



The Joyce

A storied past and hopeful future

Joyce Hotel



Manager
SPECIAL

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ROOMS
\$19 & \$22
HOTEL CORN
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Introduction

In 1912, the just completed Hotel Treves was new and beautiful and one of four recently built mixed use buildings sitting at the corner of what is now SW 11th Avenue and SW Harvey Milk Street. These four buildings are reflections of each other, complementary in scale, material, and detailing. There is not a lot of that kind of architecture left in our city. We are grateful we, along with our partners, were able to preserve it.

Over time, like many historic hotels in the downtown core, Hotel Treves, eventually renamed the Joyce Hotel, fell into disrepair. Some of these old downtown hotels were housing for a time, and then converted into parking lots or office buildings or were renovated to be beautiful hotels again. Some remained housing, becoming less and less habitable, and in some cases renovated, perhaps as affordable housing or market rate. Some buildings are simply and unfortunately still closed due to their unlivable conditions.

Ultimately, the amount of housing for very low-income people available in the downtown core has decreased, even as the need for affordable housing in downtown Portland has grown over time. And, for better or worse, the kind of “in between housing” that the Joyce Hotel once provided is mostly gone. Of course, thanks to the bond measures approved by voters, additional housing has been built in other parts of the city.



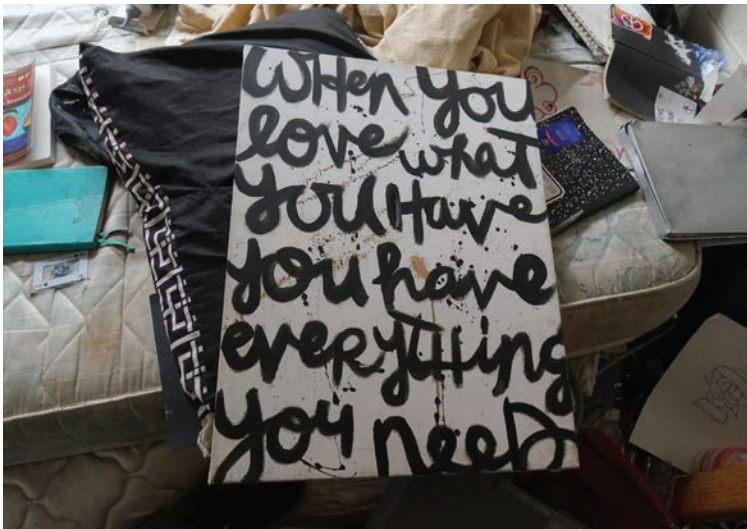
Rachael Duke
Executive Director
Community Partnership for
Affordable Housing (CPAH)

Buildings come to life because of what happens inside them. New residents in this version of The Joyce will have access to health care services and case management, right in the building, provided by our partners at Cascadia Health, the Native American Rehabilitation Association NW, and Cascade AIDS Project. There will be additional resident services and support to ensure that our residents have what they need, not just to survive, but to heal, thrive and move forward. It is hard work, rebuilding lives, so we want to give our residents all the tools that they need to do that work.

The Joyce Hotel has had many incarnations. While we are excited about the lives to come, that is, the 66 people who will call The Joyce home this year, we want to honor and acknowledge the experiences and stories from the people who have lived here before. Past residents struggled, many needed services that they could not access. Their stories speak of resilience and survival, just like the Joyce Hotel itself, stories of re-creation and new beginnings, and also, stories that reflect the challenges people face as they try to do more than just survive. We never know the journey people have traveled when we meet them or will travel moving forward. We do know that everyone deserves a place to call home.

If these old-fashioned window panes were eyes
I guess they would have seen it all
Each little tear and sigh and footfall
And every dream that we came to seek
Or followed after
If these walls could speak

from If These Walls Could Speak by Jimmy Webb





Nicole

Nicole grew up as a young teenager in the 90s punk rock scene in Portland. “I was like, the girl on the sidewalk spare-changing, maybe hanging out with a traveling kid and a dog.” Addiction gripped her early on, and she was an alcoholic for as long as she can remember. As a teenager she was marginally housed, floating from place to place, staying with friends, sleeping in closets or punk houses. At age 17, Nicole enrolled at Portland State University, living in the dorms, and barely managing her alcoholism. But within a year, she was strung out on heroin. Things fell apart. Friends were overdosing. She drifted away. She entered into a phase of on and off homelessness, marked by brief moments of housing that tenuously slipped away. “It got progressively worse until I was living mainly in hotels, and I was surviving through sex work.”

Nicole first started staying at the Joyce Hotel during this time, when she was desperate and had nowhere to go. She began working the same track every day, only a few blocks away. For years, she confined her life to a four-block radius. Her life was very small, and every single day was the same. Nicole remembers waking up at the Joyce Hotel and walking up Burnside, grabbing a cup of coffee and eating a single Reese’s Pieces candy on her way to her track. She worked for however many hours it took to be good for the

day and returned to the Joyce Hotel after picking up food at Fred Meyer. Maintaining this exact routine brought about consistent results, and it provided her with a small sense of stability amidst a tumultuous life.

The times that Nicole could stay at the Joyce Hotel were the most relaxing for her. It meant that she was making enough money and that she didn’t have to move her things every day. She loved the tiled entrance; it was just so beautiful—harkening back to a previous era, a gilded age, when the Joyce Hotel was something more grand. And she remembers being greeted by that smell: the stench of humanity that had lingered in the building for a really long time. Handing her money and her ID through the counter window, Nicole felt safer, at least one week at a time.

She often sat on the fire escape and watched the night-life below, imagining what it would be like to be someone else—normal, just going out with friends and enjoying the city. It was her window into another world. “Even though I was very much like a walking dead kind of corpse being, at least I had this visual sense of community that I didn’t really have in my life.”

Nicole started to overdose a lot during this time period. Feeling so alone, she took comfort in knowing that while she was at the Joyce Hotel, her name was associated with

“I had this little tiny seed that I was desperately trying to protect inside me, like if I could just keep this idea of self safe until I could get through that, then I would be okay. Hope does not die until you physically do. Even in the most hopeless moments, there’s still hope until you stop breathing.”

her room. She was not anonymous in those moments, unlike when she would sleep on rooftops or in abandoned buildings. “I would have these really dark thoughts about how if I were to pass away, my parents would not know how to find my body.”

Though Nicole grew up with a caring family in Portland, she was completely cut off from them during this time. “My family got to a point where they couldn’t have me in the house without me being so disruptive to their life. Being around [addiction] makes everyone else really, really sick, too.” They were so close, only a phone call away, but she couldn’t get to them. During her darkest and most lonely times, Nicole wanted so badly to call her mom and ask for help, to tell her that she was scared. “But I wasn’t ready for the help, or I wanted to dictate what the help was—which is the same thing.”

Nicole knew she was barely hanging on at that point, clinging to what she describes as the bottom rung of the ladder. And it was the Joyce Hotel that allowed her to hold on long enough to reach the next rung. Getting clean was a process for Nicole. It was waking up to the same unbearable reality of loneliness every single day. “It was knowing that the only thing that I had ever loved in my entire life was heroin.”

“People love a good redemption arc as long as it fits into their timeline; you don’t get like 10 redemption arcs, right? But that’s not how life works... You don’t get to decide when the miracle happens for people.”

She was physically near death during this time, but it was the feeling of a spiritual death that sparked her desire to live. “I had this little, tiny seed that I was desperately trying to protect inside me, like if I could just keep this idea of self safe until I could get through that, then I would be okay. Hope does not die until you physically do. Even in the most hopeless moments, there’s still hope until you stop breathing.”

Nicole began checking into the Hooper Detoxification Center. She checked in seven times—her recovery wasn’t a clean break; it was a cycle. “You climb up the ladder, you slide back down the ladder,” she says. “People love a good redemption arc as long as it fits into their timeline; you don’t get like 10 redemption arcs, right? But that’s not how life works... You don’t get to decide when the miracle happens for people.”

Today, Nicole is 12 years clean and sober; a split reality in which she has now been clean for as long as she was on heroin. “It feels like a different life,” she says. “Like you’re in the theater and you’re watching a horror movie, and then you get up and you walk into another movie, and it’s like the Minions and you realize that there’s this whole other life.”

A lot has happened in this life that Nicole lives today. She runs a successful business. She is married with a son, and together they moved to Chicago where they recently

bought a house that they are remodeling. She is part of the successful band, Soft Kill, who sold out Wonder Ballroom last year and has topped Billboard charts. She got a passport, and she travels to Europe.

Nicole returns to Portland often; and with her band, they lead direct action work for people on the streets in need of help. She sees a lot of young women who look a lot like she did. She asks them what they need in that moment: a hotel room, some soap, an extra 5 bucks, a trip to Hooper. “And if I can give what a night in a hotel room does for somebody... [it means] one less trick, one less scary situation, one less possibility of getting murdered and dumped on the side of the road. It means safety.”

But like it was for her, survival for these women is a process, and it is one that she ultimately cannot control. She has helped so many people only to see them return to the street or relapse. “You don’t get to decide who gets saved, and you don’t get to make those choices for other people. You have to provide an environment for somebody like me who just really needs a little bit more time.”

She says that things look different in Portland now. The drugs are riskier and more dangerous, and the city has lost resources like the Joyce Hotel and other single room occupancy hotels that once served as a safety net. Nicole feels a touch of survivor’s guilt, having watched so many friends and creative artists she knew overdose and die. In 2019,



Soft Kill released *Dead Kids R.I.P. City*, a record about all of the people she and her husband lost. *Dead Kids R.I.P. City* struck a chord with people who had experienced similar stories, in similar cities. “I just want people to embrace those stories, too,” Nicole says. “Our city is not all doughnuts and river rafting. There’s a lot that has been going on here forever and it is a part of the story, too. We have to embrace all of that; it has its own beauty.”

“There is so much that we do not see,” she says. Some of the most talented and amazing people Nicole has ever known have experienced homelessness and drug addiction. Her life today is an affirmation that each person deserves the opportunity and the support to climb up the ladder.

“I was a throwaway person. I was somebody that people walked by every single day and literally stepped over... Nobody would have seen it,” she says. “Not only did I survive, but I am a good mom and a good citizen and I run a successful business and I just bought a house. Today, my life is epically big.”

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Michelle

Michelle Stonebraker is a writer, an artist, an outreach worker, and a self-described “realist with a touch of idealism.” In many ways, Michelle, now 50, defied the odds, “I didn’t expect to live this long.”

Born in Huntington, West Virginia, Michelle spent her childhood and early teenage years in Florida. By age 17, tension with her parents reached a level of toxicity that made life at home feel untenable. After an intense family disturbance, Michelle left, becoming homeless for the first time in her life. There were few resources for homeless teens in Florida at that time, and Michelle struggled to survive. She dropped out of high school and worked illegally in a bar as the closing janitor. Her grandparents knew of her situation and offered Michelle a home. “I finished high school living with my grandparents on their farm in Ohio,” Michelle shared. “After graduation, I found a job fundraising and canvassing. I was good at it. I was working to save the planet.”

Michelle’s activism led to a fortuitous meeting, “I met my husband the day after the [1992 pro-choice] march in Washington DC. It was the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*.” She married Christian in his hometown of Pittsburgh in 1994. Christian and Michelle soon moved West, first settling in Ashland, Oregon.

Michelle worked a variety of jobs, including as a photographer’s assistant, a baker, a janitor, and a video clerk. During this time, she and Christian made frequent trips to Portland for punk shows, the city’s art scene, and nightlife. But the couple struggled to make ends meet with sporadic periods of employment while vacillating between stints of sobriety and heavy drug use.

In one early visit to Portland, the Joyce Hotel captured Michelle’s attention. “It was funky; it was weird. The Joyce Hotel was really just a crossroads; that whole neighborhood was a crossroads. It had evolved to be that way over many decades because that was always a working-class neighborhood. I had no idea that I would one day live there.”

Unable to find steady, well-paying work in Ashland, Michelle and Christian returned to Portland. “We came back up here and got strung out again and that second round, which was about 2001-2003, that’s when the Joyce was a really big part of our lives—we lived there pretty consistently.” For Michelle, the Joyce Hotel became a safe haven as she sunk “deeper into [her] addiction, and then way deeper into being homeless and out on the streets.”

The accessibility and immediacy of getting a room at the Joyce Hotel made a difference. As Michelle explained,



“If you could scrape up a few dollars, you could get a place at the Joyce. I didn’t have to fill out paperwork and go through a 6-month waiting period. I plopped down my \$7 and I was there.”

During that time, Michelle befriended Debbie, the owner and “backbone” of the Joyce Hotel. “Debbie was the best. She didn’t take any shit. If you came in there to fuck the place up, you were gone. She wanted respect and she deserved it,” recalled Michelle. “There was not any level of human depravity that Debbie hadn’t seen in that joint, but she treated you like a person.”

Michelle explained that “When you start to not be human anymore in people’s eyes, going to the Joyce and being treated like a person started to be special. And it started to be one of those things that kept me connected to being human with something simple, like the feeling of a hot shower after not bathing for weeks.”

For more than a year, stability and sobriety eluded Michelle and Christian as they bounced between sleeping on the street and, when able to scrape together the money, nights at the Joyce Hotel. For Michelle, qualifying for health insurance under the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) proved to be a turning point. “Right before OHP went away in the post-9/11 era, we were some of the last people to get cover-





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age in Multnomah County,” she reflected. “If that hadn’t happened, I don’t think we would be here.” Together, they began a joint effort to get clean.

After six months of methadone treatment and with housing at the Joyce Hotel, Michelle found tenuous stability, “I started back to work doing fundraising and community organizing for OSPIRG [Oregon State Public Interest Research Group]. This really helped me recalibrate to the world and reconnect to who I was and to the idealism I had when I was younger.”

From that point, they had enough of a foundation to transition into more permanent housing. Michelle recounted, “We moved into a room in a basement at 82nd and Prescott. It was the first place we had had since 1999 and it was the first place we got on our own since 1996. We’ve been housed steadily since then, since 2003.”

Michelle shared her perspective of the toll and evolution of homelessness, “When you’re first out, it’s not that bad; it’s more frustration, like figuring out how to get your day-to-day needs met. It’s something that takes time to really wear on you, when you begin to feel like you don’t want to be alive anymore. As days lead into weeks lead into months lead into years...and sure, you become used to not being able to shower regularly. You figure out how not to get your shoes stolen. You figure out ways to survive and get by. These things tend to get easier. But what gets harder, and what started to make the Joyce like a safe haven, was when you started to feel, or at least I started to feel, inhuman. Like when you would start noticing people pulling their bags closer to them or telling their kids not to stare, or when you would be spare-changing and someone would look directly at you and they would jingle the change in their pocket and just look down and not say anything to you and just do their best to ignore your existence...it was maddening.”

With sobriety, Michelle began to see her life in stark clarity. “I was sitting on the bus thinking I needed something different. I can’t do this anymore. I was scared that I’d start using again.” It was during this bus ride that Michelle decided to return to college.

While working part-time at Porch Light Street Light Youth Services, Michelle studied English, Japanese language, and Asian History. She became a McNair Scholar at Portland State University and graduated *cum laude* with a bachelor’s degree in English. Michelle continued on to

graduate school where she earned a master’s degree in English and was a mentor with the university studies program.

Usually when Michelle talks about her experiences, it’s in the service of her role as an outreach worker. “Most of the time, whenever I share about my life, I use it to be the social worker I wanted. That’s always my goal. I approach it from a place of, ‘how would I have wanted to be engaged?’ It enables me to build relationships that are authentic. I always wanted somebody who made me feel like they understood.”

Helping people access housing has been rewarding, but it is hard and exhausting work. “I just had a client pass away and during one of my last interactions with him, he was like, ‘Michelle, why do you care? Why do you care so much?’ I told him that I can’t stand to see you hurt. I can’t stand to see anybody hurt because I know what it’s like to hurt like that and I don’t want anybody to hurt like that. And then he disappeared. I had to identify his body.”

Today, Michelle is a Permanent Supportive Housing Specialist for Native American Rehabilitation Association NW. She works at Starlight, a new apartment community that provides housing to people transitioning off the street. She is dedicated to her clients, helping them navigate the pitfalls she herself once encountered. Michelle emphasized that we need people working in the field who know the unique and daily challenges houseless people face, “We speak the same language, and we need more social workers who do.”

Michelle’s experiences have shaped her person, her career, her worldview, and future aspirations. “One of the hardest things about going from houseless to housed is figuring out how to negotiate and engage with people. I want to create a mentorship program where people from the community mentor these folks who are just freshly off the street. Not [to] give them things—just to be a friend. Go and give them an outside perspective and rebuild community, because that’s the big hole we have right now.”

Christian

Cristian Stonebraker grew up in Pittsburgh, PA. He and his girlfriend (now wife), Michelle, moved to Southern Oregon in the 90s. Music was a big part of his life. He was in a band called Kill Me Kate, and they frequently took trips to Portland for shows and nightlife. Toward the end of the 90s, they went back to Pittsburgh for a brief time, then returned to Portland in 2000.

One of the first places they stayed in Portland was the Joyce Hotel. Christian said, “The neighborhood was smooth. It was slick. It was a cool place to be.” He couldn’t believe you could get a room that cheap. For \$7/night, the Joyce Hotel offered hostel rooms that had three beds to a room. Sometimes, you could get the room all to yourself. Other times, you would be sharing it with two other people. Some of the people were semi-permanent. He remembers how the Joyce Hotel smelled like the people who were fixtures there.

There were rules, like no shooting up, don’t leave your things in the bathroom, and no walking naked through the halls. But if all you had was \$12, even \$7, you could get a room. It seemed like everyone he knew went through there at one point. Christian shared that “[the Joyce Hotel] was a place of refuge. It ended up being the place that we told people to go to” if they didn’t have anywhere else to go.

Christian spent New Year’s Eve at the Joyce Hotel as 2001 became 2002. He reflected, “I might not have made it through that night. It was cold; it wasn’t nice out...I got to peacefully sit there by myself and just think about everything.”

When the weather allowed it and they had a tent, they would go out to Beaverton and camp in the woods—they didn’t want to bother anyone. When in Portland, The Roxy was their place. It was ground zero because they were open 24 hours, and it was right between the Joyce Hotel and the Kent. You could ask people for a buck and eventually you’d get \$7, and you could get a room, maybe you could shower; you could get it together and sleep. Even if you couldn’t get a room at the Joyce, you could go to The Roxy and get a carafe of coffee for a buck and a quarter. You could sit there all night. You could buy it at midnight, then at 6 a.m. the wait staff would ask if you wanted more coffee. They let you sit. Christian was sure that all kinds of art was created in that place, not to mention the people you could meet. He also worked there for a time and saw a lot of people come and go from all the different communities that made up the Portland region.

There was also a time when he worked with Labor Ready. He had to be there at 5 a.m. every morning; even



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“No one wants to be a person living on the edge of survival. That’s not what society is supposed to be about.”

just 15 minutes late, and he wouldn’t get to work that day. The work was hard, like shoveling gravel, but it paid. In thinking of things now, Christian shared, “Even if [the kids on the streets now] did go out and bust their ass for a day, now there’s no motivation to do that. Why would you? There’s nowhere to go. You used to be able to get a room. You used to be able to get a shower.” After working all day at Labor Ready, he and Michelle would go to the Mission and get food, then go to the Joyce Hotel and get a room, and still have some money left in the morning. “Now, it’s like good luck getting the money, let alone having a place to spend it, let alone having something valuable to spend it on, something truly valuable that’s not a blue pill or a bag of dope,” he added.

Christian and Michelle knew addiction well. While Michelle preferred heroin, Christian’s first choice was meth. They both overdosed multiple times. They have a lot of friends who died. Christian said, “I’d be dead without Michelle. We both went through some shit that we wouldn’t have made it through without the other one. I feel lucky for sure.” They were able to get sober by using methadone. “It enabled us to get our lives together. It was very much a midway point.”

He and Michelle were on a first name basis with the staff at the Joyce Hotel, including the owner, Debbie. She forgave the two weeks’ payment that they owed and gave them the next two weeks for free, which allowed them to save up and move into more permanent housing—a room they rented in a house.

In speaking of the transition back into housing, Christian said, “You don’t just get a new apartment and step out [of homelessness]. You got to get a whole new thing. You

got to get your clothes, and your job, and your home. You have to learn to live indoors again.” They had a mat, a TV, and two cats—for the longest time, that’s all they had.

They were doing well for a while. Michelle had graduated, and both were working full-time, making good money. Then Christian had a new struggle with addiction, which led to them losing their housing. The difference this time was that they had some family support. Michelle’s mom helped them get into an apartment. That made all the difference and gave them a hand that most don’t have.

They still had legal issues. No one would rent to them; it was incredibly hard. They thankfully found a place downtown that was the first place they could rent without a background check, from a landlord who considered the entirety of someone and their individual situation. They stayed there for 11 years. It was a tiny apartment, but they made it work. Now, they’re in a larger apartment owned by the same landlord. He gave them a chance, and they continue to rent from him today.

Christian now finds solace and a kind of peace in creating art in multiple disciplines. His current pursuits are his lifelong love of music, and most recently, Christian has taken up painting.

“People take it for granted that they have a place to live. People take it for granted that they have food, books, toys.” Not having a house, not having somewhere to go, “it’s like gravity went away. What would you do? What would you grab on to? And as soon as you move towards it, it moves away from you.” He added, “No one wants to be a person living on the edge of survival. That’s not what society is supposed to be about.”





World

Most days, you can find Arnold World in his spot—the same table (next to the outlets) in Powell’s coffee shop, where he meticulously crafts ornamental, sculptural flowers out of disposable paper. This spot is special to him. It is familiar and comfortable, surrounded by people who might give him contributions for his flowers, and just steps away from the former Joyce Hotel—where he lived on and off for a period of eight years.

Arnold Drake World, who likes to be called by his last name, works as an artist, and considers himself a street performer. He uses his craft and his smile to captivate and share, often incorporating sleight of hand tricks with floating paper, and telling people about his flower making process. “They are all based on the Fibonacci sequence,” he says, referring to the repeated number sequences within the pattern of the flower’s construction. “We have certain things built in us, and art happens to be one of ‘em.” The flowers are detailed and complex, without any wire or glue, tape or string. There is an elegance and a fragility, these humble materials made beautiful. Watching him transform a stack of paper towels from the bathroom is a mesmerizing meditation.

World followed his brothers out to Portland nearly 30 years ago. He had heard that in Portland, there was a car lot on every corner. “And from where I’m from,” he said, “that’s a big deal to be a car salesman.” World arrived on a Thursday night and immediately got on the phone. He interviewed on Friday, started work on Saturday, and got paid on Monday.

Working at the car lot afforded World stable housing, and he lived in an apartment across the street. Though he didn’t even have a driver’s license, World was great at selling cars. And he loved doing it. He worked on the lot for 15 years.

One day at work, a woman gave him a paper flower and explained its significance in Mexico. Poorer families decorated their tables with paper flowers, while the wealthy ones had the real ones. It was beautiful and inspiring to World.

Still working at the car lot, the paper flowers were a hobby he did in his spare time. During a trip to visit his brother-in-law, the principal at his alumni high school, World sat at the kitchen table making paper flowers. His brother-in-law was impressed and offered him his first paid gig: a full

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day of work at the school, using his flower making process as a way of teaching. World shared the math within the flowers, connected it to English, and reviewed the parts of the flower with local students.

“I still wasn’t thinking to be an artist,” World said. “I had a good job selling cars.” World then decided to write a book, *We Don’t Fold, We Roll*. He began making more and more paper flowers, inspired first by ikibana, and then by mathematical patterns. Slowly, World started to hang out in public spots, sharing his book and earning decent money for his flowers. When asked why he ultimately left his secure job at the car lot, World responded immediately and emphatically: “Freedom.”

While creating on his own terms gave him the opportunity to come and go as he pleased, he soon experienced how this newfound freedom was at odds with his housing stability. World was living with a roommate at the time, on the top floor of what he called a “boondock little spot.” He decided to visit his brother in New York and skipped out for a bit, returning only to be kicked out of his apartment, with one week to find a new place. World had nowhere to go, and didn’t have the money upfront to rent a place. “And that’s when I found out about the Joyce,” he remembers. “It was 21 bucks.”

“It was a lifesaver,” he recalled. “You’re not homeless, you got a place to go, a place to stay, it was ideal.” It was a comforting place that had what he needed, a place where he could eat, sleep, and bathe—“Keep up with yourself kind of thing.”

As a street performer, World would travel around and see other places. “It made it so I can jump around and always know I got a place to come to...because when you live a free lifestyle, you just wake up and go.” Traveling around, World always knew that he could start fresh each day, show up in a place without any supplies, and make enough flowers to earn a night’s stay.

World consistently stayed at the Joyce Hotel for the last three years of its existence. Hearing that it was closing was both unsettling and a wakeup call. “Yeah, [gotta] go get a place. The party’s over. That was a good excuse to be lazy. I mean, it’s a great thing to have when you ain’t got to get. But when you’re in a position where you can do better, it’s like a handicap switch over there. I loved it. And I hated it.”

“[It was] a scab of Portland,” World continued. “It was like one of those things—you know you got to pull it off

eventually. But when you’re in need, you leave it there. You don’t pull the scab early because it’s gonna bleed.”

The Joyce Hotel provided a place where people could get on their feet. “They know they got four or five weeks before that first, good check comes in...So they’re trying to be here for two, three checks, get an apartment, and get out.” According to World, the Joyce Hotel was the “in between.” He describes the Joyce Hotel as both a hideout and a gateway. It was accepting of locals, no questions asked; just a valid ID and 21 bucks. “Maybe not luxury, but you could have decency, pride.”

World believes that the Joyce Hotel played a vital role for the city, one that hasn’t been replaced and is still missing today. Portland no longer has a transitional space. “With all the big high rises and the buildings,” he says, “none of them was designed to accommodate that group of people, the unwanted.”

After the Joyce Hotel closed, World struggled to maintain stable housing for long periods of time. Facing challenges of affordability, unreliable roommates, and dishonest landlords, World decided he needed a change. He is active on social media, with quite a following of supportive fans. Through a crowd-funding campaign, he was able to secure an RV, where he lives today. Parked in a lot across town, he feels safe and secure. He lives off of a street that he says was the most dangerous in the city, and so it has received a lot of attention. “Now it is cleaned up, not a tent in sight, not a homeless person around. So, I got water, electric, sewer—the only thing I didn’t have was peace of mind. And now I have that, which is even stranger because you get used to hearing the scurvy, and now I don’t hear that. I feel safer, but spookier.”

When COVID-19 hit, he was grateful to have the security of his new home since the opportunity to work as a street performer was halted. He kept making flowers. Today, he is back engaging with the public, though it feels quieter in Portland, and he is saddened that other street performers he once knew have disappeared. He can practically see the Joyce Hotel from his usual spot. He is both far away and close to that period in his life when he was moving around and living out of a backpack. He says his life today is mostly the same thing, on a different scale. “Now I got an RV, which is just a bigger backpack. I still gotta unpack it someday.”



“I was just a kid, and I didn’t have anywhere to go.”

Chelsea

Chelsea was in her early 20s when she first began living at the Joyce Hotel. She would stay for several weeks at a time with the man she was dating, a train hopper 15 years her senior. He gave her a sense of protection while at the Joyce Hotel, a place Chelsea felt unsafe to be by herself. Still, Chelsea was grateful to not have to sleep on the side of the road. She remarked, “I was just a kid and I didn’t have anywhere to go.”

Chelsea’s childhood was filled with trauma, most of it inflicted over many years by her father. Her mother cared full-time for her severely disabled sister, which left little parental oversight for Chelsea, who had her own challenges with bipolar disorder. By 16, Chelsea left home. She lived with various friends, drank heavily, and sold drugs. And yet, amidst the chaos and instability, Chelsea knew the importance of finishing her education. With the support of her teachers, she graduated high school with a modified diploma.

Chelsea’s father died when she was 21 years old. His death destabilized her already tumultuous young adulthood. An intense mental health crisis followed, and she lost her housing. With the \$5,000 she received after her father’s death, Chelsea and her then boyfriend began staying at the Joyce Hotel.

The Joyce Hotel could be a rough environment—drug use was rampant, and the building often smelled like urine and vomit. Chelsea recalled once staying in a room where the previous occupant had died, which meant a new bed and fresh paint. Chelsea was scared, but also grateful to have “a bed and a floor, a microwave, walls, and [electricity]. It was a huge blessing.” During this time, Chelsea worked at Radio Shack, but spent the majority of her income on alcohol. Walking to the nearby Mini Mart to buy Hot Pockets and having a microwave to heat them up was a simple pleasure of great import—hot food was a rarity.

Chelsea spoke openly about the Joyce Hotel’s role in helping retain her humanity, “When I was a CNA [Certified Nurse’s Assistant], my patients always talked about the humility of someone seeing you naked so many times that you just don’t have any pride anymore, you know? And sleeping on the side of the road breaks your pride, so there’s some dignity that’s maintained by having [an affordable room at the Joyce Hotel].” To underscore her point, Chelsea added, “If you don’t see the future even offering you the basics, it feels really hopeless for that second.”

Today, sobriety is central to Chelsea’s life. It has been a long journey, one made possible with the love and support



of a lot of people. “I think if I didn’t have people that love me,” Chelsea reflected, “I could have easily been just as worthy of a person and had no one to help me.”

In speaking of her turnaround, Chelsea shared, “I [kept] watching my dad, my aunts, my brother, and it seems like all these people that have bipolar disorder lose their shit and die anywhere from their late 30s to early 50s—I just don’t want that to happen to me.”

At 24, Chelsea entered the Job Corps and later attended Portland Community College where she received her CNA¹ license. She worked in hospice care for a while and found other activities that made her feel good about herself.

Once sober, she discovered that she was really good at saving money. When in the depths of addiction, all her income went to alcohol and drugs. Now, this newfound skill has allowed her to create an underwater sanctuary with exotic fish and sea creatures. Caring for her aquarium is a source of pride and joy—it’s also a daily reminder of what sobriety can give her.

Chelsea shared many stories of the struggles she has faced and witnessed. She spoke of people being there for each other, of resilience against the odds, of hardship and loss, and the importance of seeing people as no better or worse than herself.

She also expressed frustration with an oft simplistic depiction of someone experiencing homelessness. “There’s a lot of people who want to tell each other that ‘oh, this is just a lifestyle choice,’ but it’s so many things, like almost every single person I ever met who was in a situation where they avoid housing or have an addiction [and] were living on the streets have some super fucked up trauma that makes them incompatible with society,” Chelsea shared. “There’s so many more things than just a roof that someone in that situation needs.”

“There’s so many more things than just a roof that someone in that situation needs.”

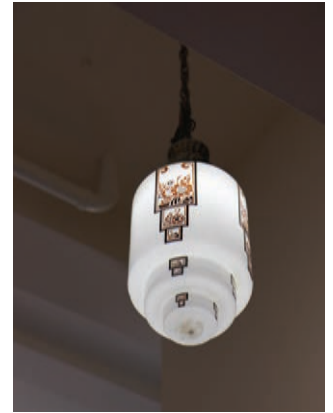
A hopeful future...

About The Joyce

The Joyce is a historic building located at the corner of SW 11th Avenue and SW Harvey Milk Street, commemorating the center of LGBTQ+ culture in Portland. The newly renovated building has 66 efficiently designed single room occupancy apartments in four stories with an elevator. It also features a community room with a kitchen for on-site activities. Individual rooms have full, efficient kitchens, air conditioning, and each floor has three shared bathrooms.

Serving formerly houseless individuals, the ground floor of The Joyce is where residents can connect with on-site supportive services, including care coordination, crisis intervention, housing stabilization support, and wellness activities. Service providers have offices for on-site mental health and addiction support for residents, and include Cascadia Health, a community-based behavioral health and substance use treatment services agency, Native American Rehabilitation Association NW, a Native American owned and operated mental health and addiction services agency, and Cascade AIDS Project, a local agency for those living with HIV/AIDS. All 66 units have Project Based Section 8 vouchers.

Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) worked with Carleton Hart Architecture for a trauma-informed design that includes elements of biophilia, which



strives to provide a sense of healing and calmness in residents to help bring them out of a fight or flight response. Examples of biophilia in the project come from the use of natural materials, calming earth-toned paint colors, use of natural light, and connections to the outdoors.

The Joyce is part of a quartet of historic buildings that invoke the rich history of the neighborhood. These four mixed-use buildings built between 1908 and 1912 are prime examples of downtown Portland architecture of the early 20th century. These buildings provide the city with a unique time stamp of our past. The Joyce, though without formal historic status, has been deemed “National Register Eligible” by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. This street and the adjacent buildings could be considered an informal historic district, with the existing buildings authenticating the historic context. The renovation of The Joyce, which included a seismic retrofit, is an investment in Portland's future while saving its past.

The service providers also reflect the history and the people who previously found their home at The Joyce when it was a hotel. CPAH is honored to continue serving the LGBTQ+ culture and indigenous communities in Portland, and to have the opportunity to uplift the legacy of all the people who have called The Joyce home.



The building is well-situated with convenient access to high-frequency transit, grocery stores, many potential employers, natural areas, and other amenities. The redevelopment of The Joyce was supported with funds from Portland's Housing Bond. CPAH was selected as the developer for this project in 2019 with a vision of combining services and housing affordable to very low-income individuals in order to serve the same vulnerable population that has always resided here.





Cedar Grove Foyer and Lending Library

About CPAH

Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) is a non-profit Community Housing Development Organization. We develop housing, provide resident services, and with the passage of the Supportive Housing Services measure, we provide case management and rapid rehousing services in Washington County. In 2023, we celebrate our 30th year anniversary. CPAH has eleven properties providing 522 homes to people with low incomes, and we have 277 more that will be completed over the next four years.

We are committed to our residents and the people we serve. CPAH is active in the community and dedicated to being part of the solution to the housing crisis that is leaving many with uncertain futures in Oregon, which is felt acutely in the Portland region. Together, we can ensure that everyone has a place to call home, that they have the resources necessary to keep their housing, and that we continue to work toward solutions that will create the change we all want to see.



Red Rock Creek Commons Community Deck

Our Mission

Community Partners for Affordable Housing advances equitable communities and housing justice through developing sustainable and long-lasting housing, providing our residents with services for stabilization and growth, and connecting people who are unhoused with a place to call home.

Our Work



CPAH builds quality housing and provides access to that housing for as long as our residents need it.



We manage our housing for longevity and sustainability.



Our residents are at the heart of what we do. Their needs guide our work.



Resident Services support people in staying successfully housed, helping them access the resources they need.



CPAH Housing Navigators help people who are unhoused find a place to call home with funding from the Supportive Housing Services (SHS) measure.



We participate in policy and community organizing efforts to advance equitable development.

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HOTEL
NOVOTEL

NO PARKING
TAXI/STREET VEHICLES
PAY TO PARK
ALL OTHER
METER HOURS



