

around in the garden on front before spending the night on someone's balcony, sleeping.

On Tuesday morning, she fluttered and flapped her way to a nearby park, apparently looking for a late breakfast, preferably bugs with a side of leaves and grass. The trouble started when she decided to wade into rush-hour traffic on First Avenue. Someone called 911. The police sent an Emergency Services Unit team.

"They got the idea that they wanted to capture her," said David Barrett, a birder who runs the Manhattan Bird Alert account on X. "They made an attempt." But Astoria flew off. The police lost sight of her. A police spokesman, describing the encounter,

*Ginia Bellafante's Big City column will return.*

## READER COMMENTS

### Home at Last for People Who Struggle to Remain Housed

Readers responded by letter to Andy Newman's article last Sunday about life at the Lenniger, a permanent supportive housing complex in New York City. Comments were edited.

AS SOMEONE WHO HAS WORKED in supportive housing for more than 35 years, I know its challenges. I also know the opportunities for improvement. History tells us that the federal administration's inclination toward treatment mandates is sure to fail. Instead, we must think creatively about how to adequately resource supportive housing to meet today's needs. The Housing First approach is just that — putting access to housing first — but housing is not enough. It is time to re-examine the current framework: What are the right supports to help people thrive in these settings? What would it look like if we reimagined the staffing patterns in supportive housing?

As the article showed, supportive housing works as a response to the basic challenge of ending homelessness — but there is so much more that is possible when people have access to the right resources. All that depends on a stable work force and having the right complement of disciplines. Multidisciplinary teams including peers — people with their own mental health experiences — registered nurses, occupational therapists, nurse practitioners and harm-reduction specialists should be funded and embedded within supportive housing and flexibly deployed to support tenants with complex needs.

CAL HEDIGAN, NEW YORK

*The writer is chief executive of Community Access, a supportive housing developer for people living with mental health concerns.*

YOUR ARTICLE SHOWS the transformative potential of supportive housing for individuals grappling with mental illness and

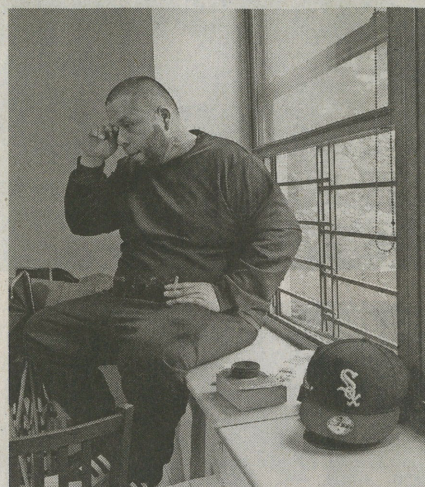
drawing a crowd.

even someone worth building a nest and laying eggs for.

"She's a female turkey," he said. "It's mating season for turkeys."

Astoria went through the same routine last year, wandering around from late April through mid-May. Then she went back to Roosevelt Island, where turkey crossing signs were put up.

"She had been living for 11 months in a fairly constrained area, a couple of blocks north and a couple of blocks south of the subway station," Mr. Barrett said. "It made it easy to find her every day." But last week she wandered south, to the end of the island. "And while she was doing that, she was vo-



THEA TRAFF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Justin Mercado spent months on the streets or in shelters before moving into the Lenniger.

substance use disorders. At Odyssey House, where we operate 450 supportive housing units in New York City, we see firsthand how this model offers stability and hope to those who have endured homelessness.

Supportive housing is undeniably effective, but it should raise an important question: Is a housing policy without behavioral expectations on tenants the best approach? Housing First prioritizes immediate stability by limiting preconditions such as sobriety or participation in treatment. While this approach has helped countless individuals find safety and stability, it can also create challenges for tenants and providers alike — especially when substance use or untreated mental health issues affect the broader community.

At Odyssey House, we believe that supportive housing must strike a balance. Pairing affordable housing with services like mental health care, addiction treatment and vocational support is essential. This

key."

The next Astoria sighting was a couple of blocks away, outside the building where she spent Monday night. "The doorman said, 'You're not going to believe it, but there's a turkey in the garden,'" said Robert Ingram, who pulled out his cellphone, walked to within 10 feet of Astoria and snapped several photos. "I didn't want to scare it, but it wasn't afraid."

Where did she go? Probably not far, Mr. Barrett said. But he had a message for people. "If you see Astoria," he wrote on X, "please just let her be. Admire her from a distance." He advised against calling the police or an animal shelter. "She does not need a rescue, and rescue attempts put her life at risk, as they frighten her and make her take fast evasive action."

includes fostering accountability and engagement in services that promote long-term recovery and community well-being.

Every day, we see how stable housing transforms lives, helping individuals reconnect with loved ones, pursue employment or education, and contribute to their communities. Expanding access to supportive housing is a moral imperative and a practical investment in public health and safety.

PETER PROVET, NEW YORK

*The writer is chief executive of Odyssey House.*

THE STORY OF THE LENNIGER shows the promise of supportive housing and the changes that having a home and support can bring to people. But it doesn't tell the whole story of who supportive housing serves now. While supportive housing was created for people who struggle with addiction and mental illness, the model has been expanded to house other vulnerable groups, from youth leaving foster care to veterans and domestic violence survivors, so they can access supportive services to help overcome their trauma. My organization, New Destiny Housing, provides state-contracted supportive housing to hundreds of survivors and their children in and around New York City, but it's not nearly enough given the 10,000 New Yorkers who enter domestic violence shelters each year and the consequences of abuse, like traumatic brain injury, that they live with.

It was only last year that survivors gained access to the city-funded supportive housing program, NYC 15/15. But by then, the program had allocated almost all its units for new construction. Now, as the federal government rescinds commitments to housing, we need the city to allocate more funding for NYC 15/15 so that every New Yorker who needs it can have a safe place to live.

NICOLE BRANCA, NEW YORK

*The writer is chief executive of New Destiny Housing in New York*