



JOHN GRAHAM HOUSING & SERVICES

Food, Shelter, Hope
69 Main Street, Vergennes, VT 05491
802-877-2677

Spring 2018

www.johngrahamshelter.org

Stacee's Story

I've been going back and forth in my head for years, not ever knowing exactly where I was supposed to be in life or when or whatever or wherever I would end up. Struggling always with severe childhood trauma issues and never fully addressing them or having any positive role models in my life to help me get through them. I've had an almost twelve year drug addiction along with PTSD most of my adult life.

“I have peace of mind, a good job, and a whole new lease on life.”

I came to the John Graham Shelter to get my life together. Not being able to keep a job because you have addictions and mental health issues is the absolute worst, and I am definitely sick of living that life. It's tiresome, bouncing around from place to place never knowing what I was going to do with my life and where it would lead me if I didn't get help. The Shelter helped me and welcomed me with open arms. Instantly I was given the tools that I needed to put my life back in order. I began seeking treatment from the on-site clinician and co-director, Kate Schirmer- Smith.



This is the first time in my life I had a way to talk to someone about all that I had been dealing with. They even took it a step further and got me into a program outside of the shelter that really helps people who are struggling with all types of emotional boundaries. (Continued on page 2)



This Frigid Winter at John Graham:

79 people, including 31 children, were safe and warm in our five buildings.

22 people received permanent housing, including 13 children.

295 people received food and services.

Mark's Story



I have been homeless on and off since the year 2000. The last time I lived in an apartment was in 2010. For the last 10 or so years I spent a lot of time bouncing back and forth from Rutland to Middlebury. When I stayed at the Charter House the man who runs it, Doug Sinclair, suggested that I get my name on the waiting list at the John Graham Shelter.

Last May I got into the shelter. While there I realized that maybe some of the problems I've had with working at jobs and mingling with people might be a mental health thing. While at the Shelter I started working on getting Social Security disability. I met with the clinician at the John Graham shelter and a service coordinator. Weekly meetings with each of them helped so that I could get all the paperwork and meetings done to start the disability thing. It can be a lot of hoops to jump through. I am glad that my clinician at John Graham, Kate Schirmer-Smith, and my service coordinator, Arran Stokes, were both patient with me. Sometimes I would get impatient at how long everything seems to take.

I worked with Pete at the John Graham Shelter on getting a voucher to help pay rent. It took until January. A lot of people helped me with housing, like Sharon from HOPE and Doug Sinclair at the Charter House. Finally in February I found a place in Vergennes where I have been staying for two weeks now. It's a great little space. It has everything I need. Now that I have a place

to stay and feel a little stable I want to work on doing some other things in the community. The big thing is doing some volunteer work. Maybe at the animal shelter in Middlebury. I want to be around people who want to help.

“Finally in February I found a place. Its a great little space. It has everything I need.”

Getting the apartment, and the people I work with at the John Graham Shelter, have really helped me see that I can do a lot for myself. I know that this is a great opportunity. I also know that no matter what happens, the John Graham Shelter and the people who work there will be there for me.

Stacey's Story (continued),

Pete Kellerman co-director of the shelter is helping me with finding housing that I can afford. I remember one night when he stayed late working on housing applications for me and I wanted to cry. I've never once had any one person, let alone two people, really taking their personal time to help me out in that way. I know I will succeed once I leave here because there are a multitude of ways that they have helped me and I can't even begin to name them all.

This place has and is changing my life because I am not close with my family and I live in this state alone. The people here feel like family. Having a place to live with such a strong support system I feel is a rare find. You have people who truly love doing their jobs. It has inspired me to do even greater, not just for myself, but to show how much I appreciate the Shelter and all that it is doing for me. And having a safe place to live like this is a great peace of mind for someone who is trying to get their life back together.

I have only been here a few short months and I can say that I'm doing better than I have in over a decade in my life. I have peace of mind, a good job now, and a whole new lease on life. I'm looking forward to my future, because I finally know where it's going.

Kate Schirmer-Smith, Co-Director



Pete Kellerman, Co-Director



Elizabeth, Loche, & Sidi

New Co-Directors Lead John Graham

A new chapter begins in the history of John Graham Housing and Services as Kate Schirmer-Smith and Peter Kellerman become the first co-directors.

Kate is a licensed mental health clinician with many years experience in community mental health and private practice. She is providing counseling for residents at our five buildings and case management supervision for staff. Pete, now starting his fifth year at John Graham, will continue to help people find permanent housing and managing the five buildings. They will both manage daily operations and remain at the heart of direct service to residents. Elizabeth will remain as CFO.

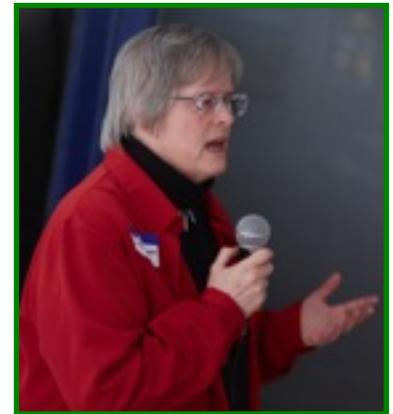
On the evening of January 25 Sophie Pickens hosted a very special event at Northern Daughters Gallery on Main Street in Vergennes. Members of the John Graham Housing and Services community – residents, staff, Board members, supporters and community partners – gathered to celebrate Elizabeth’s service and welcome the new co-directors. “We appreciate the support of a strong Board of Directors and an excellent staff,” Pete said. “We’ll continue to welcome residents into a warm, caring environment, steeped in safety and kindness, added Kate. “We look forward to serving all who reach out to us!”



Majid & his son Nima

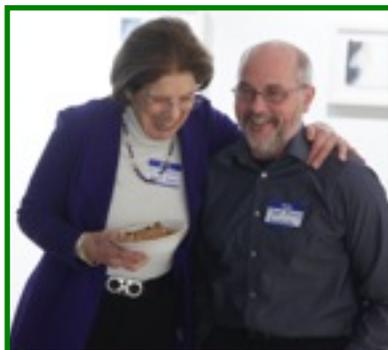


David & Abi



Jan

Elise & Ted



Allison, Dan, & Joanhina



Part of the Family

John Graham is blessed this year with a returning Vista Member who is also a candidate for a Masters in Social Work at UVM, an awesome AmeriCorp Member, and an intern -- formerly an Assistant Principal -- who is now working on a Masters in Social Work.

Quinn Salender recently graduated from UVM and joined the team in January as an AmeriCorps member. "Already I've witnessed residents who were living at the shelter when I began -- people who are inextricably linked to my first, heartfelt impressions -- move on to other opportunities and living situations," he said. "I have come to appreciate that my own contributions are a very real part of this place.



Knowing that brings me enormous satisfaction and the feeling that it is an amazing privilege to work here and be a part of this little community.

Ellen Repstead from Bristol Vermont in completing her Masters in Social Work at UNH. "I have come to understand the Shelter's mission as the ever constant endeavor to alleviate the effects of poverty through consistent and flexible support of residents and others who rely on services" she said. "The staff at JGS provide wrap around social, emotional and financial support to residents in an effort to enable



independence. I have been struck by how safe and supportive the environment at the Shelter is. Working here definitely doesn't feel like work. This is truly a family shelter, and I feel thankful to be part of the family," she said.

Chris Schembry served as a Vista Member last year and returned this year as a first year Masters in Social Work student at UVM. "I never considered studying social work before my year of service," he said. "Now I'm

gaining insights into the practice and theory of social work through my internship," he said. Chris is also leading groups at the Shelter. Over fresh, warm food he leads discussion on topics important to the residents such as stress and time management. Chris says the sessions are as informative to him as they are for the residents. "In sharing thoughts and ideas, everybody learns from each other while staying the expert in their own lives. I've seen people's willingness to listen, collaborate, and support other group members," he said with satisfaction. Chris plans to work at the Department of Children and Families once he has earned his degree.



Three newborns brought lots of joy to John Graham this winter.