25 years of thinking outside of the box

Annual Report 2018
For some, housing is a business…for us, it’s a mission.

New Destiny was founded twenty-five years ago with the pioneering mission to help domestic violence survivors access the fundamental building blocks of long-term security and health: a permanent new home and a supportive community.

Over the past quarter-century, our holistic, multi-front efforts – building and managing affordable apartment complexes, incorporating trauma-informed services within “housing first” solutions; advocating for domestic violence shelter residents to qualify for the available housing benefits; providing at-risk families with the information to better navigate the City’s complex shelter system and housing market – have helped tens of thousands of women and children move from the twinned risks of violence and homelessness into lives of well-being, stability and progress.

“I have received my keys… You have made it possible to start my life over. You are a blessing. I pray that you continue to change the lives of so many of us women who have nowhere to turn or to go after having the courage to move on from abusive men.”

Sara G., Resident of New Destiny Building
In 1994, when New Destiny was founded, government- and philanthropic-funded domestic violence programs were primarily geared toward meeting survivors’ emergency needs. They typically offered time-limited shelter stays, legal assistance and other short-term social services. They rarely attempted to address the steep ongoing challenges that inevitably follow once the immediate crisis is past.

New Destiny arrived on the scene determined to confront those tough longer-term issues. We asked: Where can survivors and their children go when they reach the end of their allotted days within the domestic violence shelter system? And: Why aren’t individuals and families in that shelter system considered to be homeless — and why isn’t domestic violence recognized as a “priority category” for the few housing resources available to people who are homeless? And: Why aren’t we recognizing and addressing the direct connection between the unceasing rate of family violence and New York City’s ongoing crisis of family homelessness? And then we began forging groundbreaking solutions to those difficult questions.

For 25 years, our determination to galvanize attention and resources toward meeting the housing needs of a consistently overlooked population within one of the nation’s toughest real estate markets has remained both singular and unflagging. And — at a time when the number of New York’s homeless families has reached a record high — our focus and our efforts have never been more relevant.

Our quarter-century of work has resulted in:

1. the development of affordable housing that provides permanent homes to nearly 500 adults and children;
2. the forging of an innovative, holistic, service-enriched housing model that offers survivors a strong, supportive community as well as a permanent place to live;
3. the development of best practice rapid rehousing options that can help reduce or prevent long-term homelessness; and
4. the provision of on-line information and guidance that help survivors and low-income individuals citywide learn about and make use of the available affordable housing options and supports.

None of these advances would have been possible without the astute guidance of our board; the tireless dedication of our staff; collaborations with a range of far-sighted housing developers, government leaders, private landlords and sister non-profits; the deep generosity of our many donors and funders; and — most importantly — the expertise and input of all the courageous, determined survivors who inform and inspire our efforts.

We are grateful to all of you for your vital contributions and we pledge ourselves to continue working tirelessly to create a world in which all survivors can enjoy lives of genuine safety, security and progress.

Gina Doynow
Board Chair
Carol Corden
Executive Director
For 25 years, New Destiny has been an innovative and enterprising creator, owner, and manager of service-enriched permanent housing for domestic violence survivors and their children—and a trusted developer of emergency and transitional housing for other non-profits in the domestic violence field. Our projects provide oases of safety and support to more than 1,200 people a year.
Thinking Outside of the Box 1: Permanent vs. Emergency Solutions

When survivors gather up their children and their few portable possessions to take flight from intolerable violence, their first goal is generally just finding a safe place to land. And for more than three decades, the most viable immediate landing place has been either New York City’s domestic violence shelter system or general shelter system.

Shelters clearly offer a vital emergency resource for those who are fleeing abuse. They do not, however, offer solutions to survivors’ formidable long-term challenges. The vast majority of shelter residents reach the end of their time-limited stays with no viable exit plan in place. Most spend years negotiating a series of makeshift living arrangements. Far too many ultimately return to their abusers.

The shelter system, in short, represents only a very temporary, very expensive ($71,000 per family per year in FY 2018) and ultimately un-strategic way station for survivors seeking genuine safety and stability.

New Destiny parlays a range of astute partnerships and a spectrum of different funding sources toward addressing this far-reaching systemic shortcoming. We create service-enriched permanent housing solutions for survivors leaving the shelter system — at a fraction of the annual cost of a shelter stay. And we do it despite New York City’s increasingly more expensive real estate market—while contending with changing, and sometimes conflicting, publicly-funded housing resources and serving a constituency that has few champions and no central place on any existing policy agenda.

Over the past 25 years, we have found the will and the means to create and manage nearly 200 units of energy-efficient, contextually-sensitive permanent service-enriched housing in the Bronx and Brooklyn. And we are currently working on a group of new projects—including developing two new complexes in the Bronx and launching two new joint ventures with for-profit developers in Coney Island, Brooklyn, and in Jamaica, Queens — that will provide survivors who are leaving the shelter system with an additional 250 affordable, clean, welcoming permanent apartments.

‘‘When I received [New Destiny’s] invitation for an interview, I was overjoyed. In that moment I felt free — I didn’t have to run anymore; I didn’t have to stress about finding housing. The apartment was everything that I wanted. I am very grateful to New Destiny for giving me just that — a ‘New Destiny.’’

Mary S., Resident of New Destiny Building
While permanent housing is clearly the first prerequisite for the long-term stability of survivors and their children, it is seldom a complete answer. Those who live with prolonged abuse can be deeply traumatized—and that trauma can be further exacerbated by the cycle of ongoing dislocation and chaos that typically await them when they attempt to flee from their abusers. Recognizing the often damaging and long-lasting impact of those experiences, New Destiny provides more than just a roof over survivors’ heads. It offers them the supportive environment and concrete tools with which they and their children can finally begin healing, re-building and moving on.

Each of the buildings that we operate includes the core features that all families need for sustained well-being. The individual apartments are modern, clean and well laid out. The public spaces—community rooms, computer rooms, courtyard playgrounds and gardens—are all welcoming, comfortable and bright. Staff and partnering organizations offer arts, therapeutic and recreational programming. Workshops and presentations, resident meetings, holiday parties and celebrations of residents’ achievements contribute to a strong sense of community.

Each of our buildings also provides the strong security that all families headed by survivors need—and a range of voluntarily-accessed services tailored to addressing potential individual challenges. The supports we offer include: counseling (both individual and group); assistance with children’s school enrollment, day care, and special needs; information and referrals around benefits and other resources; assistance formulating long-term safety plans; referrals to physical and mental health providers; and employment and work readiness coaching.

In addition, our staff receive training in trauma-informed care which helps them to understand and appropriately respond to the behaviors that can be precipitated by trauma; and are, themselves, given support toward managing the powerful “secondhand” impact of continually witnessing and addressing the effects of that trauma.

A longitudinal study conducted by researchers from Baruch College and Rutgers University found that—thanks to our comprehensive, strength-based, trauma-informed approach—the residents of our buildings overwhelmingly feel safer and more empowered. They almost always remain securely housed and they are consistently able to gain or retain employment. Their children flourish socially and do better in school. And they state that they feel part of a strong community—often for the first time.

Thinking Outside of the Box 2: Promoting a Community-Centered Approach

"The permanent housing provided by New Destiny to families like mine not only gives us the opportunity to have a safe place to live but [includes] social services that give us the chance to grow emotionally and financially and to develop self-sufficiency. The recreational events [produce] a sense of community among residents...children and adults alike."

Maria R., Resident of New Destiny Building
At the same time that we continue to lead the way in terms of concretely expanding New York City’s supply of affordable apartments, we also recognize that new construction is not typically a quick or easy solution. We therefore simultaneously pursue other strategies designed to help survivors and their children retain or rapidly relocate to other viable permanent apartments:

- Each year, our online Housing Resource Center provides tens of thousands of low-income individuals and domestic violence survivors and their advocates with information that helps them to avoid eviction; make use of appropriate housing benefits; move into safer situations using the benefits they already possess; and secure affordable apartments in the private market.
- Since its launch in 2014, New Destiny’s HousingLink — a best practice rapid rehousing initiative developed in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence’s five Family Justice Centers — has given hundreds of survivors who are at risk of homelessness the intensive, hands-on services to move into high-quality, affordable apartments; and aftercare services that enable them to achieve long-term stability. The program has placed more than 80 families in new apartments. And thanks to its tailored, post-placement services, the overwhelming majority of these families have been able to remain stably housed over time — an outcome that strongly benefits both them and the participating landlords. A March 2018 evaluation found that the program is efficient and cost-effective as well as expandable and replicable. That it represents, in short, a highly promising strategy for providing an important segment of survivor households a solid path to sustainable housing.

“[HousingLink] has helped me start the process of getting my life back…to rent an apartment for myself and my kids…to have a place that is comfortable and peaceful for all of us.”

Ava P., HousingLink Client
From our earliest days, New Destiny has recognized that the challenges that drive so many low-income survivor families into homelessness are largely systemic—not personal—in nature. We have therefore consistently sought to promote systemic as well as individual solutions:

- Our public education materials and testimony illuminate the links between domestic violence and family homelessness, and build support for the idea of combating the ongoing surge in the City’s shelter population by providing survivor families with better access to permanent housing.
- Our advocacy efforts make the case that survivors living in the City’s shelter systems face odds as steep as other high-needs populations and should therefore have comparable access to publicly funded housing resources.
- Our service-enriched permanent housing model offers strong proof that—given the opportunity for a stable home and appropriate support—survivors are overwhelmingly able to move forward with their lives.

The efforts of New Destiny and its sister advocacy organizations have contributed to several important victories:

- New York State’s new Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI)—part of a $2.6 billion plan to construct 6,000 new permanent supportive housing units with services over five years—specifically recognizes homeless households headed by domestic violence survivors as eligible for that support.
- Homeless domestic violence survivors—who were previously an invisible homeless subpopulation—are now counted in New York City’s HUD Point-In-Time Count, a data source which is used to allocate resources to the homeless.
- Increased attention is being paid to homeless families with children in the City’s shelter system by New York City and State officials, including—particularly—families who are homeless because of domestic violence.
- It is now possible for survivors and their children to make a seamless transition from the domestic violence shelter system to the general population shelter system.
- Expanded service-enriched housing and rapid rehousing for previously homeless domestic violence survivors are being evaluated as potentially effective strategies for addressing the ongoing crisis of family homelessness in this city.
- A growing cadre of far-sighted landlords are willing to give survivors a fair chance.

Thinking Outside of the Box 4: Addressing the Systemic Roots

As a domestic violence survivor, you feel you can’t trust…and have no one on your side. You gave me the support and guidance I needed to move forward.

Kendra A., Resident of New Destiny Building
Past 5 Years – New Destiny’s Accomplishments

• Developing two new service-enriched projects in the Bronx that will provide more than 100 units of affordable family housing.
• Partnering in two joint venture projects that will provide almost 150 units of new permanent housing for homeless domestic violence survivors and their children.
• Rehabilitated New Destiny’s four oldest housing projects to secure the long-term affordability of rental housing for existing tenants in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.
• Co-convened a coalition of organizations to expand awareness of New York’s ongoing crisis of family homelessness – and to promote solutions to reducing it.
• Created an innovative rapid rehousing program to help survivors avoid becoming homeless by moving quickly to existing affordable housing.

Next 5 Years – New Destiny’s Pledge for the Future

• Develop more service-enriched housing – through joint ventures and solo developments.
• Strengthen and evaluate our service-enriched housing model for previously homeless families.
• Expand New Destiny’s rapid rehousing program for New York City survivors.
• Advocate for increased access of homeless families, including those headed by domestic violence survivors, to homeless housing resources.
• Continue to create new out of the box solutions for reducing family homelessness.

Looking Back and Forward

Architect’s rendering of The Jennings, slated to open in 2019.
Revenue and Expenses
Fiscal Year 2018

Government Support, Private Support and Other Revenue

Our income is derived from diverse sources which enables us to weather changes to any one revenue stream.

Expenses

Almost eighty percent (80%) of New Destiny’s expenses are for direct services for individuals and families, and for operating our affordable housing.

Our complete audited financial statement can be accessed on our website at www.newdestinyhousing.org.
Architects’ renderings of The Bryant and Raven Hall (inset) both scheduled to open in 2021.

The Bryant architect: Magnusson Architecture & Planning.
Raven Hall architect: Stephen B. Jacobs Group PC.