

Leadership changing at Bangor Area Homeless Shelter (<http://bangordailynews.com/2015/09/08/news/bangor/leadership-changing-at-bangor-area-homeless-shelter/>)



Ashley L. Conti | BDN

After 20 years, Dennis Marble (left) is retiring as executive director of the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter. Rowena Griffin, project manager of the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter, will be named his successor. *Buy Photo* (http://store.bangordailynews.com/Other/Week-of-September-7-2015/51801509_Xp22Vp#4338807925_FJHC2XR)

By Evan Belanger (<http://bangordailynews.com/author/ebelanger/>), BDN Staff
Posted Sept. 08, 2015, at 6:59 p.m.

BANGOR, Maine — The Bangor Area Homeless Shelter (https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.bangorareashelter.org/&sa=D&usg=AFQjCNGjtCqVyhRH_aNIGMOysfjeyIk4zw) will be under new leadership in a few months when longtime executive director Dennis Marble retires and program manager Rowena Griffin steps into the top role.

Officials with the shelter announced the change Tuesday after a year of transition planning by the facility's board of directors.

"I don't foresee anything changing," said Griffin, who takes over for Marble on Jan. 1, 2016. "Dennis has set this place up to run at a certain standard, and that's just going to carry on as far as I'm concerned."

The board is seeking a shelter manager to replace Griffin's former position with plans to hire someone by October. Marble, 66, will retire after nearly 20 years with the shelter where he began his career in January 1996.

An announcement released by the board credits Marble with helping to increase fundraising contributions by 500 percent, bolstering transitional housing opportunities and fortifying lobbying efforts to engender statewide awareness and sensitivity for people experiencing homelessness and increase state funding.

"I think the frustrating thing is that the degree of people who are experiencing homelessness, however measured, is at least equal to what it was in 1996," Marble said Tuesday.

Marble said he leaves his job with peace of mind knowing that Griffin will be there to continue his work. Griffin has served as the shelter's program manager for the past five years.

"I'm a believer that everything happens for a reason, and I think my path ended up here for a reason," said Griffin, who previously held leadership positions with Job Corps and Tri County Mental Health. (<https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.tcmhs.org/&sa=D&usg=AFQjCNFnFUbN2HV3Me6z7z-VmRukjgblg>)

She also served previously as an adherence case manager with the State of Maine Drug Court (https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.courts.maine.gov/maine_courts/drug/family.html&sa=D&usg=AFQjCNFDiTTSF9NT4NOPxBKqJTzEJI5NVw).

Despite her experience, Griffin said she will face some challenges in her new role as she takes over fundraising and other responsibilities.

"Dennis has been building these relationships for 20 years and has relied on this community for a lot of support," she said.

According to Marble, the shelter ran on an annual budget of about \$220,000 with eight employees in order to provide emergency shelter services when he joined in 1996.

Today, it runs on a total budget of about \$700,000, operates 38 beds and has a day program that offers a soup kitchen, a food pantry and other support services for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

It also offers transitional housing options through the Cedarview Efficiency apartments located above the shelter as well as through partnerships with housing development agencies, including Community Housing of Maine.

Last fiscal year, which ended in June, the shelter logged 12,853 bed nights with 461 individual clients, and its soup kitchen served more than 1,000 people per month. Its food pantry served between 200 and more than 300 people per month.

Homelessness is not a choice, Marble said Tuesday, adding that there are many reasons for it such as untreated mental illness, addiction, medical issues and family break-ups. Underlying all of those, he said, is usually poverty.

“I would want the average person who pays about as much attention to this as I did before I worked here to know that these are lives, that the reason they’re here is based on reason and that these people suffer,” he said.

The average lifespan of someone who is chronically homeless, according to Marble, is at least 25 years less than an average person who is not homeless.

The Bangor Area Homeless Shelter will formally recognize Marble’s 20 years of service at its annual meeting Sept. 17.

Follow Evan Belanger on Twitter at @evanbelanger (https://www.google.com/url?q=https://twitter.com/evanbelanger&sa=D&usq=AFQjCNEzuK2VY_ZQE56lWEyWZJMF9dcyFQ).

CORRECTION:

An earlier version of this story reported that according to Marble, the shelter ran on an annual budget of about \$220,000 with eight beds in order to provide emergency shelter services when he joined in 1996. It was eight employees.

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(<http://bangordailynews.com/2015/09/08/news/bangor/leadership-changing-at-bangor-area-homeless-shelter/>) printed on September 9, 2015