



Unveiling of sign at Helping Our Women's new health care center in Eastham, Mass.

Commitment to Wellness

HELPING OUR WOMEN HONORS ANN MAGUIRE WITH NEW HEALTH CARE CENTER

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Helping Our Women, a Provincetown nonprofit that currently provides practical day-to-day support and vital resources to over 300 women with chronic, disabling or life-threatening conditions who live in the outermost towns of Cape Cod. For three decades, the organization has been facilitating transportation to medical appointments, offering financial assistance to women living on fixed incomes and providing assistance and advocacy to patients who are navigating the complicated systems of health care and human services.

When Helping Our Women opens its new wellness center in Eastham, Massachusetts before the end of the year, though, it will be named for someone whose commitment to service goes back even farther.

The Ann Maguire Women's Wellness Center, which will allow HOW to make its programs even more expansive and equitable, is dedicated to the long legacy of its namesake

LGBTQ pioneer. Maguire, whose 80th birthday in July was celebrated with the unveiling of the center's new sign, has a long list of accomplishments: For starters, she managed the 1974 campaign of Massachusetts State Representative Elaine Noble, the first openly gay or lesbian person elected to a state legislature, as well as the first campaign of Boston's longest-serving mayor, Tom Menino. Maguire occupied prominent posts in more than one mayoral administration, hosted a trailblazing gay radio show on WBUR throughout the '70s, and as an out lesbian with the ear of the Bay State's political elite, architected much of the political infrastructure of the gay rights movement in Massachusetts.

Her activism extended to health services, too: She was the founding president of the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition, as well as the founding vice-president of the National Breast Cancer Coalition.

Maguire also played an unofficial role in the creation of

Helping Our Women, according to Executive Director Gwynne Guzzeau. As Guzzeau explains it, HOW cofounder Leslie McGrath was a mentee and former employee of Maguire, who owned the lesbian bars Sisters in Provincetown and Somewhere in Boston, and credited her as an important influence. After many years as a volunteer and advisor, Maguire joined the board of HOW in 2009 and was key to helping the organization move its balance sheet from \$189,000 to just over \$1 million in 2019, according to Guzzeau.

Guzzeau counts herself among those who have been personally impacted by Maguire's life work. "She's been such a role model," says Guzzeau, who adds that visiting Maguire's lesbian bars was crucial in her own journey towards coming out in midlife. When she came to Helping Our Women in 2018, she was determined to rise to the expectations of its esteemed adviser.

That she has. One of Guzzeau's first priorities was to "turn on the faucets" of more federal

and state funding streams for the organization. Under her leadership, HOW was able to purchase the three Eastham condominiums that now make up the new wellness center. It's a full circle moment for Guzzeau, who graduated from high school in Eastham and is passionate about making health care more accessible to women on the rural Outer Cape, where clinicians and other resources are often miles away. Guzzeau, whose background is in elder law, notes that the area is also home to an aging community of women, many of whom may lack reliable transportation or live on fixed incomes. Sixty percent of the women HOW serves are age 60 or over.

In addition to helping HOW meet more clients where they live, the organization's second, Eastham location will be a place to imagine what the future of health advocacy looks like, Guzzeau says—and that includes addressing the "epidemic of loneliness" that affects all folks in isolated areas, and especially elders. To that end, the Ann Maguire Women's Wellness Center will have a comfortable, community lounge-like feel, with spaces for clients to read or research while lingering over a cup of coffee, take a one-on-one meeting with a case manager, find a quiet room to meditate or use a mindfulness app, or attend a book group or educational workshop (in the center's "learning lab" and conference room).

It will also serve as a tribute to Maguire, whose work improved the lives of countless women, and continues to reverberate today. Says Guzzeau, "It represents a lifetime of super service to our organization and to the lives of women, to the lives of lesbian women, to the lives of bisexual women, to the lives of trans women—to the lives of all the women that we serve in our community and have served over the past 30 years." [x]

helpingourwomen.org