



Upper Valley Haven

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER 2016



From Sara Kobylenski, Executive Director

Listening and humility are at the core of the Haven. In the last issue, a “reunion”, we listened with appreciation to the voices of some people who had been with us in the shelter programs over the last few years. In this issue, we listen with gratitude to volunteers, because it is through the combined energy and commitment of hundreds of community members that the services of the Haven happen. People who have many different stories, beliefs, experiences of their own, come to share of themselves and their skills and time. Volunteers inspire us, as they have made the choice to invest in building a strong community. They make the Haven a place where others can find hope and discover possibility, at the same time finding those opportunities for themselves. Please celebrate with us the power of listening, humility and doing the best you can for the well being of all.



ROSIE

Rosie volunteers on Wednesday afternoons in the Haven’s After-School Program. This year, 34 children are enrolled in the program. For Rosie, who started teaching as a Peace Corps volunteer and is now a retired college professor, this is a new age group. “I spend a lot of time outside with the children on the playground, re-upping my softball skills and shooting hoops.” Rosie enjoys playing and finds the kids to be smart and imaginative, sometimes with a strong athletic ability.

Rosie praises the expertise, warmth, love, and flexibility of the Children’s Services staff. “They make it a welcoming place for all of us.” One of the things she likes the most is seeing the older children teach the younger children something new—“I’ll show you how to do that” is a phrase she hears often. The benefits to both sides are clear.

Rosie says her role as a volunteer in the After-School Program is to be responsive to each of the children she interacts with in whatever way they need that particular day. They may want to talk, they may need space, they may appreciate a listener or need a boundary reminder. Rosie adjusts according to each child’s needs.

“One child and I have a game that we play every week when I’m there where she pops out from behind something and startles me. I never see it coming. It’s our special thing. We both look forward to it and our week wouldn’t be complete without it.”



CAMILLA

Camilla, now a junior at Hanover High School, began volunteering at the Haven with her mother when she was 13 by making dinner for guests in the Hixon House Adult Shelter. Camilla started volunteering at the Haven’s Food Shelf last year. “At first I started out stocking and helping team leaders with odd jobs that had to be done. After I turned 16, I was ‘promoted’ to taking visitors through the Food Shelf.”

Camilla describes a special moment at the Haven: “I remember I was still getting comfortable with showing the customers around. A woman came in and I took her through the Food Shelf relatively smoothly, and at the end, she looked me in the eye and told me she wanted to thank me for what I did for her during her visit. Not only was that simple moment touching, but it was also very important for me. It showed me that helping someone out is never something that I should take for granted. I feel so lucky that I was able and given the opportunity to be a small, positive part of her life. That simple ‘thank you’ was part of something much bigger for me. Things like that happen quite frequently at the Haven, just because it’s such a supportive and influential place!”

Camilla says the environment at the Haven is positive, where volunteers and staff have a genuine desire to help each other and the people that come to the Haven seeking assistance. “It’s a place to grow, and I have grown so much while at the Haven. So if someone wants to grow as a human being and is interested in taking part in bettering our community, I would definitely recommend volunteering at the Haven.”



JIM

Jim and a group of his friends cook dinner once a month for guests in the Haven’s Hixon House Adult Shelter. Jim has his dinner planning down to a science: he has about 16 friends on an email list (“all foodies”) that he contacts once he has picked a date for the dinner. The first eight to reply choose one of the following items; three salads/sides, three mains, two desserts. Each meal is an eclectic potluck with something for everyone. People can deliver the dishes they cooked the night before to Jim’s office or bring them to Hixon House to share dinner with the Hixon guests.

“When we make a meal for the guests I get to sit with them and hear about their lives, I’m filled with loving kindness and joy,” Jim says. “It is so important to give the very finest meal you can to the Hixon House guests, they are worthy of the best we can offer. When they feel cared about you can see it in their eyes. What you get for such a small commitment of time and money is extraordinary.”

Jim cares deeply about the issue of homelessness. “I grew up in a family where service to others was something you just did.” Before the Hixon House was completed, he worked for several years with Joie Finley-Morris and Tyler Blaine as part of the 10 Bricks initiative to bring an adult shelter to the Upper Valley. “To me, seeing Hixon House become a reality in 2010 meant that an invisible population in great need finally got the support they deserved.”



JANE & FAITH

Master Haven gardeners Jane and Faith began volunteering at the Haven in 2010 when the Hixon House Adult Shelter was completed. “When we first started, our focus was on creating an edible landscape and planting trees and bushes around the new building,” says Jane. “Over time, we went from working outside of the Haven, literally, to connecting more with what is happening inside the Haven, for example, finding out what foods were needed for the Healthy Eating program and then working together with staff to grow and distribute them to people.”

It has also been meaningful to see the learning that takes place within their gardening team of 15-20 regular volunteers, who are a mix of community members and Haven shelter guests, plus groups from local businesses, churches, or schools who help with bigger projects and work days. The Haven gardens are a UVM Extension Service Master Gardener project, so learning and teaching is an important part of the work that goes on. Jane says, “I remember a shelter guest volunteer who was surprised to see how certain vegetables grow—like potatoes and asparagus. And another volunteer from a business in Lebanon who had never picked a fresh tomato off the vine and eaten it.”

Faith and Jane agree that in addition to the gardening that they love, they keep coming back to the Haven because of the warm and supportive environment. “When we are here on Saturday mornings, often shelter guests will greet us and make sure we feel welcome. You just feel it when you’re on the campus. People want you to feel at home.” says Faith.

Both women say they need more gardening volunteers on their team. “No experience is necessary. If you don’t mind your knees getting dirty, we’d love for you to join us. It’s a great opportunity to learn and work as part of a fun team.”



SARA

Sara has been volunteering at the Haven since 2002 and most people describe her service by saying some version of “She’s done it all.”

Sara was on the Haven’s Board of Directors, a member of the Byrne building committee, chaired the building committee for the Hixon House Adult Shelter completed in 2010, and helped in the early years of the clothing room and Food Shelf. Now she volunteers in the Food Shelf every Friday.

“There’s something about this place—it’s a comfort, a non-threatening environment, a safe harbor. Often people feel embarrassed about needing help. The Haven is welcoming and by the time people leave, they feel better and less alone. I, too, feel better on the days I come here as a volunteer. The Haven not only feeds mouths, but lifts hearts. And those of us who are part of it? We echo the goodness of this place.”

What would Sara tell someone who is not familiar with the Haven or doesn’t know it well? She would encourage them to call and schedule a tour of the Haven. Spend some time here, she says. Meet the staff. Meet the people who are seeking food, shelter, and other assistance. Most of us do not see the need in our community on a daily basis, but it exists all around us.



BOB

Bob started volunteering at the Haven in 2011 after he saw media reports about the Haven’s work with people affected by Hurricane Irene. Bob’s very first assignment was at the reception desk, where he accepted donations, checked in Food Shelf visitors, made coffee, and replenished snacks for community members in the café. To describe the front desk as busy is an understatement—an average of 200-300 people pass through the reception area each business day, including Food Shelf visitors, donors, shelter guests, staff, and community members.

For the past three years, Bob has worked as a team leader in the Food Shelf every Monday morning. “It’s such a nice way to start out my week. We have a great crew of 6-10 regular volunteers who work well together and we get a lot done.”

Bob says being a volunteer at the Haven has been rewarding for him. “I get a lot of thanks from people on their way out of the Food Shelf, sometimes with tears in their eyes. I hear a lot of stories, too. What we are doing in the community is so important. The Haven gives away \$2 million dollars’ worth of food every year. Really amazing.”





Upper Valley Haven

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THE UPPER VALLEY HAVEN

is a private non-profit organization founded in 1980 that provides temporary shelter and educational programming for homeless families and adults, and food and basic necessities to anyone in need. The Haven serves over 13,500 people per year and its services are free of charge. It is open 365 days a year.

(802) 295-6500 • uppervalleyhaven.org

- Byrne House Family Shelter
- Hixon House Adult Shelter
- Seasonal Shelter
- Problem Solving
- Food Shelf
- Children's Education at Bev's House
- Adult Education
- Volunteer Services

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 4/8/17 The Mud Ball - *Quechee Inn at Marshland Farm*
 Sunday 4/30/17 11th Annual Chefs of the Valley - *Hanover Inn*
 Friday 8/25/17 7th Annual Haven Golf Tournament - *Montcalm Golf Club*

VOLUNTEERS

Number of Core Haven Volunteers in Program Areas (monthly)

200	Hixon House Adult Shelter Dinners (52 teams)
161	Food Shelf
39	Seasonal Shelter
30	Special Activities
23	Gardening
29	After-School Program and Child Care
20	Events
17	Board of Directors
15	Healthy Eating
8	Reception Desk
5	Caruso Café



Thank you to all the businesses and organizations who are participating this year. We are humbled by your generosity & inspired by your giving spirit.