

New Beginnings News

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Autumn 2017



New Beginnings

DID YOU KNOW?

Youth who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) are more likely than their heterosexual peers to become homeless due to family rejection.

Up to 40% of homeless youth in the U.S. identify as LGBTQ.¹

LGBTQ young adults who report high levels of family rejection are 8.4 times more likely to report attempting suicide.²

Sources: 1.True Colors Fund, 2.Family Acceptance Project

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Independence and hope for LGBTQ youth

Ethan* grew up dealing with family challenges, including frequent moves from town to town in Maine, and a father who struggled with alcoholism. Things got harder at home after Ethan told his family he was gay.

“My parents were not accepting of me,” said Ethan, “My dad started drinking even more after I came out, and he would say awful things to me when he was drunk.”

Ethan was just 16 the first time his father kicked him out of the house for being gay. Over the next year, Ethan was homeless and couch surfing. He stayed with friends or in his car when he had no place else to go. Sometimes Ethan tried going back to his Dad’s, only to leave or get kicked out again when things were too unbearable.

Fortunately, Ethan was mostly accepted by his peers and teachers at his high school. In the fall of his senior year, a teacher and the school social worker found out about his situation and together they contacted New Beginnings for help.

Mike Suter, Coordinator of New Beginnings’ Transitional Living Program, met with Ethan at school.

Ethan didn’t want to leave his town, friends, school, or part-time job to come live at the shelter or TLP in Lewiston – what he really wanted to do was to find his own place nearby the positive things in his life.

Luckily, New Beginnings was in the process of starting a project with Preble Street called the Maine Transitional Living Collaborative (MeTLC).

The MeTLC is one of 9 sites nationally chosen to implement a 2-year demonstration project serving LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth with up to 18 months of housing and support services.

stayed in school and worked on becoming legally emancipated so he could act as his own guardian even though he was not yet 18.

Ethan became the first young person served by New Beginnings’ MeTLC pilot project. He began working with Topher Balderas, the new MeTLC Program Coordinator in January 2017.

“For each youth we work with, we ask ‘what does independence look like for them?’ What do they need?” explained Topher, “All youth in the MeTLC get comprehensive case management. Some young adults might be



New Beginnings was starting MeTLC services in Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, and Kennebec Counties, and Ethan decided to apply. While he was waiting for the MeTLC to begin, he

ready for an apartment right away that they can pay for themselves; others like Ethan need a supported apartment where New Beginnings leases it and the youth pays for an increasing

*Name changed for confidentiality.

100-Day Challenge to End Rural Youth Homelessness

Franklin County, ME has been chosen as one of only five sites nationally to join the *100-Day Challenge on Youth Homelessness*. The *100-Day Challenges* are a national movement to help communities focus and work together to make rapid change around a particular issue. This challenge will launch in late 2017. “We’re excited to lead this effort to test strategies that could have positive impacts for homeless youth in Maine and rural areas

across the country,” says New Beginnings’ Executive Director Chris Bicknell. New Beginnings will share challenge results statewide and nationally, with technical assistance from *A Way Home America*, *Rapid Results Institute*, *HomeBase*, and *U.S. Housing & Urban Development*. Many key Franklin County leaders have already responded to the call-to-action. Interested in joining the challenge? Contact Chris Bicknell at 207-795-4077.



Many youth, staff, and supporters joined the celebration at the first [Pride L-A Maine](#) march and festival in Lewiston in June 2017. New Beginnings also co-sponsored the event and remains committed to welcoming all sexual orientations and gender identities.



We hosted great volunteers from TD Bank and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center who spruced up our shelter and TLP sites on the United Way of Androscoggin County 2017 Day of Caring. Thank you for making a difference for homeless youth!

Independence & hope, *cont. from page 1*

percent of the rent while they gain more independent living skills.”

Topher met with Ethan several times a week to develop a services plan and work on life skills. Together they found Ethan a therapist, health insurance, and an apartment just a 15 minute drive away from school. “Ethan is a great example of resilience. Going through the process of getting emancipated is difficult while also being homeless and trying to stay in school. But for Ethan, independence was important. Even though he was young and had been through so much, he was determined and ultimately able to pull through.”

Ethan also got help from New Beginnings’ educational support program. He made a plan to recover credits and graduate from high school with his class, even though he had fallen far behind while homeless.

“I was driven to finish and get my diploma,” said Ethan, “I’m the kind of person who doesn’t take ‘no’ for an answer.”

“Before I started working with New Beginnings, I was a mess,” said Ethan, “I had been suicidal

in the past and I was still so depressed that I just wanted to sleep all the time.”

New Beginnings helped me so much. Having a safe place to live and working with staff helped me bring my mental health issues to the forefront and start working on them. Now I can really focus on taking care of myself.”

Today Ethan is 18 and attends community college. He takes care of his MeTLC apartment, has a car, and a full time job as a retail store manager. He dreams of becoming a social worker or a theater teacher.

Ethan’s next educational goal is to get phlebotomy certification or other medical training. He hopes to find work in the medical field that pays well enough to cover his expenses, rent, and help with tuition for college and graduate school.

Ethan says that participating in the MeTLC has been like “a kick start to my life... I’ve been able to live on my own and start making my own decisions – with the support of New Beginnings staff and the people in my life who care about me.”

NOVEMBER IS RUNAWAY and HOMELESS YOUTH MONTH



New Beginnings

Do you know a Maine youth at risk for homelessness or a family in conflict?

New Beginnings can help.

STATEWIDE YOUTH SHELTER

24-hour phone referrals and family mediation services.

(207) 795-4070

491 MAIN STREET
LEWISTON, ME 04240

DROP-IN CENTER

Food, clothing, activities, housing referrals, and more.

(207) 795-6831

134 COLLEGE STREET
LEWISTON, ME 04240

5 WAYS YOU CAN RAISE AWARENESS THIS NOVEMBER

GIVE

Join #GivingTuesday. Take a stand by making an online donation on 11/28.

DONATE

Contribute new winter coats, water proof gloves, holiday foods, and gifts from New Beginnings' wish list online at newbeginmaine.org.

ADVOCATE

Commit to starting one conversation! Talk to your friends, colleagues, and local elected officials.

EDUCATE

Invite New Beginnings to speak at your community group, church, or school. You never know who may need help but doesn't know New Beginnings is here to help.

WEAR GREEN

Wear green on Wednesday 11/8. Post a selfie & share why you support ending youth homelessness. #NRPM2017 / #wearitgreen4ME

TODAY, 1.3 MILLION YOUTH IN AMERICA ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

- Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away in a year.
- Young people who have been in foster care are 3 to 10 times more likely than their peers to experience homelessness.
- LGBTQ youth may have twice the rates of sexual victimization on the streets as non-LGBTQ homeless youth, and LGBTQ youth reports double the rates of sexual abuse before age 12.
- Running away from home once decreases the likelihood that a youth will graduate from high school by 10%. Running away from home multiple times decreases the likelihood of completing high school by 18%.

LOOKING FOR MORE STATISTICS ABOUT RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH?

Check out the National Network for Youth & the National Runaway Safeline.

Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied young people ages 12 and older who do not have a permanent place to stay and who are living in shelters, on the streets, in cars or vacant buildings, or are "couch surfing" or living in other unstable circumstances.

Supporter Spotlight: Danylle Carson

Danylle Carson is the secretary of the New Beginnings Board of Directors. This is an excerpt of the remarks she gave at the 2017 Annual Dinner about why she's a donor and Board member.

I was six years old when my mother was sent to prison and seven when my parents' rights were terminated and I became a permanent ward of the State of Maine.

I bounced around so much that my DHHS caseworker called me "the yo-yo girl." The adults in my life said I was *difficult ... had an attitude* and that I was *un-placeable*. They even said I was *unlovable*, so those things became my reality.

When foster homes wouldn't take me anymore, I began my stint at group homes, crisis units, and residential facilities. But I pushed their limits until they pushed me out the door.

I was homeless at age 12, and abusing alcohol and drugs on the streets. I stayed at an overnight teen shelter in Portland, but it was just a place to sleep where you had to leave in the morning.

When I missed curfew, I'd spend winter nights sleeping

on the streets, park benches, or in the stairwells of unlocked buildings.

On really cold nights when I couldn't find anywhere else, I slept in the alleys behind restaurants, because they had vents that would blow out hot air. I smelled like old French fries in the morning, but it was just enough heat to keep me from freezing to death.

Fortunately, I had a handful of invested adults in my life making sure that I was going to school, eating, and not disappearing for too many days at a time. Eventually those caring adults worked to get me into what became my "forever home."

My adopted parents took me in when no one else would. And unlike others, they met me where I was at, instead of expecting me to fit inside a neat little box. When asked how they managed me, my dad would say "Oh it was easy - we had high hopes, and low expectations."

I didn't change overnight. It was easier for me to push someone away than wait to see if they'd abandon me, like so many others had.

I once I asked my parents what they would do if I ever murdered someone. It was a turning point—without missing a beat my mother said, "Well, honey, we'd be heartbroken and disappointed. But we would visit you in jail. There isn't anything you could do to make us stop loving you."

My parents provided for me what every broken child needs: a steadfast, unwavering, and unconditional foundation of love on which to place the millions of shattered pieces of ourselves and begin to become whole.

And I did. I graduated high school with honors. I got my Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice Administration. I purchased my own home and started a family. In 2015, I graduated from law school and passed the bar on my first try. Now I'm a civil and family lawyer and Guardian ad Litem.

When I was 21 years old and a new homeowner, I got a call saying that my youngest biological sister had become homeless. She was at New Beginnings 24-hour shelter in Lewiston where she got so



much more than a place to sleep. She came to live with me and went on graduate, go to college, and marry. She has a house and 3 kids now and a great job working to help other kids like us.

This agency intervened in my sister's life at a crucial point, so a decade later when an opportunity to join New Beginnings' Board arose, I jumped at the chance to give back. The investment of people and programs who cared helped both my sister and I defy statistics and succeed.

I am passionate about our work. But none of what we do is possible without the community's contributions and compassion. I am an example of what the youth we serve today can look like in 25 years; and I'm just one! Together, we are changing the world, one young person at a time.



On April 26, 2017 the New Beginnings Board of Directors recognized Robin Robbins with their annual award for service and dedication to New Beginnings.

For more than 25 years, Robin was a member of New Beginnings' Board, was Board President, Treasurer (twice!), Board Advisor, and a member of the building campaign committee. Thank you for your service, Robin!

THANK YOU to New Beginnings' 2017 Annual Dinner Sponsors

for their generous support of our April celebration

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Drop-In Center to honor Mary Ruchinkas

Thirty-six years ago, a young Bates College alumna was offered a job working for a newly-formed youth shelter called New Beginnings. Starting as an admin assistant, Mary Ruchinkas went on to become the agency's primary grant writer and program designer, building a model of care and organization that has since touched thousands of Maine youth's lives. At our April Annual Dinner, Mary announced publicly that she would retire in July 2017.



New Beginnings supporters and friends of Mary are invited to join the Board of Directors and staff at 11:30 am Thursday November 30, 2017 as the Board dedicates the Youth Outreach Drop-in Center in Mary's honor. The Drop-In Center will also be hosting an Open House from 11 am to 1 pm that day. We hope to see you there!

Agency News Briefs:

Staff Updates: When Mary Ruchinkas retired this summer, Rachel Spencer-Reed was promoted to Director of Development and Community Services. Any correspondence previously going to Mary should now go to Rachel. Prevention Educator Jody Pierce Glover also retired this summer after nearly 25 years of service, and we hired Olivia Loneman as our new Prevention and Training Coordinator. Other full-time hires include Natasha Riendeau, Lis Janes, and Andrew Watson for the Outreach Program, Rosie Moreau as our Shelter Coordinator, and Amber Kruk as our Development and Marketing Coordinator.

New Prevention Partnership: New Beginnings and Maine Family Planning are collaborating to bring pregnancy prevention training and technical assistance to 10 Maine agencies each year that serve youth at high risk for unplanned pregnancy. Agencies interested in joining the 2018 PREP project should contact Olivia Loneman at olivia@newbeginmaine.org

Mental Health: Thanks to the John T. Gorman Foundation for a grant supporting our mental health services as we transition to a full time clinician position to direct the program over the next year.



While in Lewiston on August 10, Senator Angus King stopped by for a tour of the New Beginnings Youth Drop-In Center and educational support services. The visit included an opportunity for King and a group of youth representing all of New Beginnings' programs to talk and learn from each other.

“New Beginnings would quite literally not be the place it is today without Mary. We will miss her intelligence, humor, and guidance, and we will carry forward her belief in youth voice and sense of service as we try to live up to the high standards and dedication she modeled

for us.” – Chris Bicknell,
Executive Director, April 2017



Save the Date: Candlelight Vigil

FOR NATIONAL HOMELESS PERSON'S MEMORIAL DAY

Thursday December 21, 2017

The first day of winter. The longest night of the year.

Join us as we walk through downtown Lewiston and stand vigil in front of Calvary UM Church on Sabattus Street.

Co-sponsored by Lewiston-Auburn Alliance for Services to the Homeless

NEW BEGINNINGS, INC.
134 COLLEGE STREET
LEWISTON, ME 04240

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SAVE THE DATE:
November 28, 2017 IS
#GIVINGTUESDAY™
Make a difference! Kick off your annual giving at NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG

November is Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month



Learn more:
1800RUNAWAY.ORG
NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG



You can help raise awareness!

Put green lights in your window or porch to show your support and share/post the insert from this newsletter to help prevent youth homelessness!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

- Nov. 1st Tune in @7am—105.5 Maine's BigZ
- Nov. 8th Wear Green Day!
- Nov. 28th GIVING TUESDAY
- Nov. 30th Drop-In Center Open House and Dedication in honor of Mary Ruchinskas

Help make the holiday season brighter for homeless youth!

Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, every December New Beginnings distributes holiday gifts to youth in our shelter, transitional living, and outreach programs in Lewiston, Augusta, and Farmington.

Your donations make it possible for more than 75 youth to each get a care package containing gifts and winter necessities, and to replenish the supplies of hygiene items and toiletries that youth need year-round.

The 2017 Holiday Gift Drive Wish List is online at www.newbeginmaine.org.



SIGN UP TO DONATE! CALL (207) 795-4077 or email: amber@newbeginmaine.org