

a tiny home
for good.

A Tiny Newsletter

Spring 2023



ANDREW LUNETTA
Executive Director

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Prior to founding A Tiny Home for Good, I had the privilege of working at one of the local emergency shelters in the city for almost eight years. A well-managed essential service, the shelter provides hundreds of men every year with lifesaving, but intentionally temporary care. The goal is always to move the residents out of the shelter to a permanent housing solution, yet so often the result is anything but.

The “permanent” housing, the only option within the price range of the residents, is typically abysmal. Untenable roommate situations, complexes overrun with pests and code violations, and minimal support after move-in all contribute to a cycle where many men move back to the shelter months, sometimes weeks, after moving out.

But, it's no real surprise. Somehow as a society, we've allowed affordable to become synonymous with garbage. Because there will always be demand for affordable housing, meaning units that are less than \$800/month, there is no incentive for landlords to improve the cheap properties they amass, let alone take an interest in any additional needs a tenant may have after they move in. When we, as a community, must rely on the most affordable housing to act as the solution to permanently end homelessness, that result is inevitable.

At least, it was.

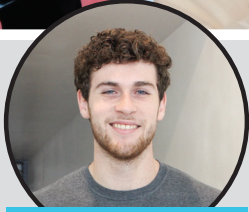
A Tiny Home for Good was founded with the knowledge that to break the cycle, how we house the most marginalized needed to change. Since 2016, we've been breaking that cycle one person and one house at a time. The solution isn't easy, but it is a profoundly simple two-step process:

1. We provide affordable, dignified housing that respects the humanity of the individual.
2. We take an active interest in keeping our tenants housed by learning about each individual and helping them meet their needs.

In this newsletter, you'll get a peek into each of these stages and how this profoundly different model of housing has resulted in years of housing stability, permanently putting an end to the homeless cycle.



MORE THAN A HOUSE



JOSH SEIERSEN
Director of Tenant
Services

It is our firm belief that ending homelessness is a community-wide endeavor. We want our tenants to not only feel at home with us, but to be a permanent part of the community – people we come to know as friends

and see regularly. Toward that end, we provide personalized outreach and support services to each tenant. We connect them with other care providers in Syracuse. And increasingly, we look to involve volunteers from the community wherever possible.

Our organization has benefited greatly from generous, committed volunteers since the very beginning. But still, I'm convinced we are only scraping the surface when it comes to the impact made by volunteers – particularly in the lives of our tenants.

A Tiny Home for Good is meant to be a middle ground where people from all across the community can take part in ending homelessness. That includes people who want to contribute in ways other than swinging a hammer on our construction sites.

Volunteers who act as a stable social presence in the lives of our tenants are just as important as those constructing new homes – and arguably more needed. In our experience, that kind of support makes a world of difference in terms of keeping tenants housed. And in the long run, keeping people housed is the only way to end the cycle of homelessness.

A great example of what this can look like is the story of a new volunteer named Zoe. She recently started working with me to support a tenant named Maya*, a single mother of two young children who works hard to juggle the kids' schooling, her own work, and maintaining her home.

*Names changed for privacy.

Unfortunately, with so many demands on Maya's time, cleaning and organization began to fall by the wayside. Together, the three of us decided to meet once a week to spend a few hours cleaning, organizing, and checking in. The hope is that, with some additional hands, some new storage shelves and containers, and some accountability partners, she can get caught up and then manage it on her own.

Whether or not this comes to fruition, we recognize that even this limited time spent with her represents a win. This is the time when we get to know Maya.

We get to hear about her goals for the future of her home and just how much her kids mean to her. She tells us about the challenges of being a single mother and, as we've spent more and more time with her, she voices maintenance needs that she may not have brought to us otherwise. Strengthening our relationship has improved our lines of communication.

All this translates into better support for Maya – our ultimate goal.

Not all tenants are looking for such extensive support. For many, a weekly check-in visit or some regular facetime goes a long way. Others ask for help with projects or hobbies, rides to appointments, or company while doing errands. These acts show our tenants that people in the community care about them, that they have people in their corner. And that's precisely what makes a place start to feel like home.

If you're interested in supporting our growing community with the gift of your time and care, visit the "Volunteer" page on our website at atinyhomeforgood.org/volunteer and fill out the form. We'll get in touch with opportunities.

BUILDING WITH DIGNITY

After months of working through the permit process, we officially broke ground in November on the four energy-efficient Rich Street houses we're building in partnership with National Grid's Project C initiative.

The significance of this support goes well beyond the creation of four new units of housing. It is recognition that our neighbors in need won't be left to continue struggling on their own. That as a community, we can raise the bar on what's acceptable in the realm of affordable housing.

Quality construction, private entries, spacious porches, and convenient access to public services all contribute to the dignity of these future homes.

While we're already excited for move-in day, we have a ways to go.

Thanks to the uncharacteristically mild winter, we were able to excavate and pour foundations without too much delay. This lot is located in a flood plain, so the houses sit on piers several feet above ground level. The added height gives these homes an impressive shadow, and creates opportunity for some enviable porches.

The houses have really started to take shape. By the time you read this newsletter, exterior framing and sheathing will be complete and we'll be working hard to dry-in the units with roofs and windows.

Speaking of roofs, you might notice a lot of interesting angles in the photos. Thanks to the design savvy of the University at Buffalo architecture students, these homes have some dramatically pitched roofs allowing for raised ceilings and a sense of space not typically found in a tiny home.



HELP US CONTINUE TO
BREAK
THE CYCLE
SUPPORT OUR WORK

If you're interested in having us speak to your group or organization, email Katie at kweaver@atinyhomeforgood.org

Please consider making a gift online at atinyhomeforgood.org or by using the included envelope. Checks can be made out to A Tiny Home for Good.

A Tiny Home for Good is a registered 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax exempt. We appreciate your continued support.

a tiny home for good.

1222 South Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13207

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christianne Radziewicz, Board Chair

Jessie Butts, Board Vice Chair

Joey Marzocchi, Secretary

Sarah Jones, Treasurer

Miguel Balbuena*

Sean Drake

Chris Gray

Kris Kratzert

Edward Piazza*

*Denotes a tenant of A Tiny Home for Good

DIGNITY TAKES MAINTENANCE



MEET DEVIN

Providing dignified housing requires ongoing maintenance. With 26 units under our belts and another 11 underway, there's a pretty constant supply of home repair projects.

We're happy to welcome Devin Clark to the team to assist in keeping our properties looking and functioning their best.

When Devin isn't bouncing between our properties, he's working through the construction trades program at OCM BOCES.

FIND US ON    @atinyhomeforgood