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April 2020 E-Newsletter



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*Shelter for the homeless; Meals for the Hungry; Support to get lives back on track.*

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## Charter House Coalition Update

Hello dear friends, we hope that you are well; as well as can be in these upsetting days.

In past letters to you, describing our mission *to provide shelter for the homeless, meals for the hungry, and social support to help get lives back on track*, we cite how year after year the demand for our services grows. 40,000 meals; 8,000 bed nights; lives changed for the better in immeasurable ways.

Over the past weeks we have still done all those things as the Covid-19 crisis has descended. But, while we have completely changed our operating model, one thing has not changed: *our guiding values*.

And it occurs to me that at a time like this, strong values that are actually embedded in our culture are so valuable. Here they are:

*We Value a safe **Welcoming** place  
Where **People** are our first priority  
We practice **Acceptance, Respect, Compassion** and **Grace**  
We honor **Discretion** and **Privacy** for all people's stories  
We grow **Relationships**  
We are a **Community** of neighbor helping neighbor*

Working by those values, our operations have had to pivot to respond to the crisis.

Long before “social distancing” was a thing, we moved our most vulnerable guests to hotel rooms where they could be better isolated than in the close living quarters of our home.

A couple weeks later, we moved *everyone* out to local hotels – with the support of the State of Vermont. Then we were recruited by the State to deploy our expert core staff to provide 24/7 oversight of those hotel sites, which continues. We provide oversight for Charter House guests, and many from other shelters around the state.

We take temperatures on a regular basis, wear Personal Protective Equipment, and leverage our family-like relationships with guests to help them practice safe behavior.

We thoroughly cleaned and equipped the Charter House home. Now it can be a safe haven if the community needs it to house medical personnel or sick people down the road – it stands ready.

We completely changed our meals program; serving the community with take out containers from the front porch of the shelter – no more dining inside. And Middlebury College prepares three meals a day for 40+ guests at the hotels, delivered by staff from Charter House and the John Graham shelter.



**Program Manager Dora Soberal takes a guest's temperature during daily health check rounds at a hotel.**



**The Easter Bunny helps us hand out Community Grill lunch on Easter Sunday.**

We've had to buy food take-out containers, masks, gloves, body suits, face shields, sanitizing products and transportation help. We have hired talented new staff, and given hazard pay raises to our core staff.

That can all add up to a lot of stress. But our team on the ground (including the state, the college, our volunteers, other shelters and social service agencies, and our guests) have instinctively relied on “Compassion”, “Grace”, “Respect”, “People” as the keywords lighting the way.

That's how a healthy family works, especially in hard times, and from where we sit the Charter House Coalition mission today is a family coming together at its best.

Wish us luck as this menace continues its path to our door.

But rest assured we are ready for it.

*Walt Stugis*  
Chair of the Board

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