

# Bethany House of Hospitality



## Gratitude Report

October 2023 – October 2024

*Looking Forward  
in Hope  
Together*



## Bethany House...since the beginning

Since its founding in 2017 Bethany House has offered a safe home to 125 women with 50 children from 29 different countries of origin. In the beginning they were all young women who had arrived in the country as unaccompanied children and came to us from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) shelters for children. Because they had no family or sponsors, when they turned 18 they would otherwise have been sent to adult immigration detention or a homeless shelter.

But the immigration situation changes constantly—who is arriving, where they come from, what are the greatest needs. Bethany House has adapted with the times and needs. In 2018, there was a call about an 18-year-old aging out of ORR custody with two young children. Soon after that, Bethany House hosted a family reunification of a mother and her baby who were separated for 7 months because of the cruel family separation policy in effect at the border at that time. They opened the door for other young women with children. In 2021, we received young women who had been part of the “Remain in Mexico” (MPP) program. They had each spent about two years waiting to enter the U.S.—and each had been kidnapped and held for ransom, sometimes more than once, while waiting at the Mexico border. That same year we also received young Afghani women who were separated from their families as they fled Afghanistan.

From fall of 2022 through summer of 2024, more than 50,000 immigrants were sent to Chicago by bus and plane from Texas. Thousands found themselves staying at police stations and airports, awaiting shelter space, sleeping on the ground and counting on volunteers to bring food. It was not a safe place for any young woman, let alone one who has been traumatized or has a small child. Many calls came from hospital social workers when they had a pregnant woman or young woman with a sick child ready to be discharged from the hospital and know it is not healthy for them return to their previous environment.



Since June when the buses stopped arriving in Chicago, we have had a new wave of women turning 18. About 75% of our new arrivals this year have been women aging out of ORR shelters throughout the country on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. They tend to stay at Bethany House a little longer while they work on English classes and a high school diploma or GED.

## Message from Board President



Dear Friends and All Who Support Bethany House,

We are living in turbulent times...in our neighborhoods, towns, cities, country, and our world. These are times that affect our friends and families, all those whom we love and indeed the whole of our being – mind, heart and spirit.

Yet, here we are in this season of gratitude – gratitude for all that has been placed into our hands, our hearts, our lives, our world. At the center, there is always good, always gift, always something for which we are grateful, to give us joy, comfort and peace. At Bethany House, we celebrate this season of thanksgiving, believing in the goodness of people and the world. The African word Ubuntu tells us that we each can create a more peaceful world by striving for goodness in each moment, wherever we are.

For our women and children at Bethany House, we hope that we can lead them to believe that, for them, another world is not only possible, but is already beginning. On a quiet day, I can almost feel the breath of the new life for them – a life that these women and children deserve to live.

What makes all this possible, is our many friends and supporters who are very much part of our ministry and the lives of all those who come to us, hoping for a safe and better life. You are a part of the breath of that new life.

Thanksgiving is a time of togetherness and gratitude. We share togetherness with you through your support and care. We are grateful and hold you in our hearts and prayers and ask that you always remember that you are a part of Bethany House of Hospitality and all the women and children who pass through our doors.

With thankfulness, we wish you and all those whom you hold dear, peace, joy, and a blessed season of Thanksgiving. In the words of Dag Hammarskjöld “For all that has been, thank you. For all that is to be, YES!”



Peace and all good,

*Dolores Zemont, OSF*

President, Board of Directors

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*back row*

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## Message from the Executive Director



When I lived in Peru many years ago, I had a favorite song by the group *Siembra* titled *Centinela de la Esperanza* (Sentinel of Hope). The second verse says: *I want to be a sentinel of hope / and put my effort into unity / with men and women who build without ceasing / strong bonds of solidarity.*” I always loved that image of the sentinel, not just waiting passively in the darkness but actively forging relationships and building a new world of justice and peace that will be revealed with the dawn.

All of you who receive this Gratitude Report have been partners with Bethany House in this effort to build bonds of unity that affirm our solidarity as brothers and sisters. The need will be greater than ever in the years ahead for us to work together unceasingly to be sentinels of hope, who “console our brothers and sisters in their pain, dry bitter tears and see in their eyes the rebirth of joy and hope.” Together—and mutually to one another—we can “bring justice and equality, heal hearts and give back dignity” to those whose dignity has been denied.\*

As sentinels let us face the darkness with hope, with a strength born of knowing we are not alone but rather working together to acknowledge the dignity of every one of our brothers and sisters. Look again at the image on the front page of this report. There are 38 faces—the number of women who have called Bethany House “home” this past year (along with 28 children). Each is an individual with a story and a family and a history that brought her here. Each is also our sister. 38 is also the (approximate) number of in-person volunteers and student interns we have had through the year. Do you see yourself in one of those profiles on the cover? All of you who have supported us through your presence or your prayer, your donations or collecting toys, toiletries and other treasures—all of you are represented in that image. Thank you for being a sentinel of hope, a promise of new beginnings and reassurance that a new dawn is coming.

Those of us who have the privilege of ministering and sharing life with the women and children at Bethany House are witnesses to the transforming power of hope that you offer.

*Kathlyn Mulcahy, OP*

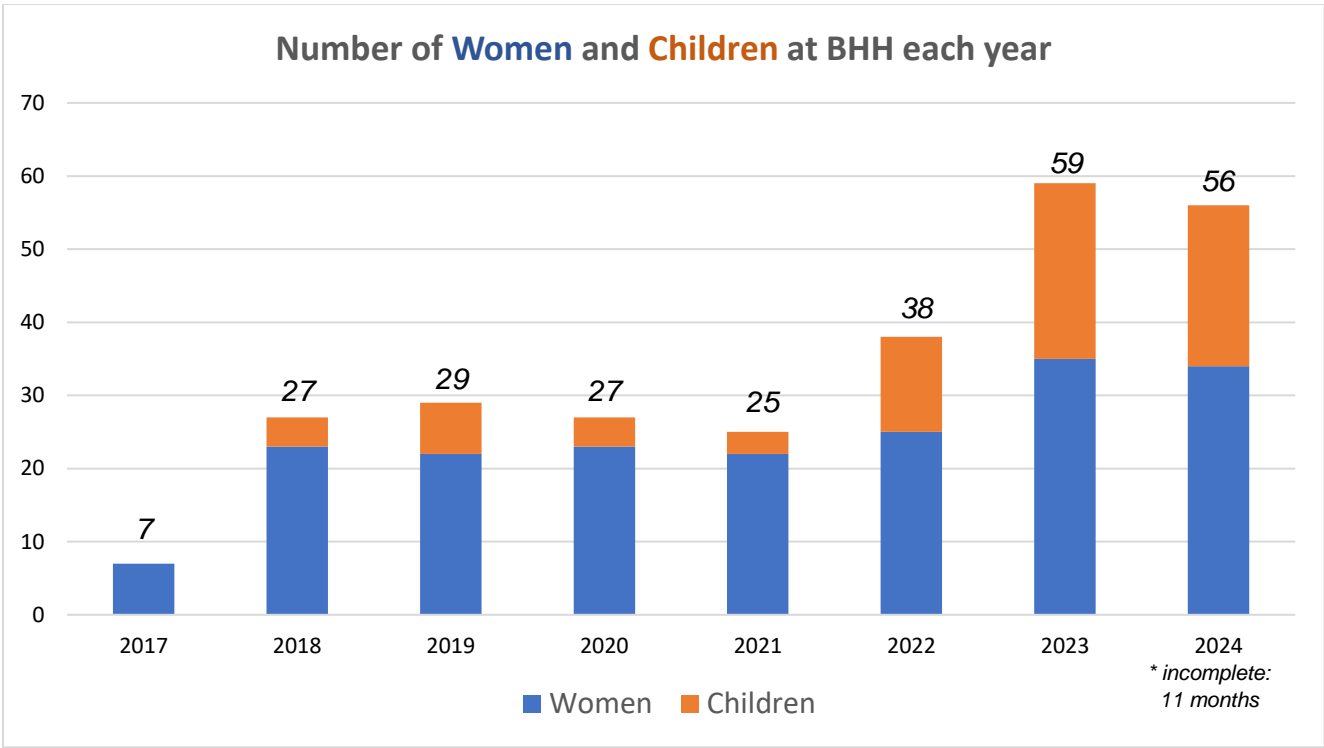
Executive Director

\* Listen to *Centinela de Esperanza*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=-9KtWXdQSkq>



### Staff

Jim Mulcahy  
Kathlyn Mulcahy, OP  
Darlene Gramigna  
Creusa Santos  
Stella Akello, RFC  
Iliana Aponte, DC  
*Not pictured:*  
*Lupe Mojica*  
*Maria Isabel Salazar*

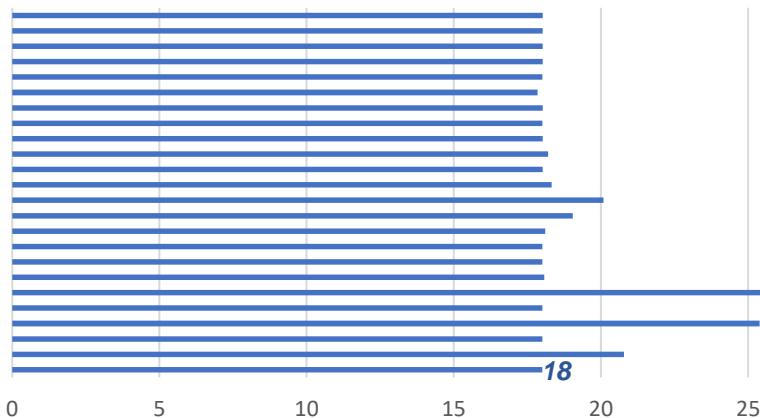


*The census at Bethany House from 2022 to 2024 increased significantly with the busloads of migrants sent from Texas. Many of the young women were pregnant or single mothers of small children who were referred to Bethany House by hospitals in Chicago.*



*31% of the residents who have lived at Bethany House have been mothers with children.*

**Age on Arrival at Bethany House  
Oct 23 - Oct 24**



*Bethany House was founded to serve young women who came to the U.S. as unaccompanied children.*

*Over the past year, 75% of the women came to Bethany House from ORR (Office of Refugee Resettlement) shelters for children on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.*

## Get Involved!

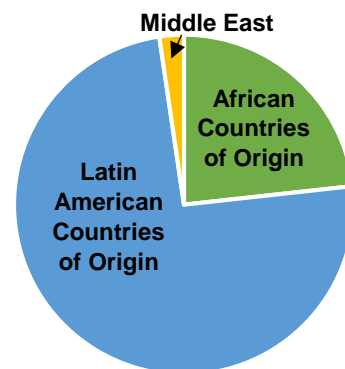
There is not much time left for advocacy on immigration issues before the change in administration. If you are interested in knowing how you can help support immigrant women and children, please contact us at Bethany House. There are many informative webinars and trainings being offered by our partner agencies that can give you the tools to continue to support migrants and their families in the U.S.

Do you own **rental properties** or know friends who do? We are always looking for housing for the women ready to move out of Bethany House. Once they have work authorization and a job, they are ready to move to an apartment. But without a credit history, their possibilities are very limited. Would you be willing to give someone a chance?

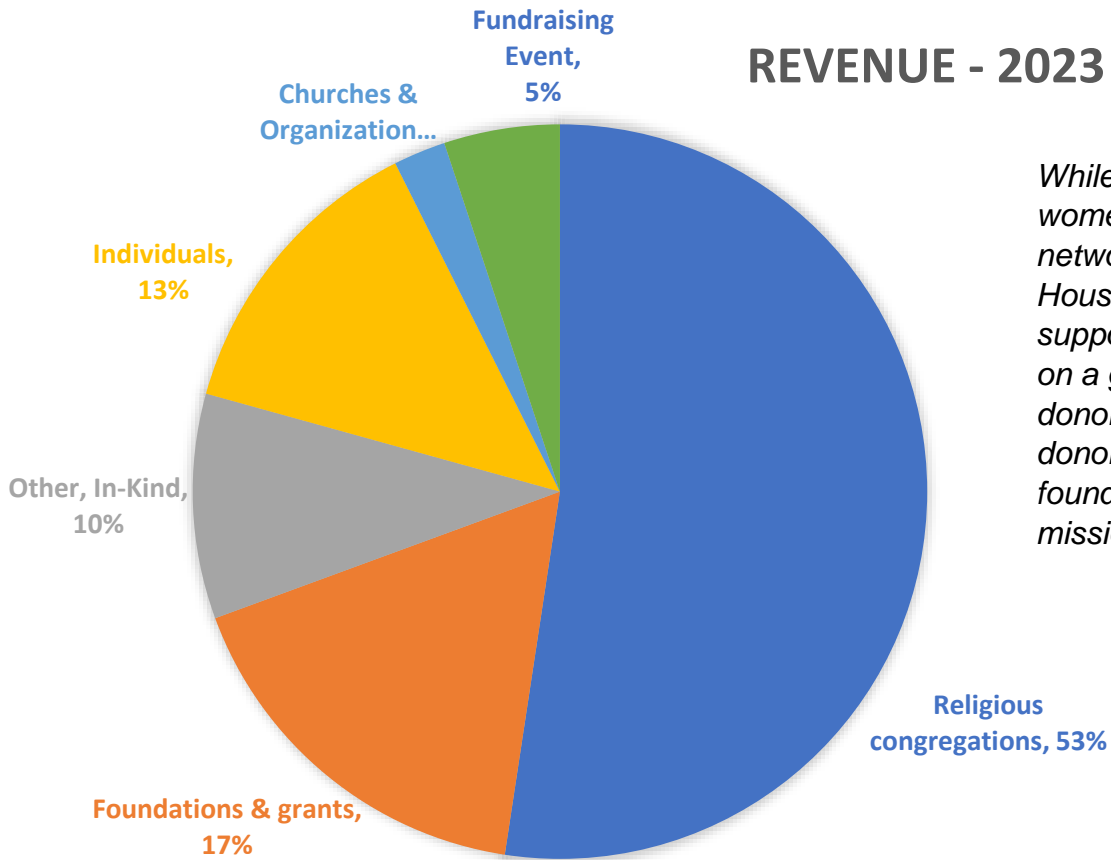
*During the past year:*

*Women from 15 countries of origin lived at Bethany House*

- 23% were from African countries of origin
- 74% were from Latin American countries of origin
- 3% were from the Middle East



## REVENUE - 2023



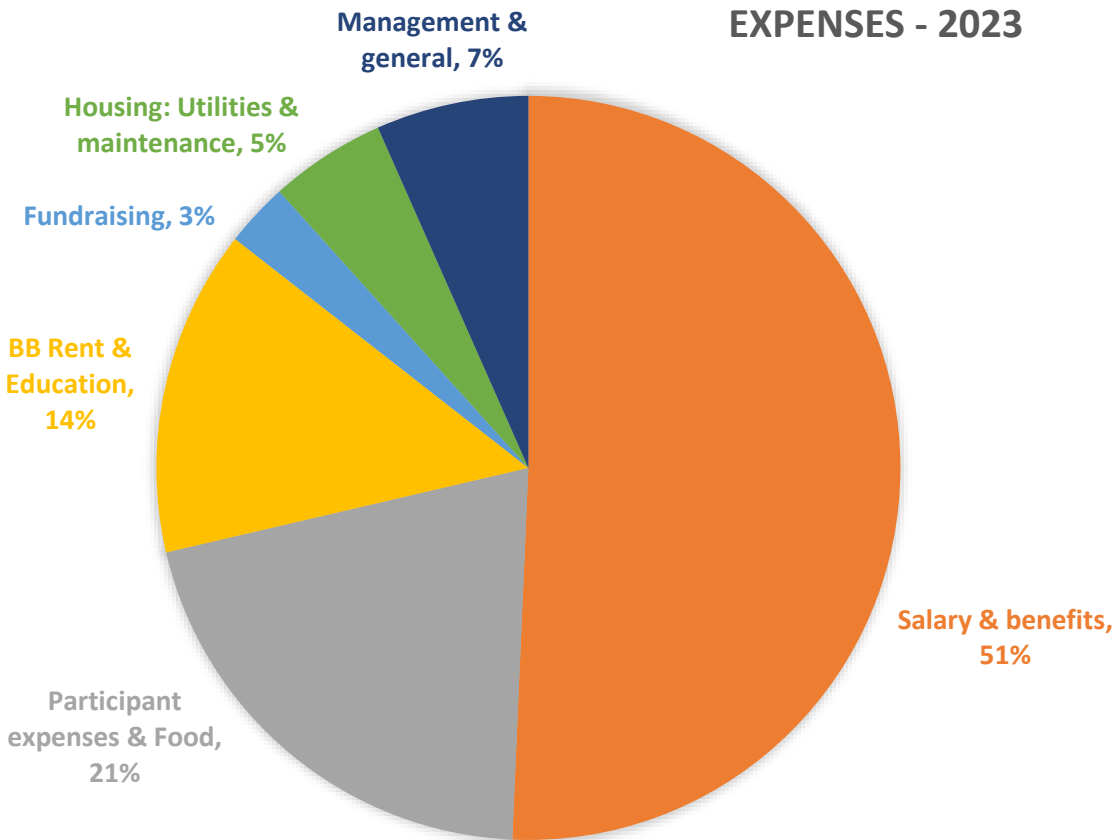
*While religious congregations of women continue to be a vital network of support for Bethany House, providing both financial support and personnel, we count on a growing circle of individual donors (including regular monthly donors), organizations and foundations to continue the mission of Bethany House.*

*We are also deeply grateful for all the in-kind donations, items from our Amazon Wish list, and the clothing, diapers, personal needs and household items collected for us at Bethany House. These items are not included in the totals above, but they contribute significantly to the warm welcome we can offer and to the women's sense of well-being after their traumatic journeys.*





# EXPENSES - 2023



- \$50 Monthly cost for travel expenses for 1 person for 1 month
- \$125 Food and household supplies for 1 person for 1 month
- \$360 Annual cost for cell phone for 1 woman
- \$800 Weekly grocery bill at Bethany House
- \$1200 Monthly cost for travel for all participants
- \$1300 Total Monthly Allowance (\$80-100 for each woman)
- \$1300 Internet/WiFi costs for one year for all participants
- \$2080 Total expenses for one person for 1 month (\$70/day)

*Where do your contributions go?*

**BEYOND BETHANY** – *temporary support for women who recently moved to independent housing to help them begin to save and thrive in their new life*

- \$4800 Total monthly rent supplements for 35 women in Beyond Bethany program
- \$2000 One semester college tuition or career training program





## Frequently Asked Question – FAQs

**What has caused young women at Bethany House to flee alone to the U.S.?** *Bethany House participants have experienced trafficking, rape, torture and other forms of violence to themselves and their family members forcing them to flee their homes.*

**Are Bethany House participants here legally?** *Yes, under U.S. law anyone can come to our nation and request asylum. Each young woman at Bethany House has permission from the government to be in the nation while her asylum case is being decided.*

**How do Bethany House participants enter the country?** *Most have entered at the southern border as minors and asked for protection. Some have come to Chicago on buses sent from border shelters in Texas. Some came after spending one or two years in Mexico in the “Remain in Mexico” program. Our Afghan participants were evacuated by the U.S. when their nation fell to the Taliban.*

**What happens to a minor who comes alone to the U.S. seeking asylum?** *Young people under 18 seeking asylum in the U.S. are processed at the border and sent to a government-funded home for immigrant minors. There, workers search for relatives to take the minor in. If she has no family with whom to live by her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the minor still must leave the program. Bethany House was founded to provide such women with a safe and supportive home.*

**How do young women hear about Bethany House?** *Attorneys or advocates working with them who know about BHH reach out to us when they have a client who needs housing. We have also received calls from hospitals, churches and the bus station about especially vulnerable young women.*

**Does Bethany House accept young women who have already turned 18?** *Yes. Bethany House has accepted young women who are 18 or older and living in dangerous or unhealthy situations.*

**Does Bethany House accept children?** *If a young woman comes with a child we will accept them together to keep the family united.*

**Why are there so many single women with children? Where are the fathers?** *Some of the women arriving at Bethany House pregnant or with children were forced to flee their home because their spouse or partner was killed or injured and the family was threatened. Sometimes the family traveled together from their country of origin but are not able to cross the border together. Some women are fleeing domestic violence by their partner or spouse. Some women find themselves pregnant when they arrive at Bethany House because of the assaults they endured on their journey.*

**Can the children go to school?** *Yes, the children who stay at Bethany House with their mothers are enrolled in Chicago Public Schools. Most of the children of the young women at Bethany House are too young for school, but this past year we have had children in special education, kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. The younger children benefit from Headstart and Pre-Headstart classes through Bethany House’s partnership with Family Focus.*

**Does Bethany House screen candidates?** *Staff generally has a personal interview with the young woman as well as discussions with the attorney or advocate who recommends them to make sure the young woman doesn't have a history of violence or medical needs that we cannot meet.*

**Does Bethany House turn young women away?** *Unfortunately, at times we have had to turn women away, when we have no empty rooms or we cannot meet their medical needs.*

**Are participants free to leave Bethany House?** *Yes, participants are released on their own recognizance and can change their address at any time. Bethany House is not required to report their move to the government.*

**Can the young women at Bethany House work legally?** *Asylum seekers must wait until their asylum application is filed (up to a year from their arrival) and then wait an additional 150 days to apply for a work permit and wait again several weeks to receive it. Like U.S. citizens, participants with work permits pay taxes.*

**What other services does Bethany House offer?** *Each young woman at BHH has the opportunity to study, learn English, master basic living skills for life in the U.S., as well as access mental and medical health services. Bethany House also offers a safe place with a sense of community support and camaraderie among the participants.*

**Do women stay at Bethany House until they receive asylum?** *The wait for asylum is normally years. As of Spring 2023, there were more than one million asylum cases awaiting resolution. If denied asylum, a participant can appeal the denial. The average stay at Bethany House is just under a year. Most are ready for greater independence once they receive their work permit and find a job.*

**How is Bethany House funded?** *Bethany House is supported entirely by private grants, donations from religious congregations and faith communities, and more than 750 individual donors. BHH receives no government funding.*

**How do volunteers support Bethany House?** *Bethany House volunteers and student interns help participants adapt to life in the U.S. in many ways. They work directly with the young women to help them learn English, succeed in school, learn to use public transportation. Volunteers coordinate wholistic enrichment activities (like museum trips or piano lessons). They may help with grocery shopping or collection of needed supplies. They help women search for apartments and find community support when they are leaving BHH. Most importantly, volunteers become friends, helping to support young women as part of their "U.S. family."*

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*According to the Chicago Immigration Dashboard, after more than 51,000 migrants arrived in Chicago via Texas buses and planes, there are 3291 still in shelters as of December 1, 2024. Those shelters are slated to close (or merge with homeless shelters) on January 1, 2025. Bethany House is receiving many calls from persons seeking shelter before that time.*

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## Profound gratitude to our DONORS who make Bethany House possible!

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*These are the congregations of women and men religious who have supported Bethany House over the past year.*

*Many of them are Sustaining Congregations who give multi-year pledges of continuing support. Many have supported Bethany House with funding since its beginning. In addition to funding, congregation members serve as board members, staff and volunteers.*

*We are deeply grateful to all of you!*

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From ALL of us to ALL of you...

