



Duke and a guest hug outside of Blanchet House.

We Need Help to Alleviate Suffering

Blanchet House is a lighthouse for many of the 6,000 people experiencing homelessness in Portland. Our staff are light keepers helping guests navigate difficult waters. One light keeper is Duke Reiss, a Peer Support and Housing Specialist, stationed in the cafe. Along with the cafe team, he is relentless in his efforts to find help and housing for our diners.

IN THE CAFE

During one average month, Duke referred 38 guests to emergency shelters, 29 to housing, and 19 to hospitals or detox centers. But behind each success is a complex, and often exhausting process.

The process begins by carefully listening to each guest to identify which services would be a good fit. Because most lack phones they need someone to make calls to find out if there are openings in shelters, housing or detox programs.

Guests with acute mental health, physical disabilities, or are over 60 years old must first be connected to a county social worker which he arranges.

A typical referral appointment with a guest or a family looks something like this.

1. No Openings

Duke calls service after service to find an open bed or multiple beds if it's a couple or family. This can last a day, a week, or months depending on a person's needs.

2. There's an Opening!

A bed is open but paperwork, IDs, disability benefits, and physical or mental health requirements must be addressed before they can be admitted. Every provider has different standards for acceptance and unexpected blocks in the path can arise.



Duke (right) with William inside the apartment he secured for him. William slept outside and ate at Blanchet until it was ready for move in.

For example: **There's an opening, but ...** the only available bed is a top bunk so the person with a physical disability is excluded.

There's an opening, but ... you must be over 60 years old and the person you're trying to house is 57 so doesn't qualify.

There's an opening, but ... the person's needs are "too acute" for a shelter but aren't "acute" enough for a care facility.

There's an opening, but ... you have to

wait until next week. This can mean more nights on the street, relying on Blanchet's meals services to get you through the day. Often Duke needs to search the streets to locate someone before an opportunity slips away.

3. There's a Bed For You, You're on Your Way!

What a relief! We found a tiny home that can accommodate a wheelchair and dog! We call a cab paid for by donors to transport them to their new homes.

We Need Professionals to Help End Homelessness

Our team's work doesn't stop when someone is housed. They must be ready to help the next person or family in crisis.

Duke's position and our cafe team—Ami, Ava, Liz, Michael, and Elizabeth—are generously funded by donors who want to end suffering. We need your help to continue to employ life-changing professionals. Please donate today. Your contributions provide meals, clothing, shelter, and resources that allow our team to continue their vital work. Thank you.

In Memoriam

We remember Bethanie, a beloved guest of our cafe who struggled with mental health. She was killed in a hit-and-run accident.

"I hope her spirit is free of the troubles of living outside," said Elizabeth, who served her in the cafe. "She used to be a piano teacher and loved Chopin. Her favorite Tootsie Pops were cherry."

Bethanie was one of the many women who found refuge and community at Blanchet House. We will remember her sweet, innocent smile and soft-spoken "thank you."





Pictured: Scott Kerman, Ross Sears, Dr. Jeff Heatherington, members of the Blanchet House Board of Directors, and representatives from Schommer and Sons, and SERA Architects “saw” a ribbon at the grand opening ceremony of Blanchet Farm on Sept. 12, 2024.

We Did It! Grand Opening of Blanchet Farm’s New Facility, Completion of Capital Campaign

In 2022, we began asking our community to help us build a new facility at Blanchet Farm so that we could give more people a path to sobriety. You, our incredibly generous donors responded, and we were able to open the new dormitories ahead of schedule and under budget!

The new facility can accommodate up to 24 men, offering support as they work to overcome addiction and homelessness.

On Sept. 12, Blanchet staff, board, and supporters celebrated the grand opening with a ribbon-sawing ceremony.

Board member Rich Ulring gave a bless-

ing and led the crowd in a call-and-response sing-along. A new resident of the farm, William, shared a land acknowledgment and his appreciation for the opportunity to stay at the farm. Board President Mary Ann Walker thanked donors and staff who persevered to bring the project to completion.

Lead donor Dr. Jeff Heatherington spoke about the importance of supporting children with health care and schools to set them up for healthier lives as adults.

Ross Sears, who’s managed the farm for more than a decade after using the program to gain sobriety told the crowd,

“When we get here, we don’t have a lot to feel good about. The farm gives you something to feel good about.”

Nathan (pictured on the next page), the farm’s cook, prepared a from-scratch brunch with delicious pastries, focaccia sandwiches, and quiche.

The building was designed by SERA Architects and constructed by Schommer & Sons, both long-time supporters. Major funders include the ECHO Fund, M.J. Murdock Trust, and Elsie Franz Finley. The Building Pathways Home capital campaign has been a success because of our caring community.



Kevin Scanlon volunteers weekly to bus tables and serve in the cafe.

Volunteer Spotlight: Kevin Scanlon

“Where would we be without places like this? What would happen to society?” asks Kevin Scanlon, a previous cafe diner and now a volunteer. “I’m over 12 years clean and sober now. This place kept me alive.”

Kevin gives back by serving the community and offering hope to others. He knows first-hand how important a free meal and welcoming space are to healing.

“It’s about giving back a little bit because the place kept me alive for years when I ate at the old Blanchet House. Back then, I would get a job, and I’d mess it all up with drinking and drugs.”

Kevin likes that there are no questions asked or requirements to dine in the cafe.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

“That’s important because there’s a lot of anger and shame when you’re homeless,” he says. “There were a lot of years I was not interested in getting clean and sober because I felt so bad. It’s very hard once you’re homeless, to get back into being a productive person. There are a lot of setbacks.”

Blanchet House is so much more than a free meal. People in crisis, because of poverty, trauma, mental illness, or addiction, need a safe place to go and be nourished while they do the hard work of healing.

For more than 70 years, we have been a place of hospitality for marginalized people. From the outside what we do may not look pretty but on the inside, it is the most beautiful thing to see.



Top to bottom: Heidi Janowski, Michael Seid, and Maggie Cornish.

People Holding Our World Together

It's been a busy year at the house and farm with new faces leading and supporting our programs. Let us introduce you to a few.

STAFF NEWS

Michael Seid has taken on the role of Volunteer Program Manager. He's transitioning to this position after serving as a cafe team member for two years. Michael's shown remarkable strength and kindness in serving our community.

Michael will manage more than 3,000 active volunteers and groups who are critical to our services. He's taking over for Heidi Janowski who transitioned to our development team with a focus on community engagement.

When you see a Blanchet information table out in the community you'll likely find Heidi behind it!

Out at the farm, Maggie Cornish is handling all resident intakes and helping the men on their sobriety journey. She will complete coursework for a master's degree in social work at the end of November.



Nathan in the new kitchen at Blanchet Farm.

We Have a Responsibility To Help One Another

An interview with Nathan, who's staying at Blanchet Farm. Nathan is a talented chef cooking delicious meals for his fellow farm residents.

I used to think that addiction was a moral failing. That was until I found myself deep in it, stuck in a cycle of using substances over and over again.

MY STORY

The thing about addiction is it rewires your brain. It's not that you're a bad person; it's that you're an addict. You have this disease that controls you. Unlike other diseases, there isn't a clear treatment plan.

There's no antibiotic or medication that fixes you in a year. Addiction is chronic. It's lifelong. It's something you have to work on every single day.

Coming to terms with that was one of the hardest things for me. I had to realize that if I wanted to get better, I had to put in the work. I had to examine my behavior, figure out what was driving me to use substances, and try to correct those patterns.

That's why Blanchet Farm has been such a blessing. It's given me the time and space to really start that internal work, without the pressure of a structured program. Here, I'm responsible for managing my own recovery, and I've found that this environment has opened my mind in ways I never expected. Even during my previous recovery attempts, I wasn't as receptive to certain ideas as I am now.

Addiction is powerful. It makes you seek comfort in the very thing that's destroying you. For me, it started with alcohol.

I was a successful middle-class guy, working as a chef, and even went to law school. I had everything going for me, but I threw it all away because I fell into a bottle. My addiction controlled me, and before I knew it, I was homeless.

If you'd asked me before if I thought I could end up in that situation, I would have laughed. But addiction doesn't care who you are or where you come from.

I've learned that addicts are part of our community, just like anyone else.

So why should we help them? Because they deserve it. We help because they're part of our community, and everyone deserves the chance to live a life of dignity and purpose.

Sometimes people need help to get there, whether it's from substance use disorder, homelessness, or unemployment. That's what we do at Blanchet. We don't cut people off and

say, "You're on your own." We try to heal them because they're part of us.

It's like if you had an injured foot—you wouldn't just cut it off. You'd try to heal it because it's part of your body. A community is the same way.

We don't just abandon people because they're struggling. We help them because it's the right thing to do. It's not about feeling good for helping others, it's about doing what's right.

No matter what you believe, there's an ethical responsibility we all share to help one another. When someone puts their hand out, we should take it. Helping others while helping yourself. That's what I've found here at Blanchet Farm.

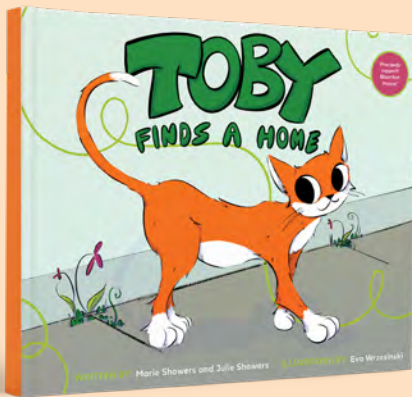
"We don't abandon people because they're struggling. We help them because it's the right thing to do."

News from Blanchet House & Farm

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A Meal. A Home. A Future.



Meet Toby!

Now there's a way to talk to young children about homelessness. Blanchet House's children's book, *Toby Finds a Home* is a great gift for the curious child or school group.



SCAN ME
TO ORDER

Readers follow a stray cat in search of food and comfort at Blanchet's cafe where he makes friends with diners. Children will learn about a complex issue through vibrant illustrations and a gentle, uplifting story.

Order a book from our website or email us at info@blanchethouse.org. Proceeds support our programs.

STORY TIME! Powell's Books will host a reading on Nov. 16 at 10:30 a.m.



MYTH: Handing out food and clothing to people encourages homelessness.

REALITY:

- Free food, clothing, and an accepting community help to stabilize individuals and families giving them the strength to tackle bigger challenges like finding housing, shelter, and medical care. Constantly worrying about where your next meal will come from distracts you and can cause mental and physical health problems, even prolonging homelessness.
- For those with mental health issues, mood disorders, and addiction, engaging in treatment or recovery is the last thing on their mind if they don't know where they're going to sleep or eat. Vulnerable people's basic needs must be met before treatment can begin in earnest.