

Director's Corner

Welcome to our new quarterly newsletter. We are excited about this new publication and hope that it will provide you with some insight on the happenings at New Hope. As the director, I am pleased to highlight a few of the accomplishments both New Hope and our clients have made. As the only emergency family shelter in Pawtucket and Central Falls, it is our mission to provide families with the vital tools and resources to begin rebuilding their lives.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and look forward to connecting with you again next quarter.

David McCreadie, Jr.
Director

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Secure Housing Environment Brings Stability to Family



“shelter-hopping” when she came across information about New Hope for Families on the Internet.

“They did an intake very fast, and we were in within two days,” Vera says as she sits at her new kitchen table and holds her 10-month-old daughter. “I didn’t want to be bouncing from house to house.”

Vera, her daughter and her 3-year-old son lived for a time at the New Hope for Families congregate shelter in Pawtucket before relocating to New Hope’s new shelter apartment location early this summer. She and her children now occupy a bright, two-bedroom apartment on the first floor of the new facility, equipped with its own kitchen and several donated pieces of new furniture.

“It’s comfortable here; it’s more private than the other location,” says Vera, recalling the shared kitchen and other common areas that families occupied at her previous residence.

Rebuilding a life

Vera says the tranquil surroundings of the new apartment are allowing her to move beyond the difficult times of her recent past and plan a better future for her family. She expects to begin working in the fall, possibly in retail, and also is preparing to enroll in a college program that would train her to work as a medical assistant.

“I want to give my kids a good Christmas,” she says in a determined tone.

Because her relationship ended and she has been in a precarious financial status, Vera has been able to stay at the New Hope for Families shelter for a longer time than what is considered an average stay there. She appreciates the program’s flexibility and the staff’s willingness to help her troubleshoot problems and to contact individuals and agencies that may be able to help her family.

By late summer, Vera expected that she would be relocating to the former congregate shelter site in Pawtucket, where New Hope for Families operates a pair of transitional-housing apartments. Her present housing status is a far cry from the shelter where she and her children shared a roof with 13 other families. *continued page 4*

System Faces Challenges in Ending Chronic Homelessness

Early efforts to build an apartment-based emergency shelter system in Rhode Island offer an encouraging sign amid many challenges in reducing homelessness in the state.

Most agencies involved in meeting housing needs for low-income individuals are dealing with the effects of a 15 percent state budget cut in housing assistance for the fiscal year that began July 1. This comes at a time when the state's emergency shelter system continues to experience the strain of serving more individuals, including a greater proportion of families and more chronically homeless clients.

According to 2005-2006 data from the Rhode Island Emergency Shelter Information Project, 6,889 people used a shelter in the state in the 2006 fiscal year, up 8 percent from the previous year's numbers. The number of families (as opposed to single individuals) in shelters has increased 50 percent since 2000-2001. And the percentage of shelter clients who have been homeless for more than two years has steadily increased, now approaching 10 percent.

"Permanent housing is what we need," says David M. McCreadie, Jr., director of New Hope for Families. Longer-term apartment dwellings such as the five units in New Hope's new Pawtucket location clearly offer an important and emerging bridge between traditional shelters and permanent housing opportunities. Of course, there is a long way to go to meet the need.

Other signs of progress have emerged. Last November, an overwhelming majority of Rhode Island voters (including majorities in every city and town) backed a \$50 million affordable housing bond issue placed on the state ballot. The state's Housing Resources Commission in July awarded \$10 million to 20 affordable housing developments in the first round of funding drawn from the housing bond. While much of these developments will target individuals at higher income levels than the population served by organizations such as New Hope, McCreadie says the availability of these units for higher-income families should have a spillover effect of freeing up other desirable housing for lower-income families.

Ongoing Challenges

It is likely that given the structural budget gap that the state administration and legislators are facing, it will remain challenging just to maintain existing state funding levels for housing-related programs. Housing organizations face other potential obstacles to success as well.

Some have suggested that the system overall has too many separate programs that unnecessarily complicate the process of accessing funds. U.S. Sen. Jack Reed has proposed consolidating the number of federal housing programs and giving applicant agencies more flexibility to use federal housing dollars in ways designed to respond to locally identified needs.

Also, agencies continue to look for the best approaches to integrating housing and support services, disagreeing at times over whether housing assistance should always take precedence over case management and other services.

But as service models continue to evolve, it is clear that longer-term housing options for homeless families as embodied in New Hope's current model represent an important advance that is bound to improve the outlook for families in need.

“Permanent housing is what we need...”

New Hope Opens Shelter Apartments, Filling Important Need for Families



The New Hope for Families shelter, which in 2005 entered an affiliation with Gateway Healthcare, has taken an important step in its effort to assist homeless families in rebuilding their lives. In July it took occupancy of a house in Pawtucket that will allow five families to live in apartment-style dwellings while they advance their education or explore employment opportunities.

New Hope relocated from a Pawtucket home in which families shared a kitchen and other common areas. At that site the organization still operates two basement units of transitional housing for families that have successfully moved toward self-sufficiency and are preparing to relocate to stable housing in the community.

David M. McCreadie, Jr., director of New Hope for Families, believes the new location offers numerous advantages for residents trying to re-establish order in their lives. “This provides more dignity,” McCreadie says. “There’s less of the stress of families being together all the time.”

McCreadie says policy-makers and housing advocates in Rhode Island are pleased over the availability of some longer-term housing options in an environment where emergency shelters remain the primary option for homeless families. The average length of stay for families at the new location will be three to four months; such arrangements are virtually impossible to find elsewhere.

“Everyone is excited about the program and the fact that we’re doing apartments, and for three to four months as opposed to a 30 or 60-day emergency program,” McCreadie says.

McCreadie explains that the transition to apartment dwellings also makes sense for the organization. This is allowing New Hope for Families to eliminate round-the-clock staffing and free up money for services, at a time when more of the dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are supporting operations rather than services.

McCreadie became director of New Hope for Families in January. He is a former president of the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless and has chaired the Rhode Island Emergency Food and Shelter Board.

Program Features

On a recent tour of the new location, McCreadie pointed out the many advantages of the apartment configuration over the previous congregate-living model. The house contains four two-bedroom apartments and a three-bedroom dwelling on the top floor. A basement area could accommodate house meetings, and offers residents space for storage.

Each apartment has a spacious kitchen and includes some new furniture that New Hope was able to acquire through a donation. Support from local businesses and other institutions has always been instrumental in enhancing New Hope’s efforts on behalf of homeless families.

New Hope’s affiliation with Gateway has helped create important linkages to counseling services and other supports necessary to help homeless families restore stability to their lives. Families residing at the shelter contribute toward the services they receive based on ability to pay.

“We meet with residents at the beginning or end of the day,” says McCreadie, who has an office in the basement of the new location. “During the day they’re out looking for jobs and in educational programs.”

The advantages of the new location illustrate the strides New Hope has made in the five years since former director Sister Marta Inés Toro arrived to a number of administrative and financial problems that had forced the shelter’s temporary closing. Today the operation offers security for families in need, and signals hope for filling an important niche in building housing stability as families seek permanent solutions.

New Hope News...

With the sponsorship of Senator Daniel J. Issa (D-Dist. 16), New Hope for Families was awarded a \$2,000 Senate Legislative grant to offset operation costs. The services at the shelter go beyond food, shelter and clothing and extend to case management and social support for the whole family.



NEW HOPE
FOR FAMILIES

Support • Growth • Stability

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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Pawtucket, RI 02860

How to Give

To make a financial contribution to New Hope for Families, please mail your donation to:

**New Hope for Families
c/o Development Office
249 Roosevelt Avenue, Suite 205
Pawtucket, RI 02860**

For more information on monetary or non-monetary gift donations, please call 401-728-8490.

Please designate New Hope for Families on your United Way Pledge Sheet.

Thank you.

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Vera says she tends to take things one day at a time right now, but at least she is feeling that she's getting her life organized. She is now able to harbor realistic hopes of finding a permanent home. "You want your own place," she says.