



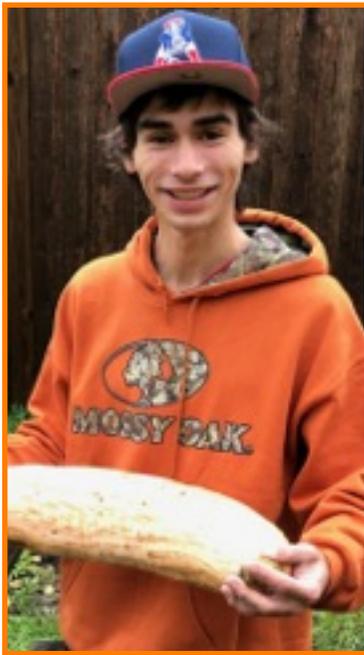
JOHN GRAHAM HOUSING & SERVICES



Food, Shelter, Hope
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Fall 2018

www.johngrahamshelter.org



Jerry's Story

I had a big family growing up in Bridport. The whole family lived on the same property. I went to Bridport for Kindergarten and then we were homeschooled. My Mom homeschooled 6 children. We had the option to go to Middlebury. But I was working with my Dad in the garage all day and the last thing I wanted to do was go sit in school all day.

When I was growing up in Bridport everything was farms and my Dad was always fixing tractors and trucks, which I do now. He'd go around to the big farms and fix stuff, still does. I started working on farms when I was 14. I was working on two big farms at once, and with my father. We milked nights at one, days at another. It was tiring. My Dad handed the work ethic down. I've also worked at food jobs like McDonalds and Dunkin' Donuts. But the farm pays better.

It was hard being in jail when I was so young. It's not easy when you get out: simple things like learning to cook, cleaning your room, finding work when you have a record. (Continued on page 2)

John Graham Invites The Community to Sleep Out to End Homelessness

Snow is on the mountain and John Graham Housing and Services is inviting the community to sleep out on December 1, 2018 to help end homelessness in Addison County.

This will be the 5th year Abi Sessions, Chair of the John Graham Board, has slept out. "It's satisfying," Sessions said. (Continued on page 3)



(Jerry’s Story, Cont.) Knowing someone has faith in you can help move it along. Pete at the Shelter gave a guy a call for me. If they know someone has faith in you, the employer will have faith too. It kind of backs you up. But if you have a record and were out on your own, it’s a struggle.

Lonnie, my probation officer, is one of the better PO’s. She’s seen a lot of what I’ve been through and she’s been through it with me. She’s taught me to be a stronger advocate for myself.

Everybody has helped. Sometimes just having someone be there means more than anything.

“For now I’m sober,
clean and working two
jobs.”

I’m thinking of Arran, my service coordinator: he’s there and he hears it. It makes the situation a lot better. Days can be trying sometimes. I’m not always asking to get things fixed. Just to have someone else hear it. Its better than keeping it all inside. People at the Shelter stop what they’re doing to hear. Even when you’re not at home, you know you are going back, you know there will be somebody who

will listen. You don’t have to keep it in.

To me the Shelter feels like a home, you’re not just thrown in a cot. Everybody works together. Which is shocking. Everybody is going through struggles but the staff understands everyone’s individual struggle and instead of making it one big scene, everyone is taken care of individually. It functions well and moves well. The Shelter got me out of jail and accepted me when nobody else would. They went out on a limb. There was more on the line with me than with the average homeless person.

I was able to stop drinking here because I knew that I couldn’t go back to the Shelter if I did. It sounds really bad but it was a really big help. Now its second nature for me not to drink. I don’t think I would get back into it. When I leave here my challenges will be to keep in touch with all the people, places, and things that got me this far: the Shelter, counseling at CSAC, the Church. I’d like to move back to Bridport and have a place of my own with my kids. But for now I’m sober, clean and working two jobs.



(Sleepout, Cont.) “Its a chance to put yourself in someone else’s shoes. You crawl out of your frosty tent, warm your hands by the fire, and know that you’ve helped homeless families with children get a home of their own. I would really like to invite people to join us.”

Pete Kellerman said that the sleepout is about raising funds and awareness. Community members can join the effort by putting up a fundraising page and reaching out to family and friends to donate. Everyone is invited to the vigil from 4:30-5:30 on the Middlebury Green. Every dollar raised goes directly to housing, he said.

“The past year has been a harsh time for too many people, Kellerman said. “More Vermonters were homeless on a cold day in January 2018 than in recent history, according to a statewide count of homeless people. Homeless families with children increased. Too many suffer from addictions, violence, displacement and trauma, and this is not acceptable to us,” he said.

Co-Director Kate Schirmer-Smith said that in addition to food, shelter and housing, John Graham offers services to help people find housing and employment and counseling to people who are in crisis or struggling with mental health issues or addictions.

“Each year we support dozens of families to get or keep housing,” Schirmer-Smith said. “There is nothing like helping a mother with her new baby move into their own place after a long difficult journey,” she said. “How would it be possible without the kindness and care of this community?”

“The past year has been a harsh time for too many people...and this is not acceptable to us.”
-Pete Kellerman,
Co-Director

To sleep out or become a fundraiser contact Elizabeth at Elizabeth@johngrahamshelter.org, 802-989-2581 or visit our Sleepout Page: www.johngrahamshelter.org/sleepout



Go Vergennes Soccer!
Josias Salomao (in white) helped power Vergennes Union's Varsity Soccer Team to the playoffs, upsetting Winooski in a 2-1 victory in the semi-finals.
Congratulations Josias and Vergennes!



Kitchen Moments: A Sense of Belonging

By: Grave Levin,
Middlebury College Privilege and Poverty Intern

When I reflect on the summer at John Graham, I always think of the shelter kitchen. I am a spatially oriented person, so I like to organize memories by place. The kitchen was easily my most frequented destination, and there was so much that happened in that one room. Simple conversations while people opened their mail and drank their coffee. Quick games of spoon and long rounds of rummy. Commiserations over the heat and the gratitude for watermelon. Dance parties. Paper planes. A puppet show. Difficult conversations about the world of the shelter and the world at large. Bad days of illness and loss. Good days of pizza and birthday cheer.



I did not know what to expect when I started the internship in early June. I had volunteered at shelters in Los Angeles before, but I was mostly handing out donations to a mass of people. I never got to know faces, much less names. I guess I thought an internship at John Graham would be somewhat similar, task-oriented, distributing resources to clients. I did not expect it to be so personal.

“Working together creates a sense of belonging and invites people to bring their whole selves to the table.”

I remember one of my first days when Pete and Kate prompted me to sit at the kitchen table and get to know residents. I sat unsure. A twelve-year old girl came in and sized me up. She said I looked bored and had brought supplies so that we could make slime together. It was such a funny, yet sincere gesture that made me feel more at ease. She welcomed me in, as residents and staff continued to do throughout the summer.

I return to these little kitchen moments, because I am reminded how many times people were willing to sit with me and share. I learned how to make pie crust and the proper way to pickle. I learned how to draw Pokémon and what to possibly do with a turnip. I learned people’s stories and I got to tell my own. I learned a lot of tangible facts about homelessness. Now I know the names of the different service providers and statistics on housing vacancies. Yet, it is these small kitchen moments of gathering around the table, even the moments of tension and discomfort, that meant the most.

The staff at John Graham work tirelessly to advocate for residents’ service needs. Working together with the residents creates a sense of belonging and invites people to bring their whole selves to the table. There was so much I didn’t know, things I didn’t know how to say, but I am so grateful for everyone, who with patience, taught me how to sit in the kitchen with openness and sincerity.