



Hospitality Times

The New London Homeless Hospitality Center's Volunteer Newsletter
Spring 2011

The Holiday Season is Over...

...but we had a great time while it was here. This season was especially beautiful due to the generous outpouring of support from our volunteers and donors. It fills me with joy to see just how much all of you care for the guests at our shelter. There's plenty to highlight from this

season, but not nearly enough space.

The generous support you all gave really began the weeks leading up to the Christmas holiday, as some of those who regularly give their time, talents, and resources asked



Staff members Andy and Celida helping hand out presents at the nighttime shelter

to spend the holidays with their families. Many of you stepped up to the plate, filling in for them and providing wonderful snacks and meals of your own for our guests. It is wonderful to know you all will be there when we need it.

Festivities started the day of the 25th, Christmas Day, with a wonderful meal provided at St. David's in Gales Ferry. The kind folks at this house of worship not only provided a feast that left many of our guests stuffed, they provided transportation to and from the festivities of the day. This was a wonderful kindness, a kindness that they have provided every year for the past twenty-one years.

The mood was festive on the evening of the 25th at the St. James shelter. Smells of delicious food and desserts filled the air as our guests mingled with some generous volunteers. Donors provided gifts for our guests, creating a merry atmosphere that permeated the shelter. One donor in particular, who wishes to remain anonymous, provided stockings stuffed with needed items for all our guests at the shelter. It truly was a splendid evening.

Food was again provided by generous volunteers on New Year's Eve, volunteers who come weekly on Fridays to fill our guest's stomachs and hearts.

All of you made the holidays, and last year, a little better with the support you give us here at the shelter. You truly do put the hospitality into the Hospitality Center. Thank You!

A Very Cold Winter

This January we were the subject of repeated cold snaps and winter storms. We just couldn't get a break! The cold weather prompted my wife, a Minnesotan, to ask herself, "when did I move back home?" Well, I'd like to personally thank all the Volunteers that helped out whenever we needed it. You kept our guests warm when they were cold and fed when they were hungry. Your generosity also inspired Cathy Zall, our executive director, to send out this Thank-You on January 24:

Dear Friends,

As the weather outside hits 15 below zero with the wind chill, I give thanks that in this city no one is being left outside. With your help, and an ever deepening partnership with other social service providers, our overnight shelter and daytime hospitality center are becoming a key resource to adults struggling with homelessness. We have opened early, stayed open late and been there when weather created a special need. Our staff has been remarkable, offering seamless coverage regardless of weather conditions. Even in crowded conditions, the day and night shelter have been orderly and positive.

Of course, all this makes a difference in the lives of individuals. But I also feel a bigger impact on our city and region as a whole. Every great spiritual tradition teaches that we are all interconnected. It should not be surprising, therefore, that a community that provides for the most basic needs of all its members is somehow made stronger on many levels. Compassion for our homeless neighbors seeps out into the broader community touching us all in some way. A place that watches out for those most in need is somehow enriched in ways we cannot measure. I am grateful to live in such a place.

Thank you to every person—volunteers, donors, staff, supporters and guests—who partner in bringing this kind of compassion to our region. It makes a difference, often in ways we cannot even see.

Cathy Zall
Executive Director



Volunteers from Three Rivers Community College helped paint our shelter's walls.

A Day of Service: Martin Luther King Day

On January 17, 2011 the New London Homeless Hospitality Center participated in MLK Day of Service, the 25th anniversary of the

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal holiday. In partnership with Three Rivers Community College (TRCC), NLHHC served as a placement site for students and faculty eager to volunteer. This day calls for "Americans from all walks of life to work together to provide solutions to our most pressing national problems. The MLK Day of Service empowers individuals, strengthens

communities, bridges barriers, creates solutions to social problems, and moves us closer to Dr. King's vision of a 'Beloved Community.'" (<http://mlkday.gov/about/serveonkingday.php>)

The collaboration between NLHHC and the volunteers from TRCC exemplified this vision.

The day began with a brief introduction of the MLK Day of Service and then TRCC Volunteers broke into groups to serve at various non-profit organizations throughout New London. NLHHC was paired with three very eager volunteers. Soon after the introduction we went to the nighttime shelter at St. James Church and started the many projects that had been identified.

NLHHC first mission is to provide a place of safety and welcome to our adult homeless neighbors. This can only be accomplished if the shelter is a clean and well-kept place. This was the main objective for the day. This exemplifies the spirit of the volunteers on this day. Cleaning, painting and doing laundry for strangers is not anyone's ideal job but this was the job given and everyone did it with a huge smile on their face.

We started by mopping and vacuuming all the floors, we do this at the shelter on a nightly basis but this day was more of a "spring clean." We moved furniture to vacuum and mop underneath, cleaned the baseboards in the hallway, and scrubbed the walls. We also washed down the chairs and tables in the community room. A couple of the volunteers in the group had extensive experience painting, so our next task was to do touch up painting in the hallway.

This brought us to about lunchtime, after which we would tackle our biggest project. With the national "bed bug" scare that swept the nation this past fall, NLHHC has taken every precaution to keep those pests out of the shelter

(WITH GREAT SUCCESS). These precautions included washing the guest's blankets more frequently than we did in previous years. On MLK day, we grabbed about half the blankets at the shelter and brought them to the laundry mat.



Volunteers helped us tackle the bed bug scare by washing blankets.

There we filled 9 of the industrial size washers.

After we finished washing and drying all the blankets, they were taken back to the shelter.

This is when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. vision of a "Beloved Community" was realized at NLHHC. Americans from all walks of life came together: Guests, employees, and volunteers from NLHHC teamed up with faculty and staff at TRCC, to empower individuals and strengthen communities. At the laundry mat both guests and staff of NLHHC helped TRCC volunteers carry the blankets to the van. Guests also helped staff fold and put away blankets later that night.

For a brief instance we witnessed our community come together to serve each other on Martin Luther King Day. We at the New London Homeless Hospitality Center owe a giant thank you to the students of Three Rivers Community College for the dedication they showed, working at some of the most menial of tasks in support of our homeless neighbors.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" –Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Some Big News!

January was a very busy time for us at HHC, filled with changes and hurdles for those of us who work or volunteer at the shelter and daytime center. One big future change was announced in an emailed letter from Cathy Zall on January 7th:

Dear Friends,

We are about to embark on a new phase of our work with our homeless neighbors and I wanted to give you a quick update on our plans. As many of you know, we have been seeking a more permanent home for the shelter and daytime hospitality center for several years. Our two previous proposals (one on Jefferson Avenue and one on Federal Street) were both rejected by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

We have continued to look and about a year ago identified the possibility of moving to what is now the St. Peter and Paul Polish National Catholic Church. This site's official address is 731 State Pier Road but can also be accessed from 327 Huntington Street. The church is about 4/10th of a mile from St. James and includes a rectory and a small church building on .75 acres.

While we have been pursuing this site for well over a year, a variety of obstacles kept us from finalizing a deal. Two of these problems have now been solved. First we have a tentative agreement with the Faith Fellowship Church to purchase from them a small strip of land that will give us access to our new site from Huntington Street. Second, the Polish National Catholic Church has agreed to provide us with bridge financing that allows us to pay the purchase price over four years.

Our remaining major hurdle is the requirement to secure a special permit from the New London Planning and Zoning Commission. We have had outstanding pro bono support from Tim Bates at the law firm of

Robinson and Cole in preparing our application. Steven Joncas has donated his architectural expertise to help us prepare the



St. Peter and Paul PNC Church, established 1921, will be the new home of the New London Homeless Hospitality Center.

necessary building plans. Ted Olynciw continues to offer remarkable volunteer service as our project manager. This combination of dedication and expertise has culminated in a comprehensive proposal we will submit to Planning and Zoning in the very near future. My hope is that we can convince the Commission that this move is in the interest of our homeless neighbors and the city.

Moving to a new site will present many challenges but will allow us to finally offer our guests a site designed for the heavy use our shelter and daytime hospitality center experience. At the new site we would have adequate bathrooms, regular showers and eventually laundry facilities. The new site will also allow us to create better working space for our staff and create more privacy where guests can meet with social service staff from the wide range of agencies that use our site. It also appears that the Community Health Center will be establishing a health outreach office that can supplement the incredible health services already offered by the Visiting Nurses of SE CT. These

are all exciting possibilities that will translate directing into greater hospitality.

I will keep you posted on progress. My hope is that this will be a real step forward in our goal of offering exceptional hospitality and opportunity to those experiencing homelessness in New London. Your support has brought us very far from where we started. With limited resources we are already changing lives and helping people survive the chaos of

homelessness. A new site will help us do even better.

As always, if you have thoughts or questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Catherine Zall
Executive Director

Volunteer News: The Help Desk

On Thursday, February 10 we kicked off our newest pilot program, the Help Desk, at the St. James Shelter. Two wonderful volunteers came by to learn about the Help Desk, what it can offer and how they can help. One of the two offered his time as general staff support, assisting staff and referring our guests to the Desk when he felt it useful, while the other worked from around 7:30 until 9:00, assisting a young guest in his job search. She showed him how to search for a job on the internet, what programs are out there for job seekers, went over how to overcome this guest's personal obstacles to getting a job, and then helped him compile a very strong résumé to assist him in his job search. Together, these two volunteers were a very big help at our shelter and served the volunteer program by troubleshooting our orientation to the Help Desk, and Help desk procedure.

A powerful new tool, the help desk is designed to afford volunteers the tools they need to assist guests out of the shelter and into a stable situation. The Help Desk has been the product of our last six months work. We have been assessing where our guests need assistance the most, compiling what resources are out there, and working hard to make these resources as accessible as possible for volunteers to assist our guests where they are at.

The first difficult task in putting together the



Volunteer Coordinator Bob Middeke-Conlin showing of our new "Volunteer Resource Manual," which offers help on a wide variety of topics from job interviews and resumes to AA and NA meeting schedules

help desk was compiling a lengthy, concise resource manual that offers every sort of assistance we thought a volunteer might reasonably need: from employment assistance to mental health issues and everything in between.

Formatting the manual itself proved a challenge, as we needed to make it easily accessible to a volunteer while keeping it concise enough to be of assistance.

Gathering the resources needed to support volunteers as they help our guests was another hurdle. We needed to find semi-private space in an already crowded shelter, a light, movable desk and chairs, a printer, and a computer with internet access. This last was provided with the generous support of St. James Church, which allowed us to extend wireless access downstairs,

while several volunteers and donors provided the rest.

We are now in the piloting stage of this desk and have a good group who are willing to stick with us as we fine tune this tool, assisting guests while giving us feedback as to what's helpful, what's useless, and what is too difficult.

The goal of the Help Desk is to allow volunteers, with training, the ability to offer our guests more in depth assistance when they are at the shelter, and follow up during the day. Ultimately, we hope to offer this every evening of the week, but are currently limiting the nights it is offered to Monday through Thursday.

And there is a demand for the desk: On the first night it was available, we had at least four guests who wanted assistance, and only saw one. In short, we see a strong need that, when we are able, will allow our volunteers the ability to have an even more significant impact in service to the homeless population first, and then the New London area and southeastern CT in general.

For now, thank you to all the volunteers, donors, and staff who have allowed us to reach this stage in our program: thank you for all your patience and kind work; you truly are making a difference!



4th Annual Walk for the Homeless

Sponsored by the New London Homeless Hospitality Center and the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy at Connecticut College

Saturday, April 30, 2011

When: April 30, 2011, registration begins at 9 AM, walk begins at 10 AM

Where: All Soul's Unitarian Universalist Congregation
19 Jay St, New London

Who: All proceeds from the Walk for the Homeless will go to the Homeless Hospitality Center which provides both overnight shelter and day time support to homeless individuals. The Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy at Connecticut College is working in partnership with the Homeless Hospitality Center to organize this walk.

For more information please visit our website at www.nlhhc.org

Phone: (860) 391-5457

Email: Alyssa.languth@gmail.com

Three New AmeriCorps Positions

Dear Friends,

We are very fortunate to have three VISTA positions to fill beginning **July 2011**. I am reaching out to you in case you know someone who might be interested in a year of service with the **New London Homeless Hospitality Center**. More information about VISTA is available at:

<http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp>. The specific jobs we are looking to fill are described below. If you know anyone who might be interested, could you pass this information along? People can apply directly through the VISTA site or could contact me for more information. I can be reached by phone at [860-227-2188](tel:860-227-2188) or by email at czall@snet.net.

Our work is often challenging but I am confident that anyone pursuing this opportunity would learn a great deal and leave their year of service with a deep sense of having made a real contribution. Thanks.

Cathy Zall

Fundraising Support

Central to the position will be the goal of forming strong relationships with the various individuals and organizations that provide us financial support. The VISTA member will have a “portfolio” for donors that will include government agencies who contract with NLHHC, faith communities, foundations, civic groups, schools, local businesses and individuals. In consultation with the Executive Director and Administration Manager the VISTA member will design and implement a marketing and communications strategy that will develop deeper connections between NLHHC and his/her assigned donors. Strategies will include maintaining the NLHHC website and Facebook

pages, organizing the annual appeal, public speaking, maintaining the donor database, organizing special events, interfacing with media and conducting personalized outreach. The VISTA member will be assisted by one or more work-study students from local colleges.

Help Desk Coordinator

This VISTA position will assume the lead on implementation of a comprehensive **help desk program** that will engage volunteers in providing one-on-one assistance to homeless individuals. The VISTA member will be responsible for maintaining a comprehensive resource manual, which has already been completed but will require modification and updating. The VISTA member will also need to do extensive training as the volunteer base for this activity is currently limited and our goal in the coming year is to take this pilot project to scale. The VISTA member will need to provide on-site mentoring of new volunteers as they learn available resources so some night hours will be required. Strong organizational skills will also be required as we continue to work with logistical challenges and methods to provide continuity and follow-up.

Volunteer Coordinator

This VISTA position will continue to develop systems and training for volunteer working within NLHHC. This will include coordinating the nightly shelter volunteers offering hospitality, volunteers working at the hospitality center answering phones or other support projects other than the Help Desk. The VISTA member will also have responsibility for coordinating one-time special projects from civic groups, scouts, schools, businesses and

individuals. Close working relationship with NLHHC staff will be a key to identify needs and assure that volunteers can function effectively as a part of the staff team. The VISTA member will

need a clear understanding of various NLHHC operations so he/she can design effective training and match volunteers to appropriate opportunities.

Ways to Keep in Touch

Sign up for or email, hhc.volunteer@gmail.com. This is still the best way to find out about immediate volunteer opportunities and ways you can help out.



Join us on [Facebook](#), just search New London Homeless Hospitality Center. This is a great way to keep up with the happenings at NLHHC as they happen.

Check out our [blog](#) at <http://nlhhcvolunteer.blogspot.com/> where issues in homelessness, poverty, and perspectives from our shelter are discussed.



If you haven't visited our website, www.nlhhc.org recently, stop by! This is the best way for you to find out what's been going on at NLHHC.



Help keep the Hospitality Center Open! We offer an easy way to donate through [PayPal](#). Simply click the image to the left and you will be brought to our webpage, www.nlhhc.org. From there, just click on the red button at

the upper right hand corner.

Help us out by donating your time, talent, or energy: Volunteer! Simply call us at 860-391-5457 or email us at hhc.volunteer@gmail.com and one of our volunteer coordinators will explore how you can best serve your community.



New London Homeless Hospitality Center

Providing a place of safety and welcome,
to our homeless neighbors

New London Homeless Hospitality Center – 19 Jay Street, New London, CT 06320

Phone: (860) 439-1573

8:30am – 4:30pm, Mon – Fri

St. James Shelter – 76 Federal Street, New London, CT 06320

7pm – 7am, 7 days a week

Homeward Bound Thrift Store - 35 Golden Street, New London, CT 06320

Phone: (860) 444-8800

11am – 5pm, Mon – Sat