

An Inside Look: Building Better Futures for Struggling NH Veterans

In 2019, Catholic Charities NH acquired Manchester-based Liberty House, which provides transitional housing and a wide range of support services for at-risk veterans across New Hampshire. A lot has changed since then – a new home, expanded programs and more resources to meet the increasing demand for its services. To learn more, we recently caught up with Jeff Nelson, Liberty House's executive director:

For those who may be unfamiliar with Liberty House, can you briefly explain what you do?

Liberty House provides substance-free transitional housing, a safe and supportive environment and various forms of assistance to help veterans facing homelessness, substance use and difficult life situations get their lives back on track, regain their independence and build stable futures.



Jeff Nelson

What type of veterans do you serve?

Our sober transitional living program helps homeless veterans, many of whom are in recovery. They're struggling financially and often in poor physical and mental health. Most lack an adequate family or personal support structure. We're here to walk alongside them and advocate for them as they move from recovery towards independence. Since 2004, we've served more than 370 resident veterans through this program.

We also regularly work with veterans in the community who may be on more solid footing but still require support around everyday needs. Most are on fixed incomes and also have difficulty getting by financially. We provide them with assistance such as food, clothing, transportation (gas cards, bus passes), camping gear and community referrals.

How do you help your veteran residents move their lives forward? What does "success" look like?

Every veteran is different, but we share the common mission of guiding them on their journey to recovery and personal successes. This could mean getting them to a place where they are able to afford their own apartment or live on their own. It could mean helping them get a job or secure a steady income. For some, it's learning how to establish a budget and save money for the first time. For others, it's rebuilding relationships and trust with their families and loved ones that may have been strained due to their substance use.

What's most rewarding about the work you do?

Regularly seeing the bright-eyed, clearer-thinking veterans who are putting the pieces of their lives back together after so much hurt and pain. These are the same individuals who came into our doors unshaven, clothes dirty, eyes down, ashamed, and unsure of themselves. Seeing them standing up straight, hopeful and confident is amazing. It's like seeing a whole different person.

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How is Liberty House different from related service providers?

Liberty House is one of the only sober residential programs for veterans in New Hampshire. We accept no state or federal funding for our operational expenses. This allows us to maintain our zero-tolerance behavioral standards for residents, who are required to remain sober throughout their time with us.

How has the acquisition allowed you to better serve the needs of local veterans?

The past year and a half has been a whirlwind – not only with the pandemic but also how we've been able to scale up and further develop our programs in such a short time window. Thanks to Catholic Charities NH, we had the opportunity to move into a 16,000-square-foot home in Manchester – that more than doubled our residential capacity – and then renovate it to meet the needs of our program. We're now in a great position to be able to serve veterans in new ways and make a lasting difference in so many more lives.

Have you seen the demand for your services increase because of the pandemic?

Yes, we've certainly seen the adverse impact of the pandemic among our veteran community. The past year was even more difficult for veterans who were already struggling. Many who were on stable ground lost their jobs, fell on tough times financially and experienced other forms of significant hardship. For others, the isolation, trauma and uncertainty over the future negatively impacted their mental and physical well-being, and often led to substance use. Homelessness among veterans also increased nationally in 2020. While veterans make up approximately six percent of the US population, they encompass eight percent of the nation's overall homeless population. New Hampshire is certainly not immune to this troubling trend.

What is one thing about Liberty House someone may not know?

Many people may think we are a shelter, when in reality, we're so much more than that. We're a transitional house with a comprehensive program wrapped around it that involves a great deal of work and commitment from our residents to move their lives forward. Residents don't stay with us overnight. Most of the time, it takes seven or eight months. Our veterans really invest in the process of recovery and take advantage of our services. We're a strong community where everyone treats each other like family and is committed to seeing everyone succeed.

What's your vision for the next few years?

We're looking forward to bringing meaningful change to even more local veterans. Beyond the expanded residential capacity of our building and food and clothing pantry for community veterans, we're very excited about our 2,000-square-foot recreational center. We envision this becoming a central hub for much-needed veteran resources across New Hampshire, whether it's through hosting recovery meetings, community gatherings, job skills seminars, educational workshops, art therapy, or simply becoming a place where veterans can come together and support each other.



How is donor support so critical?

Without the support we receive from our incredible donors, we wouldn't be able to do the work that we do, nor would many of our veterans have access to the resources they need. We know how important it is to keep the door open and continue to grow. We can't do that without our supporters. It's great to see a community so diverse come together and demonstrate that our veterans deserve our help. There's nothing more valuable than stepping up and helping others.

3 Ways (Among Many) You Are Changing Lives



80% of clients in our *Community Services* program have insufficient income to meet even their basic needs.

But because of you, we're able to provide support services that address their urgent needs and case management services to help shift the fundamental dynamics of their lives to create paths to long-term success.



93% of *CareGivers* clients live alone and fight isolation.

But because of you, they are accessing the resources – food delivery, rides to medical appointments and emotional support – to help them independently live in their homes and know that they aren't alone.



55% of *Mental Health Counseling Services* clients come to us with some form of adjustment disorder.

But because of you, they're discovering the skills necessary to better cope with life's difficult situations, find a greater sense of peace and improve their overall quality of life.

CCNH Launches Pathways Program

Imagine having a lifelong dream of becoming a nurse, yet you lack the resources to pursue that ambition, even after trying so hard and sometimes making difficult sacrifices. That's the reality several New Hampshire residents face. But thanks to **Pathways**, a new program from Catholic Charities NH, many will get that opportunity they have been waiting for.

Pathways is a program that combines unique development and advancement opportunities to help New Hampshire residents build a rewarding career in healthcare and create new pathways to their own successes they otherwise may not have had access to. Read more at cc-nh.org/pathways.



Pathways
Catholic Charities NH

Your Legacy

Make a lasting impact by naming Catholic Charities NH in your will or estate plans. For more information contact Karen Moynihan at **603-669-3030**.



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Save the Date: 2021 Annual Meeting

Wednesday, September 15 @ 4:30p
Bedford Village Inn
2 Olde Bedford Way, Bedford, NH 03110



Race to benefit CCNH

Wednesday, July 14 @ 6:20p
Auburn Pitts
Auburn, NH

totalimagerunning.com/christmas5k

Grant Recognition

Thank you to the following for awarding grants to support Catholic Charities New Hampshire's programs and services:

Blanche M. Walsh Charity Trust Senior Services
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