions exceptionally well, although we have encountered a few quirks along the way. The metal corner posts tend to stay cold, leading to condensation in the inside corners. However, with the help of moving air and a small dehumidifier, we have effectively addressed this issue.

We have also initiated the process of reclaiming our property north of town, and we are optimistic that by October, we can start preparing the site for 6-8 new housing units. For the past 18 months, The Bridges Program has utilized our property for their Pallet Shelter Village. They will be relocating to a more permanent site in October, and we wish them all the best in their transition.

Our Community Development Liaison, Sandy Craft, is diligently researching and writing grants to help us achieve our goals. Since 2022, the competition for public grants has intensified significantly. We have observed larger, more established housing organizations receiving grants that we had hoped to secure. However, some of that competition is beginning to ease, and we are cautiously optimistic about 2025 and beyond. During this time, we have refined our supporting materials and nonprofit ratings, ensuring we are better prepared for the upcoming grant cycles.

Houses and grants alone do not encapsulate the essence of First Step; we are fundamentally about families. Specifically, we focus on families in need of support to regain their footing. This support can manifest as a fresh start after losing an apartment, escaping an abusive relationship, or serving as a waypoint for families aspiring for a better future for their children. Assistance often takes the form of a modest trailer and a compassionate voice encouraging a parent to seek employment, enroll their children in school, or find childcare.

I cherish the moments when I encounter former program participants and hear about a child making the honor roll or trying out for basketball for the first time—these are the everyday triumphs of families. I am grateful for the opportunity and resources we have to help, and I especially appreciate your decision to partner with us in this vital work.

We are consistently in need of funds to cover staff salaries and utility bills. Additionally, we have encountered families in need of reliable transportation. If you have a well-functioning used car that you could donate or sell to First Step at a reasonable price, we will ensure it reaches a family in need. While we don’t require a perfect vehicle, it must be capable of safely transporting children to school, families to grocery stores, and new workers to their jobs. As you might imagine, access to a car can be a transformative opportunity for a family, opening doors to better employment and a brighter future.

Again, Thank YOU for your partnership with First Step Florence!

- Greg Wood

HELPER
HEROES

First Step Florence appreciates having a number of **Helper Heroes** over the past few months. Andy Cotton and John Leland have been faithful physical laborers to care for First Step housing units. Denyse Renner and Rick McMinn stepped up and into service for our Ground Hog’s Day Pancake Dinner! THANK YOU, ALL!!

From the desk of Community Development. . .

Our Community Development Liaison, **Sandy Craft**, continues to apply for funding from diverse grant-making sources such as private foundations, government sources, and corporate entities (e.g. banking institutions). The current non-profit funding climate and the past few years - pandemic and pandemic recovery; have been very competitive for funding of newer nonprofits. Yet we have hope that our cause will be supported and funded! There is currently over \$400K pending in grant applications for First Step.



In Addition - - -

Because of urgent need, at this time we do have a fourth family housed in a trailer on a private RV site - evidence that it will be advantageous to get onto the First Step property and acquire additional housing units.

First Step Florence is currently serving seven children ages 3 months & 4 years, 6 months, 4 & 5 years, and 9 & 11 years old.

Due to the season and weather, we’ve have a few “upkeep” and maintenance projects - seems a Board member along with a community helper step up to take care of these spontaneous needs.

Also, planning has begun for our 2nd Annual GALA fundraiser.

*Join Us!
Help your neighbors!*



Current Board Members

Greg Wood, President
Paul Pearson, Vice President
Rebecca McMinn, Secretary
Donna Gregg, Treasurer
Ivy Medow, Member
Rachel Sachs, Member
Norma Wood, Member
Linda Yoder, Member



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To make donations:
www.florencefirststep.org

follow us on fb @ firststepflorence
and on instagram @ fsfhousing

Greg Wood 804.908.9663



SAVE THE DATE!
JUNE 28, 2025

LUAU GALA
"KOKUA OHANA!!"
SUPPORT COMMUNITY!

Dinner, Drinks, Silent Auction, Program
Highlights - Enjoy the BEACH VIEW!!

Saturday June 28, 2025
From 6:00 - 9:00pm

Driftwood Shores Resort & Conference Center
88416 1st Avenue, Florence OR 97439

TICKET INFO COMING SOON!!



Transitional Housing for Families
PO Box 1331
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