

Rumford Group Homes, Inc.



Reporter

Volume 1, Issue 12
(207) 364-3551

160 Lincoln Ave.
Rumford, ME 04276

Summer, 2012
www.rumfordgrouphomes.org

Home for Good with Your Help

Below is the true story of Ann, written in her own words. It is the story of her family's journey to stable housing.

HOME... it's a wonderful thing and something we as a large family have always dreamed of, especially since apartment living for us was not very pleasant. When you have six small children to take care of one of the scariest things that can happen in a parent's world is getting a phone call that says your 4-bedroom apartment building is being shut down in a month. A month seems like plenty of time to find a new place, not the case when a possible landlord finds out you have six small children because any excuse is made for you not to be able to rent from them. By the last week of our three week frantic search for a new home, we were desperate.

The only choice we had was to swallow our pride and ask a family member if we could camp in their yard long enough for us to find a permanent home. Not wanting our children to hear the



words "homeless" and "nowhere else to go," we told them that we were going on a camping trip until our new home was ready. We took our security deposit and first's



Pictured above is the house Ann and her family moved into after they left the Rumford Family Center.

months' rent money and bought camping gear which included two tents, sleeping bags, flash lights and other camping gear. Before we knew it there was no work and what meager funds came from unemployment went to things we needed, especially since we had a six month old baby among the six children, so saving up for a rent was impossible.

We had another big scare when we heard about Hurricane Irene, thankfully we were all safe inside during that storm thanks to those same family members who made room for all 8 of us to bunk

down inside. After the storm, we knew school was starting up soon and we needed to find something more permanent for our family so the calls to more landlords started and we got the same results as before.

Desperate for a home, we started calling homeless shelters and thankfully with only a short wait, Rumford Group Homes had us come in for an interview. Melissa, our case manager, was very kind as she heard our story and was very willing to help us. Thankfully, she was very patient with us through all the paperwork for 8 people. We took a tour of

the shelter and knew that it was a great temporary solution for us. With great relief we were told that we could move in that weekend!

We told our children that we were moving to a house that we were going to share with other people until our new house was ready for us and they were all very excited as camping was getting old for them as well as for us. Being under a nice sturdy roof that didn't leak as our tent roof did, and having nice solid walls that didn't move with the wind was a great joy to us.

Story continued on page 3



Executive Director's Corner



Dear Friends,

For many in our community, the summer is a carefree time of year when families plan vacations and enjoy the beautiful weather and a variety of recreational opportunities.

Many of the families that we serve at Rumford Group Homes, Inc., do not have the luxury of enjoying the weather and relaxing. They are not planning about what hotels and campgrounds they will stay at, but are worried about where they will live, how they will afford housing, and how they will buy food. More and more families are coming to us for assistance and support than ever before and utilizing our services from shelter to permanent housing.

We know that these programs are only the beginning and that the need for assistance is greater than ever. In order to help those most vulnerable in a time when we are all doing more with less, all of us in the community must collaborate to find creative solutions to providing comprehensive services. We will continue to be leaders in addressing the needs of the families we serve and in building solid community partnerships. With your support and assistance, we can help to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors.

As the new fiscal year begins, we are looking forward to all that we will accomplish this year and the steps we are taking to continue to provide excellent service in a time when resources are scarce. We are excited about many positive changes coming up. One of them is the implementation of an electronic record system that will allow our staff to use state-of-the art software. We have also developed our own Vocational Readiness curriculum that will start next month to help the families we serve become ready for successful employment.

As you and your families enjoy your summer, please keep in mind that there are other families in your community who are not as fortunate. Please remember that your support is needed more than ever. We appreciate all of our donors and volunteers who have been so generous this year.

Have a happy and safe summer,

Alan J. Monier
Executive Director

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MISSION STATEMENT

COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION MISSION STATEMENT

The council on accreditation promotes best-practice standards; champions quality services for children, youth, and families; and advocates for the value of accreditation.

RUMFORD GROUP HOMES, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Rumford Group Homes, Inc. a Nationally Accredited Agency through The Council on Accreditation (COA), to develop and administer programs to enhance the safety and quality of life for children, youth, and families through a quality, comprehensive continuum of care in the fields of social services, education, corrections, mental health, and housing.



Books and Buddies

On any given day, there are 1.6 million homeless children in the US. Many of these children end up in homeless shelters and are scared, worried and sad. Some children have never had access to books to read for fun. In fact, studies show that in middle-income neighborhoods the ratio of books to children is 13 to one, but in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 book for every 300 children. Even more alarming is that some studies show that 75% of homeless children drop out of school, 36% repeat a grade, and only 43% pass standardized tests for reading proficiency. Having a selection of books in the shelters can help introduce children to the love of reading, help them develop the reading skills to feel confident in their school work, and help them with the desire to stay in school. Improving their reading skills will help boost self esteem, and introduce them to new places, ideas, and people.

A new program is helping the children at the Rumford Family Center to have their own books to keep. Barclays colleagues Christina Bourassa and

June Libby decided they wanted to do something to help and developed a program called Books and Buddies. They collected books, stuffed animals, and toys and made bags for children in the shelter. Each child receives an age-appropriate book along with a stuffed animal that relates to the story. This way, children can read with their parents while holding and playing with their animal.



Barclays colleagues June Libby (left) and Christina Bourassa (right) work on their Books and Buddies project. Their goal is to provide books and stuffed animals to homeless children.

So far, Christina and June have donated over 25 Books and Buddies bags to homeless children in the shelter. They plan on continuing this project to encourage the love of reading in even more children. They are currently developing a Summer Reading Program and want to give children and adolescents in the shelter recommended reading lists and provide them with the books to read over the summer while school is out.

Their continued support and generosity is appreciated and we hope they inspire others to get involved and make a difference in the community. We couldn't do it without people like Christina and June.

Home for Good (Continued from Page 1)

Everyone who worked at the shelter was very friendly and the other houseguests were very understanding and patient. We were so glad not to have to worry about transportation to school for our children. The bus stop was right down the street.

Life wasn't so stressful anymore even though we were still homeless. We did at least have a temporary home. Now came the next challenge, obtaining Section 8. Melissa helped us out with our paperwork and made sure everything was correct. We felt very welcomed at the Shelter and it made our wait there so much better. Great news came in the form of a letter from the Maine State Housing Authority a couple of weeks before our youngest turned a year old. On our son's 1st birthday, we received our Section 8 voucher and were the

happiest family in the world! Thankfully, finding a house wasn't very difficult as RGH owned a house that was perfect for us. So, with a little bit more paper work, some packing and cleaning, with six happy children and two overjoyed parents, we moved into our amazing house! If it hadn't been for our loving family members and the wonderful people who work for Rumford Group Homes, we wouldn't have OUR HOME!!!! Everyone needs a place to call home. Thanks to everyone involved, we now have a place to call HOME.

Thanks to the support of donors like you, Rumford Group Homes, Inc. was able to offer Ann and her family permanent supportive housing services to promote long term self-sufficiency. ❖

Norway Family Center – a Place Where Family Matters

Not just a homeless shelter, but a temporary home away from home while on the road to success

Norway Family Center has been here for several years working to help single women with children establish and maintain healthy, affordable and stable housing.

To tell of my own personal experience, coming to this shelter was a last resort for me. I waited until I had no other choice but to leave my place of residence with my three children as winter heating costs were unbearable. Feeling helpless and depressed, I moved to the Norway Family Center with my children. I thought it couldn't get any worse than this, but I was wrong. It couldn't have been any better! I was really surprised when I arrived, to see how beautiful the house was. It felt more like a *home* than a shelter.



The furnishings were beyond nice, and every amenity had been made available. All of the comforts that a family would need and enjoy like large and small appliances, pots and pans, a washer and dryer, toiletries, dish and laundry soap, and even TV and internet service are all provided for guests to use. The shelter even includes a nursery for moms with infants and most of the rooms have some kind of hand-painted stenciling or wall murals, like angels, ladybugs, butterflies, or trees. These may seem like small details for some people, but for the guests, these details can help to lift the spirit.

This was the best choice that I have ever made for my family and with the support of staff, I was well on my way to a beautiful future. We now had a safe, warm place to stay. However, coming here is not meant to be a free ride. Guests are required to participate in 30 hours per week of productive time spent outside of the shelter, such as volunteering in the community, attending school, or work-related activities to better ourselves. In addition, guests are required to participate in a group chore each weekend and there are daily chores.

Families stay active in the community by attending meals at the Community Center twice a month. Other group activities included a visit from the Norway Fire Department for Fire Safety, representatives from the Rotary Club came in to prepare meals, and the South Paris Baptist Church held a Cooking Matters class for six weeks. Local businesses, such as Wal-Mart and Hannaford offer support to the Norway Family Center with donations on a regular basis. School groups such as Gould Academy have raised money so that the guests with children were able to have a beautiful Christmas and students from the Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School donated their time working in

the shelter as part of their final project for graduation. Other generous individuals have also stopped by with donations.

While staying at the shelter, each family is provided with case management. The case manager helps provide many resources, such as helping families locate doctors, dentists, counselors, children's services, transportation, transitional housing, and assistance with completing necessary applications. Norway Family Center has helped me regain my confidence and self-esteem, and has given me a sense of hope. I have learned more about myself and the needs of others and have learned that it is o.k. to accept help from outside sources. I have also learned what resources are available in the community to help my family succeed. Norway Family Center has also taught my children what it means to be a family.

They have made new friends, and have learned to respect others, share with others, and follow rules. Norway Family Center is helping well as helping people to are all here to accomplish goals.

I wouldn't be today without the support of the Norway Family Center. I have achieved my goal of finding a stable home for myself and my children. We will be leaving NFC in a few weeks to move into our new home. The apartment is beautiful, clean and affordable. Continued support will be provided at my new residence to help maintain a happy, healthy living environment and to help stay self-sufficient and work on additional goals.

I was really surprised when I arrived, to see how beautiful and well kept the house was. Right off the bat to me – it felt more like a home than a shelter.

Advice that I would pass on to other families that might find themselves in my situation would be the importance of patience and never giving up. Nothing happens overnight. Furthermore, I learned to follow through with my goals. Don't feel sorry for yourself – DO something to change your situation. Only you can change you. No matter how small it may seem a baby step forward is better than no step forward at all. Other life skills that I have been able to explore include learning about family values, budgeting, stress management, parenting, coping skills, and how to value myself both as an individual and as a member of the larger community.

I also want to personally thank my family's support team, who contributed so much time and effort into assuring our success. My support team at the Family Center includes Melissa (Director of Homeless Services), Kelley (Case Manager), and Linda (House Manager).

My external supports include Ellen (Opportunity Alliance/Child Case Manager), Melinda (Family Counselor), Maria (In-Home Support Services), and Jen (Common Grounds Counseling). I would also like to thank my beautiful daughter, Jennifer Lynch, who has always unconditionally loved and supported her mother and siblings through good times and bad.

I now know that I made the right choice of coming to the Norway Family Center, and I am thankful that, with their encouragement and support, I was able to succeed in making a better future for my family.

~Written by Marie L.

We can do what we do because of you!

At Rumford Group Homes, Inc., we are busy year-round making a difference in our community. Thank you for making it possible for us to provide vital services for children, youth, and families in crisis through our continuum of homeless services including emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing, transitional living, homeless youth outreach services and case management. Highlights of our last fiscal year include:

- 44 families or 114 persons received emergency shelter
- 19 families participated in our homeless housing programs
- We received 160 referrals for homeless youth outreach services
- 10 youth enrolled in our Transitional Living Program where they will receive services for 18 months to help them become independent
- Over 100 youth received crisis stabilization services
- We provided 5,988 shelter bed nights
- We provided 12,518 bed nights in our transitional and permanent housing programs

Curves Continues Food Drives for Rumford Shelter



Curves owner, Kathy Andrews, has been organizing on-going donation drives to benefit the Rumford Family Center. Kathy has been asking her Curves members to help her support her mission to bring in much needed items to donate to the shelter including food, household, and hygiene items.

Kathy's efforts have been very successful and are a huge help to families in the shelter who are often struggling to meet their most basic needs.

We are always looking for businesses and civic organizations who would like to sponsor a project similar to this. Please contact us for details.



University of Maine at Augusta Students Raise Nearly \$300 for Rumford Group Homes, Inc.

Local Students Advocate for Local Homeless Population

Kayla Morin, Sonia Richards and Cynthia Spaude, students from the University of Maine at Augusta, raised money to help support Rumford Group Homes, Inc. They provided \$285.50 in donations to the agency and delivered it as part of a school project.



*UMA students drop off donations after a tour.
Pictured left to right: Cynthia Spaude, Samantha Lueloff,
Kayla Morin, Melissa McEntee, and Sonia Richards*

As part of their coursework for “Intervention with Family and Children,” these UMA students completed a project to engage the community in RGH’s homeless programs by providing needed

donations to help the agency accomplish their mission of helping those less fortunate, namely homeless youth and families. By coordinating with the local Eagles Club, classmates, and other community contacts, the three students were able to raise \$150 to donate to the shelter, as well as a beautiful quilt, multiple toys for the children and much needed clothing items.

The students were thanked by program

“While coordinating donations and attempting to engage the community, I learned that many people didn’t even know there was a homeless problem in their very own community!”

staff and received a tour of the Rumford Family Center, which serves up to 4-5 homeless families. Richard states “While coordinating donations and attempting to engage the community, I learned that many people didn’t even know there was a homeless problem in their very own community!

I was delighted to be able to educate them and get them involved in making a difference.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Imagine not knowing where you will sleep tonight or where you will get your next meal. Now, imagine that the help of one person and one organization could get you through this. Through your support you could be the person that brings comfort and job to your neighbors. Please consider helping in one of the following ways:

Donate Now: Make a donation to Rumford Group Homes at 160 Lincoln Ave. Rumford, ME 04276. Visit our website to learn more about our mission and the essential life services that you are helping to bring to your neighbors.

In-Kind Needs: Rumford Group Homes could not continue to provide the emergency support and meet the basic needs of homeless families and individuals without your support. In

kind-donations are a great way to support Rumford Group Homes, Inc. Please call (207)364-3551.

Planned Giving: There are many ways you can help Rumford Group Homes secure its future by planning your gifts now. If you find yourself with limited cash on hand but would like to make a significant investment in improving the lives of others, you might consider one of the following planned gift options:

- Gift annuity
- Gift of Stock
- Charitable Remainder Trust
- Remembering Rumford Group Homes in your estate plan

Volunteer: Rumford Group Homes has a variety of volunteer and group projects opportunities. Some of the

ways individuals and businesses, civic and faith based groups have helped are:

- Host a drive to collect donation items
- Sponsor a pot luck lunch at work with proceeds benefitting Rumford Group Homes
- Offer to be a guest speaker at life skills group
- Teach a cooking class and provide supplies and recipes

Visit us in person: We’d love to see you and give you a personal inside look at what your donation has made possible. To arrange a tour, call Melissa at 364-3551 ext. 212. Thank you again for your support in helping to provide havens of safety, respect and effective care.

Gould Academy Youth REACHOUT to Help During the Holidays

REACHOUT is the philanthropic arm of the Gould Academy Community. They raise money for worthy causes locally and globally through fundraisers of all kinds. Students involved in REACHOUT work together to identify causes and design fundraisers.

Over the past couple months the REACHOUT Club at Gould Academy has been working on different projects to raise money for providing a Christmas for the children at Rumford Group Homes' Norway Family Shelter. This process started back in September when the group through their advisor Erin Parker, contacted the shelter about doing some volunteer work. They chose to adopt the Norway Family Center this Christmas and provide presents for all the children in our shelter. Some of the members of the club came to Norway to tour the shelter and to take back what they learned about shelter life to their peers in the group. Erin then asked for a list of what the children in the shelter needed for Christmas. She worked closely with Kelley Mason the case manager at the Norway Family Center.



Next the group had to do fundraising. This included toy and book drives. They held a bottle drive and did change collection. They also volunteered at Sunday River to earn money. In total they raised \$1500. The group then went shopping for the shelter. They supplied us with several wrapped presents for all the children in shelter as well as a couple families who had only recently moved into housing. They also bought several cases of paper towels that are always in need at the shelter. The toy and book drive provided the shelter with lots of gently used items that will be made available to any children that need them as they enter shelter. This group did a great job and provided a beautiful Christmas for the Norway Family Center this year. Guests and staff wish to express their gratitude for all the work the students and their advisor did!

Gannett Foundation Awards RGH Grant for Homeless Shelters

The Gannett Foundation, awarded a \$3,000 grant to Rumford Group Homes, Inc. homeless shelters. RGH operates three homeless shelters in Oxford County including the Rumford Family Center, a 12 bed shelter that helps homeless families in crisis, the Norway Family Center, a 12 bed homeless shelter for single women and children as well as the South Paris Men's Shelter, which can serve up two single men.

The Gannett Foundation supports local organizations in communities served by Gannett Co., Inc. Their community action grant priorities include education and neighborhood improvement, economic development, youth development, community problem-solving, assistance to disadvantaged people, environmental conservation and cultural enrichment. About 60 percent of their community grants target grassroots organizations in the areas of social/human services, health and mental health, benefiting the most disadvantaged people in our communities.

"This is very exciting news for us" says Alan J. Monier, Executive Director of RGH, Inc. He states "Support



Executive Director, Alan Monier (right) accepts a grant from the Gannett Foundation from Debbie Sample (middle) along with Case Manager, Aurora Lenz-Watson (left).

from the Gannett Foundation will help us to expand our Housing First model, which is designed to help families get to permanent housing more quickly. The Housing First model helps homeless families secure safe and affordable housing more quickly and provides case management and supportive services after they leave the shelter to help them maintain their housing and prevent a reoccurrence of homelessness. The goal is to decrease shelter stays and help people get to permanent housing sooner through the implementation of this model, which is considered a best practice model in housing.

Last year, through three emergency shelters, RGH provided over 6,000 bed nights and provided emergency shelter and housing in our rental programs to 63 families or 160 individuals in Oxford County alone. Debbie Sample of WCSH, representative for the Gannett Foundation, states "The Gannett Foundation is pleased to support Rumford Group Homes, Inc. so they can help the most needy in their community."

Thank you to all of our donors in 2011!

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 160 Lincoln Ave.
 Rumford, ME 04276

