

# The Shift Report—Bangor Area Homeless Shelter

## Summer 2015

**Shelter Funding:** As included in the Spring Shift Report, advocacy for sustainable shelter funding has continued this session. As you may recall, the need for a more defensible level of state funding surfaced again almost two years ago as cuts in federal funding had some directors and their boards worried about possible shut downs. Some of us then took a look at the general picture of shelter funding and decided we needed to do something. As we go to print we are surprisingly hopeful! As we go to print we are surprisingly hopeful!

State of Maine support for shelters had not increased since the late 90's, while demand and costs had risen sharply over those 15-20 years. A grassroots team convened a couple of meetings of the state's shelter directors, and from that work a proposal was drafted for consideration that eventually turned into a bill sponsored by Senator Alford and co-sponsored by members of both parties. The annual amount in the original bill was \$3.5 million per year (to be shared by our 42 shelters); that amount was determined by setting a goal that the State of Maine would contribute about \$10 for each night of shelter in all those shelters' beds (the average cost is roughly \$35). With all that has been difficult and contentious this session, legislators from both parties and others (like Maine Housing) who have a voice in Augusta have rallied to this cause. The budget bill awaiting enactment, probably this week, calls for state funding in the amount of \$2 million per year.

If this becomes law, it will signify that the State of Maine has stepped up in partnership with local communities and private citizens to provide safety and emergency services for the thousands of Mainers who experience such crisis each year. We, who for years have been critical of the State's apparently irresponsible position, applaud the Legislature for this action.

**Sustainability:** As the world around us becomes increasingly concerned with saving energy and protecting the environment, our Board of Directors and team of staff are about to launch two, "green" initiatives: a building-wide energy savings rehab, and the installation of a dishwasher in our (busy) kitchen. Much of the bigger work will focus on insulation, although efficiencies to heating and cooling will be achieved as well. A dishwasher will mean that we can discontinue the constant purchase and disposal of Styrofoam plates, bowls and cups as well as plastic "silverware." True to form, we'll be able to make these investments through judicious use of our own financial resources along with significant help from others. Private donors including Bangor Greendrinks are covering the dishwasher acquisition, and a "Grants to Green" program will match shelter funds on the energy savings work. Flagg's has agreed to donate all the dinnerware. Go team!



**Hike for the Homeless:** Wow! One thousand participants and more than \$36,000 raised! Success on a scale like this requires willing donors and supporters, and it also depends on an event team made up of dedicated, smart and hard working people. A lot of people in crisis receive help from the Shelter as fueled by such an event. We thank all involved on their behalf.

**Housing:** As alluded to in the winter edition, the Shelter's Board of Directors has in fact authorized investments in a collaborative housing project and additional outreach capacity for fiscal 2016. BAH's decision to contribute \$50,000 to a proposal for 4 new units of safe and affordable housing developed by Community Housing of Maine was matched by the City of Bangor with use of federal funds from HUD. All the partners see this as an investment in community, and for us it essentially means that we will have use of four apartments in which to place homeless guests of the Shelter. The increase in our capacity for outreach will bring more support to those who have come through the Shelter and are now housed, some of whom who would be at risk of losing that housing without this continued support.