2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Stepping Stones
ALLIANCE

Prepared by:
Jesalyn C. Cole

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Thanks to the support of many, we continue to accomplish big milestones! Here are a few from 2025:

February– Fans installed in Sleep Center bathrooms with grant dollars.
March – Three water spigots installed on campus with grant dollars.
April – Received a grant to create an outdoor garden and purchase planters and flowers. Began partnership with HHS construction class to build raised garden planters.
May – Participated in **I Love My City** with free haircuts available. Parking lot improvements made with grant dollars.
June – 1st anniversary of Individual Shelter Units. Delivery of new washers/dryers purchased with grant dollars.
July – Added an awning onto the Sleep Center and added visitor parking signs.
August – Screening of Hollywood movie, “No Address,” at Hermiston Cinema, sponsored by AWS.
October – Solar panel project completed with ribbon-cutting event. Hosted 2nd annual fundraising gala: Enchanted Garden.
November – Added two additional Individual Shelter Units (Thank you Marlette/Clayton Homes!), replaced and added trees, and added electricity to two storage sheds.
December – Celebrated 3rd year of consecutive service to guests in the Sleep Center!

OUTREACH

Our focus continues to include outreach and community education. It is important that everyone is aware of our services. We are providing shelter, and so much more, to those in need. We regularly attend, participate, and present at area events. We attend area meetings to spread the word and help our community at large to better understand what we are doing and why.

Below is a further re-cap of 2025:

10 total presentations to the city councils of Echo, Stanfield, Hermiston, and Umatilla, as well as Umatilla County commissioners.

12 presentations to civic/service organizations and/or church congregations.

27 scheduled group tours to community partners, organizations, and supporters; along with countless impromptu tours for community members and supporters.

We participated in five community resource events with information for the general public.

We participated in monthly meetings for PATH, Hermiston's Faith Advisory Council Committee, Eastern Oregon Shelter Collaboration, Home for Hope, Oregon Continuum of Care, and our own board meetings. We also attended quarterly meetings for the Local Planning Group in Pendleton, the Community Action Group of Eastern Oregon, and the Food Insecurity planning group.

We invite you to come take a tour in person!
Visit our facebook page and/or website for a virtual tour.

We'd love to come to you, give an update, and answer questions you have about our work. Reach out to schedule with us!

SLEEP CENTER

Cindi Jorgensen
Sleep Center Coordinator

The Sleep Center continues to offer a low-barrier solution to those seeking overnight shelter, meaning we are an emergency, temporary shelter designed to minimize obstacles for people experiencing homelessness.
We have been in continuous operation every night since opening in December of 2022. We allow immediate access without requirements like sobriety, identification, income, or background checks. We encourage stability and safety for vulnerable populations; including accommodating pets and families.

Our Reverse Advent Calendar was very well received by individuals, as well as commuity groups, in December. We were grateful for the many donations!

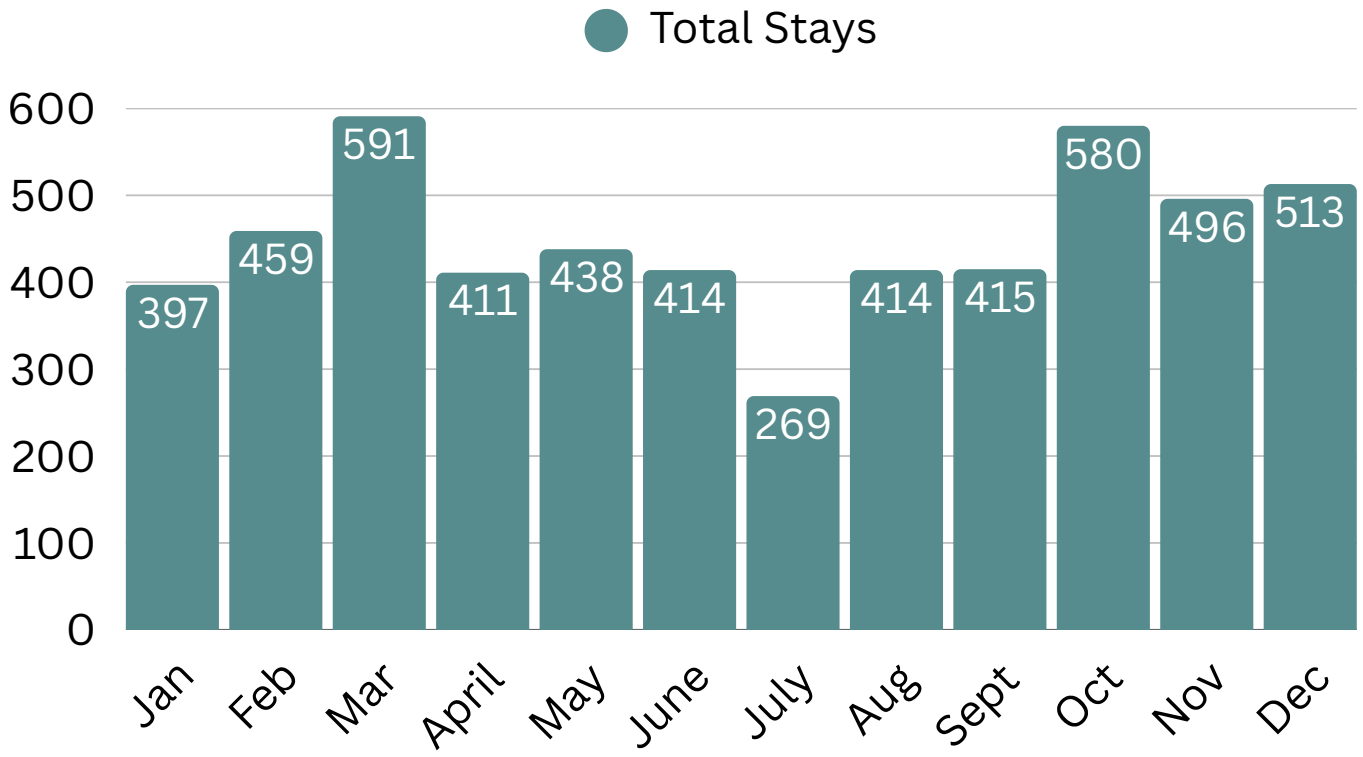
We continue to rely on volunteers to help with serving breakfast and guest check-out, as well as evening check-in procedures. Meals are generously donated by individuals in the community, service organizations, local restaurants, and churches. Our guests are fortunate to have the support of so many. SSA appreciates the thousands of dollars of in-kind donations for our guests.

Transportation is available from a pick-up location in downtown Hermiston, or guests arrive independently. They are welcomed into the center, fed an evening meal, and given a safe place to sleep for the night. Breakfast is served in the morning before guests depart for the day. Transportation is then offered back to the same location downtown.

Overnight security is contracted through Phoenix Protective Services.

SLEEP CENTER NUMBERS

With average nightly stays ranging from 10-20 guests, the Sleep Center is offering a much-needed service in the region. Over 5,000 overnight stays occurred in 2025 representing well over 350 unique individuals.



Once a guest has stayed 14 consecutive nights at the Sleep Center he/she qualifies to transition into membership and works with our Navigation Director on the next steps to get into an Individual Shelter Unit.

NAVIGATION CENTER

Our Navigation Center and Individual Shelter Units opened in June of 2024. We continue to build the services and resources available to members.

Carolina Delgado
Navigation Center Director

Members set and work toward goals while staying on campus. Some categories include: employment, housing, budgeting, physical health stability, mental health stability, substance use disorder treatment, obtaining documents, and/or obtaining benefits. Each member works one-on-one with Carolina to set and progress toward their individual goals. She works hard to link our members with the appropriate resources to meet with success.

Members have access to computers, washer/dryer, kitchen, showers, and the group area that includes games, books, and puzzles. Staff is on hand daily to help with resume building, applications, etc. We offer a shuttle schedule Monday-Friday for members to be able to run errands. We strive to build a community where members are growing in hope, independence, and accountability. We celebrate birthdays, personal milestones, promote peer support, offer field trips, and host craft and social activities. We work to show members what a home looks and feels like, and how they can create that for themselves.

SUCCESSES

We were able to add two additional ISUs on campus at the end of 2025. In the 18 months of our ISUs being available, we have successfully transitioned 18 individuals to permanent housing. Our primary goal is for our members to find sustainable, permanent housing, not quick fixes. We want to see success, so we strive to build a community that creates stability for members while they are here, and independence beyond our campus. We are working on long-term goals and long-term solutions, and this takes time.

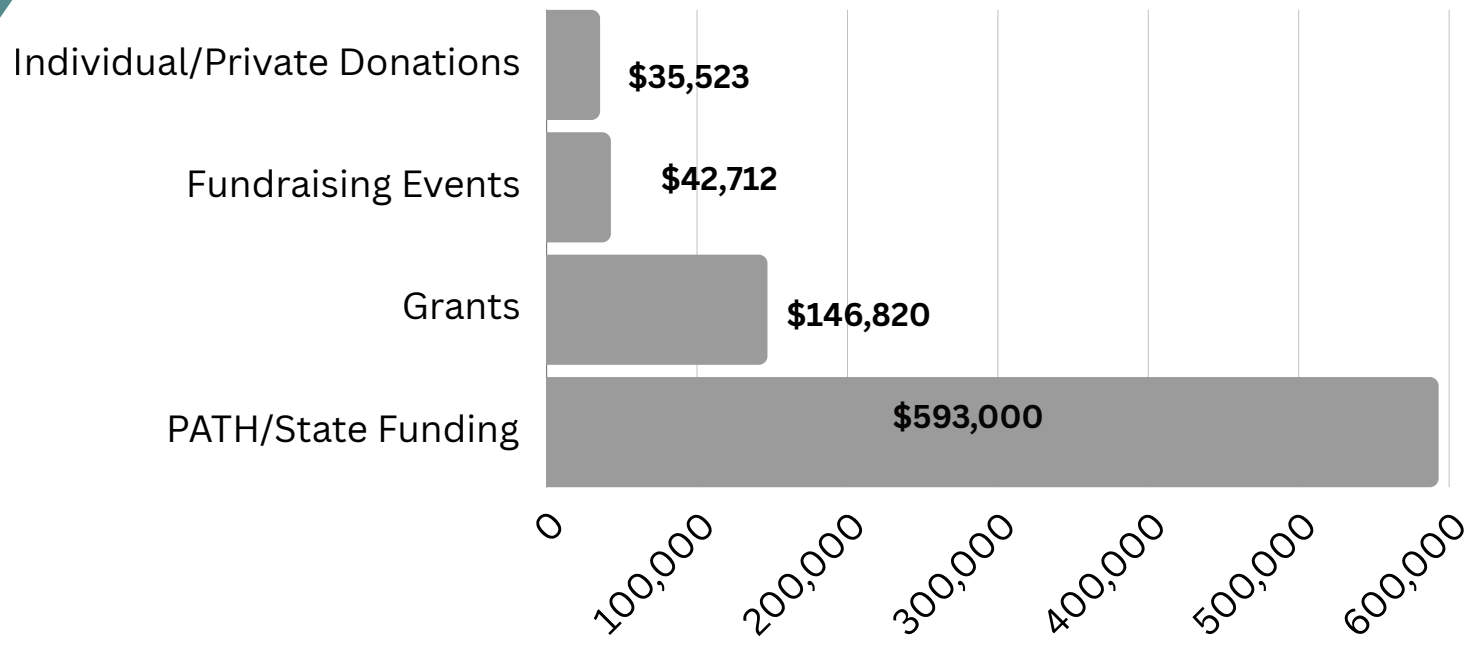
Stepping Stones Alliance works with a vulnerable population filled with unique individuals. Each has his/her own, unique history, along with hopes for the future. Through our Navigation Center and staff, we work one-on-one to set goals and link each member to the community resources that will help them achieve those goals. Dealing with government bureaucracy is challenging for the best of us, but for those with limited means and difficult situations it is even harder without an advocate in your corner. We become that advocate and assist our members to navigate and persevere through the challenges.
Here are a couple recent member stories:

*names have been changed to protect the privacy of our members

Steve came to the shelter fleeing domestic violence. He had been in an abusive relationship in another state and wasn't sure where to turn or even where was safe. Over several weeks, we were able to build trust with Steve and get more information about his background. He had cut all ties with his family years prior, but was open to the idea of reaching out to them. We were able to facilitate a reconciliation, and he was welcomed back by his parents (who had known nothing of the abuse or his whereabouts).
His mom sent a follow-up letter of gratitude stating, "We want to thank you so much for the help you gave our son. Because of you, he will now get his life back."

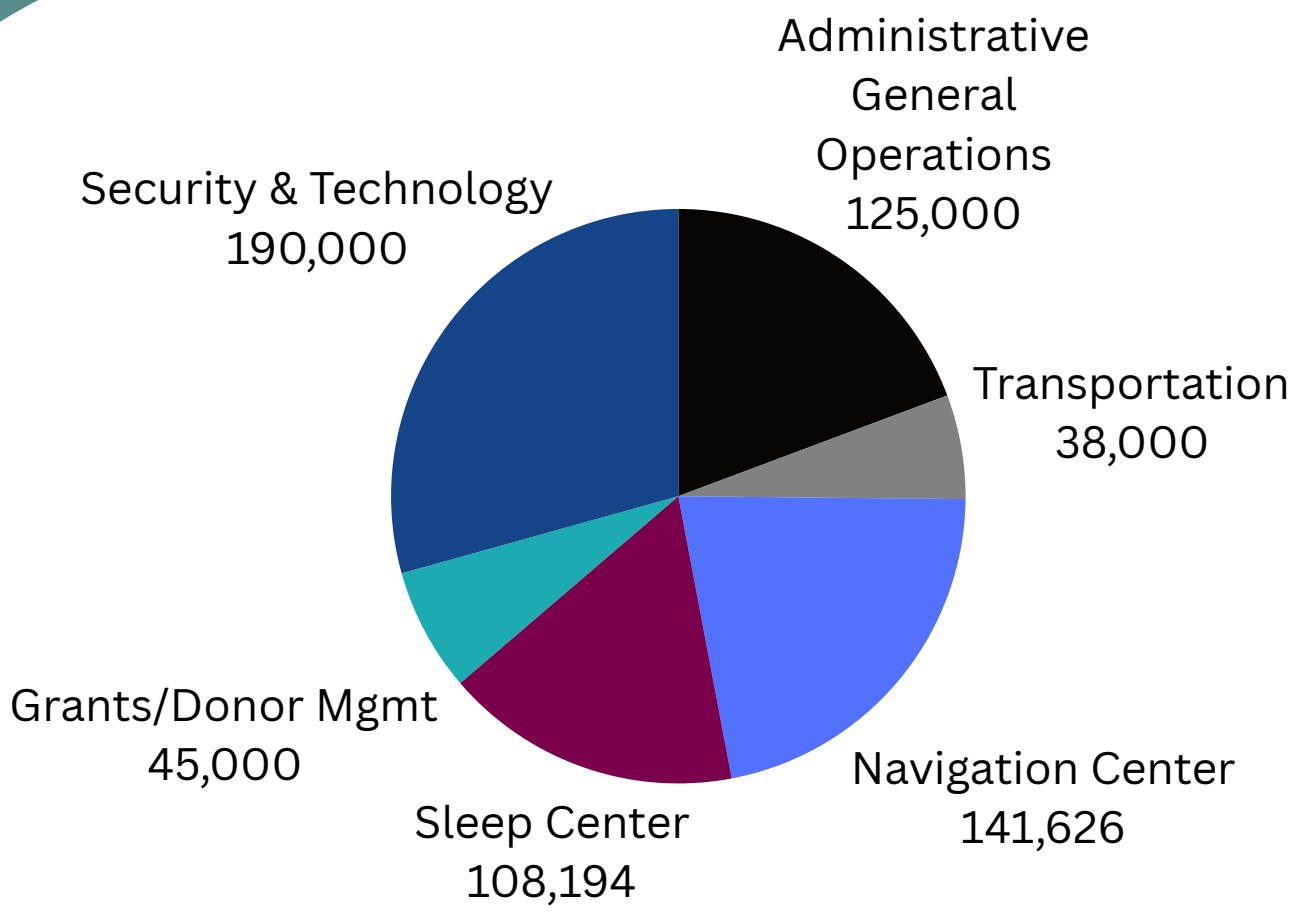
John moved to the area to live with family after his wife of many years passed away from cancer. The living situation did not work out, and he was left homeless, with little to no resources. John, a Veteran in his 80s, was lost without his wife. We began working through the process of getting him linked to Veteran resources. This involved a lot of navigating through the system to get the documents he needed to prove his service. His daily walks with his dog brought him solace, and he began to connect with staff and other members. The connection made with our Veteran services partner eventually got John the resources he needed, and his own apartment.

REVENUE



We operate the Sleep Center 12 hours a day, 7 days a week and have members on site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with the Navigation Center and ISUs. We operate with 8 staff members and have contracted overnight security staffing. Thanks to every donation, small and large, we are able to offer necessary resources to our guests and members. Funding opportunities for future revenue are constantly being researched and explored. Grants, sponsorships, private donations, and fundraising events are all being worked on as we continue to grow and add services.
EIN 84-4739478

EXPENSES IN USD



Administrative General Operations (19.3%) include: administrative staffing, insurance, utilities, phone, office supplies

Sleep Center Expenses (16.7%) include: staffing, guest supplies

Navigation Center Expenses (21.9%) include: staffing, member programming, supplies, Individual Shelter Unit maintenance

Security & Technology Expenses (29.3%) include: security staffing, IT, website, system monitoring costs

Transportation Expenses (5.9%) include: fuel, staffing, shuttle maintenance

Grants/Donor Management Expenses (6.9%) include: grant writing and management, outreach, software, fundraising

ANNUAL GALA

Sponsors and attendees made our second annual gala, the 2025 Enchanted Garden, a fun and successful evening for all! With your help, our net after expenses was $42,712!

FUNDS FROM THE GALA

Monies raised at the annual gala help with costs not covered by state/contracted funding. This year our ‘silent auction’ was a fund-a-need option and bidders were able to purchase: shuttle fuel, cleaning supplies, outreach lunches, dishes for the members, breakfast foods, bedding and mattresses, monthly birthday cakes for members, laundry supplies, guitars, and other class materials for members.

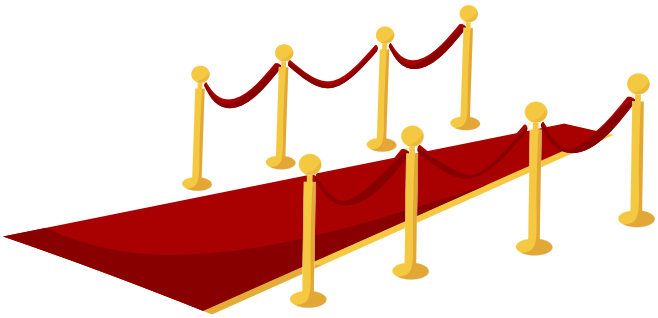
ANNUAL GALA

2025 Sponsors and Supporters:

AWS InCommunities, Atkinson Staffing, Clayton Homes, Banner Bank, Rylee Kaye Photography, UEC, Wheatland Insurance, VegOut, Anderson Boylan & Ramos, Hermiston Generating Plant, Rogers Toyota, Lifetime Vision Source, Delish, Inland Tarp & Cover, CG Catering, Kirby Nagelhout Construction, Hermiston Kiwanis, Safeway, Specks Printing, Midway Bar & Grill, Sassafras Flowers by Shera, Cupcake Paradise, Waste Connections, Julie & Kim Puzey, Susan Ross, John & Cathy Lloyd, Kalinda Harris, Linda Turner, Dan Dorran, 3rd Story Creations, The Maxwell House, DJ Montes, EOTEC, Tipsy Boards, Peter Cole, Aden Blake Films, Knerr Construction, NW Farm Supply, Micah Mercer, HHS Construction class, Desert Lanes, EOMS, Follett's, Echo Ridge Cellars, OMG Burgers, City of Umatilla, Andee's Boutique, Hale's, USA Subs, Carson Oil, Nookies, Lucky Endz Gifts, Woodworking Specialties, Hermiston 8 Cinema, Angie Markwick, Aloras Winters, The Homemade Bakery, Carrie's Custom Confections, Sweet Caroline's Treats, Chuck Barnes, Roger Condie, Kelly May, Kire Barraza-Ross, Phil SpicerKuhn, Carolina Delgado, Cindi Jorgensen, Zak Shasteen, Ross McIntire Bland, Michael Gilliland, Greg Plano, Skyler Whalon, and more!

SAVE THE DATE

for Saturday, October 10, 2026 and join us for an evening on the Red Carpet! Watch for more details as we get closer. Interested in sponsoring? Reach out and we'll get you information!



GRANTS & DONATIONS

Jesalyn Cole
Executive Director

Securing funds to ensure that the day to day can happen is a constant activity. The community continues to be supportive in MANY, MANY ways, from volunteering time, donating meals, dropping off grocery items, making community connections for future partnerships, and giving financially. Our guests and members benefit greatly from the ongoing community support.

Grants in 2025:

Schnitzer Cares
(Umatilla and Pendleton High Schools)
Amazon ChangeX
WalMart Store
WalMart DC
AgWest Farm Credit
Roundhouse Foundation
Wildhorse Foundation

Grant funding in 2025 financed planters and community garden supplies, commercial washers and dryers for both the Sleep Center and Navigation Center, bathroom fans, three water spigots, an awning on the Sleep Center, parking lot improvements, transportation staffing, the addition of electricity in two storage sheds, and overall operations.

NEXT STEPS

This third annual report takes a look at the progress that has been made. Our next steps and goals include:

- continued growth in partnerships with area resources
- financial sustainability and diversification of funding sources
- further volunteer and in-kind donation recruitment
- continued outreach through social media, community events, informational brochures, and presentations
- street outreach
- assisting members in educational and/or vocational development
- teaching financial management and other life skills through the Navigation Center
- completing the outdoor common space with pavilion and cooking area
- planning for and upgrading the bathroom/shower trailer
- completing the suppression system and installing the stove in the Navigation Center
- creating a memorial garden for members to have a quiet place for reflection and to remember those we have served and lost

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ALLIANCE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our board of directors is made up of volunteers who focus on the high-level strategy, oversight, and accountability of our organization. They guide our long-term success, inclusive of our overall mission and financial stability.

Roger Condie
Board Chair

Chuck Barnes
Board Vice Chair

Phil Spicerkuhn
Board Secretary

Kire Barraza Ross
Board Member

Kelly May
Board Member

New board members, Jami Tait and Cristina DeAnda, joined SSA in December, and we look forward to their contributions!
Roger Condie was re-elected to serve as board chair in 2026.
Kire Barraza Ross is serving as vice chair and Kelly May is the newly elected secretary. The board is still actively seeking a volunteer to serve in the treasurer role, that is supported by our retained CPA firm.

STAFF MEMBERS

We have five phenomenal staff members who oversee our day-to-day operations. They drive, cook, clean, assist members, handle check-in and check-out, oversee the reception area, and so much more!
Outside of the daily operations; Zak focuses on IT, technology, and writing the monthly newsletter. Ross brings his own lived experience and assists with member goals through one-on-ones and navigation. They have both celebrated their 1-year work anniversaries with us and we hope they continue to offer their compassion and encouragement to guests and members at Stepping Stones for a long time.

Photo left to right: Zak, Greg, Cindi, Michael, Carolina, Jesalyn, Ross, and Skyler successfully completing a teambuilding exercise.

Michael is our Mr. Fix-it, with a background in construction, he gets most of the maintenance tasks. Greg shares his lived experience and love for music offering a creative side to member classes, as well as his attention to detail through his editing prowess. Skyler shares her creative skills through her contributions to all things office related on bulletin boards, holiday decorations, organization of supplies, and so much more! These three joined the team in 2025 and have been amazing additions. They each bring a unique skillset that rounds out what SSA is offering guests and members daily.

Photo left to right: Skyler, Zak, Greg, Carolina, Ross, Cindi, Jesalyn, and Michael at the 2025 Enchanted Garden Gala.

CONTACT US

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