



New Beginnings News

NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG 134 COLLEGE ST. LEWISTON, ME 04240 207-795-4077

Winter 2019

SAVE THE DATE:

New Beginnings 2019 Annual Dinner

Wednesday
May 8, 2019

Hilton Garden Inn -
Auburn, ME

Contact Amber Kruk for
sponsorship information:
(207) 795-4077

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She Followed Her Dreams In Spite of Hardships

Can you imagine being uprooted from everything you've ever known, moved halfway across the world, and abandoned at the age of 15? Beatriz was only 13 when she moved with her father to Maine from West Africa. She enrolled in school after she arrived and spoke very little English. In time her English improved. By 15, she began to feel at home in Maine.

Around this same time, her father traveled back to Africa to visit family and left Beatriz in the care of a friend. Months passed and her father remained in Africa. Her temporary caregiver became abusive which ultimately landed Beatriz in the emergency room, at which time DHHS took custody.

After two years and multiple failed foster care placements, DHHS placed Beatriz in the care of New Beginnings' Shelter. At first she struggled to make progress toward the goals she established with shelter staff. She felt defeated by her lack of success and connection in her foster homes.

During her stay at the shelter, Beatriz told staff that she would never return to a foster care placement and threat-

ened to run away if DHHS placed her again. Though staff wanted to support and keep Beatriz safe, it was clear that she was not yet ready to live independently.

Shelter staff and Beatriz discussed what goals would need to be achieved in order for her to prove that she was ready to live in the Independent Living Apartment Program (ILAP).

ILAP is a partnership between New Beginnings and DHHS to provide case management and housing support to young people who have aged out of the foster care system and still need additional support to grow into stable and healthy adults.

Focused on ILAP as a goal, and with the support of New Beginnings' staff, Beatriz became determined to become independent. Within a matter of weeks, her whole outlook changed. She met and exceeded goals, and after an extended stay at the shelter, Beatriz was accepted into the ILAP program. But not without additional challenges.

Beatriz came to New Beginnings with no documentation except an expired passport, and while the Immigration Legal Advocacy Project was working on her immigration application for special juvenile status (due to her father abandoning her), New Beginnings' staff had to find someone willing to rent an apartment to a 17-year-old with no social security number. And they did.

Despite Beatriz's setbacks, she remained committed to living independently and pursuing her dreams to one day travel the world.

Over the course of the next three years, Beatriz remained part of the ILAP program. She graduated high school, enrolled in college courses, obtained her driver's license, her green card, her social security card, and she traveled to her West African embassy in New York City to obtain a new passport.

Beatriz began working in the community, and volunteered at the shelter to provide translation services for other young people from West Africa who spoke her native language and to help them feel less alone.

She Followed Her Dreams In Spite of Hardships, *continued from page 1*

What's more impressive, is that in spite of the hardships she's endured, Beatriz continued to pursue her independence and career goals.

Allie Smith, an Education Specialist at New Beginnings helped Beatriz apply for a scholarship through the Dot Larrabee Youth Development Fund (DLYDF) to attend a job training program to obtain a career in the travel industry. The DLYDF is a fund that provides aid in support of vocational and

educational goals for youth involved with New Beginnings programs.

Allie shares, "What has always impressed me about Beatriz is that she is extremely confident, while also being down-to-earth, hard-working, and motivated. There are a lot of people, who if they came up against the barriers she came up against, would have said 'it's too much, I'm not going to try.'" Allie continues, "Beatriz had to figure out some way

to communicate with estranged members of her family back in Africa to obtain identification materials, given to her in a way that an embassy here would accept them and issue her a passport. But she was so determined, and was so committed to her love of travel and knew she needed her passport to do the program.

She just refused to be deterred. **She decided that she was going to figure out how to get it**

done, and she did!"

Now 20, Beatriz obtained the scholarship and is enrolled in the job training program she dreamed of and is looking forward to a career that will allow her to see the world.



SHIFTING THE PARADIGM: EMPOWERING YOUTH VOICES

New Beginnings began the process of creating a statewide Youth Action Board (YAB) in 2017 and will fully implement the YAB over the next 18-months thanks to funding from the John T. Gorman Foundation. The primary goal of bringing the YAB to full scale is to improve the lives of vulnerable youth in Maine by ensuring that young people with lived experience dealing with the homeless, juvenile justice, behavioral health and child welfare systems have their voices heard and can positively impact policy and service delivery.

New Beginnings is serving as the lead agency on this project and will provide support and resources to the YAB. Chris Bicknell, New Beginnings Executive Director is serving as the project leader for this 18-month project. In this role he will engage statewide systems of care at the highest levels to create a platform for YAB members to be heard. Chris explains, "We are seeking a paradigm shift in youth engagement in Maine to reshape cross-sector policies and practices that affect system involved youth in the state. We believe that a functioning YAB in Maine will create policy that is successful and informed by youths' lived experience, ultimately improving the lives of vulnerable youth so that they can successfully transition to adulthood."

Recruitment for the YAB will focus on adolescents and young adults who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness as well as those who have experienced interrelated barriers to success such as poverty, juvenile justice, and/or child welfare involvement. Members of the YAB will experience opportunities for meaningful participation in the decision-making that impacts the care they receive from these systems, and will have the support they need to become the primary change agents advocating for their own needs and the needs of their peers and communities.

To learn more about this project or to get involved please contact Chris Bicknell by email at chris@newbeginmaine.org.



Youth Action Board Specialist Search Underway

New Beginnings is seeking a self-sufficient leader to help create a statewide Youth Action Board (YAB). This position is responsible for creating, developing, and facilitating a statewide YAB.

This is a 20 hour a week grant-funded position that will last for 15 months.

Job Requirements: Two years of experience working directly with youth, including youth-adult partnerships, youth voice, and youth leadership development. Bachelor's Degree preferred.

To learn more about this and other job opportunities at New Beginnings please visit view the full job posting online at newbeginmaine.org/jobs/

HIGHLOW Project Exhibition

Highlights An Invisible Problem

As part of National Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month, this past November, New Beginnings and L/A Arts co-hosted an exhibition of artist Ned Castle's **HIGHLOW** Project exhibited at L/A Arts gallery space in downtown Lewiston.

The **HIGHLOW** Project originated as a collaboration between the artist and youth served by the Vermont Coalition of Runaway Homeless Youth programs (VCRHYP). Castle worked directly with the youth to create large-format photographs depicting re-enactments of high and low moments in each youth's life. Audio of the youth telling their stories accompany the photographs and explain each situation's significance.

Remarking on the stories, local photographer Rene Roy of Rene Roy Photography says, "The collection of stories points to how fast things can get out of hand for a young person struggling against adversity. Without a support system in place life can become unmanageable quickly. It's very sad to think that these experiences are being shared by youth in our communities; having to sleep in the bushes or in a car in the winter time. It's terrible that this is their reality."

In addition to gallery hours, Ned Castle spoke at the Lewiston Public Library on the night of November 8th. Earlier that same day, Ned and a small contingent of New Beginnings' staff and youth clients installed a temporary mural on the Park Street alley wall of the Lewiston Public Library. The mural featured two HIGHLOW images from the exhibit ("Steve high and low") that remained up throughout the month of November.

The talk, mural, and exhibition were part of a series of events organized by New Beginnings to raise awareness during National Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month in November 2018.

When asked about the importance of the exhibit being accessible locally, Rene shares, "For me, it was important to be in the space with the images. It gave me an occasion to come and fully experience the stories. Being in the gallery allowed me to immerse myself in what the subject was going through in a way that I think would have felt different online. Anyone who missed the opportunity to view the exhibit in person, should make time to experience the stories online. We need to educate ourselves about these struggles and find ways to help." To view these stories online please visit <https://vcrhyp.org/highlow-project.html>.

Special thanks to **Hebert Construction** and **BrunswickSteel** for providing in-kind support for the mural project, to the City of Lewiston for helping to make the mural possible, and to the partners who helped bring this project to Maine including: L/A Arts and the Lewiston Public Library, The Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs and the Vermont Folklife Center who originated the project with the artist Ned Castle, as well as event lead sponsors **Clark Insurance** and **Norway Savings Bank**.

Additional **HIGHLOW** coverage by the Sun Journal and Maine Public is available online by visiting newbeginmaine.org/highlow/.



Thank You

*To our 2018 in-kind and Holiday Drive donors. Your donations of holiday gifts, household goods, food, hygiene items, socks, gift cards, services, & more have made a huge difference for New Beginnings youth over the past year. **Thank you** — we couldn't do all we do without you!*

Anonymous (4)

**1st Congregational Church of
New Gloucester Congregants**

1st Universalist Church Auburn, UU

Rebecca Adamson

Rick & Maureen Andrew

Androscoggin Bank

**The Staff of Androscoggin Home
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JoAnne Badger

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**Bates College - Harward Center
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**Calvary United Methodist
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Linda DeSantis

Rebecca Dill

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Lewiston High School

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LuLaRoe Knightly

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Valen Mays

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- **Headquarters**

- **Auburn Branch**

- **Lewiston Branch**

- **Operation Center**

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Mindful Queer Collective

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Maura Moody

Mike Mooney & Nancy Brown-
Mooney

Carol & Dick Murrell

Mark Murrell

Paul & Tracey Murrell

Jen Nandhlal & Karsten Peavy

Sandy Nichols

Scott Nivus & Friends

**Oak Hill Middle School -
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Joel & David Oshansky

Gail Owen

Sharelyn & James Parker

Partners for World Health

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Thomas P. Peters II & Assoc.

Pineland Farms

Sandy Pomerleau

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Portland Observatory

Linda Prescott

Linda Provencher

Rainbow Bicycle

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RSU #22

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Barbara Ricker

River Valley Village

Polly Robinson

Shawn Ruskell & Nancy Scruggs

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St. Mary's Nutrition Center

St. Mary's Health System

St. Mary's Health System

Nursing Staff

St. Mary's Residences

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Langston Snodgrass & Tony Brown

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Sugarloaf Mountain Resort

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Dorothy Towle

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Adrian Tucker

UMF Rainbow League

United Way of Andro. County

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Victoria Mansion

Sherri Wagg

Walking Books Library

Wallingford's Fruit House

Dianna Walters

Drs. Edward & Candace Walworth

Water Cat Productions

Jim & Kathy Wellehan

Claire Wilson

Lois Wilson

Amanda Woodford

Nancy Wyman

Celeste Yakawonis

Barb Zaccadelli

Agency News Briefs

Annual Campaign Success: This giving season our Board of Directors set an ambitious goal of \$75,000 for the 2018-19 Annual Fund and our new and dedicated donors rallied in response. Their collective generosity has helped us meet our goal! Thank you to the staff of Androscoggin Home Healthcare + Hospice, Liberty Bell Moving & Storage, Inc., Joan H. & Stanley Gould Charitable Foundation, Mechanics Savings Bank, Northeast Bank, Northeast Charter Tour Employees, Village Inn—Auburn, Jane Dwinell and Sky Yardley, Jeffrey & Sonia Gorman, Owen Larrabee & Melissa Albertson, Kathy & Bill Low, Dr. Kurt Oswald, 2 anonymous major donors, and the more than 280 other individuals and businesses who contributed. Thank you for giving the gift of hope to the youth we serve.

Staff Updates: New Beginnings is pleased to announce the promotion of Allie Smith to the role Educational Services Specialist replacing Sarah Dostie who will continue serving the program as a sub, Darren Deth to the role Case Manager at the TLP, and Sean Racicot-Psaledakis to the role of TLP Youth Worker. Other new hires include Nina Michaud for the Education program, and Ian Gould who serves as our Community Case Manager for Kennebec County.

Annual Meeting: The Board of Directors will hold their annual meeting and election at 4:30pm on May 8, 2019 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Auburn, immediately prior to the Annual Celebration Dinner.

Prevention Conference: We are once again co-sponsor for the 14th Annual Maine Comprehensive Sexuality Conference on April 5, 2019 at the Augusta Civic Center. More info online at newbeginmaine.org/hiv-trainings/cse/.

Volunteering at New Beginnings: Are interested in volunteering in one of our programs or in our administrative offices? Please contact Christina Macia by email at christina@newbeginmaine.org, to express your interest and learn more about available opportunities. Christina is the initial point of contact for all volunteer inquiries.

BREAKING BARRIERS & FIGHTING HUNGER

Our Outreach Program is gaining national attention for the innovative ways they are working to alleviate hunger for the more than 500 young people who enter our Drop-In Center each year.

100% of youth who visit our Drop-In Center are food insecure. Historically, to address youth hunger center staff have been serving hot meals two nights a week; making snacks and other food available for youth while in Drop-In, and were providing transportation weekly to other local soup kitchens and food pantries.

Participation in these off-site services was limited to only 2 - 4 youth per week due to factors like seats available in our van and scheduling conflicts. And even on-site services were being underutilized by youth who couldn't be in the space when meals were being served.

Through conversations with youth, it became clear that more on-site meals and a take-home-food program were the best paths forward to expanding support for the varying needs of youth who frequent the Drop-In space.

In 2019 the Outreach Program has dramatically expanded food services. We began serving lunch 5-days a week and launched a weekly Mobile Food Pantry program—a first of its kind in the nation among Federally funded Street Outreach Programs.

These innovative strategies to alleviate hunger for our clients were made possible by the Androscoggin Bank's Main-Street Foundation \$25k for Kids grant. The Outreach Program is using these funds to provide greater access to food on a daily basis for youth and to establish a new emergency client assistance

project to eliminate barriers and help more young people access stable, independent housing.

Each Friday staff prepare food boxes for youth who have requested mobile food service and hit the streets. After only two months in operation, the mobile food pantry peaked at delivering 37 food boxes to young people who need additional support over the weekend while our Drop-In Center is closed.

Prior to the support of the MainStreet Foundation, this level of access to food was out of reach. This investment in the immediate needs of our young people allows us to help them focus on their futures. We hope to continue to sustain this level of food programming in the years to come.

See the weekly meal schedule online: newbeginmaine.org/food-program/

New Beginnings is Looking to Connect with Alumni

No one can better describe how New Beginnings can help young people than someone who has utilized New Beginnings themselves. Your personal stories and experiences can help potential and current youth as well as interested members of the community understand how New Beginnings helped you face challenges and successes in your life.

If you are interested in reconnecting, sharing your stories, or joining us for alumni events please contact Amber Kruk by calling (207) 795-4077 or email amber@newbeginmaine.org.



NEW BEGINNINGS, INC.
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Annual Celebration Dinner
May 8, 2019

Hilton Garden Inn—Auburn Riverwatch

Get great visibility for your business while making a difference for homeless youth!

Call 207-795-4077 or get details at
WWW.NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG

Supporters raise awareness at the annual Homeless Memorial in Lewiston this December.



Our Wish List

We are currently seeking donations of goods including:

Regular donation of 3 Large Pizzas (for Outreach Youth Leadership group that meets every third Monday of the month)

\$5 Gift Cards to Dunkin Donuts (useful for emergency assistance for youth who need a warm place to be after-hours)

Diapers (sizes 4, 5, and 6)

Instruments or music lessons for youth in our Transitional Living Program

Projector and retractable screen for the Shelter

Office and School Supplies

If you can help, please call

207-795-4077

to arrange a donation drop-off.

Complete list online: newbeginmaine.org