

In Our BACKYARD



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Building a welcoming community to provide safe interim homes and connections to resources for our unhoused senior neighbors.

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



As I reflect back over 2025, our shift went from building cabins and infrastructure in 2024 to building relationships and community. We went from having five livable spaces and one small meeting/storage cabin to six livable spaces and one community building. We served twenty one individuals in 2025. Five went on to housing, two went into residential treatment, and six left the program. As 2025 came to an end, we had eight guests staying at IOBY, our maximum number of guests. For the first time, we had two couples staying at IOBY. All of this led to a great deal of reflection, community building and deepening of relationships.

Our Home team volunteers started the year providing coffee hours with guests, then adding gardening activities, craft times, and helping host a "Friendsgiving" event. As one Home team member writes, "I volunteered at IOBY with the hope of contributing in a small way to alleviating the pain, distress and injustice associated with homelessness. I found much joy in working and interacting together with both guests and volunteers as we built a garden of food and flowers on site. Being paired with a guest and walking with her through transition forged a special relationship and gave me profound gratitude for her many gifts to me: trust, smiles, vulnerability, delight."

The Board participated in the ACEH and MOA Anchorage's Coordinated Response to Homelessness Workshop. The Board also hosted a movie night to show "Until We Are All Home," where over 40 members of the community attended, including representatives from the Mayor's office and a guest speaker from the Cold Weather Emergency Shelter. We also continued to connect with other community groups. With the help of a Mayor's Community Grant, In Our Backyard partnered with Neighbor Works Alaska, Anchor Gardens and Yarcucopia to build beautiful community garden spaces. In Our Backyard became a model for the Municipality of Anchorage's Micro Unit project. The local Lions Club volunteered hours and raised monies that were matched by a grant from Lions Club International to build the community building, connect a water supply line to Central Lutheran, and even build raised vegetable garden beds inside the site.

None of this would have been possible without the volunteers and their gifts of time, talents, and stepping up to say, "Yes, I can do that." A group of volunteers from First Presbyterian Church took up the task of picking up meals for the guests. A team from Central Lutheran Church and St John United Methodist volunteered to be on call for maintenance trouble shooting and so much more. The guests of IOBY have all stepped up to take ownership by cleaning the shower trailer, gardening, shoveling snow, and keeping the new community building organized. Most importantly, they check in on one another, make meals together, laugh, and share both struggles and successes.

It takes a village to raise a village. We are here to say, "I see you," to our unhoused neighbors.

Loaves & Fishes,

JULIE GREENE-GRAHAM
BOARD CHAIR

ABOUT US

OUR MISSION

Building a welcoming community to provide safe interim homes and connections to resources for our unhoused senior neighbors.

OUR VISION

Creating a community where everyone is housed.



In Our Backyard is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded by members of Central Lutheran Church in Anchorage, Alaska. As a community, we are called to share God's love with all. We believe in living out God's abundant grace and love through worship, learning, fellowship and service. This project is an opportunity to be proactive in addressing the needs of our unhoused neighbors. With support from multiple faith-based organizations, community groups, nonprofits, and local agencies, we are working to:

- Create modular housing shelters and supporting site infrastructure
- Provide connections to social services and related resources
- Engage a community volunteer network
- Transition people to permanent housing
- Deliver a replicable small-scale shelter model for other Anchorage organizations



ABOUT US

BOARD MEMBERS

Julie Greene-Graham, *Chair*, retired educator

Steve Lambert, *Vice Chair*, retired engineer

Betsy Baker, *Secretary*, retired law professor

Betty Hertz, retired educator

Carla Gage, nurse

Brad Erickson, business owner

Kelly Januten, lawyer

Matthew Markovitch, maintenance, former guest of IOBY



Carol Norquist, treasurer until her passing July 2025

SUPPORTING TEAM

Joanna Knapp, Treasurer, business owner

Jeni Davis, data support, Data Management Support Specialist, UAA

Pastor Zach Manzella, *Special Advisor*



HIGHLIGHTS

Planter Boxes

A group of volunteers led by the Lions and volunteers from Anchor Gardens constructed large planter boxes at several sites within the site. The planter boxes helped to beautify the site as well as provide vegetables for use by the guests.



“The Gathering Place” Construction

The major construction project for the year was construction of a new cabin to be utilized for storage, and for a meeting place. The cabin size is 12' x 16', considerably larger than the other cabins on site, but less than half the maximum unit size allowed under the city bylaws governing homeless shelters. Many of the volunteers from 2024 returned to help with the construction of the new building. The crew was very efficient under the guidance of Construction Manager Stan Olsen and was able to erect the four walls and install the roofing on the first day of the project. Installation of windows, doors and some finish work was completed by the end of the weekend. Mike Graham and Stan were able to install the flooring, counter tops and shelving within the following week. Following installation of the electrical by Kodiak Electric, the cabin was ready for use.



Construction projects for 2025 were funded by the Lions Club.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Garden

Over the summer, we partnered with Anchor Gardens and Yarducopia to transform an underutilized gravel strip into a roadside garden filled with berry beds, medicinal plants, and flowering perennials for guests and members of the public to enjoy. A team of volunteers and IOBY residents used the “lasagna method” to build up a deep layer of nutrient-rich soil, planted young shrubs in a series of meandering mounds, and erected an ornamental fence and archway to define the garden’s edge.



VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteer Home Team members helped guests settle in, get to the laundromat and medical appointments, and build community with other guests and volunteers. Other volunteers helped with meal pickup and delivery, first from Beans Kitchen and then from Alaska Dinner Factory, which now partners with us to provide at-cost meals for our guests. Volunteer quilters made sure every new guest received a homemade quilt, while other volunteers helped clean the cabins for move-in, and provided fresh linens, towels and welcome baskets. Volunteers even provided dog food when guests had canine companions. We are one of the few facilities in town that allows unhoused guests to potentially bring their pets.



Volunteers also make up the IOBY Board and committees, whose members bring expertise from different Anchorage faith communities and non-profits. We are grateful for our past and current volunteer treasurers, Carol Norquist whose untimely passing in 2025 left hard-to-fill shoes and Joanna Knapp, who has devoted boundless energy and countless hours to filling them by managing financial gifts, grant reporting, record keeping, tax returns and many other details. Jeni Davis has helped improve our database management with new systems and organization.

VOLUNTEERS



Volunteer lawyers helped us change our non-profit status with the IRS to a public charity. Other volunteers helped write thank you notes and assisted with grant writing and other office-related tasks. As we continue into 2026, we hope to offer guests mini-courses on life skills such as financial literacy, job interviewing, and navigating workplaces. We also hope to identify new volunteers who can take the lead on our social media and website presence.



If you are interested in volunteering for the Home Team, the Green Team, or any other of the activities described above, or if you have another talent to share, please contact Kelly at kelly@inourbackyard-ak.org.

Thanks to every one of our volunteers for your kindness and generosity. You have helped to make IOBY the vibrant and growing community it is.

ACHIEVEMENTS



YEAR IN REVIEW



JANUARY - MAY

Welcomed first guests!



MAY - SEPTEMBER

Established communal garden area with perennials, berries, medicinal plants, and raised vegetable beds.



SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

Lions Club helped build the "Gathering Place" community building, water line connections, and three raised veggie beds.



OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

Harvest party and Friendsgiving with guests of In Our Backyard.



DECEMBER

Cabins full with 8 guests!

FINANCES

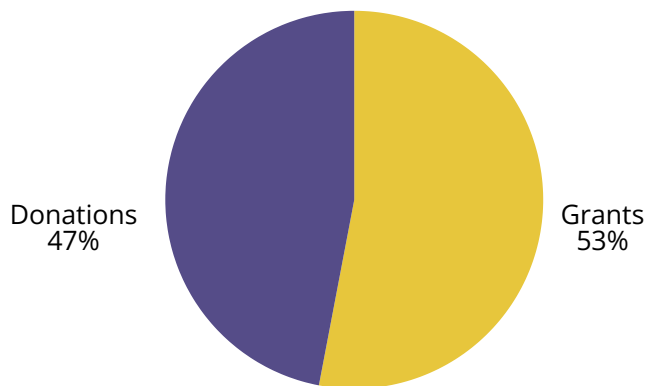
TOTAL REVENUE: \$211,001

GRANTS

\$112,484

DONATIONS

\$98,517



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$132,265

SUPPLIES

\$43,316

CONTRACTED SERVICES

\$37,449

EQUIPMENT

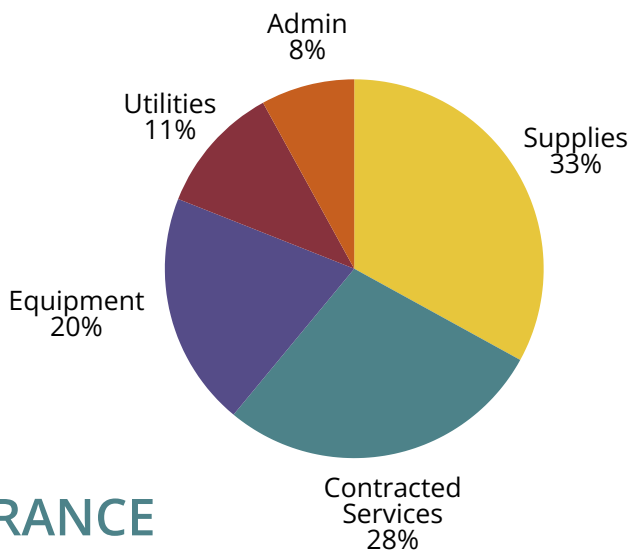
\$26,040

UTILITIES

\$15,187

ADMINISTRATION/INSURANCE

\$10,273



SUPPORTERS

GRANTS

LIONS INTERNATIONAL GRANT
MAYOR'S COMMUNITY GRANT
ANCHORAGE MUNICIPALITY OPERATING MODULAR UNITS TRANSITIONAL GRANT

IN-KIND SERVICES

ALASKA DINNER FACTORY
BBFM ENGINEERING
CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
CENTRAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
GRACE GRAHAM, DESIGN SERVICES
KODIAK ELECTRIC
LIONS CLUB
NVISION ARCHITECTURE
RESTORATIVE & RENTRY SERVICES

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS



100+ INDIVIDUAL DONORS

CONTACT US



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