



JGHS NEWS | Summer 2022

Meet The JGHS Summer Interns

JGHS is fortunate to have one to two summer interns each year as part of Middlebury College's [Privilege and Poverty Program](#). We chatted with this year's summer interns, Dira Mahmud and Makenna James, about their experiences at JGHS and their goals for the future.



Makenna James (left) is a senior studying International and Global Studies. Dira Mahmud (right) is a sophomore studying Geology and Food Studies.

What have you been working on at JGHS?

Dira: Mainly, I've been working with the shelter guests; we go through a lot of training and watching and learning. I watch a lot of shelter intakes, do some food boxes, handle donations, and take phone calls. I've also been working on a project to take shelter guests to a museum and have them experience something fun outside of the shelter and work. We're planning to take them to the Maritime Museum in August.

Makenna: The service coordinators have been nice enough to let me sit in on a lot of meetings and shadow their work when the clients are okay with it. This week I searched for a mattress for a client and completed an application to get it approved by Housing Solutions to be

paid for. At the shelter, Dira and I are there wherever they need us.

How have your experiences at JGHS influenced you so far?

Dira: The main thing has been compassion and the idea of helping people where they are at instead of where you want them to be. Learning how the system works for people, as frustrating as it can be, and taking pride in the little victories like if someone found a job or if they found a daycare program that is subsidized or free or helping people with their needs around appointments.

Makenna: One of my favorite classes was on urban development. Interning with JGHS has allowed me to look at a more rural population. There are a lot of similarities that have surprised me...mainly the number of Vermonters without housing or that are in unstable housing. In classes and books, we learn about what it means to be unstable in your life and how that manifests itself in problems that you see in cities, but it's been a bit of a surprise to see how unstable rural populations can be as well.

What do you want to do after you graduate?

Dira: I want to be a farmer. I'd love to own a farm. I don't know how far in my life I'll be when I get to that point, but that's the end goal. Hopefully, next year I can work for Shelburne Farms or the Department of Agriculture. This internship was a great way to see how privilege and poverty affect our food system.

Makenna: I think I've realized I'd like to do some of this work after I graduate and be super involved in the community. I'm taking Arabic as a language...there is a program in Connecticut I'm interested in where students help newly settled families from the Middle East with documents, paperwork, and translating services because it can be very overwhelming.

Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant

This spring JGHS received a \$5,000 grant from [Vermonters Feeding Vermonters \(VFV\)](#), a program of the Vermont Foodbank that purchases 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.

Our VFV grant was used to purchase cheese from Bridport Creamery in Bridport, produce from Last Resort Farm in Bristol and Lewis Creek Farm in Starksboro, hamburger and steak from Lazy Breeze Farm in Waltham, chicken from Misty Knoll in New Haven, and ground beef from Nop Brothers & Sons in Salisbury. The farm-fresh food was 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

“This grant filled a hole in the JGHS food delivery system by providing fresh produce and meat that would otherwise have been unavailable. Clients have expressed their gratitude for having healthier options,” Ray Beaver, JGHS Guest Services Manager, said.

After enjoying a meal one client shared, "This is great. I love farm fresh food, and the grocery store options are limited."



JGHS student intern Dira Mahmud getting berries from Last Resort Farm and greens from Lewis Creek Farm, courtesy of funding from Vermonters Feeding Vermonters.

Donations to JGHS also increased significantly due to the farmer relationships developed because of this grant. Most farms added extra products to our order, and some delivered additional donations independent of our orders.

Diana Newton of Lazy Breeze Farm shared about the partnership with JGHS, “Thank you for your continued support and commitment to providing quality food across Vermont. We are very grateful for all that you do!”

Please help us celebrate these individuals and families with your gift today!

GIVE TO JGHS: <https://bit.ly/grahamhousing>

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) Household Items Operations Children’s Items

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

JGHS Celebrates 40 Years (For Real This Time!)

We planned to celebrate our 40th anniversary in 2021. But when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, everything changed, and celebrating our anniversary was the last thing on our minds.

Along with Addison County's other safety net providers, JGHS spent the next two years focused on supporting a growing number of families and individuals in need of shelter and housing while implementing new health and safety protocols.

Now, halfway through our 41st year, JGHS is taking a moment to celebrate four decades of service and your support.

Data shows our critical work to create affordable housing:

- ✓ Benefits children academically and supports their overall development and well-being.
- ✓ Allows individuals to improve their physical and mental well-being.
- ✓ Disrupts the cycle of unemployment, substance use, and other difficulties that lead to homelessness.
- ✓ Increases workforce development efforts and tax revenue by creating opportunities for people across the income spectrum.

Today, affordable housing is out of reach for many people.

A household with one adult and one child must earn nearly \$35 an hour to afford the average two-bedroom apartment in Vermont.

When people have access to housing support, they overcome hardship and make our community stronger.

And yet, there aren't enough homes to meet the need.

Addison County has 25 to 40 housing units available for every 100 low-income households (at or below 30% of median income) and a less than 1 percent housing vacancy rate.

You can ensure housing support is available to people facing challenging circumstances by donating to John Graham Housing & Services. The JGHS population is our shared Addison County population. Safe shelter and affordable housing are basic needs critically linked to the personal healing that ultimately leads to happy and healthy lives. In the last four decades, JGHS has helped thousands.

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