

News From The Road Home

Dane County

Winter 2025/26

Our Partners

Surgery Gives Back with Care for Families



UW-Madison Department of Surgery supported The Road Home through their Surgery Gives Back donation drive this winter, helping families meet immediate needs and move toward long-term housing stability. Thank you!

Dove & BG CDC: A Collaboration of Care



Last month, The Boys & Girls Clubs of Dane County donated Dove hygiene products to The Road Home, helping provide comfort and care for families through the power of community collaboration.



With Housing First, The Road Home Supports Families Working Toward Lasting Independence

Federal cuts and changes to housing programs threaten stability for families in our community, but The Road Home is committed to Housing First principles.

For years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) funding toward rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing programs have helped ensure children in our community have a place to call home while families work to build a strong foundation for stability that lasts.

However, late last year, HUD suddenly revealed a major priority change, shifting resources to outdated transitional housing models and promoting strict eligibility criteria including required mental/behavioral health treatment and work requirements. These structural challenges to the widely accepted approach to homelessness intervention create real barriers to families trying to access affordable housing.

In contrast to HUD's newfound priorities, The Road Home's commitment to "housing first" is rooted in our belief that access to stable housing is a human

right and serves as the foundation to independence and ending the cycle of homelessness for families in our community.

Housing First is defined as an approach to homelessness intervention that prioritizes getting families into housing without requiring preconditions like treatment or employment. It's the principle that stable housing is a basic need which gives people the starting point to better address other issues like poor mental health or substance use. Following this model, The Road Home offers voluntary, client-driven supportive services to help people stay housed. It's a shift from older "treatment-first" models that created barriers to housing.

Hear from Michael, our Executive Director, about The Road Home's commitment and history with Housing First approaches. See page 3.

Every child deserves a home

890 W Wingra Dr. | Madison, WI 53715

trhome.org





Breaking the Cycle: Zianna's Journey to Stability and Strength

Last year, Zianna stood in front of our community as a guest speaker at The Road Home Dane County's Home for Families Fundraising Breakfast. Today, her journey continues to reflect why housing stability matters.

Zianna has always been the one who holds her family together. A natural mediator with deep empathy, she leads with love and an unshakable devotion to her daughters. That love has guided her through years of instability and difficult choices, often requiring her to start over again and again.

At just 15, Zianna experienced housing instability for the first time after being turned away by family while caring for her young child. What followed was a long search for safety and stability, marked by moving between relatives, sleeping in a car, and eventually staying in shelters. When she arrived in Madison in 2019, she hoped to finish school and build a future, but without stable housing, those goals felt out of reach.

After months in shelter and repeated setbacks, Zianna connected with support through The Road Home Dane County. With help from a housing advocate, she was able to secure critical documents, overcome barriers, and move into a two-bedroom apartment of her own.

"I didn't care what kind of place it was; I was just excited to get the keys"

Today, Zianna has created a home where her daughters feel safe, loved, and supported. Both girls are thriving, and Zianna is looking ahead with confidence with dreams of opening her own braiding business. Her long-term dream is to buy a home she can pass down to both of her daughters.

Zianna's story is a powerful reminder of why Housing First matters. When families have stable housing, everything else—education, employment, health, and hope—can begin to fall into place.

More Than Gifts: A Holiday That Helped a Family Feel Whole Again

For Melinda* and James*, the past year has been one of profound change. Just months ago, the young couple and their three small children were separated, staying in shelters or with friends as they tried to navigate housing instability. The holidays felt distant and uncertain, overshadowed by the daily challenge of keeping their family safe and together.

That began to change last summer when they enrolled in one of The Road Home's Housing & Hope program. With the support of their housing advocate, Melinda and James both secured new jobs with benefits, enrolled their oldest child in school, and found reliable childcare for their younger children. They connected with their local food pantry, built relationships with their neighbors at one of The Road Home's Family Fun Nights, and began to feel rooted in their new neighborhood.

In December, Melinda and James received holiday gift cards through The Road Home's Holiday Sponsorships Program. The impact was immediate and deeply meaningful.

Through the Holiday Sponsorships Program, dozens of community members help provide The Road Home participant families with gift cards around the holiday season.

"Thank you so much! This means a lot and now my kids will have something for the holidays."

For Melinda and James, the gift cards meant more than presents. They made it possible to choose clothes, toys and warm meals for their children and to prepare a holiday meal together. Simple moments that restored dignity, joy, and a sense of normalcy.

This experience is just one of many. Each year, families in The Road Home's programs are work hard to rebuild stability after homelessness. Your contributions to the Holiday Sponsorships Program empower parents to focus on their long-term goals for housing and employment while also providing their children with the warmth, connection, and hope every child deserves during the holidays.



A&J Photography

*Names changed to protect privacy.

Why I Give : Guild Mortgage Madison



Every year around the holidays, Guild Mortgage Madison hosts their Toys for Tacos event, inviting their clients and friends to donate a kids toy or cash donation to The Road Home and, in exchange, get delicious tacos! In December, this event provided hundreds of toys to children served by The Road Home. The Guild Mortgage Madison team has this to share:

"The Road Home is something that has been near and dear to our hearts at Guild Mortgage Madison for a long time. Several of us found different paths to the organization, but what's clear to us and so important is the incredible valuable but also comprehensive work The Road Home does. We love that you help families. We love that you help people at their most vulnerable. We really love that instead of a band aid which is sometimes offered in alternative settings, you take people from unhoused to housed. You 'teach a man to fish,' and, in doing so you change people's stories.

"Housing is obviously central to what we do. If you ask any of our loan officers they'll tell you one of the perks of the job is we get to make an impact on people lives. Because we're in a people business we also have an extensive network, and we are therefore able to leverage that and be helpful with events like Toys for Tacos. It's been productive because it's fun and easy to participate in, and we have a generally kind and giving group around us. It's fun to shop for toys, it's fun to eat tacos, and it's fun to take time out of the day to stop by and have a few laughs. All while helping the community!

"This year was our 12th year doing Toys for Tacos. TRH has been a great partner with us, and it's been nice moving the location to TRH's offices because it helps with the outreach and folks naturally ask more questions about your mission and interact with your staff. We feel very lucky to be able to help you, help a community that has been so good to all of us at Guild for so long. It's our hope that the donations are impactful and bring a lot of happiness to the holidays! "



Scan the QR code or visit trhome.org/give to donate today! You can also use the enclosed envelope to donate and support our mission of ending family homelessness.

Contact Elliott Valentine, Development Director, for information on joining our Giving Society: elliottv@trhome.org

Housing First at The Road Home

The Road Home has been committed to Housing First since 2005. It's part of why over the 26 years of this organization, we evolved away from offering shelter (Interfaith Hospitality Network) in 2018 to build all 13 programs we operate today. Shelter for families is needed in our community. The same goes for robust, effective programs to help people with their mental health and/or substance abuse disorders, as well as programs that support solid employment for parents. We know that the stability needed to be successful in those programs, secure employment, support kids in school—and, of course, try to prevent any future loss of housing—really requires housing from the start.

Michael Etheridge, The Road Home Executive Director, says this about Housing First principles:

"Housing First has been a key part of the homelessness response at the City of Madison, Dane County, State of Wisconsin, and federal government levels for years now. In collaboration with many other locally operating organizations, The Road Home has been a leader in growing programs based on evidence-based practices that has been proven to work for people in need. As federal priorities change, our local approach to homelessness intervention will be strongly collaborative with other agencies who are part of our Dane County 'Continuum of Care' (CoC).

"As we monitor the evolving landscape of housing policy, our focus is on ensuring that families don't fall through the cracks as they work hard to build brighter futures for themselves and their children. We understand that stable housing is the cornerstone of progress, and we're committed to doing everything we can to support families as they move toward lasting independence."

How Can You Help Keep Families Housed?

Contact your members of Congress and let them know you support proven **Housing First** approaches to ending family homelessness.

Sample Message:

I support Housing First: rapid access to safe, stable housing with voluntary supports. HUD has started to shift funding away from permanent housing programs, which will jeopardize programs in Dane County that keep local families housed. Please urge Congress to stick to Housing First principles and protect my local community from HUD funding cuts that will put families back on the street.

Find Your Members of Congress:

Visit www.congress.gov/members to find contact information for your members of Congress.

We're excited to share that our organization has earned a 2025 Platinum Seal of Transparency with Candid! Now, you can support our work with trust and confidence by viewing our #NonprofitProfile: trhome.org/who-we-are





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Save The Date: 2026 Homes for Families Fundraising Breakfast

Start your day inspired **October 8, 2026 at 8:00 am!** This special morning will feature stories from families whose lives have been transformed through The Road Home's programs, a chance to connect with community leaders and supporters, and updates on how your support helps provide safe, stable housing for children and parents. Enjoy a delicious breakfast while celebrating the impact our community makes together.

Stay tuned for more details and speaker announcements!

To learn how you can join in on the conversation, please visit www.trhome.org/breakfast

