

NB youth grows skills at local farm

Lynn* was 17 years old when she came to Marian's Place. "Before NB I was struggling to graduate and was in a rough living situation that was emotionally and physically exhausting. I finally decided it was time for a change. I ended up coming to New Beginnings because I saw a ton of opportunities to help me with school and work or just life in general."

Lynn was not able to reunite with her family, so when her time at Marian's Place was up, she was accepted into the Transitional Living Program (TLP) licensed apartment site for youth under 18 in, Lewiston. The TLP provides 18 months of supportive housing to help youth develop the independent living skills they need to live on their own.

At the TLP Lynn was quiet but very driven—she wanted to take full advantage of the supports that NB offered. She worked with her case manager to set goals for herself (finishing school, getting her driver's license, finding a job) and created a plan of how to reach those goals.

With a clear path laid before her, Lynn began working with NB's Youth Education and Employment Services (YES) staff to stay in school and work toward employment. YES staff offer youth in all of NB's programs tutoring, help with homework or getting connected to school or training, and job search/pre-employment support. Lynne told YES staff that she had a background in farming and wanted to pursue a career that aligned with her passion.

During last year's COVID-19 lockdown, a local farmer had been donating microgreens to NB programs while his usual restaurant customers were closed. That farm had recently reached out to YES Program Coordinator Allie Smith to see if NB might have any youth interested in a paid entry-level internship at the farm. Allie immediately thought of Lynn and let her know about the opportunity. With Allie's help, Lynn worked on a cover letter and resume and applied for the job. The farmer came and interviewed Lynn at the YES



"I just love that my hands are always in the dirt and I'm always learning something."

classroom, and based on her farming experience, hired her on the spot!

Lynn is now happily employed at the Auburn farm. "I just love that my hands are always in the dirt and I'm always learning something. It's just fun all around." Lynn is still working towards

See FARM on Page 3 ►

SAVE THE DATE *for these upcoming NB events:*

NEW BEGINNINGS VIRTUAL SILENT AUCTION – August 6–13

More details coming soon!

FORAGE MARKET RE-OPENING FUNDRAISER – Date TBA

More details to come!

LOST VALLEY FUNDRAISER NIGHT – September 8

Lost Valley will donate 15% of all food purchases to New Beginnings!

So come out, bring the family, and enjoy a nice evening while supporting a great cause!

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*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.



Growing New Beginnings

This spring and summer, New Beginnings' Community Services Department (Prevention & Training, Youth Action Board, Education & Employment services, and the Street Outreach Program) has been working together to improve the outdoor spaces at our Lewiston Drop-In Center and at NB's Residential

locations. Education & Employment staff and some very motivated youth have begun a summer gardening program to make NB outdoor spaces more inviting for all.

With support from MOFGA's Russell Libby Agricultural Scholar grant recently awarded to NB's Education & Employment Specialist Signe Lynch and community donations, raised beds were built and filled in the Drop-In Center backyard at 134 College Street. Outreach and education/employment staff and youth have been working together to design creative methods for vertical gardening along the backyard shed using chicken wire and hanging containers. The team also plans to establish new raised beds at the TLP's 436 Main Street location. Both sites will grow vegetables,

herbs, and flowers that can be utilized for cooking and youth projects, and offer culturally sensitive, educational, and engaging experiences during the summer.

Staff began this Summer Gardening Program to connect youth from Marian's Place, TLP, and Outreach

with educational experiences related to agriculture and food systems. With goals to inform, refer to, and visit local sites that focus on food systems so youth can form a connection with a variety of community partners as well as

experience what agriculture looks like in different scales.

Outreach and Education/Employment staff and youth began growing plants from seed in the spring, and are working together to maintain the raised beds through weed management, watering, harvest, preparing and sharing food grown on-site. By engaging in the growing process every step of the way, youth have opportunities to foster awareness of food systems, practice relevant life skills related to growing one's own



food, and connect youth to other local food resources. Youth from Marian's Place and TLP are also going on weekly summer field trips to sites like Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in New Gloucester to learn about their herb gardens, St. Mary's Nutrition Center in Lewiston to see local community gardens in action, or Wolf's Neck Center in Freeport where youth will see a large-scale dairy and vegetable farm along the coast.

To make growing food accessible to as many NB youth as possible, TLP staff and youth worked together to put in raised beds and clear a section of the yard to grow native pollinators and sunflowers. TLP youth can grow vegetables and herbs to harvest and bring the experiences and excitement they gain through their small-scale garden to the summer field trips. NB staff are also exploring collaborations with St. Mary's Nutrition Center for sharing youth gardening opportunities this fall.

The raised bed gardens aren't the only things growing! The Drop-In Center outdoor yard is coming to life with picnic tables, shade canopy, and new murals. Outdoor art is being co-designed by youth and Prevention & Training, outreach, and technology staff to bring color and positive messages onto the walls surrounding the Drop-In yard.

New Beginnings is grateful for a community-building grant from Healthy Neighborhoods for the mural project and donations of compost from Garbage-to-Gardens and Coast of Maine for the raised beds. We hope these projects will establish beautiful and therapeutic spaces at our Lewiston sites where youth experiencing homelessness can access food, creative outdoor learning spaces, and safe relaxation.

To donate supplies for art or garden projects: contact Development and Marketing Coordinator Nicole Pollock at nicole@newbeginmaine.org

MISSION MOMENT

Kendall is a steady presence for youth

Jessy Kendall has worked for New Beginnings' Outreach program since 2004. But Jessy is so much more than a seasoned street outreach Youth Worker! Jessy is an artist, musician, and active community volunteer in Lewiston-Auburn who shares his kindness and creativity with others.

Recently Jessy stopped by to say hello and check on the progress of a youth living in a residential placement outside of New Beginnings. Jessy was immediately struck with how alone and afraid the youth seemed in their new place. As the youth fought back their tears, Jessy realized how fragile a supportive safety net can be. He was glad that he could be a steady presence in the life of this youth, who had already gone through so many changes so quickly.

"Placing youth in housing is just the first step and only half of what they may need. As a youth transitioning to adulthood, fashioning your own foundation without the help of supportive adults is a gamble. It is a tough job! Every now and then you need to check in, feel normal, and remember your own sense of history and belonging."

Thank you, Jessy, for embodying New Beginnings' mission of partnering with youth to create lasting change so all youth have safe places to live and opportunities to grow!



Jessy Kendall

YHDP UPDATE

MaineHousing awards grants totaling \$3.2M

MaineHousing has awarded \$3.2 million to four organizations to address youth homelessness in Maine. Penquis, Preble Street, Shaw House and Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), and Volunteers of America: Northern New England were awarded funding to create new and innovative programs to end and prevent youth homelessness.

The funds are available as a result of the \$3.35 million dollar U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YDHP) grant. New Beginnings, the only emergency shelter licensed for 24-hour care for youth in Maine, was critical in getting the funding to Maine.

"Since 2018, New Beginnings has worked with over 40 community partners to bring these much-needed

resources to end and prevent youth homelessness to Maine," said New Beginnings' Executive Director Chris Bicknell. "This funding is the culmination of years of effort and it's the first step in a statewide strategy that will dramatically change the lives of children and youth who are at risk for homelessness in Maine. New Beginnings is proud to have played a leadership role in this important effort."

These grants were selected for funding by a statewide group representing MaineHousing, the Maine Department of Corrections, the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, local municipalities, nonprofit youth serving agencies, and most importantly, youth with lived experience in homelessness.

AGENCY BRIEFS

Our team welcomed many new faces since our last update. For details, please visit: newbeginmaine.org/welcome-to-the-team

We're thankful for 2021 grants from: Bangor Savings Bank, Frances Hollis Brain, Community Credit Union, Atlantic Charitable, Town Fair Tire Foundation, and the Lewiston CBDG. Thank you to the John T. Gorman Foundation for a \$20,000 general operating support grant and to the Stephen & Tabatha King Foundation for a \$15,000 community services grant.

Our 2021 Virtual Annual Meeting was held on May 12. The program was a great success and can be viewed at: newbeginmaine.org/2021-virtual-annual-meeting/

Please welcome **Detective Joseph Philippon**, of the Lewiston Police Department, to our **Board of Directors**.



Detective Philippon

Farm *Continued from Page 1*

her other goals including taking drivers education and getting her diploma. She's planning to graduate from high school this summer. "Everyone at NB has been so supportive and helpful," said Lynn, "I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for NB's support and my own motivation."

Are you a local business owner looking for entry level employees?

New Beginnings is hoping to foster more relationships between NB youth and local employers! To learn more, or share a possible opportunity for youth employment, please contact Education and Employment Program Coordinator Allie Smith at: allie@newbeginmaine.org or 207-795-4077 x214



134 College Street
Lewiston, ME 04240

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partners with youth to
create lasting change
so all youth have a
safe place to live
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Check out our Virtual Silent Auction, August 6–13:
NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG/2021-VSA

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