



Upper Valley Haven

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2017



From Sara Kobylenski, Executive Director

Over the past six months we have been asked what current federal public policy trends and actions will mean for the Upper Valley Haven. We truly appreciate this community concern and have found there are multiple ways to reply.

Our Board, staff, volunteers and recipients of services all share uncertainty as we try to understand what to make of the world. Stress and worry result. The Haven has limited dependency on government sources of funding, only about 8% of our \$3 million budget. Although the percentage is low, we have to find ways to replace funds that have already been eliminated in two of the seven streams of revenue that make up that percentage. Unfortunately, readjustments being made in existing government services, in *anticipation* of bigger cuts, are already negatively impacting individual Upper Valley households and families in a constriction of resources.

The most important response I can make, however, is that this community cares. The Haven remains a living tribute to the kindness, will, and investment of the citizens of this region. More than ever we have to celebrate the successes that people achieve who are touched by your caring. Together we will continue this journey, adapting our responses as the challenges change, but staying steady in service to this community. Thank you for making it all work!



FOOD SHELF

The Haven's Food Shelf exists through generous donations of food and hours of volunteer time. Many community members using the Food Shelf have two things in common: they are struggling with physical and emotional barriers that make their lives complex and hard, and they are caring for multiple generations. As these visitors arrive, some with mobility issues, they share the progress of medical treatments and note struggles in getting asthma or heart medications. They speak of raising their children and grandchildren, their nieces and nephews. In many cases, these children would be homeless if not for these older family members.

On a recent afternoon, a woman came who had not been to the Food Shelf in several months came into the Haven. She said she had been managing to make ends meet, but this week she was short. She had spent precious dollars on a nutrition shake for herself as her cancer treatment was making solid food intolerable. Her household includes eight other people from three generations. The Haven's Food Shelf helped her with a good supply of groceries, but also let her know that we always maintain nutritional shake supplements such as Boost or Ensure, for the people with situations like hers. Visitors to the Haven have told us that if this Food Shelf did not exist, it would have to be invented.

SECTION 8 HOUSING

Jeff, Kathy and their son Ryan came to Byrne Family Shelter in spring 2016. They earned a Vermont Rental Subsidy for rent assistance plus support through the Haven's Service Coordinators. The VRS gives them 12 months to increase their income to afford market rate housing, or acquire a long-term housing subsidy, a "Section 8" voucher. Section 8 is often the next step for families, as increasing income sufficiently is outside the realm of many. The family fell in love with their apartment at Safford Commons in West Woodstock and have been outstanding in achieving all their goals. Jeff and Kathy hoped to become permanent residents there, keeping their son Ryan stable in school. Unfortunately, the Section 8 list was closed in January in anticipation of proposed federal budget cuts. A new experience of homelessness loomed. However, their landlord, Twin Pines Housing Trust created a solution, enabling them to move to a unit in White River Junction that has a subsidy attached. The move gives the

family another year and the hope of getting a Section 8 voucher in the future. Jeff and Kathy said, "We are disappointed at having to move and change schools, but grateful to TPHT and the Haven for helping us to keep going to a stable life." Although some days feel like two steps forward and one step back, we work on behalf of our families every step on the their path to permanent housing.



UPPER VALLEY STRONG

On July 1, 2017, a strong rainstorm tore through the Upper Valley, wreaking havoc in pockets both visible and hidden across towns from Orford and Haverhill to Thetford, Norwich and Hartford. The Haven's Director of Operations, Jennifer Fontaine has led the case management aspect of the community response, as part of Upper Valley Strong.

In the days following Irene in 2011, organizations in the region formed Upper Valley Strong as the long-term recovery hub. In the months and years since then, the group has continued to meet, activating four years ago in 2013 in response to the July 1st storm that caused mudslides and flooding in Lebanon.

The key tasks of Upper Valley Strong have been carefully refined:

- case management: sorting out who had been impacted and how, and what services they need;
- construction case management: assessing repair and replacement needs;
- volunteer coordination: bringing together people who have been prepared for certain disaster related tasks;
- cleanup and muck out: just what it sounds like;
- case paperwork: to access resources and plan recovery.

The Upper Valley Strong Steering Committee includes representatives from Twin Pines Housing Trust, Upper Valley Haven, SEVCA, COVER, Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission, the Town of Hartford, and the Grafton County Economic Development Council. Andrew Winter, Executive Director of Twin Pines Housing Trust, is the current Chair of the group and leads the efforts currently going on.



AMERICORPS

If you were to hang out this summer at Bev's House, home of the Children's Program Summer Camp, you would find Rhianna Hutchins. More than likely, Rhianna would be squarely in the middle of a clutch of kids, enjoying giggles and games. Rhianna is the 2016-17 AmeriCorps member serving as a Children's Services Associate at the Haven.

Each year the Haven is able to keep a balance of staff and volunteer assistance for the intensive, year-round Children's Program with the inclusion of an AmeriCorps member. Rhianna was herself homeless, living at Byrne Family Shelter with her children several years ago. Since then Rhianna has maintained permanent housing, and has advanced her education toward her dream of one day working professionally with young mothers and children. An internship at Zack's Place and now this AmeriCorps year are part of her "hands on" learning. As Rhianna moves on, she is encouraging others to apply to join the lifetime affiliation with AmeriCorps, and to become part of the Haven team for a year. "It has been a great year," says Rhianna. "I am so glad I took a chance on doing this. It makes my dream seem more possible."



PERINATAL CLINIC

An important response to the opioid epidemic sweeping NH and VT has been the establishment, by Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and the Geisel School of Medicine, of a program for mothers to receive medication assisted treatment (MAT) to beat their addiction during pregnancy and throughout the beginning months and years of their children's lives.

Daisy Goodman and the Perinatal MAT Team observed that the demands of life for these pre- and postnatal woman are so intense and so time-consuming that they were not eating properly. Lack of money, lack of time to shop and cook, and limits to transportation are huge barriers to consuming nutritious food. The Haven responded to a request for help, creating a small Food Shelf in the clinic in the Rivermill Complex. Two large refrigerators were donated by a caring local family to store perishable food.

It took experimentation to determine what foods were most in demand and consumed, and now every week Haven staff deliver a variety of fresh produce, dairy products and nutritious "to go" meals, along with a few of the traditional food shelf staples like canned tuna and beans. In addition to addressing the original problem of hunger, families are learning healthy eating habits as part of the experience. The results have been so positive and the partnership thrives.

TIPPING POINTS

"Tipping Points" is the perfect name for a program dedicated to inspiring and advancing healthier communities across NH and VT, created by Dartmouth Hitchcock called Partners for Community Wellness. PCW chose four organizations across the DHMC service area and asked them to identify up to five people each for whom a \$1000 grant would create a meaningful change in their life. Each organization must also provide mentorship to the recipients for at least one year. The Upper Valley Haven, River Valley Community College, Families in Transition (Concord) and Easter Seals (Manchester) are the 2016-17 organizations. Some of the Haven grantees share their stories.

Angela is the mother of three who has struggled through the years to provide a stable life for her family. She was close to achieving certification as a Medical Assistant, but was stymied by some course requirements and fees outside of her budget. With this Tipping Point grant Angela has not only overcome those barriers, but has resolved her transportation issue with a car and license. Inspired by her progress, Angela recently tested out her singing talent, winning a competition!

Brad, a single Dad who has always cared for his daughter, is self-employed in manual work impacted by season and weather. He is proud to own his own small home in a very rural part of the region, heated by wood that he cuts, and electricity that comes from his generator. He came to the Haven when he found he could not pay his property taxes. With Haven coaching, he determined that he could get employed by a company that would allow him year-round work, and he could still carry on his own business on the side. He had more than half of the money for the taxes, and with a Tipping Point Grant for the rest, he has taken a step to a more sustainable future than he had realized could be possible.

Brian and Maryann have a car, but only Maryann had a license. Brian's was suspended 17 years ago in another part of the country for a situation involving insurance coverage. He can earn a good income in the manufacturing world, but the second shift jobs that are most common entry points were challenging. Getting their four children out of bed for the 11:30 PM trip to work, and back up and out to school so Maryann could return for Brian, and then go to her own day job was overwhelming. With a Tipping Points grant they paid the fines and required fees to release his license and get him licensed in Vermont. He is now stably employed, and the family is thriving.



Upper Valley Haven

713 Hartford Avenue
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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 nearly 14,500 people per year and never charges for any of its services. The Haven is open 365 days a year.

(802) 295-6500 • uppervalleyhaven.org

- Bev's Community House Building
- Byrne House Family Shelter
- Hixon House Adult Shelter
- Seasonal Shelter
- Problem Solving
- Food Shelf
- Children's Education
- Adult Education
- Volunteer Services
- Community Partnerships
- Policy Advocacy

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, August 25th
September
December

7th annual Golf Tournament, Montcalm Golf Club
Hunger Action Month
19 Days of Norwich and the Upper Valley



SHELTER



FOOD



EDUCATION



PROBLEM SOLVING