

WELCOME TO OUR
Monthly Newsletter
we're so glad you're here!

Hi Supporters & Friends:

We just wrapped up the final month of 2025, and as this issue lands in your inbox, we're stepping into the first full week of January 2026. December invites reflection, generosity, and gratitude. In that spirit, this newsletter is a little less polished and a little more personal. Think of it as an open window into the hearts of the people who make Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter what it is.

I asked our staff and board members to share what motivates them to be part of this organization. When it came time to write my own introduction, I stalled. Not because I don't know why I'm here, but because putting that into words is harder than doing the work itself. Sorry, team.

I've never been someone with a neatly mapped-out career plan. I've always taken a more indirect route, following what felt meaningful at the time rather than what looked good on paper. Looking back, that's probably how I ended up here.

This July will mark ten years (yikes!) since I first walked through the doors of SAS as the Centralized Intake Coordinator. I was coming off a break from an intense career in mental health—first inpatient psychiatry, then crisis-based outpatient case management. I was burned out, and I knew I needed something different if I was going to keep showing up well for people, because after all, that is my real “why”—meeting people where they are and helping them help themselves. During that pause, I spent a lot of time asking myself what actually helped, and what just felt like spinning wheels. Heck, I almost completely switch gears and became a baker!

When I read the job description, shifting my focus from mental health to housing felt like the most honest place to continue what I had been trying to do in my previous roles. As I moved from the CHI position into the Housing Counselor role, it was more more clear to me that when housing isn't stable, everything else becomes harder. Mental health, physical health, employment—none of it stands on solid ground without a safe place to live.

The SAS I walked into those few (ha!) years ago was still rebuilding after the fire, a small group of good-hearted people working side by side in one room, doing the best they could with what they had. It felt human. It felt grounded. It felt like a place where the work and the people mattered equally. That's what made me stay.

Somewhere along the way (and I'm still not entirely sure how), I found myself stepping into the role of Executive Director. True to my nature, it wasn't a title I ever set out to hold, but it's one I continue to grow into, guided by the same values that brought me here in the first place: meeting people where they are, staying grounded in the work, and believing deeply in the power of housing stability to change lives. Just as importantly, I believe in creating that same sense of stability and support for the people who work alongside me every day and I hope I'm doing that well.

As you read on, you'll hear directly from our staff about why they choose this work, and from board members about why they remain invested. And don't worry, there are still numbers and impact tucked inside—but at its heart, this issue is about the people who make this work possible.

As we head into a new year, thank you for being here, and for believing in this work alongside us.



Katie

DECEMBER IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Noteworthy Trends

As we step into winter, this month's trends feel less like data points and more like stories we carry with us. We've been especially shaken to learn of at least two households who have gone without power for more than three months—an unimaginable situation at any time of year, and even more so as temperatures drop.

We've also seen an increase in calls from households who are just short—people doing their best to make ends meet, but coming up a little behind in a month when there are few, if any, programs designed to help in that gap. These moments are often where stability begins to unravel.

These experiences continue to shape our work. They remind us why we must remain flexible, responsive, and creative as we build programs and solutions that meet people where they are. We are deeply grateful to those who trust us with their stories, and to the staff, partners, and supporters who help ensure no one has to face these challenges alone.



SAS DIRECT CONNECTIONS: ALL STAFF

202
Service Connections made at SAS Level

323
Hours of Effort



CENTRALIZED INTAKE:

322
Strength Based Intakes Completed on the Coordinated Entry Line

12
Referrals



STABILITY SUPPORT FUNDRAISING, PRIVATE GRANTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FUNDS



STABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED

1

Households Aided with Rent/Mortgage Payments

\$711.00
in Assistance



UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

9

Households

\$5,108.33
in Assistance



RESTRICTIVE FUNDING STATE & FEDERAL HOUSING GRANT PROGRAMS



HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

0

Rapid Rehousing

3

Targeted Prevention

2

Emergency Shelter

5

Case Management Interviews

\$3,451.56
in Assistance



HOUSING REFERRALS RECEIVED

3

Rapid Rehousing

2

Targeted Prevention

0

Emergency Shelter

5

Total Referrals



POINT IN TIME (PIT) COUNT

The Western Virginia Continuum of Care
will conduct a complete survey of all people
experiencing homelessness on

**January 28-29,
2026**

Winchester
Frederick
Clarke
Warren
Page
Shenandoah
Rockingham
Harrisonburg

WHERE

WHY

HOW

Learn about the
**needs of people
experiencing
homelessness**

Help agencies
**improve
services**

Make homelessness
**rare, brief, and
non-recurring**

**Sign up to
volunteer**
by scanning
the QR code:



Questions? Contact kheatwole@harrisonburgrha.com
Learn more about the PIT at <https://continuumofcare513.com/data/pit>



BJ Stout-Ritter
Utility/Housing
Coordinator

Stability Support

If you know someone who has a disconnection on their utility or needs propane, oil, or wood, have them call BJ.



I have lived in Shenandoah County all of my life and have always wanted to work in a field that allowed me to help give back. When I was younger I always wanted to be a teacher and never thought of working in the Family Services field. In my 27 years of Family Services I can honestly say I have seen how this community has grown when it comes to giving back. When I first started here 7 years ago I was the Centralized Housing Intake Coordinator and covered seven areas on that phone line just doing referrals to agencies for possible housing assistance for consumers. Now I am the Housing Stability/Utility Coordinator and Site Manager for our Sibert House Project. Helping others is something I have always wanted to do and living here all my life has made it that much more rewarding knowing that I am helping my neighbors in my community as well as the communities of Page and Warren Counties.

This job has allowed me to see how most feel that homelessness is not something that is happening in our area and are not aware that it is literally out their backdoor. Growing up I lived next to a family that went without and our family always helped them when we could. I was well aware that not everyone was born with a silver spoon in their mouths.

I take pride in what I do and I am happy knowing that I am providing a Hand Up and Not a Hand Out which is why we ask for the verifications we ask for when assisting. Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter is more than just a non profit, it is a family that cares and takes pride in what we do for the areas we serve and that means a lot to me. The staff here is one of a kind and I could not do my job without them supporting me.

This job is not an easy one at times but it is definitely worth it when you hear the words "Thank You". Those words go a long way in this line of work and to hear that makes the day a little better. Working here has made me appreciate what I do and knowing that I have helped someone whose electric has been off for several months or even 2 years reminds me that I do make a difference in someone's life. I will always be grateful for the opportunity I have been given to work for such an amazing organization. So always remember to stay humble and kind in life because you never know when you may be the one needing a Hand Up.

MERRY
CHRISTMAS



Happy
New Year

Shenandoah Alliance
for Shelter



Sibert's House Program

This month, Sibert's House is home to two female participants who were previously in extremely unstable living situations—sleeping on park benches, couch surfing, or staying in a shed or their car.

In their short time of being there so far, one participant has maintained the job she got about 6 weeks ago and has also enrolled in Criminal Justice classes at Laurel Ridge Community College for the Spring Semester. At this time she has applied to be on the waitlist at an apartment complex in New Market and has completed an application for an apartment in Woodstock. The other participant has been working with DARS to start her employment adventure. She has also been looking for employment on her own and attending AA classes. Our two participants are making great progress and are very grateful for the support from our agency and our community.

Sibert's House continues to grow stronger every day thanks to the compassion and partnership of our community. Would your group, church, or organization like to provide occasional meals or pantry staples to support our residents? Reach out to us at alliance4shelter@gmail.com!

(occupancy is gender-specific and rotates based on current residents)



\$39,687.12

**In Financial Assistance provided to Shenandoah County
Residents in both Utility & Rent/Mortgage Assistance.
(July 2025–June 2026)**

Our Funding Partners

Partner Organizations & Private Grants

Woodstock Ministerial Association
Strasburg Local Relief
Maurertown Brethren Church
Wakeman's Grove
St. John's Bosco
Edinburg Ministerial Association
New Market Presbyterian Church
St. Mary's Church of the Pine
Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative
Shenandoah Community Foundation
Sentara Health
United Way



Salvation Army Funds

Funds from Shenandoah County Salvation Army Service unit to administer the funds collected in the Red Kettles for utility/rent/mortgage assistance to Shenandoah County residents.

Use the QR Code to
Make a Donation to the
Virtual Kettle Year Round!



Centralized Housing Intake

I have been with Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter for 14 months, and I truly love the work and the organization. It is an incredible team to be part of. I bring 32 years of experience working in nonprofit organizations, driven by a strong passion for community-based work and helping individuals connect with local resources that support long-term self-reliance.

In my role as a CHI Coordinator covering seven service areas, I stay consistently busy managing a high volume of calls. Some callers can be redirected to appropriate local resources, while others require formal referrals for more intensive support. This work differs significantly from my previous experience with Head Start, where I worked with entire families. Supporting adults experiencing a housing crisis presents unique challenges, but it is also deeply rewarding.

The most meaningful moments often come from simply returning a call, listening, and offering guidance during a difficult time. Hearing gratitude from someone who feels supported—especially when they describe the assistance as a “hand up, not a handout”—reinforces why this work matters and why I remain so committed to it.



Becky Thorpe
Centralized Housing
Intake Coordinator



If you know someone who is experiencing a housing crisis, please have them call Centralized Housing Intake at 540-271-1701 to complete an eligibility screening.



Learn about the CHI Program here: [continuumofcare513.com](https://www.continuumofcare513.com)

**Calls this Month
118!**



Megan Bly
State Certified
Housing Counselor

Housing Corner

If you had asked me five years ago whether I ever saw myself working in homeless housing services, my answer would have been a definite “no.” A late-night search on Indeed, however, led me to a job posting with the Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter. I had never heard of the organization, and after reading the description, much of which I did not fully understand, I still felt compelled to apply. *It was calling me.*

Even after receiving a voicemail from SAS, I hesitated to return the call. I remember thinking, “What’s the worst they can say, no?” Despite my uncertainty, I had always envisioned myself working in a field where I could help others. As a child, I dreamed of becoming a lawyer or a probation/parole officer. In many ways, my role as a housing counselor reflects those aspirations – tracking down documentation, meeting strict deadlines, advocating for clients, enforcing program requirements, and navigating complex systems.

Helping others has always been a passion of mine. Prior to joining SAS, I worked in home health services as a personal care aide, supporting individuals with both mental and physical health challenges. When I interviewed with the SAS team and was offered the position, I was thrilled. My first desk was located in a small corner near the printer, but it marked the beginning of a journey I could never have imagined.

Five years later, I am the State Certified Housing Counselor at SAS and have served as a case manager for hundreds of households across three regions, assisting households in obtaining or retaining homes through the Virginia Homeless Solutions Program and HOME funds. On occasion, I still dabble in utility assistance and partial rental payments through our private funding sources. I assist our Centralized Housing Intake Line with particularly difficult cases and can be found fixing computers or tackling the endless printer and connectivity issues. You might also find me sorting through a closet, documenting donations, reviewing grant proposals, completing new housing trainings, attending community outreach events and ENDLESS meetings (so many meetings!), making new landlord connections, sweeping a floor, or taking out the trash – just stepping in wherever I’m needed.

This work is not easy. The people we serve are often experiencing some of the most difficult moments of their lives, facing crisis, uncertainty, and loss, while looking to us for guidance and support. At times, we are able to provide the solution they need; at other times, our resources are limited. This field is not for the faint of heart, and the mental and emotional toll can be significant. Fortunately, I am part of a strong and supportive team – Katie, Becky, BJ, and myself. We rely on one another, face challenges together, and approach each situation one at a time.

Why do I do this work? The answer is simple: because it makes a tangible difference.

Everyone deserves a safe place to sleep.

For those who have always had the security of a home, I encourage you to step outside on the coldest night of the year and stand there for just ten minutes. Then imagine having to sleep outside in that same cold – without proper clothing, while recovering from surgery, while managing schizophrenia, or while grieving the loss of a loved one. Imagine doing so without a tent, a sleeping bag, or even socks and shoes.

While the fulfillment I gain from this work may feel personal at times, it is deeply meaningful to know that I have played a role in creating lasting change. This holiday season, I encourage everyone to reflect on their own work.

Do you love what you do? Could you do more for your community?

Merry Christmas

\$36,252.95

**Financial Assistance provided in Fiscal Year 2026
(July 2025–June 2026) to retain or obtain housing in
the counties of Shenandoah, Page and Warren.**





Messages from the Board

I initially became aware of the Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter when I was recruited to help with their annual Empty Bowl Soup Supper fundraiser. After talking with the staff and board members I became aware that housing insecurity and homelessness were real issues in our area. It being a rural area, the problem is much less visible here than in the more urban areas where it can be right in your face every day. After realizing how dedicated the staff and board members were to helping vulnerable individuals and families, I agreed to serve on the Board of Directors and have not regretted a moment of my time on this great team.

Mary Gessner, President

My involvement with the Shenandoah Alliance for Shelter stems from a deep conviction that no one in our community should have to face the hardship of homelessness. The tremendous need in the Shenandoah Valley is undeniable—far too many individuals and families struggle to find safe, stable housing due to job loss, medical crises, domestic violence, or other unforeseen circumstances. By supporting the Alliance's work to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, and vital supportive services, I am part of a committed effort to help defeat homelessness one life at a time. Offering not just a bed but a pathway to self-sufficiency restores dignity, rebuilds lives, and strengthens the entire community, and that is why I choose to stand with this vital organization.

Candi Lopresti, Member

My motto is "God blesses us so that we can bless others". I truly enjoy volunteering my time to several non profits. However, my heart truly lies with the SAS because of personal reasons. There were times, (most of the time), when I was growing up that money was very tight. Even so, we still had a roof, food, and clothes, though it was not what many others had. We received free lunches and things that helped us throughout those years. We ate deer, squirrels, rabbits and other food that many others did not. The stress as a child, worrying about money, had a real effect on me and my brother. Having come from that, I want to truly help others (especially children) eliminate, or at the least diminish, that stress from needing homes, food, electricity, or whatever the need is. I truly believe that God called me to SAS. I pray I can continue to help those in need, in whatever capacity I can.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity.

Carrie Coffey, Member

I came to the board when SAS was still located at the Shenandoah County Alms House in Maurertown. Having clients right there with us was a reminder of the need for housing in our county. While the way we go about serving the community has changed a bit, with the loss of the Alms House, the mission has not changed. We're needed even more now.

**Barbara Adamson, Member
Fundraising Committee Chair**

Thank You to Our 2025 Supporters!

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Kiblers Auto Care Clinic
Kim Uhl
Lance Courtright
Laura Ellen Wade
Laurel Hill Christian Church
Lebanon Lutheran Church
Linda Howell
Linda Williams
Lisa & Scott Currie
Louis & Janet Kocon
Lydia's Clothes Closet
Lynne Crumpacker
Margaret Lorenz
Mark & Gloria Muse
Martha Heisel
Maruertown Brethren Church
Mary & Dennis Pence
Mary Gessner
Mary Jane Field
Maurertown Bretheren Church
Meg Trott
Mel Wheeler Inc
Michael Rohrbaugh & Lucy Banks
Michelle & Charles House
Mount Jackson Lions Club
Mt Jackson United Methodist
Health & Welfare Fund
Nate & Main Ltd
Navy Federal Credit Union Employees
Nimble Thimbles
Odoherly Family Giving
Otterbein Chapel Inc
Pamuela Kitner
Paypal Giving Fund
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Phyllis & Edward Smith
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Daniel Rodney Chamberlain
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SMH Medical Staff Fund
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St Andrews Episcopal Church
St Jacobs Lutheran Church
St Johns United Methodist Church
St Luke Covenant Brethren Church
St Paul Lutheran
St. John's UCC Hamburg
St. Mary's Lutheran Church
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Stanhagen Family
Strasburg Christian Church
Strasburg Presbyterian Church
Strasburg Rotary
Strasburg SDA Church
Strasburg United Methodist Church
Sue & Stuart Foster
Susan Moose
Suzanne Montgomery
Terry & Lore Fogle
The Estate of Eugene Drifmeyer
The Heartstrings
The Home Store
Thomas Constable
Thomas Truban
Thrivent
Timothy Funk: Woodstock Lions
Toms Brook United Methodist Church
Valley Pike Church of the Brethren
Wakemans Grove Church of the Brethren
Warren & Barbara Halvorson
Wesley Chapel United Methodist Women
Whitney Wilson
William Dalke
William Sweeney & Albert Cho
Woodstock Lions Club
Woodstock United Methodist Church
Woodstock Presbyterian Church
Zelda Zadnik
Zion Lutheran Church

Our January Calendar



JANUARY 1ST: OFFICE CLOSED / NEW YEAR'S DAY

JANUARY 6TH: STRASBURG LEADSHARE

JANUARY 8TH: SAS BOARD MEETING

VHA FEDERAL IMPACT CALL

JANUARY 12TH: CoC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

JANUARY 13TH: CoC BfZ CASE CONFERRING

PACA MEETING

JANUARY 14TH: WOODSTOCK LEADSHARE

HOUSING STUDY REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

JANUARY 19TH: OFFICE CLOSED / MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

JANUARY 20TH: CoC MEDIA & ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING

CoC COMPLIANCE & EVALUATION COMMITTEE MEETING

JANUARY 21ST : CHIP MEETING: HOUSING & MENTAL HEALTH

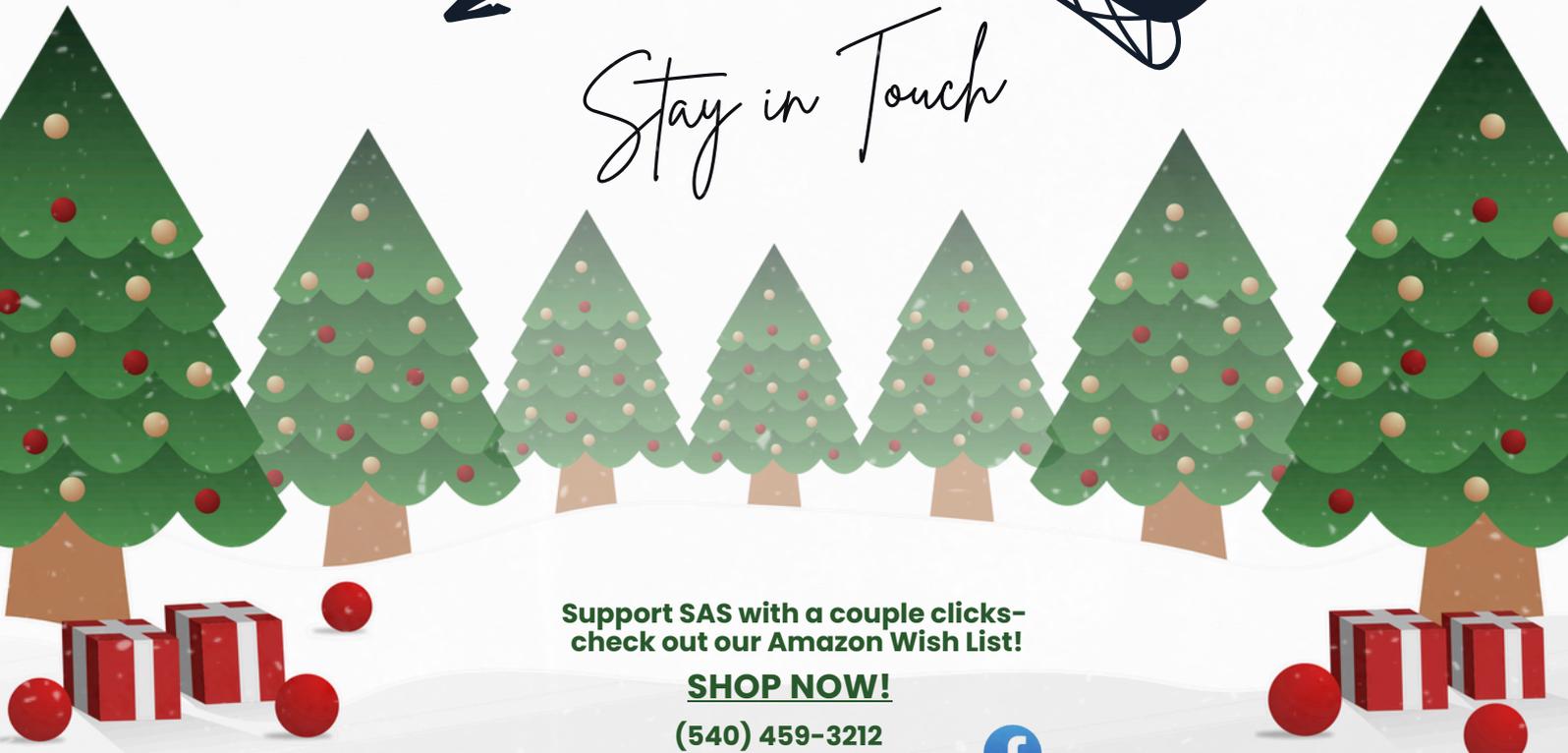
JANUARY 22ND: WARREN COALITION MEETING

JANUARY 28TH: WOODSTOCK LEADSHARE

JANUARY 28TH-29TH: CoC WIDE POINT IN TIME COUNT



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