

A N O T H E R C H A N C E .



A F R E S H S T A R T .

DISMAS OF VERMONT

PROVIDING THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY TO INDIVIDUALS RETURNING FROM VERMONT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES SINCE 1986

P . O . B O X 1 5 6 H Y D E P A R K , V T 0 5 6 5 5 | (8 0 2) 7 9 8 - 2 1 5 7

My Friend, Denis

Rita McCaffrey, Dismas of Vermont Founder

Thirty years ago, I was the House Director at Rutland Dismas House. Denis applied to live at Dismas House and following interviews at the Correctional Center, he was accepted. Upon his arrival, we experienced him as hard working and his gratitude for being "home." He had grown up on Long Island and mentioned his mother often, who worked full-time at a large convent in Brentwood doing heavy cleaning. He had experienced spirituality from his early childhood, growing up with his mom who raised the family.



Prior to coming to Vermont, Denis had lived in North Carolina for many years. While living at Dismas House, he joined in Dismas community activities, and appreciated his new, wholesome space. At dinner time, he often would volunteer to say a blessing, and gave thanks for the delicious meals prepared by community volunteers. He also did his fair share of chores.

Denis taught me a lot about addictions, due to owning his "disease." While with us, he got a job in a factory, working full-time and told me that when he walked home from work, he'd plan out his route, so as not to walk near any bars in downtown Rutland because they were a "magnet." At night, he'd go out to AA meetings, saying that he was going to get his "medicine" (AA being his medicine). A few weekends a year, residents and staff would go to Weston, VT for a weekend in the country through the generosity of Benedictine Monks making their retreat houses available. Residents walked Old County Road, hiked the steep hills, went sledding in the winter, helped with meal preparations and just simply relaxed away from "home." Denis loved coming because he enjoyed the tranquility, at times meeting some monks on the Priory grounds, who made him feel at home.

After a year at Dismas House, he rented a small, mobile home. He had also saved enough money to buy a used car. From time to time, we would see him at the Priory for a service, where he felt safe and accepted. Some Sundays, the brothers would invite him in for lunch. Sadly, a few years later, at age 46, Denis was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer and began his treatments in Rutland. One day, he approached the brothers to share his news asking them if he could be buried in their cemetery, just down the hill. There was no hesitation that he would have a "forever place" in the Priory cemetery and would always be in their hearts.

Several months later, he called me from the airport to tell me that he was flying to Arizona, to be with his mother....by now, he was really sick and weak. I asked him to please let me know that he arrived safely. Two weeks later, his sister called to say Denis had died at home with his Mom and said she'd bring me his ashes, for a service we planned at the Priory. The brothers prepared a simple Celebration of Life and there were remembrance cards with Denis's photo and the Serenity Prayer. Afterwards, we processed from the chapel to the cemetery, carrying his ashes, which we buried while the brothers sang. Many years later, my husband Mac was interred close by and one day, I will join them.

BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE

36th Community Celebration

For tickets, visit:
tinyurl.com/BDHCElebration36
or call 802-658-0381

Echo, Leahy Center
1 College St. Burlington, VT
5:30 - 8 PM

Online Auction:
tinyurl.com/BDHAuction23
May 20 - 29

Hearty Appetizers by:
 Sugarsnap

May 21st

2023



ASHLEY MESSIER

DISMAS ALUMNI AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
WOMEN'S JUSTICE AND FREEDOM INITIATIVE

Keynote Speaker

HELEN HEAD

VERMONT STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Father Jack Hickey Award Recipient

Exceptional support to the Burlington community



CHRIS BURT

Ann Atherton Award Recipient

Outstanding Volunteerism

US SENATOR PATRICK & MARCELLE LEAHY

Honorary Chairs

Recognition for decades of public service



Ashley Messier - Keynote Speaker

Ashley is currently the Re-Entry Services Program Manager at Vt Works for Women, specifically building their new BEAM Program which provides inclusive hiring and holistic wrap-around supports for women and folks who feel comfortable in a female orientated space returning to community from incarceration. Ashley is also the founding Executive Director of the Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative. WJFI supports and advocates for women, girls, transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people impacted by systems of oppression and is expressly committed to prison abolition. She spent time previously incarcerated at the only women's facility in Vermont, Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (CRCF). Ashley is also in recovery from substance use disorder, as well as a survivor of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking.

After stepping out of CRCF for the last time, she began working as a consultant with the ACLU VT, eventually becoming the lead organizer for the ACLU's Smart Justice campaign. She then went on to serve as the Vermont Organizer for the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. Ashley also serves as a Commissioner the Vermont Commission on Women and is a member of the former Vermont's Human Trafficking Task Force. She was also recently named Chair of the legislative Vermont Department of Corrections Monitoring Committee.

She is, most importantly, a wife and mother who resides with her family in Jericho, VT and also assists in her husband's construction company, Messier Construction, building community one job at a time.



"In thinking about why I support Dismas, a few things came to mind. I definitely loved the family atmosphere, the comradery, and dinners. For me, having the trusting and supportive relationship with Sue (assistant director) was very impactful for me as well. I think the second chance to come back to the house after returning to the facility made me feel like they understood people make mistakes"

-Ashley Messier

Helen Head - Father Jack Hickey Award

Helen Head was born and raised in Griffin, Georgia. She was educated at the University of New Hampshire (BA) and the University of Vermont (MPA). Her career focused on the administration of nonprofit organizations, including New Hampshire Legal Assistance's Concord office and Project Home (now HomeShare Vermont). From 2003-2018, Helen served in the Vermont House representing the northwestern section of South Burlington. She was chair of the House's committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs during her last twelve years in the House.

Helen's past community board and committee memberships have focused on civil liberties, domestic violence, developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's Disease, court diversion, community library services, and ecumenical action. Presently Helen serves on the boards of Champlain Housing Trust and the Housing Foundation, Inc., along with the Cabinet of Emerge Vermont, a program that recruits, trains, and supports women who run for office at all levels of government. She is co-presiding clerk of Burlington Friends (Quaker) Meeting.

Helen has worked as a hospice volunteer for fifteen years and served as a co-coordinator for Small Potatoes, an interfaith hunger relief program, for even longer.

Dismas holds a special place in Helen's heart. She has served on Dismas Burlington's Community Council and been a part of Dismas of Vermont staff search committees. Helen ranks passage of "ban the box" legislation

as one of her highest achievements in the Vermont Legislature. This law prohibits most Vermont employers from asking criminal history questions on job applications. Helen and her husband, Tom Mercurio, deliver donated bakery goods to Burlington Dismas each month. Over many years, Helen and Tom have joined us at the Buell Street table bringing her popular chicken fajitas and occasional guests, including their adult children, Paul and Maria.



Chris Burt - Ann Atherton Award

I first heard about Dismas from my Mother and thought it was an interesting idea. Many years later my dear and longtime friend, Marykate Rowan, talked about needing help with the Dismas Dinner Auction. I said sure I can help. A year or two later in late 2013 Marykate again asked if I might consider joining the Council. So in February 2014, I attended my first Dismas House Council meeting. The rest is history including a stint as Council Chair. Some nine years later it is time for me to take a step back from Council Membership and turn it over to new leadership. I do plan to continue to work on the Community Celebration and will join with my husband, Steve and sister, Martha on the Second Tuesday of each month to cook and dine at the East Allen Dismas. A highlight of our month. In my free time I enjoy working as a volunteer at The Flynn Theater, helping to build and decorate sets for Lyric Theatre. Steve and I enjoy traveling and spending time with family and friends.



Chris Burt with Executive Director, Jim Curran, and Council Member, Marykate Rowan

Giving Voice



Linktree*



My Road to Giving Back (cont.)

Shelly Spooner, Rutland Dismas House Council Member



This time as a volunteer who wholeheartedly believes in their mission. I want to give a special thanks to Rita & Frank McCaffrey, Nancy Corsones, Patricia Lancaster and Officer Dumas. I owe my sobriety and life to God. He gave me a new heart. For the addicts and alcoholics still suffering, you can get a new heart too. You will find yours in these simple steps:

- We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors. That our lives had become unmanageable.
- (Romans 7:18 "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.")
- Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- (Philippians 2:13 "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.")
- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.
- (Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.")
- Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- (Lamentations 3:40 "let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.")
- Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
- (James 5:16a "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.")
- Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- (James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.")
- Humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.
- (1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.")
- Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- (Luke 6:31 "Do to others as you would have them do to you.")
- Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- (Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.")

MY DISMAS STORY

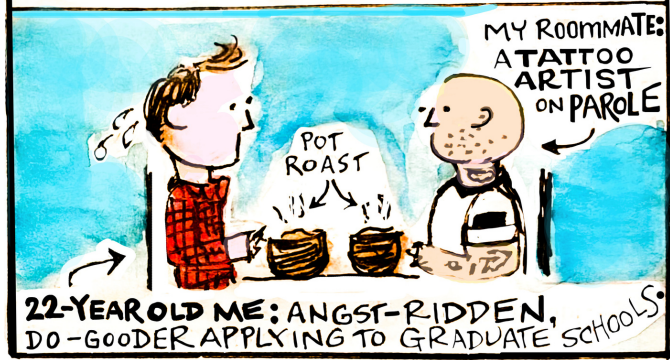
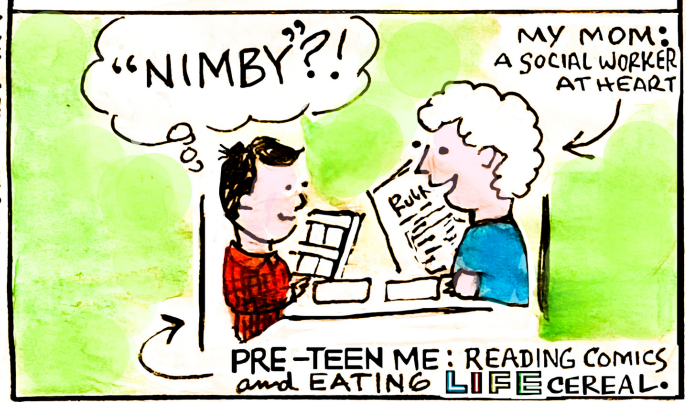
by Kurt



#N.I.M.B.Y. = Not In My Back Yard

1980s, RUTLAND COUNTY, VERMONT
 AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE, MY MOTHER READ TO ME ARTICLES and EDITORIALS about the NEW **DISMAS HOUSE** in RUTLAND.

1990s, BURLINGTON, VERMONT
 I DID AN INTERNSHIP AT THE REGIONAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY (as a Philosophy Major?!). AFTER GRADUATION, I LIVED at the BURLINGTON HOUSE.

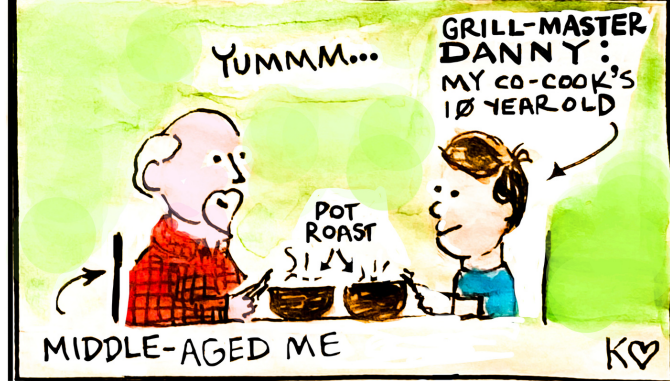


SHAFFERT @ CARTOONSTUDIES . DE 6

*THE CENTER for CARTOON STUDIES in WRIT

2010s, WHITE RIVER JCT., VERMONT
 I WAS VOLUNTEERING at the VA HOSPITAL as a FELLOW in APPLIED CARTOONING*, A CLINICIAN SHARED NEEDING COVERAGE TO SERVE DINNER at the LOCAL **DISMAS HOUSE**...

2020s, HARTFORD, VERMONT
 3RD FRIDAYS NOW are ONE OF MY FAVORITE DAYS of the MONTH, REGULARLY SHARING at TABLE ONCE AGAIN.



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P.S. ONE OF MY GREAT PRIDES is that a CONGREGANT (of the church I am serving in New London, New Hampshire) IS SERVING 4th FRIDAYS!

RUTLAND DISMAS HOUSE

DINNER & AUCTION 2023



FEATURING RUSTY "THE LOGGER" DEWEES

Date

June 3rd, 2023
Doors open at 3:30 pm
Program begins at 5:00 pm

Location

Spartan Arena
100 Diamond Run Mall Pl.
Rutland, VT

Tickets - \$75
No tickets sold at the door

802-775-5539
geraldine@dismasofvt.org
dismasofvt.org



Honorees



DEE BORT
Father Jack Hickey Award
Exceptional Support to Rutland
Community



TURNING POINT
Mary O. Award
Direct Support to Rutland
Dismas House



CALVARY BIBLE CHURCH
Loving Spoonful Award
Outstanding Volunteerism



JOHN CASELLA
Honorary Chair
Recognition for Community
Service

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Drawing will be at the Dinner/Auction but you need not be present to win.
Chair will be available late summer for the winner




Rusty DeWees

Skillfully blending humor with life lessons, Rusty is able to paint meaningful images that resonate with listeners; the familiar and the foreign merging to create a synergistic puree of two parts gifted stand up entertainer, one part old time crusader and one part journeyman seeker.

*"I do shows.
At a filling station a hail-fellow greeted me:
"Russ, saw you entertain when I was in. Im out now, for ten years."
He and his two smiling kids loaded into their car and took off for the lake.
DISMAS of Vermont works hard helping former prisoners choose to get back to the lake with their family.
Thrilling."
-Rusty "The Logger" DeWees*

Calvary Bible Church Loving Spoonful Award

Rutland Dismas House will be honoring the Calvary Bible Church Cooks with the Loving Spoonful Award for their enthusiastic support and dedication to the residents.

Although our relationship is young, they have become an instrumental piece to the Women's Dismas House. Every fourth Monday of the month, Melissa, Emily, Lisa, Joyce, and Alberta all make their way over with such joyful spirits, a delicious meal, and, of course, one of Alberta's amazing cakes! Their interest in cooking for the home has turned into real and everlasting friendships and connections being made. They have gone above and beyond to show dedication and commitment to the residents with their compassion, consistency, and support in more ways than one. Just like a real family member, the Calvary Bible Church ladies have been present for many milestones; they have celebrated birthdays, donated furniture, attended our first ice cream social at the women's home, and done it all with such contagious kindness. Melissa, Emily, Lisa, Joyce, and Alberta are irreplaceable women that embody the Dismas of Vermont mission of connecting the residents to the community, and the community to the residents.



John Casella Honorary Chair

Over the years Casella Waste Inc. led by founder and owner John Casella has made a significant impact upon the Dismas House organization as well as the Rutland community as a whole. Casella has graciously provided pick up of trash, recycling, and compost at no cost to Rutland Dismas House for many years. The company has also benefited Dismas by giving residents a second chance with opportunities for jobs in the recycling center. In the Rutland area John Casella is known for his generous support of many nonprofits that work to improve the quality of life for all in the community. Dismas is grateful to be one of the non-profits supported by John Casella.



Dee Bort Father Jack Hickey Award

Rutland Dismas Houses are pleased to announce the recipient of this year's Fr. Jack Hickey award: our very own Dee Bort. Dee, a retired special education teacher, has volunteered with Dismas for the past ten years and is a committed member of our Rutland Council. As a long-time member of Grace Congregational Church, Dee sings in the choir and has been involved with the annual Christmas tradition of the performance of the Messiah for many years. Dee served as president of our council and currently participates in our Outreach-Membership Committee where she blesses us regularly with her stellar writing organizational skills, and commitment to residents and the community.



Rutland Turning Point Mary O. Award

The Turning Point Center of Rutland is a non-profit recovery center that provides a safe, friendly, fun, and substance free environment. All people in recovery, and their family and friends, can meet here for recovery support, meetings, social activities, recovery coaching, education, and advocacy. Rutland Turning Point has worked with the Dismas House for many years. With the implementation of the Rutland Dismas Women's home, office space was delegated to Turning Point to provide on-site recovery services. The collaboration of Dismas and Turning Point has provided greater opportunities for those both organizations serve to progress holistically.



HARTFORD DISMAS HOUSE
dismasofvt.org



ALI SIDDIQ AT LEBANON OPERA HOUSE

Ali Siddiq is stand-up comedian, public speaker, and writer out of Houston. Ali's unique style of stand-up began behind the walls of incarceration, an incubator for interesting experiences and good stories.

JUNE 4, 2023
6 PM

LEBANON OPERA HOUSE
51 N PARK ST.,
LEBANON, NH 03766

TICKETS:

(603) 448-0400

lebanonoperahouse.org



BARBARA COUCH

Father Jack Hickey Award

Founder, Hypertherm HOPE Foundation

Chair, Couch Family Foundation



TRACY DUSTIN-EICHLER

Jonathan G. Sylvia Award

Director, Dartmouth Center for Social Impact

Former President, Hartford Dismas House



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People received their first taste of Ali Siddiq when he appeared on HBO's "Def Comedy Jam" and "Live from Gotham," and in 2013 he was named Comedy Central's "#1 Comic to Watch". In 2014, Ali impressed comedy enthusiasts by displaying his ability to captivate an audience with his "Mexicans Got On Boots" tale, a descriptive storytelling, with over 15 million views, of a prison riot on "This Is Not Happening," the first of three appearances.

His stories continued with his Half Hour special, which premiered on Comedy Central in the fall of 2016. Immediately following the premier of that special, Comedy Central offered Ali an hour-special where he performed for inmates live in a Texas jail, sending Ali back to where it all started. The hour special, Ali Siddiq: It's Bigger Than These Bars, premiered in February 2018 on Comedy Central. In 2019, Ali could be seen as a Top 5 finalist on NBC's "Bring the Funny." Most recently, Ali could be seen as a guest on The Joe Rogan Experience.

Volunteers are a Bridge to Opportunities

Nancy Snyder, Dismas of Vermont Board Member

My name is Nancy and I have been a volunteer at Dismas of Vermont for about 12 years now. I obviously believe in this mission, and I have been an enthusiastic ambassador for the program and for the residents over all that time. I currently live in Burlington and serve on the Board of Directors.

It all started for me when I joined a team at my Church to cook dinner for the residents at Hartford Dismas House once a month. We delivered homemade meals to the House serving 10 to 14 people, and then sat down with staff, and residents, and volunteers to share the meal. I was anxious at first because I knew these people had been in prison, some of them for serious crimes. What would we talk about? Was I safe? Would they like our dinner?



I soon learned that this group was more direct and open than other groups I had joined in the past. The men (at that time only men were in the program - now we have a Women's House in Rutland) were anxious to connect with the people outside of prison, and grateful that we had brought them food and companionship. So I stayed involved in many different roles at Dismas for the next many years.

Volunteers are critical to the success of Dismas House! We are a bridge to work opportunities, new friendships, connections to support groups and even reconnecting with family members after years of isolation in prison. Watching the residents grow in confidence and social skills with guidance from staff and fellow residents is inspiring.

Most former prisoners leave incarceration with nothing - no clothes, no money, no family, no identification, and no computer skills in a world that demands these skills. And yet in a few months most of these folks have a job, pay rent, and have new friends.

This is a difficult journey back into the world. It often takes several tries. But accepting a second chance, or even a third chance requires courage, motivation, and determination. Volunteers can help in so many ways, but the most important way is reaching out a friendly hand and dispelling the stigma that society assigns to folks in prison.

I am fortunate to have contributed to this effort, and to join a group of enthusiastic, fun-loving dedicated volunteers. It is fulfilling work, and we make a difference.



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My Road to Giving Back

Shelly Spooner, Rutland Dismas House Council Member

My name is Shelly Spooner. In 2002, I found myself helpless and truly hopeless. My story mirrors millions of other friends of Bill W. and Bob. My addictions made me unrecognizable even to myself. From age 18 - 33 I attended rehab seven times not including hospital detoxes. My last arrest found me facing a judge in shackles and looking at 40 years. I did not consider any attempt to change or save my own life. Nothing short of Divine Intervention, I finally received the gift of desperation. A loving judge offered me a ride back to jail or a ride to rehab. I learned about Dismas House of Rutland from my rehab counselor. I was accepted into the program. Dismas House of Rutland was the starting point of my new journey to sobriety. The AA & NA Program loved me until I learned to love myself. Dismas House provided a safe and loving environment required in order to obtain employment and pursue my recovery. Fast forward 20 years, I rejoined Dismas House January 2023. **Continued on Page 4**



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