



Willissae's Agency for Vision and Empowerment (WAVE)

OCTOBER 2023

WAVE Innovative Homelessness Prevention Services Program

Allegheny County, PA

THE PHARE PROGRAM: AT A GLANCE

The PHARE Act was established in 2010 to provide funding throughout the Commonwealth to assist with the creation, rehabilitation, and support of affordable housing. Currently, the program is funded by two funding sources, the Realty Transfer Tax Fund and the Marcellus Shale Fund.



Did You Know?

In the 2022/23 round of PHARE funds 98 proposals for Homeless Prevention were awarded to organizations for a total of approximately \$17 million dollars with a targeted 11,000 households impacted in this funding priority.

We are the Organization that wants to get to the "Why" so that we can prevent the external consequences that individuals are facing in the community."

-Charlise Smith, WAVE

WAVE is a full-service organization with a holistic approach that empowers and uplifts those individuals who are most vulnerable in the community. Providing services such as homelessness prevention, landlord mediation, budget and credit counseling services, WAVE also believes in approaching each client from the inside out by providing other services for individuals who enter the program, such as an in-house therapist and health nutritionist. Their mission and goal are to help individuals on their path to sustainability in each aspect of their lives.

Founding Director, Charlise Smith, highlighted the community impact of the \$50,000 grant that was awarded to the project in 2021. PHARE funds were used to assist over 250 households with housing related services in the community. The organization also responds to over 2,000 calls per year from individuals seeking their services.



One individual who received support from WAVE was Keyona Farrell (pictured left), a resident of Wilkinsburg. Keyona was facing a life-threatening condition during her pregnancy and was unable to work, causing her to fall behind on her bills and ultimately, facing eviction with her newborn. WAVE came to Keyona's rescue, providing rental assistance and landlord mediation to keep her in her apartment, while also setting her up with a budget and plan as a first-time mother to ensure her continued success in the future.

Willissae's Agency for Vision and Empowerment, a non-profit organization, was established in 2012 by Executive Director and real estate broker, Charlise Smith.

Charlise (pictured right), who lost her mother to violence at a young age, became a victim of violence herself working in property management in the community she served. During her healing from this traumatic experience, she was inspired to become a pillar of change in her community when she realized the incredible gap in mental, emotional, and spiritual support being provided to families in Pittsburgh. This realization led her to form the organization, WAVE, and grow it into everything it is today. Charlise's advice to newer non-profit organization's looking to grow is that "You have to be willing to do the hard work and the resources will follow later."



For more information about WAVE and their services, visit their website at waveoflife.org.

