GET HOUSING RIGHT

THURS 05–12
& FRI 05–13

A conference exploring initiatives to improve Rhode Island’s affordable housing options.

Presented by the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island with support from Homes RI.

FREE

URI Shepard Building
80 Washington Street
Providence, RI 02903

Poster — @zpulley
Welcome to Get Housing Right, a free, two-day event presented by URI’s Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies with support from Homes RI. This conference will explore initiatives to improve Rhode Island’s affordable housing options. We’ve invited experts in affordable housing, local zoning, community development, finance, reentry, supportive housing, and local government to show how we can expand affordable housing state-wide through policies, best practices, and grassroots efforts. Our goal is to identify immediate, short-term, and long-term strategies from around the country and apply them to the Rhode Island context. Thank you for joining us!

Thursday, May 12

10 – 11 am
Opening Plenary featuring Diane Yentel, President and CEO, National Low Income Housing Coalition

11:30 am – 12:45 pm
Session 1-A: Transformative Affordable Housing Policies
Session 1-B: The Right to Housing

1:30 – 2:45 pm
Session 2-A: New Models for Community Wealth Building
Session 2-B: Zoning for Housing Access

3:30 – 5 pm
Closing Plenary, Creating Community Buy-In for Expanded Affordable Housing

Friday, May 13

9 – 9:30 am
Legislative Update with United States Senator Jack Reed

9:30 – 10 am
2021 Fact Book Presentation

10 – 11 am
State of RI Legislative Update

11:30 am – 1 pm
The State of RI’s Public Housing

2 – 3:15 pm
Grassroots Movements for Affordable Housing Access

3:30 – 4:30 pm
Getting Housing Built

4:30 - 5 pm
Bringing Reparations Home
Diane Yentel is the President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a membership organization dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes. Diane is a veteran affordable housing policy expert and advocate with nearly two decades of work on affordable housing and community development issues.

Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s (NLIHC) publishes “The Gap”, a measurement of the available rental housing affordable to extremely low-income households and other income groups. Based on the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (ACS PUMS), “The Gap” presents data on the affordable housing supply and housing cost burdens at the national, state, and metropolitan levels. The report also examines the demographics, disability and work status, and other characteristics of those extremely low-income households most impacted by the national shortage of affordable and available rental homes.
TRANSFORMATIVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICIES

This panel covers lessons learned from France’s social housing programs, ideas for a potential federal “Social Housing Development Authority”, and the local outcomes of state affordable housing appeal systems.

Jacob Carlson
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Brown University
@HJacobCarlson
www.hjacobcarlson.com

Magda Maaoui
Adjunct Professor, Université Cergy-Paris
@MagdaMaaoui
www.magdamaaoui.com

Nicholas Marantz
Associate Professor, University of California, Irvine
https://faculty.sites.uci.edu/marantz/

Huixin Zheng
Post-Doctoral Scholar, University of California, Irvine
THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

This panel covers the international and national legal norms that connect human rights to housing access, the role doctors can play as patient advocates in the housing and justice systems, and national research showing that housing choice vouchers are most effective in addressing family homelessness.

**Eric Tars**
Legal Director,  
National Homelessness Law Center  
@erictars  
www.homelesslaw.org

**Beth Shinn**
Professor,  
Vanderbilt University  
https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/bio/marybeth-shinn

**Rahul Vanjani**
Assistant Professor of Medicine,  
Alpert Medical School of Brown University  
www.docsforhealth.org
NEW MODELS FOR COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

This panel features research into new and creative mechanisms to expand community ownership, a proposal for shared-equity rental housing, and a model for community-driven investment into BIPOC small businesses.

Andy Posner
Founder and CEO, Capital Good Fund
@cfund
www.capitalgoodfund.org

Nia Evans
Executive Director, Boston Ujima Project
@UjimaBoston
www.ujimaboston.com

Brett Theodos
Senior Fellow and Director of the Community Economic Development Hub, Urban Institute
@BrettTheodos
www.urban.org/author/brett-theodos

Shane Phillips
Lewis Center Housing Initiative Manager, University of California, Los Angeles
@shanedphillips
www.betterinstitutions.com
ZONING FOR HOUSING ACCESS

This panel presents a proposal for a Zoning Atlas, the impacts of broad legalization of 2 – 4 unit buildings in select U.S. states, and the current state of the MBTA Communities law in Massachusetts which requires by-right multifamily zoning in 175 communities.

Sara Bronin
Professor,
Cornell University
@sarabronin
www.desegregatect.org

Noah Kazis
Legal Fellow,
New York University Furman Center
@n_kazis
www.noahkazis.com

Jesse Kanson-Benanav
Executive Director,
Abundant Housing Massachusetts
@jessekb
www.abundanthousingma.org
Day One - Presenters

CREATING COMMUNITY BUY-IN FOR EXPANDED AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This panel presents the stories and reflections of elected officials who sought to codify a comprehensive approach to housing, prioritizing racial equity, and environmental sustainability.

James Diossa
Former Mayor, Central Falls, Rhode Island
@JamesDiossa
www.diossaforri.com/

Lisa Bender
Former City Council President, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler
Former City Councilor, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Senator Jack Reed is the senior United States senator from Rhode Island, a seat he was first elected to in 1996.

Reed has long championed efforts to make rental housing options available to more Americans and wrote the law creating a trust fund to build, preserve, and rehabilitate affordable rental apartments. He also serves as Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, which authors the funding for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In addition to lowering the cost of rentals in Rhode Island, Reed has focused on preventing foreclosures, ending homelessness, supporting the redevelopment of blighted communities, cleaning up lead-based paint in homes, weatherizing and retrofitting homes to be more energy efficient, and ensuring healthier, more livable communities.

Senator Reed will present a federal legislative update on housing related initiatives and bills.
Brenda Clement, Director of HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University, will present key findings from the 2021 Housing Fact Book.

The Fact Book is an annual detailed, data-driven assessment of the state’s housing. The 2021 Fact Book illustrates the critical lack of affordable housing in Rhode Island – as well as breaking down the challenges facing every town and city in the state. It takes an expanded look at the intersection between housing and health, and uses the framework of the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) to explore how healthy, affordable homes connect Rhode Islanders to the opportunity for overall wellbeing.

Key findings include:

» More than 140,000 Rhode Island households, nearly 35%, are housing cost burdened. Cost burdened households pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, leaving less money for households to spend in support of our local economies.

» Seventy-four percent of renter households with incomes under $14,764 are cost burdened. Of these, more than 17,000, pay more than 50% of their income for housing costs, making them severely cost burdened.
STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Katie West
Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Housing Network of Rhode Island
@KatieWest107
www.homesri.org

Meghan Kallman
RI State Senator, District 15
@MeghanEKallman
www.electmeghan.com

June Speakman
RI State Representative, District 68
@junespeakman
www.junespeakman.com

David Morales
RI State Representative, District 7
@DavidMoralesRI
www.davidmoralesri.com

Josh Saal
Deputy Secretary of Commerce for Housing, State of Rhode Island
RI’S PUBLIC HOUSING

Richard McIntyre
Professor of Economics,
University of Rhode Island

Christopher H. Little
Chair, Board of Commissioners,
South Kingstown Housing Authority

Skip Mark
Assistant Professor of Political Science,
University of Rhode Island

www.skipmark.org

Jennifer Dalton Vincent
Master’s Student,
University of Rhode Island

Mary Lind
Undergraduate Student,
University of Rhode Island
GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACCESS

This panel features local grassroots organizations who are organizing local action to expand affordable housing options state-wide.

Liza Burkin
Organizer,
Providence Streets Coalition
@pvdstreets
www.pvdstreets.org

Anne Fosburg
Organizer,
Providence Living Tenant Union
@annefosburg

Jordan Goyette
Legislative and Political Director,
Reclaim RI
@goyettejordan
www.reclaimri.org

Miguel Youngs
Organizing Director,
Reclaim RI
@reclaimri
www.reclaimri.org
Day Two - Presenters

GETTING HOUSING BUILT

This panel features leaders of nonprofit agencies that develop affordable housing, public housing, and mixed income housing for working artists. All panelists will speak to the opportunities for and challenges to expanding affordable housing options throughout the state.

Shauna Duffy  
Co-Executive Director,  
AS220

Peter Asen  
Deputy Director of Development and Governmental Affairs,  
Providence Housing Authority  
@peterasen  
www.provhousing.org

Laura Lee Costello  
Executive Director,  
South Kingstown Housing Authority
BRINGING REPARATIONS HOME

Silas Pinto
Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, City of Providence, RI

Dr. Silas Pinto serves as the City of Providence's first-ever Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB).

Dr. Pinto is a member of the Providence Municipal Reparations Commission, a 13-member panel charged with examining reparation work being done in other cities, conducting community outreach, and creating recommendations for ways the city can begin repairing harms.

Providence’s commission comes almost two years after an initial executive order established a truth and reconciliation group, kick-starting a process of repairing the damage done by the capital city’s role in enslavement and systemic racism against Black and Indigenous people, and people of color. The new commission will address the harm the committee describes in the nearly 200-page “Matter of Truth” report detailing Providence’s 400-year history of racial inequity.

Dr. Pinto closes this conference with a discussion on how access to affordable housing fits within the framework of the city’s reconciliation effort.
WHY STATE OR MUNICIPAL POLICY (OR POLICIES) WOULD YOU CHANGE TO EASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

In March 2022, we sent a survey to administrators and direct service staff at over 100 non-profit agencies asking one question: what state or municipal policy would you change to ease access to affordable housing for the people benefiting from your program?

Our goal is twofold. We want to shine a light on the many local agencies that connect everyday Rhode Islanders to housing; we also want to spotlight local solutions to the housing policy problems that directly effect residents state-wide.

Following are the answers we received. We encourage you to learn more about the organizations listed herein and - if their mission resonates with you - donate what you can to support their work.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Stephanie Geller,
Deputy Director
www.rikidscount.org

“More funding for affordable housing, eviction sealing, more enforcement of Low-Mod 10% rule even if it requires state overruling current municipal building codes, requirement that builders allocate a certain percentage of the units they build to affordable housing.”

Lucy’s Hearth

Kelly Lee,
Executive Director
www.lucyshearth.org

“Zoning laws in all 39 municipalities which support affordable housing efforts.”
South Providence Neighborhood Association

Dwayne Keys,
Chairperson

“Policies and programs that focus on poverty alleviation, as the challenges of income inequality and liquid asset poverty contribute to the limitations to being able to afford housing in Rhode Island.”

South Kingstown Housing Authority

Christopher H. Little,
Chair, Board of Commissioners

“The South Kingstown Housing Authority and its related company, SKHA Services & Development Corp., need coordination of statewide funding policies to help enhance our ability to build new and additional low income housing at our current sites as well as potentially at other sites in the community.”

Church Community Housing Corporation

Christian Belden,
Executive Director
www.cchcnewport.org

“Land-use reform is urgently needed. Most of the state is zoned for single-family residential. Very few municipalities allow multi-family by-right. Those that do often have low performing schools. To break the cycle of poverty, the state should require municipalities to allow multi-family housing (6 units and larger) by-right to allow the children of renters access to high performing schools and resource rich surroundings and influences.”

Latino Policy Institute

Marcela Betancur,
Director
www.wdchoc.org

“Our state needs to provide tax credits for municipalities in regards to construction costs.”
### Policy Recommendations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Initiatives Support Corporation</th>
<th>Providence Streets Coalition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah O’Grady, Senior Program Officer</td>
<td>Liza Burkin, Organizer</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The state’s Zoning Enabling Act must be reformed to prevent municipal zoning codes from being used as a structural barrier to the expansion of affordable housing.”</td>
<td>“Eliminating single family zoning in towns with over 20,000 people – H 6638.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>The Womxn Project</th>
<th>West Bay RI</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jocelyn Foye, Executive Director</td>
<td>Casey Gartland, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
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<td><a href="http://www.thewomxnproject.org">www.thewomxnproject.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.westbayri.org">www.westbayri.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I would change the policy that limits people’s abortion access as one more level of restriction holding people back from having healthcare freedoms with these financial burdens. To improve other reproductive justice elements like housing, food, economic, and social access would change all aspects of people’s dignity to live more safely.”</td>
<td>“I recently learned that each city and town have different zoning laws and construction guidelines depending on their Housing Authority. In our advocacy to implement universal design (not simply accessibility) for all public housing, this will be a significant barrier having to work with 39 cities and towns. We are also interested in alternative housing, such as tiny homes, but given varying zoning laws we would need to work at a granular level, something that many organizations do not have time or resources to expend.”</td>
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Policy Recommendations

**AS220**

Melanie Fuest,
Administrative Assistant
www.as220.org

“More accessibility for those without technology, less required paperwork, longer terms of leases, higher thresholds of compliant income limits, smaller areas to base median incomes, more incentives and less bureaucracy to take on affordable housing as a landlord or developer.”

Jonesy Mann,
Operations Director
www.as220.org

“1. Reduce and simplify the bureaucratic hurdles that people must navigate in order to qualify for affordable housing. Our experience at AS220 is that the process to get approved for affordable housing is very challenging. This process biases the system against people who are most in need of affordable housing: those who have experienced chaotic disruptions in their lives and who may not have all the required documentation and records at their fingertips.

2. Provide funding for local housing organizations to hire social service workers who can help people access affordable housing. These workers should be equipped with training and tools to empower them to do outreach with populations in need and to help applicants to navigate the hurdles mentioned above.

3. Create policies and funding streams that facilitate the creation of Youth Transitional Housing. AS220 comes in contact with many young people in unstable housing situations, and it is clear to us that they have very few options to turn to. Haus of Codec was founded last year and is one of the only organizations operating in this space. Their work is admirable, but their capacity is limited. We need streams of funding and a regulatory framework that will support the creation of many more shelters that cater to the needs of young people.

4. Create policies and funding streams that increase the number of affordable units available throughout the state. We’d like to see more units targeted to people with low incomes compared to the Providence metro’s AMI. Our experience is that the rent levels allowed under 60% and 80% AMI are unaffordable to many people who apply to live in our spaces. We’d like to see many more units available targeted for 30% and 50% AMI.”
Policy Recommendations

**Providence Housing Authority**

Peter Asen, Deputy Director for Development and Governmental Affairs  
www.provhousing.org

“Increase code enforcement compliance and/or establish rental registration so that participants in voucher programs that require inspections are not at a disadvantage relative to other renters. Even though source of income discrimination is now unlawful, landlords still find ways to rent to non-subsidized tenants because they wish to avoid having their unit inspected. While they are still required to have their units up to code, state building code is mostly enforced only in the context of tenant complaints. Requiring all rental units to register and be inspected regularly would not only put subsidized tenants on an even playing field with unsubsidized, but it would ensure better quality of housing for everyone.”

**Women’s Development Corporation**

Tara Quinn, Operations Manager/HR  
www.wdchoc.org

“-Enforcement of the 10% rule in each town/city across Rhode Island e.g. Cranston has 5 years to get to the full 10% affordable housing stock.  
-Rent control in Rhode Island.  
-Funding to create more rental units at 30% AMI.”

**Amos House**

Eileen Hayes, CEO  
www.amoshouse.com

“Municipalities need to be held to a percent of housing development that targets below 30% AMI. Municipalities should also take responsibility for families and individuals who are unsheltered and come from their respective communities. Too often NIMBYism prevents folks from accessing shelter at their home of origin. We also need municipalities to take bold action in creating solutions to prevent homelessness.”
Children Lead Action Project

Laura Brion,
Executive Director
www.leadsafekids.org

“Increase availability of and income eligibility for public housing and housing vouchers. Be sure to include housing safety (including lead paint safety) as a goal, along with affordability. People shouldn’t have to choose between a place they can afford and a place that will poison their kids.”

State of Rhode Island Department of Human Services

Suzanne Austin,
Productivity Project Director
www.dhs.ri.gov

“Change zoning laws to allow for more affordable duplex and multi-family units to be built.”

Coventry Housing Authority

Julie A Leddy,
Executive Director
www.coventryhousing.org

“Centralized Waiting List for all affordable housing programs by community with designations of elderly only, elderly and disabled, disabled only, homeless, veterans, etc. This has worked extraordinarily well for the state-wide Waiting List for Housing Choice Vouchers. Also, a user-friendly, centralized database by community for search of affordable housing. Lastly, allowing Memorandum of Agreements with the state and local Department of Human Services and Mental Health Agencies.”

NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley

Joe Garlick,
Executive Director
www.neighborworksbrv.org

“City and town policies around Comprehensive Permit and supporting housing production.”
Policy Recommendations

South County Habitat for Humanity

Colin Penney,
Executive Director
www.southcountyhabitat.org

“Tax reform for deed restricted affordable home ownership units.”

Individual Researchers

Sam Coren,
Researcher / PhD candidate
Brown University
americanstudies.brown.edu

“I would like to see state-level action to override local zoning ordinances that make it difficult to impossible to build affordable housing. I would also like to see support at the state-level for transit-oriented development along major commercial corridors, where rental housing can be retrofitted.”

INCLUSIVE HOUSING IN RI – A SURVEY OF THE STATE’S PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS

Skip Mark,
University of Rhode Island,

Jennifer Dalton Vincent,
University of Rhode Island

This survey attempted to capture public housing resident’s opinion of their housing quality and housing preferences.¹ 277 residents across all five Rhode Island counties were surveyed between June and December of 2021. The results below are state-wide trends.
Overall, younger respondents, minorities, women, those with children in their unit, and those with unreliable cars were significantly less satisfied with their public housing. Some of the key findings from the survey are presented below. We include graphs that show the results of a multiple regression analysis of latent variable measures of: overall satisfaction with the housing unit, the management, the community, and the safety of their housing. These were created by combining a number of questions related to each of the categories.¹

**Key Takeaways**

» Minorities are significantly less satisfied with their housing than white residents.

» Families with children in a unit were significantly less satisfied with their housing.

» Those without a car or without access to a reliable car were less satisfied with their housing.

» Those who applied for a section 8 voucher were less satisfied with housing, but those who had used a voucher were more satisfied.

» Public housing residents want to be active participants in decision making. ~60% of respondents showed interest in participatory budgeting and fixing up their complex. Those who showed an interest in participatory budgeting or fixing up their complexes were more satisfied with their housing.

¹ This survey was funded by the South Kingstown Housing Authority, the Social Science Institute for Research, Education, and Policy, the Rhode Island Foundation, and the Johnny Cake Center. It was designed by Dr. Skip Mark, PhD with URI masters student Emmanuel Michaca in consultation with the South Kingstown Housing Authority and Dr. Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, PhD. It was administered by URI graduate and undergraduate students who underwent training in survey methodology with Dr. Skip Mark and completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) research ethics and Human Subjects training. Survey respondents were given a $20 gift card for completing the survey. Due to COVID the survey methodology was switched from in-person surveys given on a tablet to the drop-off-pickup method (Allred, Shorna Broussard, and Amy Ross-Davis. The drop-off and pick-up method: An approach to reduce nonresponse bias in natural resource surveys. Small-Scale Forestry 10, no. 3 (2011): 305-318.). Response rates were ~40 around the state.

² These are not intended to be interpreted as causal relationships but instead show patterns in survey responses that suggest areas for further investigation.
Research Findings

**SATISFACTION WITH COMMUNITY**

- Minority
- Children in Unit
- No Access to a Car
- Car is Unreliable
- Applied for Voucher
- Used a Voucher
- Participatory Housing Advocate
- Volunteer to Help Fix Complex

**SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING UNIT**

- Minority
- Children in Unit
- No Access to a Car
- Car is Unreliable
- Applied for Voucher
- Used a Voucher
- Participatory Housing Advocate
- Volunteer to Help Fix Complex
Satisfaction with Safety

Research Findings

Minority
Children in Unit
No Access to a Car
Car is Unreliable
Applied for Voucher
Used a Voucher
Participatory Housing Advocate
Volunteer to Help Fix Complex

Satisfaction with Management

Minority
Children in Unit
No Access to a Car
Car is Unreliable
Applied for Voucher
Used a Voucher
Participatory Housing Advocate
Volunteer to Help Fix Complex
NEW DIRECTIONS IN PUBLIC HOUSING: WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN’T?

Richard McIntyre, University of Rhode Island,
Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, University of Maryland¹

This paper summarizes existing research on three types of public housing - clustered site housing, scattered site housing, and voucher-based housing. We begin with an historical sketch, from the segregationist principles embedded in the original New Deal housing programs through exclusionary zoning that functions in the same way today. Then we briefly consider the political economy of housing, including the extent to which various forms of housing allow people to have a voice in their living conditions and the extent to which housing is treated as a commodity versus as a citizen’s right. Then through case studies and concrete examples, we explain what works well and what works less well in each of the three types today. This is followed by a discussion of Montgomery County Maryland, which is on the leading edge of solutions to the housing crisis, including inclusionary zoning, workforce housing, and expansion of tenant opportunity.

Key Takeaways

» There are many social and individual benefits to clustered housing despite its having fallen out of favor. Many of the problems with this form, especially poverty concentration and segregation, are due to poor management. In some cases, participatory development and budgeting mitigate these failures.
Research Findings

» Participatory management supports affordability and resident autonomy. The Mildred C. Hailey apartments in Boston is an outstanding example.

» Structural design of housing stock, participation of non-profits, and inter-agency collaboration are all predictors of success in clustered housing.

» Limited equity cooperatives also provide affordability and resident empowerment. Startup funding for LECs can be difficult. In some cases, partnership with Community Land Trusts have overcome this barrier.

» Vouchers became a prime tool in public housing in the 1990s. The result has been a net reduction of affordable units nationwide, with majority African American communities especially negatively affected. Practical problems with vouchers include long wait lists, loss of vouchers if not used quickly, and lack of support in finding and occupying available housing.

» Some effective solutions to these problems include earlier notice to tenants of housing availability, small area fair market rents, landlord workshops and counseling, transparent and frequent interaction between landlords and public housing authorities, and enforcement of laws including Rhode Island’s relatively new Fair Housing Practices Act.

» Scattered public housing is also a product of the 1990s shift away from clusters. Proponents posited benefits from poverty de-concentration, but results have been disappointing. Inclusionary zoning appears to have more promise.

» Montgomery County Maryland is a national leader in public housing. The county has pioneered inclusionary zoning, workforce housing, and a right of first refusal law that allows the housing authority and tenant groups to match any signed contract for the sale of multifamily properties containing four or more units.

¹ We would like to thank Patrice Pierre and Yisel Vazquez for excellent research assistance.
Your Doodles
GET HOUSING RIGHT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE KIND SUPPORT OF MANY WONDERFUL PEOPLE. JOIN US IN OFFERING A WHOLE-HEARTED THANK YOU TO:

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