



# Upper Valley Haven

## Donor Impact Report

SUMMER  
2020

*Neighbors like you make the Upper Valley a community better for its caring!*

### COVID-19 Pandemic Response: We are all in this together.

Much has changed in the world since our last Donor Impact Report. Schools closed, some businesses remain shuttered, and many of us know someone who isn't sure if, or when, they will receive their next paycheck. Unfortunately, nobody can say for sure when our lives will ever return to what we used to consider normal.

For the time being, this is the new normal.

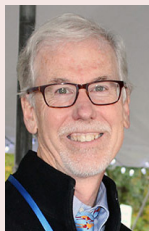
While things constantly evolve in the midst of this pandemic response, the needs of our community's most vulnerable individuals and families continue—and they're more *scared, vulnerable, and at-risk than ever*.

The essential nature of the Haven's work remains — we continue to provide services 365 days a year to people who are homeless, food insecure, or struggling with poverty. Our staff has been creative, resourceful, and cautiously fearless in the face of this challenge, remaking our work, to meet and exceed safety protocols.

**Thank you for standing with us in these critical times.** Your support has been invaluable in our efforts to adjust and adapt to these unprecedented circumstances. You're helping to ensure the most vulnerable among us are not forgotten.

**Just as we're all in this together, we will all get through this together.**

With much appreciation,



*Michael*

—Michael Redmond, Executive Director





# ADAPTING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

## A Report from The Front Lines

Gwen Williams is a Service Coordinator with the Upper Valley Haven. Gwen has been with the Haven for three-and-a-half years. In mid-March, the Haven moved many of our shelter guests to local motels for safety reasons; this allowed them to have a bedroom and bathroom of their own. Our guests were soon joined in the motels by many other people who needed a place to live. Soon, over 130 households, including parents with children, were staying in Upper Valley motels through a voucher supplied by the State of Vermont. The Haven reached out to everyone and helped them all.

With guests in the motels, we've made sure food is being delivered to our clients weekly through a mobile Food Shelf. This provides an opportunity for additional conversations and check-ins. Gwen is one of the service coordinators involved in this program. We asked her about the challenges presented by this new normal:



### **Q. How has your job changed with the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A. The obvious difference is that people can't come to us the way they used to. Now, our community clients need to call us on the phone. This is fine for some of the simple things, but many times it takes a while for our clients to be able to share what's really on their minds. That's often harder to do over the phone. I have to trust that people will find me if they need to see me.

### **Q. What is important about the food delivery program that the Haven has undertaken to support people temporarily staying in motels?**

A. It's important to share with our clients that their well-being is important to us. That we'll go the extra mile by bringing food to where they're living now. The mobile Food Shelf is a good bridge to people. It says our doors are open. We're always concerned. We'll do what needs to be done.

### **Q. How are the people who have been staying in the motels? What is their state of mind?**

A. There's some anxiety about what comes next. They know that the motel vouchers are going to end, but they don't know when. Some people who have been homeless long-term will return to camping—they've enjoyed the break. But for others, they're worried about where they're going to live. Many of the people living in motels are current clients but some are new to the Haven.

### **Q. I heard that when you're delivering food to the motels on Fridays you'll go from room to room, knocking on doors of "regulars" who haven't appeared for the food pick-up. Does that make you nervous with the fear of the presence of COVID-19 and social distancing that everyone's practicing?**

A. I take precautions of wearing a mask and gloves and I step back after I knock on the door; the majority of clients I encounter are also wearing a mask. It's important for us to touch base with the clients, as living in the motel can create anxiety for them around isolation. We make sure our clients with trauma, depression, and untreated mental health know we are a resource or can provide them with resources. Many clients are challenged with addiction and can easily retreat into their rooms and escape by using drugs or drinking—we want to put eyes on them and make sure they're okay.

### **Q. Is anything good coming from this motel experience?**

A. I think that we've provided a lot of valuable services to people staying in the motels. Another good outcome is that the community has been able to see that the Haven is ready to go wherever we are needed; daily to weekly visits to the motels or campsite outreach, that's where you'll find us. It's also become clear that when we talk about the "homeless," it's not just a few people living in tents by the railroad tracks. There are many people who are housing insecure. When the pandemic hit, they found themselves without a place to live.



# COVID-19, The Upper Valley & You

The Upper Valley Haven works every day to support people experiencing poverty by providing food, shelter, education, and service coordination. We continue to support these families and individuals, as well as anyone who finds themselves experiencing economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

***We are seeing an increase in need and expect that to grow. Your financial support allows us to offer hope and a sense of security to those who are struggling during this challenging time.***

For anyone in need of food, we continue to offer monthly groceries, now available for curbside pick-up through a quick, no-contact registration process. These boxes include milk, meat, eggs, cheese, canned goods, and more, and can be customized as needed for allergies and food preferences. Those who cannot get out can have a friend or family member pick up on their behalf.

- A tent donated by Blood's Catering is set up in our parking lot. Anyone needing supplemental grocery items like produce, bread, baking ingredients, soups, prepared foods, and desserts can pick them up, as needed, Monday thru Friday between 9 AM-3 PM.
- Prepared meals, with protein, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and snacks are available for pick-up Monday thru Friday between 9-10 AM.
- We are conducting weekly grocery drop-offs to families connected to our After-School Program and monthly drop-offs to clients from our Family Supportive Housing Program.
- Service coordination relationships continue through telephone and video conferencing. We've installed a telephone outside the Haven for clients without access to a phone.
- Through a partnership with Good Neighbor Health Clinic, we've been helping better support the health needs of people who are homeless or hyper-vulnerable (at higher risk of complications if they contract COVID-19) in the Upper Valley.
- Our mobile Food Shelf has been visiting people temporarily housed in motels, offering groceries, prepared foods, masks, personal care items, Narcan, and other resources.
- Haven staff made door-to-door visits at all five of the local motels and provided Mental Health Wellness Bags that contained items for relieving stress and connecting to services, including information on mental health and recovery services, stress balls and games, relaxation exercises, and dark chocolate. We've also started having conversations with everyone about their future housing plans and how the Haven can support them.

This situation continues to unfold and so do the changes and adaptations we're making to meet as many needs as we can. You can keep abreast of the latest updates through our website, at [upervalleyhaven.org/covid-19](http://upervalleyhaven.org/covid-19).

As we continue working through this crisis to positively impact our community, your support has never been more important. Your gifts today are being immediately routed to areas of greatest need—***and needs are being met, thanks to YOU.***





Things are going alright, although as you can imagine, COVID-19 has interrupted the work and progress of many of my families, as they must do full-time childcare/schooling and can't retain or pursue employment. That being said, our families are hugely resilient and are doing what they need to get through.

—Maria, Haven service coordinator



*"Today we received food from you and it brought tears to my eyes as I saw my fridge begin to get full, same with my pantry! My kids were thrilled to receive a cake and I was happy to have a nice treat for dessert tonight! Thank you so much! There are no words to describe the gratitude and appreciation I have for your program! In such difficult times it's nice to see a ray of light in all the darkness!! Thank you so much from our family to yours!"*

—Alex, Food Shelf customer

*I realized that it is really easy to get focused on our situation in the way the COVID-19 crisis affects our daily lives, and forget that there are people who are really hungry, not just bored with the contents of their personal pantry. So it felt really good yesterday, when I went on my once-every-two-week shopping trip, to think about other people getting food through The Haven.*

—Sarah, Haven donor



Thank you!

Your compassion and generosity allow us to continue serving the most vulnerable among us and to expand to meet a growing need. The Haven is funded primarily by private donations—your gifts allow our essential staff to connect, to foster new relationships and to grow existing ones, to deliver services in new ways and in new locations. You are helping us offer hope in the form of food security, housing resources, and trauma-informed care, for both the people who rely on us regularly, and those we've yet to meet, as this economic dislocation threatens to impact still more of our neighbors.

## BY THE NUMBERS: YOUR GIFTS ARE MEETING NEEDS



Currently serving an average of **76+** a day with curbside grocery pick-up (monthly Food Shelf visits and outdoor food tent)



Serving **130+** households temporarily housed in local motels by providing food, service coordination, and health resources



Delivering **32** Boredom Buster bags and books to families with children connected to the Byrne Family Shelter, After-School Program, and Family Supportive Housing Program



Moving **13** households into permanent housing in March and April, amidst the COVID-19 crisis, with the help of Haven service coordinators



Enlisting more than **100** new, active COVID-19 volunteers to safely help in food stocking, meal prep, mask-making and deliveries.