



WHEEL

Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League
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Dear Mayor Durkan:

Twenty years ago, the City of Seattle asked WHEEL to open a women's shelter. Twenty years later, WHEEL is asking you to let us do more: Open the Red Doors of City Hall for a nighttime women's shelter NOW so we can save lives. All you have to do is say "Yes," and we're ready to do all the work.

Today WHEEL/Women in Black will stand vigil on the steps of City Hall for Chris Dailey, a 38-year-old father, camping in Woodland Park with his family, who was shot to death. There are thousands more like him vulnerable tonight. Chris's death on December 30th was the 140th death of a homeless person outside or by violence in King County in 2020.

With the capacities of so many shelters cut in half or more, we need to add capacity to make up for the loss. We need to get people inside, especially the most vulnerable and hardest to serve. Even before the pandemic, thousands had no indoor shelter at all. The pandemic has pitched the crisis, and made adding shelter, support and community even more important.

Looking at the numbers--a few open beds here or there in shelters--is misleading. Many beds are not available now and will be filled immediately when they are. Shelters have been closed for intake due to COVID outbreaks--this will happen again, and again. Others are top bunkbeds, or require a COVID test and a quarantine for intake, or require staying put and making curfew, or just have higher-barrier requirements for stay. We know the most vulnerable need to be met where they are with the lowest-barrier respite that is reliable. We are struggling EVERY day to find spots for women like this who come to our doors. Many have given up, and don't even try to find shelter anymore.

The women staying at the WHEEL shelter now say WHEEL is a godsend and a lifesaver. We give women who are alone on the street a strong sense of community. WHEEL is grassroots, led by homeless and formerly homeless women fighting for rights and resources for women. At WHEEL women don't feel homeless; there's camaraderie and love for one another and every person is valued.

WHEEL has shown women their strengths and gifts. We can extend this sense of community to more women and strengthen Seattle. The stronger we get as individuals, the more we can contribute to the greater community. And we are ready!

We'll be standing vigil near the Red Doors at noon today. Please say yes to opening those doors for a women's shelter now.

Sincerely,
Women of WHEEL

James H. Krigore
Ethel Schuchter

John R. Thompson
C. Della Gray
Alvin P. [unclear]
~~Kathy Thompson~~

Christina Angen
SHI CHEN
Lindsay Anderson

John J. [unclear]
John J.
Clyde
Carol Freeman
Greg [unclear]