The undeniable importance of our work—building community and providing resources—has come to the forefront during the COVID-19 crisis. We all share a collective vulnerability and a new understanding of how quickly things can change.

In the blink of an eye, families who had never faced food insecurity were unsure where their next meal would come from. Seniors who had been active and social were now forced to stay at home, many by themselves. Children of all ages and backgrounds lost the opportunity to socialize and learn at school as normal. Childcare businesses were forced to close, many forever. Along with these sudden changes came the drawn-out, inevitable impacts of already-growing economic inequities made ever worse by the pandemic. Families facing the stubborn, persistent grind of poverty were hit the hardest.

But, Neighborhood House was there to help. Last year, we supported over 12,000 Portlanders through the seemingly insurmountable. Our staff found ways to meet the immediate, emergent needs of the community while looking ahead and building long-term, positive changes for adults and children.

Despite the pandemic, many of our programs expanded. Our Head Start Programs opened a new children’s center downtown, creating affordable preschool space for even more families with young children. Neighborhood House won competitive funding, making our Parenting Program the backbone organization for Multnomah County’s first Parenting Education Hub and providing parents with resources, support, and community. Neighborhood House was also selected to create the Oregon Childcare Alliance, which connects childcare providers across the state with tools that improve the efficiency and quality of both their businesses and the care they give.

The organization’s success over the last year was made possible by you, our generous neighbors. Despite the rapidly changing economic situation that we are all facing, Neighborhood House met, and will continue to meet, the challenges and lingering impacts of the pandemic.

Thank you for your support.

Chris Chiacchierini
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
cc@nhpdx.org
WHAT DOES POVERTY LOOK LIKE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

How do we fight it?

Poverty looks different for everyone. For some children, it meant watching family get sick with COVID over and over because they had a risky, in-person job they could not miss. For other families, it meant missing rent payments, facing food insecurity, or being unable to afford medical care. Much of this was true before the pandemic, and is even more true now. Poverty is often generational and cyclical. It is difficult to break out of poverty once in it.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 85,000 Portlanders are currently living at or below the poverty line (a family of four is considered to be living in poverty if they earn less than $26,200 a year). Poverty rates are much higher among women, children, people with disabilities, and people of color.

Life events can trigger poverty, like losing a job or work hours, changes in family structure, or a major illness or health emergency. The economic turmoil caused by COVID-19 has only increased instances of these events, putting more and more households at risk of falling into poverty.

Neighborhood House’s vision is to ensure that all our neighbors have the community and support they need to thrive. By working upstream - in prevention, education, and wealth building - we aim to stop poverty before it begins.

Between July 2020-2021, our programs helped more than 12,000 children, adults, and families at risk of falling into poverty to stay housed, fed, and connected to school, family, and community — and provided them with hope for a better future.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE FOOD PANTRY CLIENT

Meet Michelle

A great accomplishment of the Neighborhood House Food Pantry over the last year has been its ability to provide uninterrupted food delivery throughout the pandemic. Thanks to generous donations and volunteers, the Pantry supported neighbors who couldn’t leave their homes to get food for themselves and their families.

54-year-old Michelle lives alone in Southwest Portland. Michelle is unable to work due to health challenges, so making ends meet is difficult. Fortunately, the Food Pantry has been there to help.

“(The Pantry) fills the gap when other expenses are too high and there’s not enough money for groceries,” Michelle said.

Donors and volunteers who support the Food Pantry are playing a big role in keeping our neighbors housed. When someone living on a limited or low income receives a hearty box of fresh, healthful food once or twice a month, that frees up money in their budget to meet other essential needs — like paying rent or for prescription medications, or buying school supplies for their children.

During the pandemic, the Pantry’s shift from a walk-in model to a delivery service helped keep our neighbors safe and healthy. For Michelle, it was a lifesaver.

“I cannot drive. (Delivery) has been the difference between accessing food or not,” she said.
COMMUNITY IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Meeting immediate needs:

• Our Food Pantry served over 9,000 food-insecure neighbors with highly responsive food delivery and in-person services.

• 42 houseless families, many of whom were fleeing domestic violence, found a safe, stable place to live at our 19th Avenue Apartments.

Building resilient futures:

• 100% of children in our Head Start Program showed positive development in motor, communication, cognitive, and social/emotional skills.

• Our Child Care Improvement Project awarded grants and technical support to 121 at-home child care providers, allowing them to remain open and serve 400 families safely through the pandemic.

• 80% of participants in our Parenting Program, all of whom are immigrants or people of color, say that now, they know more about how to parent in healthy ways.

Support for all ages:

• Our School Age Programs responded to a request from Portland Public Schools, providing in-person child care and educational support to 67 elementary-aged children of working families.

• The Connect Program, which normally serves 30-35 grade 2-4 students needing additional academic and emotional support, expanded to provide tutoring and enrichment to all 78 K-12 students residing at the affordable housing community where it operates.

• Over 1,500 seniors attended an online class through our virtual Senior Center, and our Senior Transportation Program provided nearly 3,000 rides to medical appointments, shopping, and other essential destinations.

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Capital M Lending is a local mortgage company with more than two decades of experience helping Portlanders buy and refinance homes. As a housing industry leader, Capital M is keenly aware of the toll that houselessness is taking on the lives of too many in our community. In December 2020, co-founder Aaron Nawrocki wanted to make a significant donation to an organization that works “upstream” to stop poverty before it starts.

“Neighborhood House provides the tools and support to enrich communities, and Capital M Lending appreciates all of the heart and drive that comes along with that,” said Aaron.

“We chose to donate to Neighborhood House because they truly are there to fill in the gaps where assistance is needed, from food to transportation to skills to housing.”

Business partners like Capital M that are deeply invested in the community are an essential part of Neighborhood House’s base of support. We are grateful to Capital M and all our generous donors for supporting our mission this year.

Capital M Lending describes its mission as “serving people across their lifetime. From first-time home buyers to VA Loans to seasoned seniors looking to get the most out of their home equity, Capital M Lending assists in stepping through the home loan process.”

AARON NAWROCKI, CAPITAL M LENDING CO-FOUNDER