

People seeking food and other items from Esther's Pantry and Tod's Corner may be surprised to see a "For Sale" sign outside Our House's Milwaukie building, but executive director Wayne Miya says they shouldn't worry—their services aren't going anywhere.

"Even though the clients at Esther's and Tod's will see a big 'For Sale' sign, we are working on finding a new space so services can go on continuously," Miya says.

The community resources will likely have to relocate when the building housing them is sold (it went on the market in July). The current home of Esther's Pantry and Tod's Corner, which provide supplemental items to people living with HIV/AIDS, is owned by Providence Health and Services and has been offered rent-and utilities-free for more than five years.

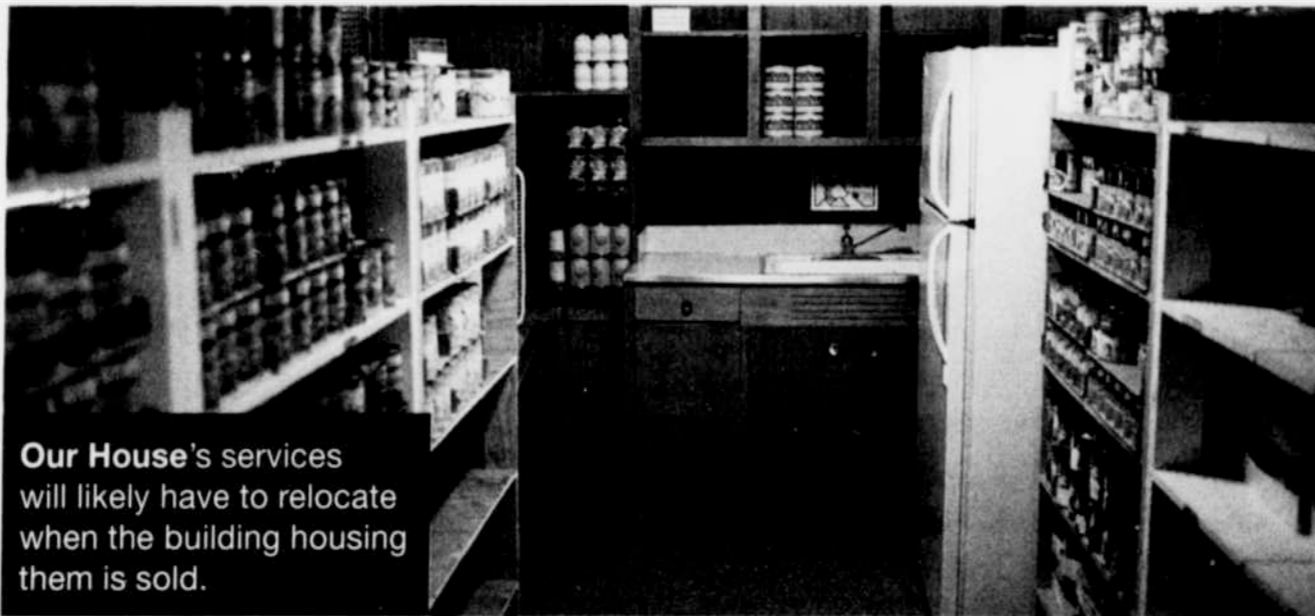
The services moved into the Providence-owned medical offices after Friends of People With AIDS took over for Metropolitan Community Church in 2006. Our House started running the programs in 2007. Esther's Pantry has supplied food—and Tod's Corner, personal care items—to individuals living with HIV/AIDS since 1985.

"We would like to express our gratitude for all the years [Providence has] provided this facility free for us," Miya says. Now that Esther's Pantry and Tod's Corner are looking for a new home, Our House is calling on the community to help with the relocation by making additional donations, hosting food

No Place Like Home

Esther's Pantry on the hunt for a new space

BY ERIN ROOK



Our House's services will likely have to relocate when the building housing them is sold.

drives or even suggesting a new space.

Miya says Our House currently has a commercial Realtor on the hunt, but encourages community members to contact him if they know of a suitable home. The organization, which serves about 700 people annually, is hoping to trade up, so to speak.

Our House seeks a larger space (about 5,000 square feet) that is close in and near bus and MAX lines. Also on the wish list: ADA accessibility, a telephone/internet connection, air

conditioning and heating, 20 off-street parking spaces, a 500-square-foot reception area, enough electrical outlets for 10 refrigerators and a washer-and-dryer hookup.

"Currently, the space that we have is a little small and kind of difficult to navigate through. If there's a lot of people waiting, some of them have to wait outside... and face the weather," Miya says. "We're hoping that the new space will have space enough that we can have people in a formal waiting room."

The community Esther's and Tod's provide is a vital haven for vulnerable individuals who may have trouble accessing other food bank services.

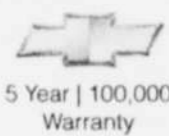
"Because we serve people exclusively with HIV and also low income, it's a safe place for people with HIV to come. There is still a huge amount of stigma out there with regard to HIV and AIDS," says Miya, adding that it can be especially hard for medically "delicate" and transgender people to use other food banks.

Though Miya doesn't know for sure when (or, technically, if) Esther's Pantry and Tod's Corner will have to move, he's doing everything he can to ensure continuity of service.

"We're just trying to be proactive," Miya says.

In the meantime, Esther's Pantry is accepting food donations, including canned foods (meats, beans, vegetables, fruits, etc.), boxed meals, peanut butter, grains and fruit juice. Donations can be made on location or at a variety of drop sites, including *Just Out's* offices at 6234 N. Greeley Avenue or any event sponsored by the newspaper, such as the monthly Gay Skate at Oaks Park (held next on Monday, October 17). **JO**

To suggest a location, email Miya at wmiya@ourhouseofportland.org. For more information about Esther's Pantry and Tod's Corner, visit ourhouseofportland.org. To donate food, become a volunteer, or for services, call 503-349-4699.



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