



# Step By Step

TRANSFORMING LIVES, ONE STEP AT A TIME

## Snapshots from A LEGACY IN MOTION

If you've been following us on Facebook, we've been spending the last 30 days sharing stories from the journey of our Legacy In Motion project! This newsletter includes just a few of those stories.

Above all else, the most important thing to know about Step By Step's story is that it has been and always will be about strong moms. We are passionate about empowering mothers, because we know that mothers empower our families and communities. Every day, we work to help mothers overcome their challenges and become bold women of vision who raise children that thrive.

As we enter the final stretch of this big project, a dream that has been many years in the making, I want to thank you for your support. We can see the finish line, and I am confident that together we will make it.

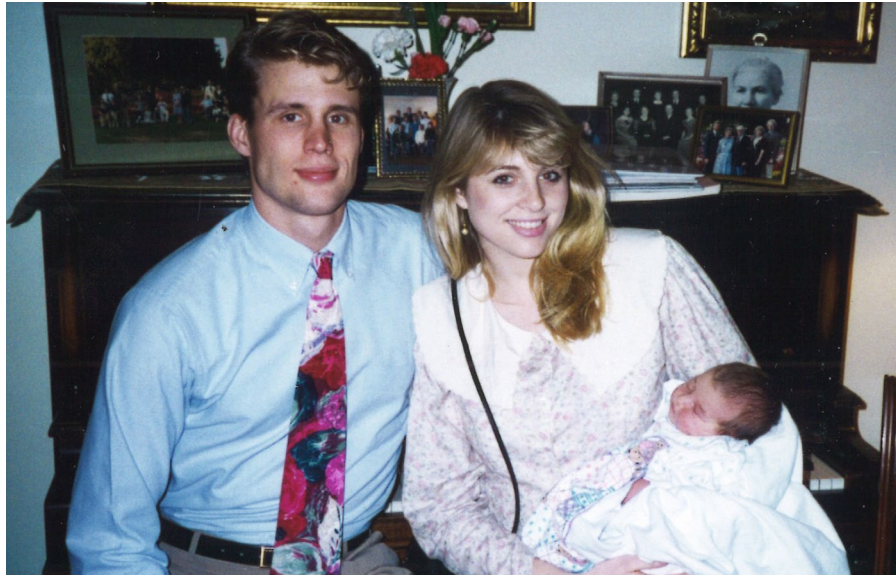
This is our legacy in motion...

~ *Krista Linden*

*Step By Step Founder & Executive Director*



# HOW OUR STORY BEGAN



## How We Got Our Start

Step By Step was really born on the day of another baby's birth, when Krista, Step By Step's Founder & Executive Director, held her own newborn baby for the first time.

When Krista held the first of her daughters in her arms, she had flashbacks to an experience from her college years that she often describes as "haunting."

At the time, she was a student teacher in a first grade classroom. On the first day of school, she met a little girl named Leanne who looked a lot like her as a child. She could immediately tell that something was terribly wrong. Later, she learned that Leanne had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. While she had never heard of that before, the irreparable damage done to this little girl's brain was immediately evident.

Krista remembered the only experience she had meeting Leanne's mom at her apartment. The home environment was awful. It wasn't long afterward that she learned that Leanne was removed from her mother's care.

As Krista now held the first of her seven daughters in her arms, the look on Leanne's face haunted her, in a different way from a different perspective.

She knew in that moment that someday she wanted to do something to help support other struggling mothers, so that their children would have a chance at a better future. In her own small way, in her own little corner of the world, she was determined to spend any extra time she had helping little girls like Leanne (and little boys) to not start out life like she did. And, Step By Step was born in 1997.

## Why What We Do Matters

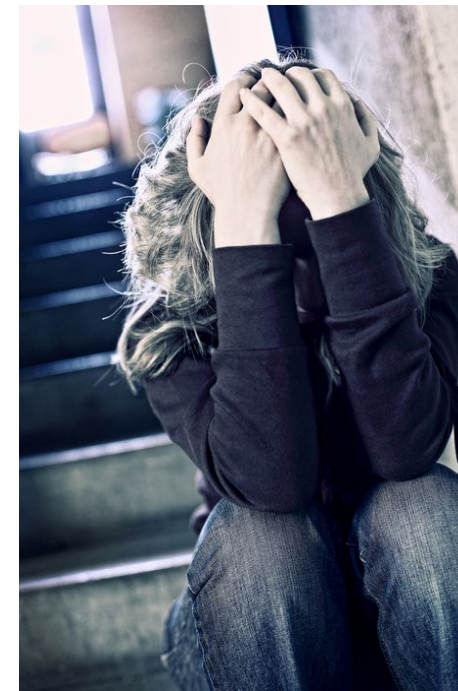
During a staff meeting at a local hospital, one of the social workers from labor and delivery told two stories about women who had delivered their babies at the hospital the day before. One was homeless and did not have a car seat, so the hospital could not release her baby into her care. This mom had been discharged, but she had nowhere to go, no way to safely transport her baby, and no one to call for help. The second woman had been addicted to drugs throughout her entire pregnancy. When she tested positive at the hospital, her baby was immediately removed from her care.

Neither of these women had been in a program like Step By Step's, and this social worker was urging doctors and nurses to help encourage and refer at-risk pregnant women to take advantage of our program. These women could have had support. Like so many of the women who have come to us with similar circumstances, their stories could have been different.

Programs like Step By Step's, where a mother receives professional home visits and care, are working. We know firsthand that when a mom feels supported and has someone to turn to and to ask questions – she will feel better, cope better with stress in her life, and make better and healthier choices for herself and her baby.

This is what we do every day. We go into the most at-risk homes and neighborhoods in our community. We spend time with mothers, and provide counseling, education, and encouragement. We teach our moms how to make healthy choices. We encourage them to breastfeed, to cuddle their babies, and to embrace parenting. We connect them with other moms and people in the community who care about them and can help them be successful.

For over two decades, we have been working to help give mothers and babies their best start. We are helping babies to be born healthy, and we are helping moms transform their lives and the lives of their children – one positive step at a time.



## Why We Need To Do More

When one of our moms first called us, she was homeless, in a domestic violence situation, struggling with addiction, and had just found out from a pregnancy clinic that she was pregnant with twins. She wanted so badly to be a good mom and for her children to not experience what she had growing up.

We later learned that she had grown up never knowing who her father was and surrounded by drug and alcohol abuse. She was a victim of rape and prostitution and had often been homeless. She had never experienced a safe and loving home. This mother has taken so many steps towards hope and health, but it has taken years of support and ongoing encouragement, far beyond what our typical program is able to provide.

We are often asked what led us to make the decision to expand our program and

how our Legacy In Motion project got its start. Stories like these are why.

While having a healthy pregnancy and getting a good start to parenting are monumentally important goals, we recognized that it was not enough. For so many of the women we work with, they need more ongoing support, as they work to overcome their past and take their next steps towards a stable and secure future. We can not fully help women to address significant challenges like these, over the course of a pregnancy.

We recognized that the established relationships we have with the mothers we serve are powerful, and we are in a unique position to seamlessly support them in their next steps. While our new program will have a focus on helping moms reach employment goals, it will also help to keep them on track, to continue developing healthy habits, recover from past traumas, learn what a healthy family looks and feels like, and work to establish a positive environment, where their children can thrive.

**“While having a healthy pregnancy and getting a good start to parenting are monumentally important goals, we recognized that it was not enough.”**

# A FAMILIAR PLACE WITH A NEW VISION



## Why We Bought A Farm

Step By Step began looking for a place where we could expand our program to offer job experience and workforce training, while retaining the critical wraparound services of case management, mentorship, and key educational programs that help our moms establish safe homes and parent positively.

Krista, Step By Step's Founder and Executive Director, was immediately drawn to the idea of repurposing a farm.

She has lots of farmers in her family, and she herself grew up on a family farm. She often credits the farm for instilling in her a strong sense of responsibility and an appreciation and value for positive family and community relationships, determination, humility, and hard work.

Krista was approached about repurposing the former Van Lierop Farm site, and she embraced the opportunity to preserve a piece of this legacy farm and infuse it with new life.

When a few members of our Step By Step team first arrived onsite, we were greeted silently by brown barren fields and empty echoing buildings.

All that remained of the former Van Lierop Bulb Farm's rich history were a few resilient bulb flowers, pushing up through the hard soil in scattered patches across the sprawling grounds, living artifacts of a family's 90-year legacy of growing fine flowers.

It was here where we first met Neil Van Lierop, the last farmer of five family generations to fill these Puyallup Valley fields with vibrant beauty. Neil overflows with stories about this farm. He can still recount the dozens of varieties of tulips and daffodils that were grown here in countless field rows, and he has a running informal list of things the farm "loves" – like country music and red trucks.

When asked about his story, Neil pulled out a childhood photo of himself, arms crossed, standing proudly next to a stack of bulb crates as tall as he was. "I plowed my first field when I was seven," he says. "I've been in love with this farm my whole life."

Looking at colorful photos of over a hundred acres of flower fields, bursting with blooming tulips and daffodils, it is hard to imagine that this once internationally recognized flower farm came from humble beginnings and grew out of hard times.

Krista was approached about repurposing the former Van Lierop Farm site, and she embraced the opportunity to preserve a piece of this legacy farm and to infuse it with new life.



During tough financial times, when there was not enough money, the Van Lierop family was often paid in flower bulbs. They made ends meet by selling flowers door to door. In 1934, they finally acquired their own land and started the Van Lierop Bulb Farm.

We hope this farm and its story will inspire the women and families we serve to see hope for their future, to realize that they too can overcome their own unique challenges and work to build a brighter future for themselves and their children.

While it remains a familiar place, the farm has a broad new vision for the future. Each building on the farm is being repurposed. It will soon be a place that grows not only beautiful flowers but also strong families.

Neil Van Lierop still drives his red truck and resides in his farmhouse on site. He has watched as this place has undergone its transformation. When asked how he was doing with all the changes, he replied, "I cannot tell you how good it does my heart to see a new dream taking off."

# BEGINNING A NEW LEGACY



In spite of all that we had accomplished, we knew that it was just the first step, and that we had a lot of work ahead to bring this big dream to reality.

## Our First Big Fundraising Challenge

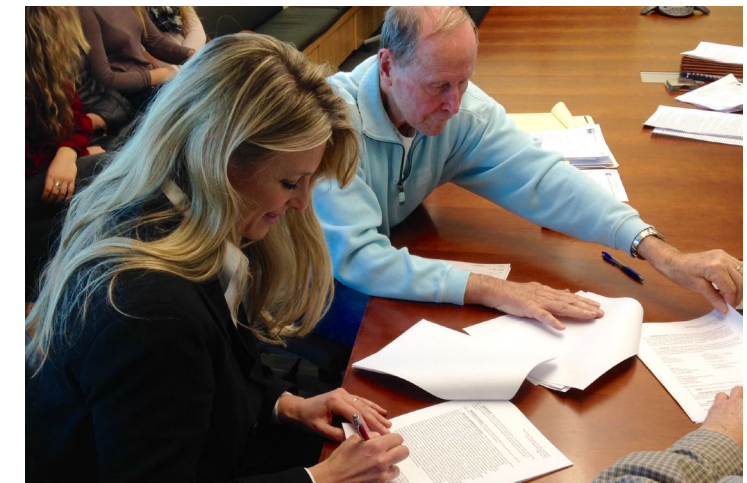
It was January 1st, 2015 when we launched the first phase of the Legacy In Motion project's Capital Campaign. According to our Purchase And Sale Agreement, we had just one year to raise the \$1,500,000 needed to purchase the site. It was the first milestone of our Capital Campaign. And, it felt like a daunting task.

It was an amazing year. Step By Step's donors and volunteers, partner organizations, companies, and foundations came together in support of this project. We worked tirelessly, but they brought us to this moment. We are so thankful for the selfless generosity of all those who helped get us to this point.

We ran that time all the way down to the wire. It was New Year's Eve, just minutes before 5:00 pm, when Krista Linden and Neil Van Lierop, sat side by side at a conference table in Puyallup City Hall and signed the final closing documents for the sale of the Van Lierop farm. It was a beautiful day. You could see Mount Rainier from the windows, covered in pink and orange hues against the snow. Not a lot of words were said.

In spite of all we had accomplished, we knew that it was just the first step, and that we had a lot of work ahead to bring this big dream to reality.

It was an emotional moment, one that signified the closing of one family's legacy, but also the beginning of another. Neil sold his family's heritage farm, grown and cultivated over 5 generations. Krista realized the first big step of a new legacy, one that will allow this beloved place to continue to serve our community, its families, and many generations to come.



## A Critical Lead Gift

Krista, Step By Step's Founder and Executive Director vividly remembers waiting in the kitchen of her home for a phone call that she knew could be the key to giving our Legacy In Motion project the momentum that it needed to get off the ground.

Jerry & Germaine Korum, local business leaders and founders of the Korum for Kids Foundation were considering a major gift toward the project and had told Krista they would call at a particular time that evening.

They called right on time and pledged \$500,000 to help purchase the site. They were some of the first to believe in and support this project, and we might not be where we are today without their generous financial support.

Because of this critical lead gift, Krista decided to name the future site the Germaine Korum Center, after Germaine, whose deep dedication to women and children has spanned decades. Step By Step's office headquarters will be here, as well as a family counseling and educational center, job training and workforce preparation facility, a culinary training program, a greenhouse, and a social enterprise restaurant, which will provide on the job training and work experience for the women we serve.

The Germaine Korum Center will be a unique and beautiful place that both enriches lives and holistically strengthens families in our community – for generations to come.



# KEY LEADERS STEP UP TO SUPPORT



## A Tremendous Team

When Krista, Step By Step's Executive Director, was told that we needed to find a good architect for the Legacy In Motion project, she knew exactly who she wanted on the team. Over 20 years ago, she had attended a presentation where Jeff Brown, a local architect was talking about designing a new Children's Wing at a local church.

She immediately remembered him and how much his authenticity, transparency, and genuine kindness had impressed her. She picked up the phone, tracked him down, and invited him to join our team.

Jeff has given up countless early Saturday mornings to come lead meetings, he donated his preconstruction service costs, and he refused to send us a single invoice for his work for nearly two years, until he was sure we had secured the funds we needed to finish construction on the project.

He has guided us over every hurdle and around every roadblock along the way. Jeff's expertise and encouragement and unfailing spirit have been absolutely critical to the success of this project, and we are so thankful for his dedication and generosity.

Not only has Jeff acted as our architect for the project, but he has also provided leadership for our Advisory Council of nearly 30 professionals. These individuals include local business owners, engineers, attorneys, contractors, and program staff, who have been instrumental in guiding and speaking into the development and planning of this project over the past three years.

Every time we have needed expertise, advice, or we have had a problem to solve, someone on this team has stepped up to help. Each one of them has been a key part in this legacy in motion!

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PICTURED ABOVE: The Legacy In Motion Project Advisory Council Team

## Political Support

At 5:48 am on April 28th, 2019 Krista received a message from Senator Zeiger that Step By Step's Legacy In Motion project was selected to receive \$1,750,000 in this year's capital budget, which had finally passed in the middle of the night.

When Krista got Senator Zeiger's message, the tears came down hard. This project has been such an emotional journey, and in many ways a huge leap of faith. We could not be more grateful for the tremendous kindness of so many.

We so appreciate the support and encouragement we have received over the past few years, from many elected officials, including Representatives Chambers, Gildon, Stambaugh, McDonald, and Jinkins and Senators Zeiger and Honeyford. Thank you for believing in our mission and vision to strengthen the lives of vulnerable women and children in our communities.

We still have a ways to go before we reach the finish line. But, we are getting there - step by tenacious step!



# CHANGING HOW WE WORK



## Moms Speak Into The Program

We knew that the wisdom and advice from our Step By Step moms would be invaluable, as we worked on developing our job training and workforce preparation program.

We gathered together 19 past and present Step By Step moms who were willing to share their testimonies and speak into the program.

We started out asking them about their hopes and dreams for the future, as well as what barriers they thought might be in the way of them reaching their goals.

We were surprised to hear the majority of them say that no had ever asked them about their future goals. Later, one of the moms wrote about her experience with the group.

She said, “During that first meeting, there was not a dry eye in the room. We, as women, came together to share our stories of pain, our trials and tribulations, mistakes, fears, and disappointments. It didn’t end there. It continued with activities that made us search within ourselves and ended with us starting to verbalize, and write down, our hopes, dreams, and goals for our future.

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Now, understand how hard it is to think and ponder about your dreams and goals when you are just trying to survive. It opened my heart that someone, a whole group of people, truly cared about the happiness inside my heart. That first night, I remembered myself, and that I mattered. I cannot describe to you how empowered I felt.”

These Step By Step moms have been helping us with our new program, but we didn’t realize how much they would really help each other. Each one of them expressed a need and desire for community and better social support. These women now have eighteen friends. Eighteen people in their corner, cheering them on, sharing their stories, giving advice, and being vulnerable. They also all agreed that the largest barrier they had to success was themselves. Their mindset, confidence and the voices in their head often hold them back from pursuing their dreams.

One of the key focuses of our training program will be to provide our moms with time to focus on their personal development and a team of personal mentors and coaches who will provide positive relational support and encouragement along the way.

## Not A Typical Day At Work

For the women we will serve in our Job Training & Workforce Preparation program, one thing has become really clear – a typical day in our program will be anything but a typical workday.

When we sat down and painted a picture of what that day might look like, we saw a tradition of meeting together prior to the workday, to hear a brief message from a leader and to acknowledge team achievements.

Following that time, program participants might check in with their coach to talk about their progress and next steps. They would spend time job training with their peer trainers, many of whom are former Step By Step moms themselves. Time for personal development such as life skills and parenting classes would be built into the workday. Moms might meet up with members from a social support group during lunch to talk or to go for a walk at the park.

Most importantly, throughout each step of the program, we will provide needed time for counseling and for them to connect with their personal mentors and coaches – all individuals who are part of a cohesive team. Guidance, resources, training, and encouragement will be combined to help these women be successful both in the workplace and in their homes.

Each mother’s day will look a little different, based on where she is at in the program and what her individual strengths and challenges are. It is not our intent to create an unrealistic work environment, but to build women up to a place where they can pursue gainful employment in the marketplace.

At its core, our holistic program will always revolve around two things: It will be founded on supportive positive relationships and focused on holistically strengthening women and their families.

# A PLACE WITH PURPOSE



**Penny, one of our Step By Step moms is passionate about the potential our social enterprise restaurant has to change lives, because a restaurant once helped her to change her own.**

## A Social Enterprise That Changes Lives

Penny, one of our Step By Step moms is passionate about the potential our social enterprise restaurant has to change lives, because a restaurant once helped her to change her own.

Growing up, Penny endured abuse and neglect. She lived with her mother, who was always dependent on state assistance and did not work. Penny describes her family as the typical “welfare family.” At 14 years old, she got her first job, bussing tables at a busy restaurant to help support her family financially. She worked hard and eventually worked her way up to assistant manager.

When she was 18 years old, Penny finally escaped, only to end up in another volatile relationship. When she came to Step By Step, she had just given birth to her third baby. However, with support and one positive step and achievement after another, she has transformed her family and life into a huge success story. Today, Penny owns her own home and her own business. All three of her children are attending college. Her oldest will be graduating from UW this month with an electrical engineering degree. She has shattered the generational cycle of poverty and abuse in her family, and she is one of the hardest, most dedicated workers we know.

She says she feels she can trace a lot of her business and professional success back to the foundational skills she learned working in various roles at the restaurant. When asked about her experience and how it helped her be successful, she said, “I learned time management, the importance of teamwork, and the value of good service, which comes from being consciously aware of a customer’s needs. I learned how to communicate effectively, how to handle conflict constructively in the workplace, to listen well, and to not panic in high-pressure situations. Instead, I learned to ask myself ‘how can we work this out.’ I also learned how to manage a budget. All of these skills have been helpful to me in life and later starting my own business. I think it’s a great environment for us to utilize to help train and equip the mothers we serve.”

We also love that food tends to bring people together. One of our staff members said that she believes life is beautiful when food, people, and communities are whole. We hope that is what this restaurant becomes all about. We can’t wait for Farm 12 to be able to serve both the families we work with and our local community.

Our vision for this place is for everyone who walks through our doors. We want to be a welcoming place of renewal and hope that grows, encourages, serves, and celebrates – together!

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## A Social Enterprise Restaurant & Event Center

Our new site will be open to the public and include a social enterprise restaurant and event center.

These venues will provide opportunities for the women in our program to receive on-the-job training and work experience, while also generating revenue to support the ongoing program.

When our team began brainstorming what we should name the restaurant, we knew we wanted it to relate to the history of the flower farm that formerly operated here for over 70 years. Not long afterwards, at a Puyallup City Hall meeting, Neil Van Lierop was speaking about the history of the property and answering questions.

At one point, the discussion turned to the Bulb Exchange and how each flower farm in the Puyallup Valley had been assigned an identifying number. Every farm had their respective number on the wooden bulb crates they used on the farm. It was then that we learned that the former Van Lierop Bulb Farm was #12.

When Krista, Step By Step’s founder and Executive Director, returned from the meeting, she said “I know what we should name the restaurant!” And, so it is... Farm 12!



[WWW.FARM12.ORG](http://WWW.FARM12.ORG)



# MOMS EMPOWERING MOMS



## Our First Peer Trainer

Rachel, one of our Step By Step moms, took a day off from her job to do a video interview to talk about her story and our new job training program. Krista, Step By Step's Founder & Executive Director had given her some money to pay for her time and gas to get to our site. After she left, she texted Krista to tell her that she wanted the money to go towards the program and that she had left it between the couch cushions in Krista's office.

Rachel has a vibrant personality and a heart of gold. She has been volunteering her time to attend development meetings to contribute her ideas about our new job training program, and she recently wrote a beautiful speech and shared her testimony at our Spring fundraising dinner and auction.

One of the things we are excitedly doing right now is looking for Step By Step moms who have both been through our program and possess experience working in the restaurant and catering industry.

We are recruiting these moms directly into our social enterprise restaurant and catering program, where they will work as both employees and peer trainers for the women participating in the program.

We were excited to learn that for the past three years Rachel has been working as an assistant manager at McDonald's. The Restaurant Group, who is facilitating the hiring and startup process for our restaurant, interviewed her and were impressed with the skills she has developed. And, of course, they loved her personality.

She was the first Step By Step mom that we offered a position to, and she is set to make a lateral move to serve as an assistant manager at our facility. She will bring great talent, personality, and a wonderfully inspiring story for the women she will work alongside.

We're so glad we have had the privilege to be a part of Rachel's story, and we are excited for her to come full circle and become an integral and active part of ours. She is definitely a legacy in motion!

# BE A PART OF THE LEGACY

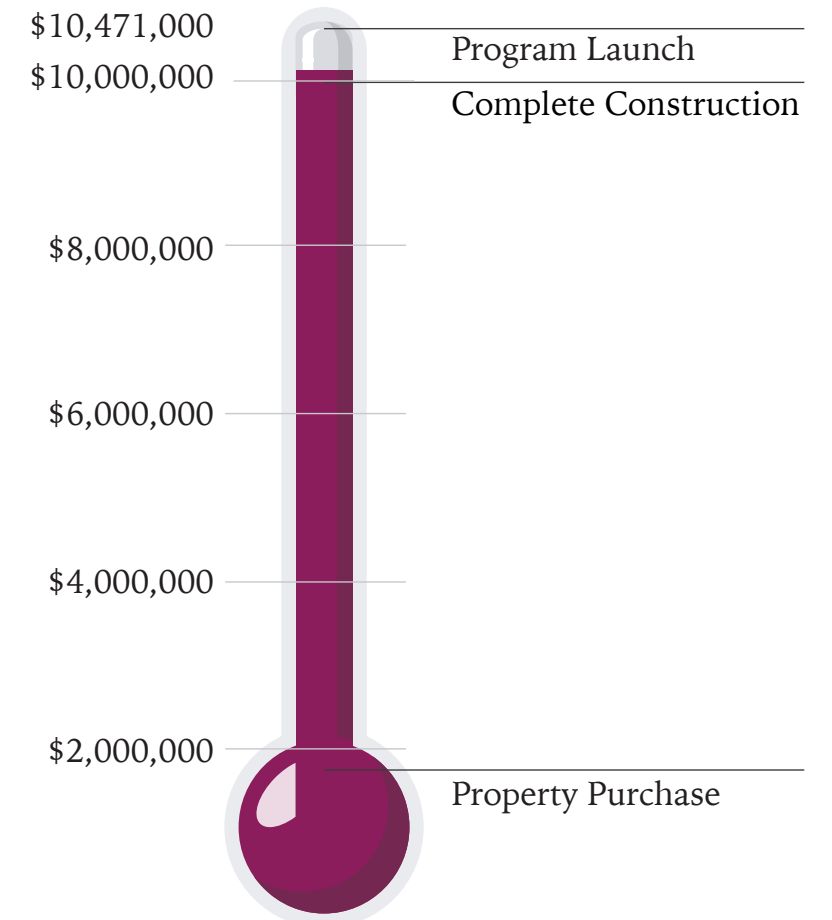


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TRANSFORMING LIVES, ONE STEP AT A TIME

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