

HOME COMING 2024

BRIAN MICKELSEN HOUSING HERO AWARD

ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Ross SCHAEFER

The Housing Hero Award for Advocate of the Year recognizes and celebrates the individual having a measurable impact on the lives of low-income members of our communities through their effort, commitment, and caring in implementing affordable housing programs and/or services. This year's honor for Advocate of the Year goes to Ross Schaefer, Executive Director for Flagstaff Shelter Services, for her tireless efforts in bringing housing strategies to people who are experiencing homelessness. In her 10-year tenure at northern Arizona's largest emergency shelter, including her personal participation in many of northern Arizona's Point in Time counts to tally the unhoused, Ross has consistently demonstrated a firm commitment to swiftly, creatively, and collaboratively responding to urgent community needs for shelter and housing.



**HOUSED OVER 500
INDIVIDUALS + FAMILIES**

Since Ross began her role in August 2014, Flagstaff Shelter Services has permanently housed over 500 individuals and families, provides year round emergency shelter for all who need it, and has expanded its physical campus and service provision to work with more neighbors experiencing homelessness in Northern Arizona.



In March 2024 when Sunshine Rescue Mission suddenly closed for 12 weeks, Ross and her team stepped up that same day to fill the gap in critical services and provide emergency shelter to those affected throughout the entire closure. Caring for an additional 50 neighbors each night when Flagstaff Shelter Services' own shelters were already close to capacity was no small feat, but Ross rallied the support of Episcopal Church of the Epiphany and Flagstaff Federated Community Church, to pull it off. Flagstaff Shelter Services committed nearly \$100,000 to this herculean effort to help those displaced and Ross and her team ensured that everyone in need had reliable access to safe shelter, nutritious meals, and resources during Sunshine Rescue Mission's closure.

Her commitment to implementing affordable housing solutions is evidenced by the two hotel-to-housing projects she has undertaken, 'The Lantern' and 'The Crown'. These former motels acquired by Flagstaff Shelter Services and converted into new transitional housing communities offer equitable, low-barrier respite and wrap-around services unparalleled in northern Arizona.



**FLAGSTAFF SHELTER
SERVICES COMMITTED
NEARLY \$100,000**

These examples demonstrate how Ross consistently prioritizes doing what is right over what is easy, even when it requires a significant investment. With optimism and compassion she is committed to serving our vulnerable neighbors with every available resource. The significant, positive impact Ross has on the lives of our low-income northern Arizona neighbors suffering through housing insecurity cannot be measured and she is truly deserving of the Housing Hero Award for Advocate of the Year.