

PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED
ENVELOPE TO MAKE A DONATION
TO NEXT STEP CENTER.

“We Updated our Mission and Vision Statements”

OUR MISSION:

To provide safe and stable housing, as well as support services, to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. We are committed to creating a community where everyone has access to affordable housing, and where individuals and families are empowered to achieve their full potential.

OUR VISION:

We believe that homelessness is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach, and we work collaboratively with other organizations and community partners to address the root cause of homelessness and provide effective solutions. Our goal is to be a beacon of hope and a catalyst for change, inspiring others to join us in our mission to end homelessness and create a more just and equitable society for all, one person, and one family at a time.

Next Step Center, Inc.

P.O. Box 850

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Somerset, PA 15501

(814) 444- 8588

www.nextstepcenter.org



NEXT STEP CENTER, INC. Newsletter

Board Members

Chair: *Karen Ferry*

Vice-chair: *Marlene Gotjen*

Treasurer: *Art Gotjen*

Secretary: *Paul Bomboy*

Cory Merrbach

Rev. Brenda Shaffer

Andrea Palguta

Lisa Phillips

M. Renee Gindlesperger

Nancy Webb

Pastor Arnie McFarland

Michael Kuhn

Employees

- **Executive Director:** *Lisa Wengerd*
- **Community Housing & Advocacy Director:** *Amanda Webreck*
- **Housing Case Manager:** *Amy Shaffer*
- **Housing Case Manager:** *Jordan Woy*
- **Community Housing Program Assistant:** *Shayla Brant*
- **Shelter Manager:** *Becky Kozuch*
- **Facilities Maintenance Manager:** *Justin Kerrigan*
- **Maintenance Supervisor:** *Robert Fowler*
- **Janitorial/Steps Program:** *Christian Miller*

Homes Within Reach - Frontline Leader Award Nominations for 2023

By Lisa Wengerd



The Next Step Center, Inc is proud to announce that Amanda Webreck has been nominated by her co-workers for the Homes Within Reach, Frontline Leader Award which is set to be announced this summer.

Amanda is a passionate and dedicated professional with extensive experience in the Community Housing and Advocacy world. With a deep

commitment to social justice and equitable access to housing, Amanda has made a significant impact in her role as the Community Housing and Advocacy Director with The Next Step Center, Inc.

Amanda's journey in the field of Community Housing & Advocacy led her to develop a strong foundation in understanding the complexities of homelessness, housing insecurities and the challenges faced by marginalized populations. Early in her career Amanda earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from University of North Carolina at Wilmington December 2009 where she majored in Human Resources & Racial/Inequality Issues. September 2011 Amanda earned her master's in human services from Capella University, Majoring in Management of Nonprofit Agencies. She then obtained her Doctorate in Human Services February 2019 from Walden University, Majoring in Disaster, Crisis & Interventions doing her Dissertation on Intake Case Manager's Perspectives on Rural Veteran Homelessness in Pennsylvania.

Over the years, Amanda has held various positions with nonprofit organizations, each contributing to her well-rounded knowledge of housing policies, programs, and advocacy strategies. Her unwavering dedication to creating positive change has led to her current role as the Community Housing and Advocacy Director.

As the Community Housing and Advocacy Director for The Next Step Center, Inc., Amanda leads a team of committed professionals who share her vision of ensuring safe, affordable, and accessible housing for all community members. She works closely with government officials, community leaders, and stakeholders to develop and implement innovative strategies that address the housing needs of vulnerable populations in Somerset County.

Amanda's expertise in housing policy, grant writing and her ability to navigate complex regulatory frameworks have been instrumental in advocating for the rights of individuals and families facing housing insecurities. She actively engages in grassroot movements, collaborating with local organizations and community members to raise awareness, mobilize

resources, and influences policy decisions at the local and regional levels.

Amanda's leadership is marked by her exceptional interpersonal skills and her ability to foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders. She is known for her compassionate and empathetic approach, always placing the needs and voices of marginalized communities at the forefront of her work.

Beyond her professional endeavors Amanda is also a Drug & Alcohol Counselor, Adjunct Instructor for Allegheny College of Maryland. She actively volunteers with her local 4-H & her children's schools. She is married to Russell Webreck and is the mother of 3 children aged 17, 8 and 1 year old. In her spare time, she helps raise goats & Guernsey Cattle on their family farm that they show at the Somerset County Fair each year. Their Guernsey cow was awarded Reserved Junior Grand Champion 2022 and won Best Owned and Bred at the PA State Junior Show in Harrisburg 2022.

With Amanda's unwavering commitment, strategic vision, and compassionate advocacy, she continues to make significant strides in creating more inclusive and equitable housing solutions for communities in need. Her work serves as an inspiration to others, reminding us that housing is a fundamental human right that must be safeguarded for all.



Lisa Wengerd
Executive Director

Our Community Partnerships



LIVE UNITED



**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
FOR THE ALLEGHENIES**

SERVING BEDFORD, CAMBRIA, SOMERSET, AND INDIANA COUNTIES



LEE INITIATIVES
Health & Wellness
ENDOWMENT

“Landlord Spotlight: Rice’s Building a Strong Foundation!”

By Amanda Webreck



Diane Rice has a long history in the housing market. She bought her first 3 unit building in Berlin when she was just 26 years old. “I watched an employer I worked for doing the rental business. I thought I was smart enough to do the same thing.” She was eager to jump into the rental business and connected with Somerset Trust’s loan officer, Richard Poorbaugh. Richard was able

to help her navigate her first loan application. “He is a wonderful man. Of course, retired now.”

With over 34 years in the rental market, Diane has seen vast changes and recognizes that one of the biggest challenges that landlords face today is “finding a renter that will respect you and your property.” She even noted that the utility bills can be a challenge from the landlord’s perspective, especially if “[they have] renters that don’t pay their utilities and trash removal bills. They are my responsibility it tenants leave unpaid borough bills; it becomes the landlord’s responsibility.”

The Next Step Center has worked tirelessly alongside Diane and her husband to make noticeable changes in the rental market. Next Step Center continues to educate tenants on landlord/tenant responsibilities, improving financial responsibilities and timely payments. Our extensive Transitions Program and comprehensive life skills are incorporated throughout all of our housing programs and have been instrumental in improving tenant and landlord relationships.

Despite these many challenges, Diane and her husband continue to love being a part of the rental market and have multiple properties throughout Somerset County. You can find her and her husband splitting their time fixing properties but also enjoying life. They admit they are ‘outdoor people’ and ‘love golf, traveling, and warm weather’.



Amanda Webreck
Community Housing & Advocacy Director

Donation
from 4H
Project!



“Board of Directors Spotlight: Trust is Key!”

By Justin Kerrigan



Art and Marlene Gotjen have more than earned time in the spotlight, they deserve it. Since 2006, they have served especially important roles on the Next step Center’s board of directors. At the time, they decided to join the board due to a significant loss of board members, which is

when he was appointed the chairman of the board for the next 3 years. He currently serves as the Treasurer and Marlene was the Secretary for 10 years. She is currently serving as the vice-chair of the board.

Prior to working with the Next Step Center, Art was always involved with organizations that provided affordable housing and lessened the homelessness in the community. He is also a board member for Habitat for Humanity. In 1984, Art worked to build 40 affordable apartments in Confluence, PA to help the elderly in the community with hopes that the apartments would be passed down to young generations and they would benefit too.

Art and Marlene both volunteer their time to help in various ways to better support the goals of the organization. They support the mission and the vision of the Next Step Center, and the growth and development of the staff and organization. They dream of seeing the finished project at the Glades Centre as we continue to renovate and remodel the building into more accessible housing, which is affordable for the residents.

Marlene feels strongly that the dignity of the clients’ needs to be kept with trust and compassion from staff while assisting them through homelessness. She also feels that education for our clients through the transitions program, offering clients valuable life-skills is crucial to success. They both agree that trust is key to providing affordable housing for the community with a new perspective and the ability to better manage homelessness in Somerset County.



Justin Kerrigan
Facilities Maintenance Manager

“Success Story”

By Amy Shaffer

A client was referred by the Area Agency on Aging regarding a 65 year old man that had fell in his home and broke his back. He had been at a personal care facility but had been discharged and was placed in a hotel. He was then enrolled with Somerset Drug and Alcohol Authority because of prior drug and alcohol abuse. He was currently on parole and a registered sex offender.

He asked to be returned to his residence but there had been some concerns because of damage done by 7 cats he had inside the house. Also, his capability of keeping things in order independently.

A case manager met with the Landlord to access damages and agreed to complete the return to his residence. The landlord removed all the garbage, cats, a completed all necessary repairs to the property.

He purchased a new bed, and the case manager received donated furniture for his residence that was delivered by volunteers. Weatherization applied two new doors prior to assistance but then turned them away before the completion of services. The case manager had weatherization complete the services and he received a new refrigerator and deep freezer. As he was discharged by the Area Agency on Aging, they assist him with weekly cleaning of the property. He will continue with Home Health as necessary and other health care service professionals. He is doing well, and the landlord made a place in the shed for his cats. He is incredibly happy with his residence.



Amy Shaffer
Case Manager



“Success Story”

By Rebecca Kozuch

I am writing a success story about one of the Next Step Center clients that was at the shelter. This client came to the Next Step Center through referral due to an on-going domestic violence situation. She was able to bring her dog, which is emotional support for the client. The client was told it was a clean, safe environment and that nothing bad would happen.

The client had an amazing turnaround and was able to find her own place in Somerset. She only spent 25 days at the shelter, but she still stops every so often to say “hi!”



Rebecca Kozuch
Shelter Manager

Take a Coat, Leave a Coat Program

By Shayla Brant

The coat program is what it is today because we have great people in our community able to provide donations. We want to keep lending a helping hand when needed. The coat program provides a warm coat to help anyone who is in need. We hang them outside our building, and we try to keep a variety of men’s, women’s, and children coats depending upon donations. We want to thank everyone who donated. As a community there were a total of 144 coats donated for the winter months January – April 2023. There are 25 coats left over for this coming winter.

Donated Coats

Taken Coats

Women: 74	60
Men: 54	49
Children: 16	10



Shayla Brant
Office Assistant

“Renovations at Glades Centre”

By Robert Fowler

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve our apartment complex, we recently completed the remodeling of apartment 15. This involved installing new flooring on the third and fourth floor hallways, which has greatly enhanced the overall look and feel of the space.

With this project completed, we have now turned our attention to apartment 10, which is currently undergoing a full remodel. This includes the installation of brand new cabinets and appliances, as well as new vinyl laminate flooring throughout the apartment. We are excited to see the transformation taking place and cannot wait to unveil the finished product to our residents.



Robert Fowler
Maintenance Supervisor

Facade Work!



Sanner Bros. working on the facade of Glades Centre with a partnership with Somerset Inc.

Volunteer Day!



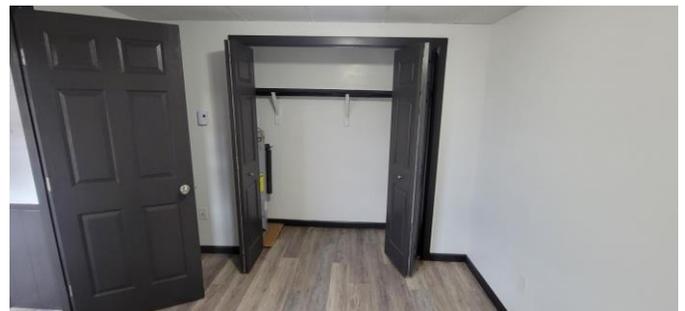
Frieden's Lutheran Church has been a big part of the renovations at Glades Centre in 2023! Thank you for all the help with volunteers.

Dumpster Day!



Staff at the Next Step Center removed all the garbage from building renovations, placing it into a dumpster for better sanitation, safety, and space.

Apartment Renovations



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WISH LIST OF ITEMS NEEDED:

- Laundry Soap (liquid HE)
- Fabric Softener
- Dishwasher Detergent
- Bleach
- Floor Cleaner
- Pillows
- Towels
- Hand Towels
- Wash Cloths
- Zip Lock Bag
- Light Bulbs



Our Impact on 2023

“Next Step Center, Inc served 202 individuals total for 2023.”

Next Step Center Emergency Shelter

- 38 individuals sheltered
- Includes 8 children
- For a total of 1099 people days
- Average stay 25 days
- 8 domestic violence

Community Housing Program/Other Programs

- 164 individuals assisted, housed, or diverted from the shelter where we stopped eviction or found other housing options.
- Currently 56 individuals are enrolled in a NSC program.



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