

**Press Release**

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State Honors Social Service Innovator as a “*Friend of Housing*”

Spokane, Wash. —Sept. 28, 2011— The Washington State Housing Finance Commission presented a *2011 Friend of Housing Award* to social service innovator Betsy Lieberman at the Davenport Hotel in Spokane during the annual *Housing Washington* conference.

“Betsy's commitment to helping others has resulted in a legacy of housing and social service programs for chronically ill and disenfranchised people,” said Washington State Housing Finance Commission Executive Director Kim Herman. “Her work has consistently focused on promoting the dignity, health, safety, and prosperity of people with the greatest need.”

Lieberman is founding Executive Director of Building Changes, a nonprofit organization partnering with government entities, private funders, and nonprofit service providers to end homelessness in Washington state.

Lieberman has been at the forefront of promoting affordable, stable housing for residents of Washington state since 1988. She is a recognized leader, both regionally and nationally, in raising public awareness about the value of supportive housing for vulnerable populations and the prevention of homelessness.

In 1987, the Seattle-King County public health department hired Lieberman to develop a plan for meeting the long-term care needs of people with AIDS. This began her long collaboration with health professionals, AIDS organizations, and public officials, who identified the need for a skilled nursing facility and day health program. At that time, no existing organization wanted to take on this challenge.

To fill the vacuum, AIDS Housing of Washington was founded in 1988, and the board selected Lieberman to be its executive director. Seattle did not welcome this effort with open arms; two years of challenges followed from communities, political factions, and state officials.

The deadlock ended when Lieberman forged a successful alliance between ACT-UP Seattle and a lobbyist for Seattle's powerful Boeing Company. In 1992, Bailey-Boushay House finally opened its doors as the first skilled nursing facility in the nation for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Lieberman's efforts did not stop there. Fundraising and a commitment to help difficult-to-house individuals led to the Lyon Building, a 64-unit project in downtown Seattle. It opened in 1997, with Downtown Emergency Service Center as the operating partner.

After the Lion Building, AIDS Housing of Washington, in partnership with other nonprofits, created several other permanent supportive housing projects for low-income individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS.

In 2004, Lieberman was a driving force behind the formation of the Washington Families Fund, a public-private partnership dedicated to

expanding the availability of supportive housing throughout Washington by providing stable, long-term operating support for housing-based services for homeless families. To date, the fund has awarded millions of dollars to 48 programs across the state. Nearly 1,300 families, including 2,248 children and 1,695 adults, have benefited from these programs.

In 2007, Lieberman led AIDS Housing of Washington through a transformation that expanded its mission to include ending homelessness in Washington and the agency became Building Changes. Through grant making, consulting, and advocacy, Building Changes supports and improves the community-based housing and social service organizations and mainstream public service systems that help people who are experiencing homelessness.

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