

Giving help - and hope

NLHHC provided 20,550 nights of shelter in 2011-12, up 19% in two years. You made it possible.

For nearly 60 percent of our guests in 2011-12, their first night in our shelter was their first night without a home. They never imagined they'd be here.

Some had lost a job or exhausted unemployment benefits. For many, illness started a chain of events that led to the loss of a home. Or substance abuse destroyed their livelihood and social network.

We collaborate with colleagues at dozens of public and private programs and agencies to address as fully as possible the underlying causes of homelessness for every individual who needs our help. We are also developing innovative new housing options for those who need them most. This report highlights the year ending June 30, 2012: the rising demand for our services, new ways of helping people and planning for our new site.

We hope it gives you a sense of why hospitality is at the heart of all we do. We welcome every homeless individual as our guest, both at our shelter and at our Daytime Hospitality Center.

We hope this report also shows you that your commitment truly has changed lives. Whether you're volunteering in the shelter, speaking up for the homeless at a meeting, or supporting us financially, you've made a real difference. On behalf of everyone at NLHHC, thank you.

'They really started the wheels rolling for me.'

Kevin Gibson was rushed to Lawrence + Memorial Hospital for alcoholrelated crises more times than he could count. But on June 28, 2011 he started a new life. He became sober.

Kevin credits his turnaround to the staff at NLHHC – he was a guest in the shelter for a time – and to a case manager at Southeastern Mental Health Authority who got him into treatment at Lebanon Pines.



Today Kevin lives in a boarding house on Broad Street in New London and is a shift supervisor at the Authority's Recovery Café in Norwich. There, he has four words of advice for young men struggling with addiction: Don't be a follower.

59% of our guests have a history of substance abuse.

A welder for 11 years at Electric Boat, Kevin is now considering a course in counseling – another step in a very long journey away from addiction. He celebrated 15 months of sobriety on Sept. 28, 2012.

"I've had a lot of time to think about what my life could have been, and sometimes I beat myself up," Kevin said, "but I know now that it's time to try something different, to have something to look forward to." He's wasting no time. He has reconnected with family in New Haven and Virginia.

Kevin is still grateful to NLHHC and the Mental Health Authority. "They really started the wheels rolling for me," he said. "I've always been blessed by people having faith in me." Kevin got wheels rolling for others, too. His experience sparked a unique collaboration between NLHHC and the New London Fire Department to give targeted help to those who rely heavily on the ambulance and hospital for care.

Where did they go?

Many guests leave without telling us where they're headed. We do know that with our help last year:

- 73 found market-rate rentals
- 34 lined up shared housing with family or friends
- 21 found subsidized housing
- 61 moved to transitional housing (including our VA House on Mountain Avenue)
- 60 returned home to places from Boston to California.

Every homeless person needs a home.

We do everything we can to make sure each guest finds permanent housing as quickly as possible.

We encourage guests to move in with family members (and we will pay for transportation home if someone there can take them in). Guests have only a handful of other options.

Market rate housing: Some guests secure enough income to pay for their own apartment. If they need financial assistance, we can provide a security deposit and the first month's rent.

Subsidized housing: For those with no money, this is the only viable option. Rent is based on income; federal or state subsidies make up the difference. Southeastern Connecticut has a variety of units. Some are designated

for veterans, people with health problems, the elderly or the disabled. Demand is high. We help people fill out applications, get the documents they need and advocate for admission.

Transitional housing: Some of our guests need a step between the shelter and permanent housing. We work hard to help them identify alternatives and apply to programs that meet their needs. Options include domestic violence shelters, sober houses, transitional housing programs with a fixed length of stay, and live-in training programs.

Special focus on veterans: With help from the Veterans Administration, we recently bought and renovated a transitional house on Mountain Avenue in New London solely for those who've served our country. Each veteran has a room of his own in an apartment shared with others. During 2011-12, 23 vets lived here.

62% of our guests have no wages or income; 90% are unemployed.

Other housing we manage: NLHHC is developing a house on Steward

Street in New London with inexpensive shared living, thanks to a generous first-of-its-kind gift from the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme. The gift honors the Rev. David Good on his retirement. We are very excited by this project and by the possibilities for developing others like it. Residents have their own rooms and share a kitchen and living area. A live-in manager oversees the house. The arrangement keeps costs down for renters, gives them a clean and safe place to live, and provides a sense of community.

Donate your unneeded furniture and housewares

We're always looking for items to furnish our houses and to sell in our thrift store, Homeward Bound Treasures on Golden Street in New London. We'll pick up your items; call 860-444-8800 for information. In the market for some treasures of your own? The store is open Tuesday-Saturday, noon-6.

Partnerships that work

What does it take to find and keep a home? Legwork. Determination. Discipline.

Sometimes our guests can work things out with little help. Other times they turn to us. We collaborate with other agencies, organizations and volunteers whose expertise will benefit our guests. We don't work alone and we don't duplicate what others do. The network we have pioneered across the public and private sectors is cost-effective and efficient, reflecting the current best thinking on this challenging issue. Some examples:

- New London Fire Department: When a battalion chief told us his ambulance crew was picking up the same homeless people over and over, we drafted a joint plan to address the issue.
- Lawrence + Memorial Hospital: We work with the emergency room staff to identify homeless individuals who make inappropriate use of emergency services.
- Southeastern Mental Health Authority and Southeastern Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence: Counselors help us convince guests to enter treatment. They also provide follow-up outpatient care and case management.
- Volunteers: More than 150 people volunteer in our shelter and Daytime Hospitality Center. They offer snacks and a friendly ear, and help guests with everything from getting a driver's license to locating a family member who might take them in.

Every week, we bring together agencies to coordinate care for the 20 or so guests with the greatest current needs. We are seeing remarkable improvement in the creativity, timeliness and effectiveness of our joint response, serving hundreds of people over the course of a year. This collaborative program has drawn attention from social service agencies around the state.

Mental health and substance abuse: Linking people with services is especially difficult when individuals don't feel they need help. We dedicate 1.5 staff people to focus on guests with the most serious problems.

During 2011-12 we helped 35 guests find intensive mental health services and 31 find addiction services – a first step to treatment, housing and a better life.

11 percent of our guests are veterans: We work closely with them to make sure they know about all the benefits for which they're eligible. During 2011-12, 23 veterans lived in transitional housing we manage on Mountain Avenue in New London (see page 3).

Former prisoners: In July 2011 we launched a new FUSE program for homeless people who have had multiple prison stays. We've had five participants in this pilot program.

"I tell people this is a chance for them to get their lives back in order. The resources are here. I encourage everyone to use them."

Tony Szramoski Former NLHHC guest; now a case worker



An open door for those who need it most

Demand for services at the Daytime Hospitality Center has jumped 48% in 2 years. We supported 31,020 visits in 2011-12.

We provide a place of safety and welcome to all southeastern Connecticut adults who find themselves facing homelessness. Our 50-bed shelter at St. James Church is full nearly every night, often with a waiting list.

In winter, the limited number of beds doesn't keep us from sheltering everyone who needs to get out of the cold. In January, February and March of 2012 we sheltered 65 individuals each night on average. We put down mats on our common room floor and opened the Daytime Hospitality Center at All Souls Congregation to take in those we couldn't accommodate at the shelter.

Because demand for shelter has continued to outstrip our capacity, in 2011-12 we reluctantly began a waiting list for services, believing it was the only way to continue providing a safe and livable environment for guests.

Our highest priority is people who are from our region, are vulnerable because of age, gender or health, and have no other options for shelter. With intensive work to help people avoid the need for shelter and move more quickly from it, the waiting list is generally short.



"I never thought in a million years it would be me. ... You have to believe in yourself and believe in God.
That's what gets you through it."

Carol Lauderdale

She and her husband were robbed in the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York while returning to Connecticut from Florida in July 2011.

We stay focused on housing. We are trying harder and harder to help people find housing as quickly as possible. Two staff people make sure every eligible person is on waiting lists for subsidized housing. They advise guests about low-cost apartments and provide money for security deposits (see page 3.)

We serve a diverse population:

- 29% of our guests are African American
- 13% are Hispanic
- 65% are white.

There is no "welfare" for single adults in Connecticut. Those who could work are left destitute if they exhaust unemployment and cannot find a job. NLHHC is all that keeps them for having to live on the street or in a car. We are their only safety net.

When the economy improves, the need for shelter will probably decline only minimally. The challenges many of our guests face – substance abuse and mental illness in particular – pose special

needs. In addition, our new site on State Pier Road (see page 7) will have 35 beds in all, 15 less than we currently have at St. James. The smaller space meets New London's zoning requirements and we believe it is an excellent location overall – the best available for us.

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To make up for the smaller shelter, we intend to be flexible with housing arrangements. We will focus more of our resources on helping people avoid staying in the shelter altogether and on developing additional housing options (see page 3).

Many of our guests are young – 25% are under 30 and 50% are between 31 and 50.

Use of our Daytime Hospitality Center is rising dramatically. In

February 2012, for example, an average of 99 people used the Center each day. Use has risen 48 percent in two years. We see so many people because the Center offers what they need: a place to sit where

people because the Center offers what they need: a place to sit where they're not asked to move along. A place to get mail, make a phone call, take a shower, use the bathroom, get a pair of socks, log onto a computer. And a place to meet with staff, outside providers, volunteers and others who will get people the help they need.

Looking for more information?

Visit our website at www.nlhhc.org for more about our programs, our latest financials and opportunities to volunteer or support us in other ways.

This Navy vet worked hard to get his life back.



In a few years, Navy veteran Robert Larson went from being a radiation health physicist making \$120,000 a year to someone who, in his words, "quit life."

He was prescribed painkillers by his doctor, but he became addicted and his life got out of control. Robert gave up. He lost his job, his house and everything he had. The crisis landed him at the William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich, and he was referred to Reliance House for treatment.

A social worker recommended Robert for NLHHC's transitional veteran's house on Mountain Avenue in New London. There, he did so well that he became the house manager. "He ran with that," said Jessica Marshall of NLHHC. "He's a responsible guy."

11% of our guests are veterans.

Robert began to realize he had a lot to live for. His Mountain Avenue housemates relied on him. "I didn't let them down," he said.

Robert is now living in Jewett City – his hometown. He was one of the first to move into veterans' housing managed by the American Legion vets to the apartments. He's still grateful for the help he got from NLHHC

and has referred six other vets to the apartments. He's still grateful for the help he got from NLHHC, Backus Hospital, Reliance House, the Veterans Administration and Connecticut Works.

"It never occurred to me that people would intervene to help me," said Robert, who wants to return to school. "Everyone worked hard to help me get my life back. None of them would take no for an answer."

Pioneering new ways to provide health care

A high percentage of our guests face medical challenges. Some of the challenges are short-term, like a sprain or the flu, and others are long-term and life-threatening. Some guests are navigating chemotherapy and outpatient medical procedures. A significant number struggle with serious mental health challenges and are taking complex regimens of medication. Many are in the grip of addiction to alcohol or drugs.

All face serious barriers in accessing primary care and dental services. Being homeless makes it hard to get or stay healthy. As a result, many homeless individuals overuse hospital emergency rooms. Poor health also limits their ability to look for work and housing. We're finding innovative ways to address these issues.

Housing for Health: We are working with Lawrence + Memorial Hospital, the Visiting Nurses Association of Southeastern Connecticut and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide special housing for homeless individuals who rely on the emergency room for health care. A pilot program covered housing and services for three people. The number of emergency visits for the three fell from 48 in the year before the program started to seven at the end of its first year in January 2012.

Social Innovation Grant: Based on our success with Housing for Health, we are one of five sites in Connecticut to win a grant from the Corporation for Supportive Housing. The grant will fund a pilot program to see how housing and case management can further reduce inappropriate medical costs.

Community Health Center: Our new site (see below) will include a medical outreach clinic managed by the Community Health Center. It will also have a new kind of respite shelter where the Visiting Nurses will help us meet the special needs of homeless individuals who are facing health challenges. When combined with other health-related initiatives, we expect to see improved health and reduced use of the emergency room.

The next horizon for NLHHC: State Pier Road

In fall 2011 we launched an ambitious three-year, \$1 million capital campaign to buy and renovate the Sts. Peter and Paul Church in New London.

The site gives us space to work more effectively and to offer truly comprehensive services. We believe our holistic, individualized approach could become a national model for addressing homelessness.

With leadership support from the State of Connecticut, Lawrence + Memorial Hospital and the Palmer Fund, we already reached 85 percent of our goal as of June



Sts. Peter and Paul Church and rectory late last fall.

30, 2012. We are seeking gifts to complete the campaign and are committed to strengthening annual support to ease our reliance on any one source of funding. This site allows us to offer:

- A new medical outreach clinic with the Community Health Center.
- Respite shelter for those with special health needs.
- An ideal configuration for daytime programs.
- Quiet and privacy for our guests; more bathrooms/showers, better storage.

Your support opens doors. Thank you.



You support doesn't just provide shelter for our homeless neighbors in southeastern Connecticut. It opens doors. It provides the hospitality, services and follow-up that are essential for ensuring that our guests quickly find and keep permanent housing.

All of us here appreciate your commitment – whether you are a volunteer, an advocate for the homeless or a financial supporter. And we welcome your continued involvement.

Please feel free to contact me if you'd like more information or have any questions about NLHHC.

Catherine Zall, Executive Director 860-227-2188/czall@snet.net

We appreciate the generous commitment of these agencies, municipalities and foundations – and more than 350 individuals and businesses – who supported NLHHC in 2011-12.

FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES

Veterans Administration

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

U.S. Emergency Food and Shelter Program

Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Southeastern Mental Health Authority

Connecticut Department of Social Services

MUNICIPALITIES

City of New London Community Development Block Grant

Town of Groton

Town of Montville

Town of Waterford

Town of East Lyme

Town of Stonington

FOUNDATIONS

Walmart Foundation

Liberty Bank Foundation

Pfizer Foundation

Bodenwein Foundation

Palmer Fund

Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority

Young's Family Foundation

Mary Shea Foundation

Hoffman Foundation

People's United Community Foundation

Dominion Foundation

Electric Boat Employees Community Services Fund

Corporation for Supportive Housing

FAITH COMMUNITIES

First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

Crossroads Presbyterian Church

First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

Ladies Benevolent Society

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

St. James Jumble Shop

Grace Baptist Chapel

Niantic Community Church

St. Luke's Lutheran Church

St. James Episcopal Church

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Second Congregational Church Woman's Fellowship

St. John's Christian Church

Calvary Church

Mystic Congregational Church

Mystic Congregational Church Women's Fellowship

St. Sophia's Church

South Lyme Chapel

United Methodist Church, Gales Ferry

Mt. Olive Seventh Day Adventist Church

