



Burlington

Hartford

Rutland

Winooski

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Reconciling Former Prisoners With Society and Society With Prisoners Since 1986

A Letter From Prison

My experience in jail and prison has been a long road and I should've listened to my parents growing up. Every time I came to jail I was doing some kind of drugs, and that led me to do other stuff. When I was doing this I wasn't just hurting myself, but my family as well. The reason I did these drugs is to make me feel cool, but I was wrong. My parents told me that I was heading down a wrong path, that I would regret everything when they catch you. I always wanted a better life that was the day I became sober and found Narcotics Anonymous. I have been sober for six and a half years now and I found God in the process. All this happened when I lost my dad when a blood clot went to his heart.

I hit rock bottom when there was no one around. Then shortly after that I was paroled to Kentucky. I went down there and started my own family. I continued to be clean



Dismas Residents volunteer at the Lamoille Firewood Project

and sober and work the steps. One day I was at work and my supervisor would not let me go to check into the parole office in time because I had to pick up my stuff before I left. I did my best to hurry up, but I was late to check into the parole office. My parole officer didn't want to hear about my work or about anything I had to say; he thought I run. They issued a warrant for my arrest - first finishing my time in Kentucky before returning to Vermont.

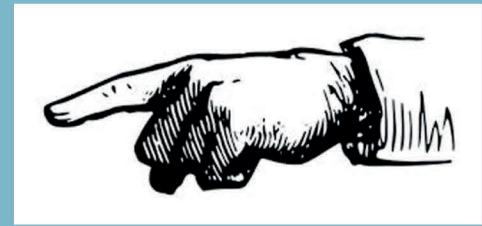
I got transported to Vermont on February 20th, 2020 even though the whole time on parole I never got any new charges; just a violation of parole. Since I've been back in Vermont prison, I've felt as if I'll never get back out into society again. All I want is to be back with my family in Kentucky after I take this time to work on myself.

something better with my life, and be a better role model to the community. As I sit here writing this article from my cell in Springfield, I eagerly wait to take advantage of this opportunity Dismas has given me. I hope I can help people and relate to one who've seen this stuff first hand and pass my knowledge and experiences onto the ones who haven't in hopes that I can help prevent them from following a similar path. -Brian R.



Celebrating a student volunteer's birthday with a favorite treat is a tradition with Dismas House.

SAVE THE DATE! CALLING ON YOU!



Our Annual Phonathon Fundraiser will be held:

RUTLAND:

- *Tuesday, November 17th
- *Wednesday, November 18th
- *Thursday, November 19th

BURLINGTON:

- *Monday, November 16th
- *Tuesday, November 17th
- *Wednesday, November 18th

Calls will be made from volunteer cell phones between 6 PM and 8PM due to current restrictions.

For more information please contact Geraldine at geraldine@dismasofvt.org or call 802-755-5539 for Rutland or Kim at kim@dismasofvt.org or 802-658-0381 for Burlington.

The Phonathon is our second largest fundraiser of the year, so your generosity is greatly appreciated!

The Times We Are In - from the desk of Richard Gagne

I sometimes find myself shaking my head in disbelief when I think of some of the challenges our country and communities are facing right now. It can be overwhelming and confusing and I find that friends and family remind me that I am a part of something larger. I have talked to a lot of people during the COVID pandemic who have said that they feel closer to their children; have finally gotten to know their neighbors and even resumed a hobby that they let go. Our communities have become our anchor for us during these challenging times. Folks getting out of jail and coming to Dismas don't necessarily have that anchor. Some have no family and others have sometimes made the decision to work on their sobriety which can mean staying away from family and friends who drink or use drugs.

Ever since the Governor issued his Stay Safe, Stay at Home order, Dismas Houses implemented his orders by creating our own Covid-19 protocols. It didn't feel like regaining freedom to former prisoners getting out of jail and it was even more important for the Dismas community to find some meaning in our isolation. We used the time to make repairs in the house, paint rooms, and yes we talked a lot about the best TV series. We got on each other's nerves and then talked about it in house meeting. In a way our world became smaller but our place in it felt secure.



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Richard Gagne
Program Manager
Dismas of Vermont



Opportunities - from the desk of Jim Curran

It is hard to believe just four months ago I was first trusted to be Dismas' next Executive Director. I have felt so welcomed and at home that it feels like I have been a part of the Dismas Family for years. Starting a new job with a different organization is always challenging and I think it maybe even more so in a Zoom setting. As our Board Secretary Alec Ewald said, "It's hard to believe we are doing something so momentous

without even a handshake." Sometimes opportunities present themselves at the strangest of times, and we just have to "trust our gut" when we act upon them. Opportunities are the current theme for Dismas. Even though we are faced with so many challenges with our current environment, opportunities seem to continue to pop-up. Dismas Local Councils and Committees are getting creative with fundraising events and new volunteer activities to help support our residents. Opportunities to add programming that compliments Dismas' core values, and prop individuals up for success are being evaluated. Efficiencies are being explored to make sure every dollar donated by you can be stretched even more to better serve your community. The Dismas Board and Local Council members are committed to being the best stewards of the Dismas organization which started 34 years ago by our Founder Rita McCaffrey.

I feel so very lucky to have the opportunity to work with such committed staff and volunteer network. Every staff member goes above and beyond to make everyone feel at home. Our Local Council Members invest so much of their time to make our mission a success. Our residents are engaged and always welcome me into the house. I have been consistently amazed at the support provided by our donors. Dismas is truly a special organization, and it is this mix that is the "secret sauce."

If you have feedback or want to get involved please let me know. My office door (virtual) is always open. I look forward to serving our residents, Dismas and you for the years to come. I am committed to work with our team to ensure and build upon the successes that Dismas has created with your help. Let's grab this opportunity to make Dismas even more amazing. Like they say, "There is no better time than right now!"

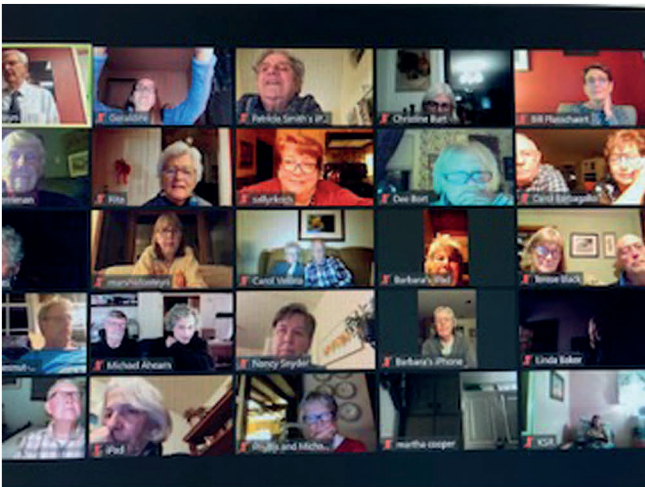


An Evening with Dismas House

On October 18th Rutland Dismas House held a live ZOOM event **"Evening with Rutland Dismas House"**. The Virtual event was coordinated by Elijah LaChance (Fundraising Chair) and assisted by Paul Fonteyn as MC. The event featured prerecorded videos of current residents, former residents, former Volunteer for Peace from France Adeline, The Weston Priory, and a "silent" auction which was conducted through the chat on zoom. One of the highlights of the event was the dedication of a plaque honoring Frank and Rita McCaffrey. The plaque was given to Rita by Rutland Dismas Council Chairperson Dee Bort on behalf of the entire Dismas family.

Thank You!

Thank you to all that attended, to the amazing sponsors of the event and to the donors of the auction items. If you would like to receive an invitation to future virtual events, please email Geraldine Burke at geraldine@dismasoftv.com.



Rutland Council

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Rutland, VT

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Rutland, VT

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Chris Babb
Rutland, VT

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Jeremy MacLachlan
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Rutland, VT

Phil Stephan
North Clarendon, VT

House Director
Eric Maguire



I am doing great working hard lots . I am spending the weekends with my daughter and looking to the future. -Brian



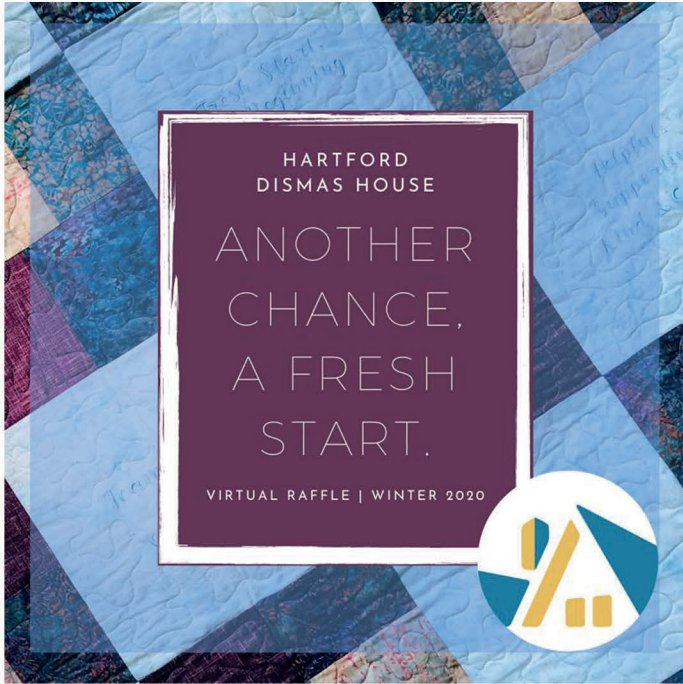
Family and friends are the key to achieving things that I need. Thank you for your support. -Shawn



I am spending time outdoors and missing the fine company of all the gracious cooks. -Matt



Dismas Quilt Raffle



Another Chance, Fresh Start

Early 2020, Hartford Dismas House wanted to start a new tradition for their Spring Dinner Celebration, and the concept of the quilt came to life. Residents at our house originated the idea of embroidering words and phrases to express what being part of the Dismas life was about and what it means to their successes. Thanks to four brilliant beautiful women in the community the quilt came to life, each contributing a special gift to this quilt. Susan Parker (former owner of the Hen House in WRJ) acted as the designer, helping with patterns and fabric. Patty Schottes (crafts lover) embroidered the phrase found on the quilt. Joleen Shepard (employee at the Lebanon COOP) put together all the quilt pieces. Finally, Merry Ferranti (retired nurse at DHMC) quilted the final product.

The blending of heartfelt phrases that express the hope and gratitude of the Dismas House residents and the compassion of these women (who knew nothing of Dismas at the start of this venture), helped birth the first Hartford Dismas House Quilt. Although the event was canceled due to COVID, the quilt is now traveling to venues across the Upper Valley, sharing the Dismas story and underscoring our core value: the importance of reintroduction into the community after incarceration and how vital it is to have a community behind all those who struggle to regain a hopeful future.



Left: The quilt on display at Cover Home Repair in White River Junction

Right: The McBride Family representing the strength and spirit of Dismas House



\$25 per TICKET

\$100 for 5 TICKETS

\$500 for 30 TICKETS

*All proceeds to benefit:
Hartford Dismas House*

**DRAWING ON DECEMBER
14 at 7:00 PM**

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Norwich, VT

Vice Chairperson
Jennifer Rataj
Lebanon, NH

Recorder
Sarah Drew Reeves
Norwich, VT

Financial Liaison
Eileen Lambert
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Drew Rockwell
Norwich, VT

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Tracy Dustin- Eichler
Hartford, VT

Gabrielle Locke
White River Jct, VT

Jim Marmar
White River Jct, VT

John McBride
Lyme, NH

Robert McCarthy
Lebanon, NH

Jordan McEntyre
Woodstock, VT

Nancy Snyder
White River Jct, VT

Lisa Sharp Grady
Bradford, VT

Eleanor Zue
Vershire, VT

Jeff Backus
House Director

Ways to Give

Discover the many ways to support Dismas and make a difference in someone's life

GIFTS BY CHECK:

Checks should be made out to the local Dismas program you wish to support, or to Dismas of Vermont Statewide.

MATCHING GIFTS:

Your employer may offer an employee matching gift program to support your charitable giving. Please check with your employer to determine if they offer this option.

PLANNED GIVING/BEQUESTS

You can include Dismas in your lifetime charitable giving plans through a bequest, charitable gift annuity, insurance policy, charitable trust or another planned giving vehicle. Planned gifts can be constructed today to benefit Dismas in the future. Contact our Executive Director to learn more!

GIFTS BY CREDIT CARD:

Credit Card donations may be made by visiting us online at <http://www.dismasofvt.org/donate>

GIFTS OF STOCKS, SECURITIES:

You can make a gift of stock by contacting:
MASSMUTUAL RE: Roger Webster
Phone: 802-264-6620
ACCOUNT NUMBER: R72025577
DTC NUMBER: 0226



Burlington, Hartford, Rutland House residents and staff enjoying a beautiful September day.

A Reason to Volunteer

By chance, as it often happens in Vermont, I ran into a woman who said she had cooked at Dismas House with her two children on Christmas day a few years ago. After we talked a little more Kate admitted that her family had always had a traditional Christmas together. After she got divorced she felt like she and her children and needed to make the day a little different. Her children were 12 and 15 at the time and she said they weren't shy and dove right in at Dismas House and asked lots of questions and enjoyed talking to everyone around the large dining room table. What she expected might be a difficult day for her family turned into a day of sharing and celebration. I appreciated Kate's thoughtful way of celebrating the



Dismas residents and volunteers sit down for a socially distanced meal.

holidays with former prisoners whose lives were in transition while her own family was going through change. There are many reasons why people volunteer

at Dismas and I think they often find something that they don't expect. We have always thought of Volunteers as a part of our extended family and through the years, Dismas Alumni often stop by for a visit and one of their first questions is asking if their favorite cook is cooking, much like you would catch up on family after being away. We are incredibly grateful to all of our volunteers as you are a large part of how reconciliation with the community starts for folks at Dismas. While some of you have had to take a break during COVID, we want you to know that others have stepped in to help out and that we are all okay but missing you and can't wait to catch up.

Burlington Dismas House
96 Buell Street
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 658-0381

Hartford Dismas House
P.O. Box 174
Hartford, VT 05047
(802) 698-8661

Rutland Dismas House
103 Park Ave.
Rutland, VT 05701
(802) 775-5539

East Allen Dismas House
103 East Allen Street
Winooski, VT 05404
(802) 655-0300



4065 Hours of Service Provided By Our Amazing Volunteers Last Year!

Commitment...

Thomas Luzader arrived to Rutland Dismas House on March 23rd after serving several years in Vermont correctional facilities. Upon arrival Tom made a commitment to himself, a commitment in which he recognized his value to the community, a commitment to no longer engage in the choices and actions that resulted in incarceration, a commitment to practice the H.A.R.D. (Honesty, Accountability, Responsibility, Discernment) daily commitment to get healthy.



Tom shared his experience at Dismas has been "Great. It's been wonderful. I was given a chance I wasn't expecting, It's helped me get a better grasp on life and I believe I'm on the right path moving forward. I truly needed this opportunity Dismas provided and am thankful for the support and guidance provided by Dismas."

Tom believes Dismas is "a second chance, an opportunity to improve a person's quality of life"

Tom's commitment has led to recently receiving parole at the beginning of October. His commitment provided him the opportunity to complete management training with Five Guys in which he is now an assistant manager. Tom has a very bright future ahead of him and believes many more positive opportunities will be presented as long as "I remember my commitment".