

We partner with youth to create lasting change so all youth have a safe place to live and opportunities to grow.

Supporting Youth in Rural Areas of Maine

Sarah* was your average high school student living at home when her life was turned upside down. 2020 had proven to be a challenging year for everyone, especially in rural areas of Maine where there can be fewer resources available. A mix of unemployment, a housing crisis, and the pandemic led to homelessness for many families who were already struggling. Rural Maine youth were no exception. Sarah’s family couldn’t seem to make ends meet and it became apparent that due to lack of support and poverty, living with her own family was no longer an option. “Life was rough, dreadful. I honestly didn’t want to be here anymore. I had no hope for myself.” Sarah began bouncing between temporary living situations, staying with friends, or occasionally with her boyfriend’s family. She was going to school full-time and had a part-time job. Without transportation, finding a balance to do it all was becoming a challenge. Donna Bilodeau, New Beginning’s Rural Street Outreach Program Coordinator, remarked, “Most rural communities in Maine do not have access to public transportation, it makes it tough for community members, especially unhoused youth without a license or vehicle, to get around. The commutes are longer and can be very dangerous on foot with no sidewalks.”

In 2022, during her senior year in high school, the McKinney-Vento Liaison

for her school identified Sarah as an unhoused youth and referred her to the New Beginnings Rural Street Outreach Program. “Connecting with McKinney-Vento liaisons in schools that have identified young people that we could work with is so crucial to our work in rural counties. It’s nice to hear young people, community members, and service providers becoming more familiar with our name,” shares Donna Bilodeau. In 2023, the New Beginnings Rural Street Outreach Program team expanded its service locations to serve not only Franklin and Kennebec counties, but now also Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Somerset, and Waldo counties. Services in new counties include information and resource connection, as well as case management.



“New Beginnings taught me how to live and how to be responsible.”

Sarah began case management and learned about the resources available to her that could help get her back on her feet. She was introduced to the Transitional Living Program, and in February of 2022 she moved into

Rural Youth
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SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER

Understanding Self-Injury Behaviors.....**10/11**

NOVEMBER

Runaway & Homeless Youth Awareness Month

Youth Fair.....**11/1**

Open House**11/8**

Wear Green Day.....**11/16**

Giving Tuesday.....**11/28**

DECEMBER

Lewiston-Auburn Candlelight Vigil.....**12/21**

**Youth name changed to protect privacy*

AGENCY NEWS BRIEFS

STAFF UPDATES

New Beginnings recently welcomed Stephanie Saltzman as our Director of Finance and Administration. Please direct any correspondence that would previously have gone to Karen Caldwell to ssaltzman@newbeginmaine.org or

contact Stephanie at 207-795-4077. We also welcomed Ron Gagnon as our Staff Accountant. At Marian's Place Emergency Shelter, Hanna Jud became our new Program Coordinator. The Street Outreach Program in Lewiston welcomed Brady Barre as their new

Case Manager in the Drop-In Center and Jarrod Warren became the Lead Youth Worker. Several Youth Workers came onboard to aid in the expanded hours, including Jason Lamontagne, Kaitlin Lagueux, Kara Birks, and Eli Hathaway.



Pictured above: New Beginnings youth and staff enjoyed doing many summer activities including body painting.

Rural Youth

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a single person unit and was able to safely stay in her community with people she knew and loved. With the right supports in place, Sarah began to thrive. "New Beginnings taught me how to live and how to be responsible. I wouldn't be capable of living independently like I am now if it weren't for them." **Sarah was the first person in her family to graduate from high school, something she is very proud of.** She mastered the skills needed to live as an independent adult, got a full-time job, and secured a two-bedroom apartment for herself that she will be moving into upon exiting the Transitional Living Program. "Before this program I couldn't keep a job for the life of me. I've also gotten a lot better at managing my emotions." Sarah has proven that so much can change over the course of a year with the right support system.

For more information about New Beginnings' Rural Street Outreach Program, contact the Rural Street Outreach Program Coordinator, Donna Bilodeau, at dbilodeau@newbeginmaine.org or call (207) 347-9557

DECEMBER 21, 2023 | 4:30PM - 5:30PM

NATIONAL
HOMELESS PERSONS'
MEMORIAL DAY

THE FIRST DAY OF WINTER.
THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR.



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 programs in Lewiston, Augusta, and Farmington, as well as in case management.

This year we need your support to make it possible for 100 youth to each get a care package containing gifts and winter necessities.

SIGN UP TO DONATE!

(207) 795-4077 or nicole@newbeginmaine.org

Learn more online at:

[NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG/HOLIDAY](https://www.newbeginmaine.org/holiday)



NOVEMBER IS...
RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH
PREVENTION MONTH

 **New Beginnings**

OPEN HOUSE

12 pm - 1 pm | Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023 | 134 College St. Lewiston



Join New Beginnings' Board and staff for our annual Open House in-person in Rowe Hall (gym). We're excited to have each of our programs and the Statewide Youth Action Board providing activities and information. Please stop by and learn more about our work!

RSVP at newbeginmaine.org/events; for more info email nicole@newbeginmaine.org or call 207-795-4077.

L/A Youth Services Information Fair

2 pm - 4 pm | Wednesday Nov. 1, 2023 | Agora Grand, Lewiston

The Statewide Youth Action Board (YAB) and New Beginnings invite young people ages 14-21, local providers, and the Lewiston/Auburn community to a Youth Services Info Fair.

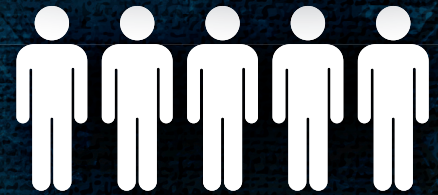
Youth can join us to meet local youth service providers, win door prizes, and more!

To learn more or request a table at the Info Fair for your L/A youth agency, please contact YAB Specialist Matthew Wyman at mwyman@newbeginmaine.org.

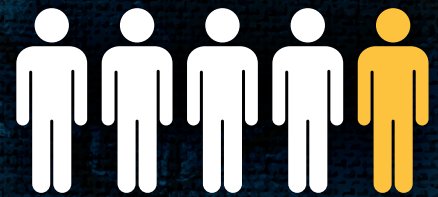
Find out how you can help this November at: NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG/NRPM2023

RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH PREVENTION MONTH

1 IN **10**



YOUTH



BECOME **HOMELESS** EACH YEAR

ONE IS TOO MANY

WE CAN HELP:

**24-HOUR HELPLINE
(207) 795-4070**

*We can ALL help end
youth homelessness*

New 
Beginnings

*Serving runaway & homeless
youth since 1980*

newbeginmaine.org

Youth Action Board: The First Five Years

Five years ago, New Beginnings launched the Maine Statewide Youth Action Board (YAB) program with help from the John T. Gorman Foundation and created a driving force for channeling Maine youth voices into creating positive change - empowering young people to be the change they want to see in their communities.

Officially founded in 2018, the YAB emerged as a collaborative effort between New Beginnings and passionate young leaders to engage, support, and uplift youth. The YAB's mission was clear from the start - to provide a platform for some of Maine's most overlooked and marginalized youth to have an active hand in shaping policies, advocating for young people like them, and providing critically needed youth voices around legislation and provider-focused training that affect Maine's young people.

But just who makes up this Youth Action Board?

Today, the YAB is a small but mighty team of seven young people between the ages of 14 and 24, who are all from Maine. Members from all across the state, stretching from Cumberland to Aroostook county and many communities in-between. While they all come from different places, what unites them is a shared passion. YAB Members are young people who have lived experiences around housing instability/homelessness, incarceration, poverty, mental health institutionalization, child welfare, and/or other systems. With these experiences, the YAB is able to take what they have experienced and turn it into

advocacy for others. Together, they stand up for youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and help provide and design education around working with and uplifting those youth.

By actively engaging and collaborating with state agencies, community organizations, educational institutions, and everyone in-between, the Maine Statewide Youth Action Board has served as a driving force behind positive change in the lives of countless young people. From helping to craft Maine's HOME document, to shaping Maine's youth coordinated entry system, to building custom trainings around working with marginalized youth, the dedicated leaders that make up the YAB's Membership have proven that their experiences and hard work are invaluable to Maine's campaign to prevent and end youth homelessness.

The Youth Action Board's current projects include helping to build Maine's youth coordinated entry system, creating trainings for working with specific marginalized populations of youth (namely LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse youth), and serving as youth representatives on a number of important committees and boards - including for the MCOC.

With their ongoing projects and steadfast participation in key committees, meetings, and boards, the YAB continues to light the way toward a brighter, more equitable future for Maine's young people. Their journey, from its inception to this present moment, underscores the enduring impact of unity, resilience,

and the unbreakable spirit of young leaders dedicated to rewriting the narrative for a better tomorrow.

The Maine Statewide Youth Action Board (YAB) continues to offer young people paid opportunities to consult and advocate to ensure youth/young adult expertise and voice is valued and 'at the table' where decisions are made that impact Maine youth - including through a partnership with ME Dept. of Education providing technical assistance to McKinney-Vento Liaisons statewide. YAB is recruiting young adults with lived experience of being unhoused or utilizing systems of care (child welfare, corrections, etc.), in particular from Maine counties other than Androscoggin, Aroostook, Cumberland, Franklin, and Penobscot. Contact YAB Specialist Matthew Wyman at mwyman@newbeginmaine.org or call/text 207-402-9106 for more info or to apply.



Pictured above: (from left to right) NB Alumni, Maddie, and YAB Members Beverly and Julia speak about the YAB and the change it's had on their lives at the 2023 Annual Celebration.

**HELP US
REDUCE COSTS!**

If the person receiving this newsletter should no longer receive our mailings, please email *nicole@newbeginmaine.org* with a request to remove/update contact info.



2022 Annual Report

Check out the full Annual Report at newbeginmaine.org/2022-annual-report

“Everyone at NB is so supportive and helpful, even if you just need someone to talk to, they’re there for you.”



Youth and families served this year by New Beginnings.

456

18,199

Meals served at the Shelter and Outreach Drop-In Center.

% of youth served reunified with family or acquired safe housing.

80

9,141

Nights of housing where youth were safe and off the streets.

378

Individuals contacted via street outreach in urban and rural communities.