

COVID-19 REOPENING UPDATES: WE ARE ALWAYS HERE FOR YOUTH

COVID-19 has been hard on everyone, especially youth who rely on our Youth Outreach Drop-In Center at 134 College Street in Lewiston for food, support, and a safe place to be off the streets. Outreach Director Maura Moody recently shared her gratitude that despite limits on indoor services, the Outreach team creatively continued helping youth during Maine's Stay Healthy at Home order:

"We were fortunate to have received COVID-19 response support from some individual donors, local companies like Hannaford, United Way of Androscoggin County, and foundation grants that allowed us to keep the mobile food pantry available to youth who needed access to basic need items such as food and toiletries."

Because of the emergency support outreach received, the program was able to provide food boxes to 85 youth each week and support the food needs of youth in our residential locations who were sheltering in place. The program also supported the weekly distribution of nearly 600 donated prepared meals in greater Lewiston-Auburn over the summer.

On June 1st, the Drop-in Center began a limited re-opening while following social distancing and agency/state safety requirements (e.g. symptom check before entry, masks, sanitizing, etc.). Drop-in is currently open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1:30-5 pm for a limited number of youth at a time, based on social distancing. On Tuesdays and Thursdays outreach staff are doing street outreach, case management, and preparing for the mobile food pantry delivery which continues on Fridays with weekend food boxes for youth.

Pictured right: Outreach workers delivering food boxes to youth during Maine's Stay Healthy at Home Order



Marian Carney and Chris Bicknell at the dedication, August 5, 2020

Welcome to Marian's Place

On August 5, 2020, New Beginnings hosted a private socially-distanced outdoor ceremony to dedicate our youth emergency shelter in honor of former Shelter Director Marian Carney's legacy of serving Maine's vulnerable youth with a safe place where families in crisis could find support to keep kids off the streets. Be sure to view the live taping of the ceremony at: newbeginmaine.org/marians-place-dedicated

Executive Director Chris Bicknell remarked, "From 1996 until her retirement this spring, Marian designed and maintained a loving, home-like experience at the shelter that makes youth feel cared for, respected and valued. Because of her long-standing commitment to the youth we serve and our agency values, the shelter will now be known as Marian's Place."

Operating continuously since 1980, Marian's Place is the only youth program in Maine licensed to provide 24-hour shelter services and support to adolescents and young adults.

Know a young person ages 12-19 in need of shelter or family mediation? Call our 24-hour Helpline at 207-795-4070.

Annual Dinner Update

New Beginnings' Board of Directors has decided not to hold an in-person annual dinner in 2020. We are still seeking sponsors for our 40th anniversary print and online storytelling project, rather than for an in-person event. Interested? Please contact Nicole Pollock at nicole@newbeginmaine.org or 207-795-4077 x209

Turning Signs of Destruction into Signs of Hope



Under the spring stay-at-home order our agency headquarters and Drop-in Center (the Ann Geiger Center for New Beginnings at 134 College Street in Lewiston) was closed to all but essential staff use. As we shared in a May Facebook post, we unfortunately experienced multiple episodes of vandalism and had to temporarily board over ground-floor windows to prevent more damage during security upgrades.

During that time, several members of our Youth Action Board (YAB) expressed an interest in painting murals on the boards to send a message of hope and let the community know that New Beginnings was still here for youth in this time of crisis.

Executive Director Chris Bicknell loved their idea. Since the boards on the windows were temporary, he suggested that instead they could create the murals on large sandwich boards made from the removed plywood. Staff supported the YAB's vision and worked to build and prime the boards that came off the windows. Chris invited other Lewiston-area nonprofits to paint and host a "Sign of Hope" at their locations too.

YAB members got to work designing the murals that now sit in front of our building, and the story was covered by the Sun Journal. With resources at hand and the creative drive of youth leaders and staff, the Signs of Hope became a reality - sharing a little beauty and inspiration throughout Lewiston-Auburn.

See more photos at: newbeginmaine.org/signs-of-hope

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Please email nicole@newbeginmaine.org
and request to remove/update your contact info.

Looking to the Future: Peer Educator Training

In the 1990s and 2000s, New Beginnings' Prevention Education offered training for youth to become peer educators and help other young people reduce their risks for HIV infection. In 2020-21, we are building on that history by piloting a new Peer Educator project, funded in part through a grant from Maine Family Planning's Pregnancy Prevention grant (PREP). This summer we recruited the first of three new peer prevention educators to get trained for this role. Trained peer prevention educators will eventually be available to discuss reproductive health, including contraceptive methods, harm reduction strategies, and STI/HIV prevention with other youth and to co-facilitate groups for their peers with staff.

Prevention and Training Coordinator, Kris Pitts, meets weekly with the peer educators and tailors their training for their specific needs. "The goal is to give youth someone they may feel more comfortable to approach or ask questions to," says Pitts. "The current Peer Prevention Educator has participated in the Certificate on Human Trafficking (CHT) training series and is planning to participate in an upcoming Be Proud, Be Responsible (BPBR) Facilitator Training." The CHT training provides a context for the intricacies of human trafficking, an experience shared by many runaway and homeless youth, while BPBR Facilitators engage youth in a mix of critical thinking and practical skills geared towards understanding risk factors and prevention methods related to pregnancy, HIV, and other STI's. "We really hope this pilot goes well. Looking forward, this could be a great outlet for youth we serve to gain important skills while improving youth health outcomes."

For more information about Prevention & Training services, or to be added to the training mailing list, please contact Kris Pitts at kris@newbeginmaine.org.

