



JGHS NEWS | Spring 2023

JGHS Spring Appeal

It's often said that **Vermonters help Vermonters**. Here at John Graham Housing & Services (JGHS), we are proud to be a part of this close-knit community. However, we are also aware of a concerning trend—**Vermont has the second highest per-capita rate of homelessness in the country, behind only California**. Last year alone, the number of Vermonters in shelters and transitional housing increased by a staggering 133%.

The housing crisis in Addison County is particularly dire, with **a vacancy rate of less than 1% and rental rates that increased by almost 6% last year**. This has resulted in the average shelter stay at the John Graham Shelter lasting almost two years, which is a bottleneck for others in need of shelter.

Even if someone has a job, the high cost of living in Vermont makes it difficult to adequately house their family. For instance, **a household with one adult and one child must earn nearly \$35 an hour to afford an average two-bedroom apartment in Vermont**.

At JGHS, we serve people without a home or facing housing instability in Addison County, including those fleeing domestic violence, veterans, elders, and those with mental health disorders, physical disabilities, and/or substance use disorders. The truth is, **JGHS also serves people like you and families like yours**. Our shelter guests are often healthy, hardworking, and employed Vermonters who have recently experienced a medical crisis, job loss, or the death of a caregiver. When families arrive at the John Graham Shelter, it's humbling to see their courage and resilience.

Despite the growing number of people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, philanthropic support is down. **COVID relief funding has ended, dollars for emergency rental assistance have dried up, and motel/hotel transitional housing programs are scheduled to be eliminated**. Many families are hurting, and nonprofit housing agencies are struggling to keep up.



At JGHS, we remain committed to helping individuals and families faced with homelessness and housing instability in our home state. However, **we cannot do this work without your help**, especially during these challenging times. We ask you to consider partnering with us by donating generously to this JGHS Spring Appeal today (by mail or online at <https://www.johngrahamshelter.org/donate2>).

Funder Highlights

Vermonters Feeding Vermonters

John Graham Housing & Services is grateful for \$4,000 in ongoing funding in 2023 from [Vermonters Feeding Vermonters \(VFV\)](#), a program of the Vermont Foodbank that facilitates the purchase of high-quality fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, and dairy directly from Vermont growers to share with Vermonters facing hunger. The goal is for VFV to lead to improved health for Vermonters facing hunger, security for farmers, a stronger Vermont economy, and a reduced environmental footprint.



Beneficiaries of this funding include John Graham Shelter guests, Housing Retention services clients, and others in the Addison County community, including the migrant community. This funding also helps us include fresh items in John Graham Shelter Food Shelf deliveries—a wonderful addition to our offering of canned and other nonperishable foods.

Our VFV grant is used to purchase produce from Last Resort Farm in Bristol and Lewis Creek Farm in Starksboro, and chicken from Misty Knoll in New Haven. The farm-fresh food is used for:

- John Graham Shelter guest meals
- One weekly communal meal, including a cooking class hosted by staff
- Food delivery to 20 families in the migrant community
- Food delivery to 20 households enrolled in JGHS's Housing Retention Program

JGHS received a \$1,950 Vermont Fresh Mini Grant, also a program of Vermonters Feeding Vermonters, to purchase a new refrigerator. In large part due to the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters program, JGHS is distributing more produce than ever before—storage was at and sometimes beyond capacity.

The new refrigerator was installed in the John Graham Shelter kitchen in March. The fridge has empowered us to increase storage and grow our ability to provide produce to Addison County households experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

Fanny Allen Corporation Ongoing Support For Services

Since 2012, The Fanny Allen Corporation has provided \$10,000-\$20,000 annually in support of essential services for JGHS client families in shelter and affordable housing. There are three essential components to JGHS's family shelter, housing, and services program:

- **Emergency Shelter:** The John Graham Shelter at 69 Main Street in Vergennes is the only emergency shelter that serves families with children in Addison County.
- **Affordable Housing:** JGHS has seven properties where households can become tenants with a Project Based Voucher (PBV) or other housing voucher.
- **Service Coordination:** Each JGHS service coordinator meets regularly with family members, carrying a caseload of 15-20 households and using Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick 2013) and Trauma Informed Care (Classen & Clark 2017)—both evidence-based practices.

Each year, JGHS reports back to Fanny Allen on targeted goals. Our most recent goals include:

- 20 families with small children who are homeless receive emergency shelter
- 10 families move into stable, long-term housing within six months of entering shelter
- 90% of program participants complete an Individual Service Plan (ISP) within one month of entering Shelter
- 75% of those stably housed remain housed at the conclusion of the grant period

John Graham Housing & Services Stands In Community With GroundWorks Collaborative

On Monday, April 3, a guest at the Morningside shelter, a program of the Groundworks Collaborative in Brattleboro attacked and killed a shelter employee.

Just a few days before this tragedy, JGHS staff had mingled with staff from the Groundworks Collaborative at a statewide conference. The loss of a colleague, in our shared emergency shelter field, made us all feel vulnerable.

And yet, the staff at JGHS continue to show up for work every day. In Brattleboro, community volunteers stepped in—delivering food at the Groundworks food shelf, processing mail, sorting donations—to let the Groundworks staff grieve. Vermont’s Office of Economic Opportunity brought all hands-on deck to immediately

find temporary housing for displaced Morningside guests. In the face of an unbelievably difficult time, people came together to love and support each other while continuing to serve those in need.

JGHS, in collaboration with other shelters across Vermont, is assessing its security systems. We are dedicated to ensuring our employees have the needed training to keep themselves and our clients safe. While there is no way to prevent a situation like what happened in southern Vermont, we can mitigate the risks. We listen to the concerns of our employees. We don’t take anything for granted. We are grateful to work with such a dedicated and resilient staff.

As you are going through your day to day lives, smile more at strangers. Say hello to people. Let someone cross the street in front of you, even if it makes you late. We all need to be seen. We all need courtesy, kindness, and understanding in our lives. Be the magic person who stays present for someone who is faced with hardship.

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Please help us celebrate the individuals and families we serve with your gift today!

GIVE TO JGHS: <https://www.johngrahamshelter.org/donate2>

Donate by Mail: John Graham Housing & Services, 69 Main Street, Vergennes, VT 05491-1114

Donations may be applied to:

Elise & Jim Blair Fund (clinical services) Operations

Also, please remember John Graham Housing & Services in your estate plans.