



**Rosie's Place**  
A Solution not a Shelter

**Rosie's Place** "A Positive Step"  
A Home for Women Living with HIV



The Narrow Gate Photography

Rosie's Place "A Positive Step" is a home for women living with HIV located in a multi-cultural neighborhood in Dorchester. Rosie's Place offers a supportive home to ten women throughout the HIV continuum, from asymptomatic to those requiring total physical care. Each apartment includes 4 private bedrooms, shared kitchen, bath and living areas, along with 24-hour access to comprehensive advocacy and support services.

## Women and HIV — The Reality

According to the World Health Organization (1995), 14 million people worldwide are now infected with HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS. It is spreading fastest in heterosexual women and teenagers. By the year 2000, the number will climb to between 40 and 110 million people, 60 percent of them women.

This decade has brought with it an alarming increase in the number of women infected with HIV/AIDS which now ranks as the 3rd leading killer of women ages 25-44. Poor and homeless women remain especially vulnerable because they are unable to access basic health care and education.

The reality of these statistics is both powerful and frightening. Each points out the severity of the situation that all of society now faces with the AIDS crisis. It affects each and every one of us.

Disproportionately, this epidemic has attacked a segment of society which is already vulnerable and at great risk for diseases like HIV/AIDS. Because of poverty and existing societal discrimination, poor and homeless women are becoming one of

the groups severely at risk, with women of color being hit the hardest. They are often weakened by malnutrition and sometimes by substance abuse, falling through the cracks of the health care system until their disease reaches advanced stages. Frequently cut off from adequate health care, education and economic opportunities, poor and homeless women are forced to deal with the "red tape" of both state and federal bureaucracies. The impending changes in Medicaid regulations will only worsen an already dismal situation.

- In 1995, the number of women with AIDS in the U.S. tripled from the 1992 level of 26,000 cases.
- In Massachusetts, there are an estimated 4,200 women infected with the virus.
- By the year 2000, more than 50 percent of all new AIDS cases will be women.

## Meeting the Challenge

In direct response to this health and housing crisis, the Board of Directors of Rosie's Place mandated the development of a residence for poor and homeless women living with HIV/AIDS. In 1991, Rosie's Place took the first trailblazing step in meeting

this challenge.

Rosie's Place created a pilot project in response to the growing numbers of women who were testing HIV positive – an apartment for three women with HIV was established on the first floor of the Columbia Road residence in Dorchester. Our goal was to create a permanent home in which the

women can maintain their privacy while fully living their lives. We advocate individualized care in an environment that is supportive and understanding of the issues that confront women of all cultures living with AIDS: safety, loneliness, shame, death and dying.

### **“A Positive Step”**

As a result of the capital campaign, a three-family house on Mount Vernon Street in Dorchester was purchased in the Spring of 1993. Renovation began in April and was completed in October 1994. Today, the house is fully operational.

“A Positive Step” has been hailed as a national model by Dr. Ken Mayer, Director of Brown University’s AIDS program. He described ‘A Positive Step’ as a “residence providing the missing link in housing for women infected with HIV. Rosie’s Place, in its usual qualitative style, is doing its best to address the housing needs of homeless HIV+ women. With this residence, Rosie’s Place is taking an important, permanent step with our sisters in the fight against HIV disease.”

### **Supportive Services**

This new, handicapped-accessible three family residence is unique in several ways. Homeless women anywhere along the

HIV continuum, from asymptomatic to actively dying may live in the house. The women are given the support and assistance to make life decisions regarding medical care, child care, and financial and family matters. The women are provided with a myriad of services which includes: coordination of medical care, both in-house and with outside agencies; counseling and advocacy services which encompass support

groups, family counseling, and substance abuse counseling; nutritional services; education programs; transportation and special outings.

Our home is staffed 24 hours per day, seven days a week by trained, competent, caring staff members. The residence manager is responsible for the coordination of residents’ health care needs within the house and with outside organizations such as Visiting Nurses Association, Uphams Corner

Home and Hospice Care, Dimmock Community Health Center, Little House, Boston City Hospital, AIDS Action Committee, and the Hospice at Mission Hill, as well as others if requested by the residents. An advocacy staff provides direct physical care and emotional support as needed. In partnership with Antioch College, Rosie’s Place also works extensively with full-time interns who assist in the direct care of the residents.

**“With ‘A Positive Step’ you are giving back to some women all they have already lost: a home, respect, peace, security and unconditional acceptance. This is the ultimate in compassion and the noblest of tasks.”**

**DR. MATHILDE KRIM  
Chairman of the Board  
for the American Foundation  
for AIDS Research**



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## Our Commitment to the Family

Many of the women who come to Rosie's Place have been estranged from their children and other family members.

Those who wish to re-establish relationships with their families are supported in their efforts. AIDS education and individual support group activities are offered so that family members and "care" partners may share day to day experiences, participate in direct physical care, and accompany the women as they journey through the progression of their illness.

**"All my life I've been looking for love, and now I'm with people who love me and tell me I'm not going to die alone."**

**CHRISTINE  
1962-1993  
The first resident of Rosie's Place  
"A Positive Step"**

Christine was a 29 year old woman whose life had been shattered and fragmented as a result of many years of abuse, addictions, poverty, homelessness, and finally HIV. Christine's greatest wish was to reconnect with her family, in particular her three young children. Rosie's Place supported Christine through this difficult time by providing a safe and nurturing home where she was able to find the strength and courage to move toward that reconnection.



The Narrow Gate Photography

## Rosie's Place – A solution not a shelter



Ellen Shub Photography

It was in 1974 that Kip Tiernan founded Rosie's Place in response to the increasing number of homeless women dressing as men and standing in soup lines just to get a meal. Rosie's Place, the first drop-in and emergency shelter for women in the country, remains committed to providing a sanctuary for poor, homeless and battered women – women who have exhausted all their options, doing their best to survive without the support of family and friends. Rosie's Place is committed to helping women achieve independence through advocacy, education and economic development, and stability through permanent, supportive housing – never participating in the warehousing of poor and homeless women.

**“I've often quoted Mother Jones, 'Pray for the dead, but fight like hell for the living,' and that's what we do at Rosie's Place.”**

**KIP TIERNAN**  
Founder of Rosie's Place

Rosie's Place Permanent Housing Committee at the opening of 18 Mt. Vernon Street, from left to right standing: Kate Ryan, former Residence Manager; Isam Hijazi, Boston Contractors & Developers; Kitty Ryan, The Narrow Gate Architects; seated: Julie Brandlen, Executive Director; Kip Tiernan, Founder; and Jill Ruge, Project Manager.

Having undertaken the challenging and very difficult task of addressing the root causes of poverty, we are committed to helping women find the resources to manage and assume responsibility for their own lives. With the goal of empowering women, we work with our guests to find solutions

to their individual needs and to help them move toward a life of independence.

The path of Rosie's Place has always been directed by the needs of the women within the community we serve. Today, HIV has put great demands on Rosie's Place: advocates conserv-

atively estimate that over 30 percent of the women we serve are HIV positive. Most of these women have inadequate support and limited access to consistent health care. Predictably they have turned to us for that support and care.

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“This virus has total disregard for class, color and race. We need your support to help poor and homeless women with HIV because everyone deserves a place to call ‘home’.”

LILY TOMLIN  
Actress, Comedienne &  
Rosie’s Place National Chair



David Lancaster Photography

“We have killed each other with our ignorance, our prejudice, and our silence. We may take refuge in stereotypes, but we cannot hide there long. Because HIV asks only one thing of those it attacks: Are you human?”

MARY FISHER  
Founder of the Family  
AIDS Network, Inc.

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