

Resident Story: My Life, My Gardens By Chris

Last week I turned 66 while living at Dismas House. I am lucky to be alive and didn't think I would live this long. I grew up in Colchester and lived with my mother, sisters and brothers and a man who I thought was my father. When I was thirteen I found a telegram in an old shoe box under my mother's bed that informed her about a man who had died and that's when I found out that this man was my real father and he committed suicide after returning home from serving in Korea. I was angry and rebellious after that. I got into trouble on a regular basis and ended up in Weeks School for 3 years. The people who worked there liked me because I behaved and worked hard to become an honor student.

I have had a crazy life with everything from sleeping on the street and in

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Our garden, nurtured by residents.

HOUSE HAPPENINGS

Annual Phon-a-thon

November 13th, 14th & 15th
at St. Michaels College

(See back page for more information)

Save the Date

Sunday April 15, 2018

33rd Annual Community Celebration

at UVM Alumni House on
Summit Street, Burlington, VT

Dismas on Facebook

Visit our FB page to see the many photos and happenings at the house.

www.facebook.com/Burlington-Dismas-House



Camping trips are the best times.

Buell St. Dismas House Director, Kim Parsons, is on the far right.

“Today I keep going because I am at Dismas House. Now I try to find hope in all the little things.”

Greetings from Germany... By Janina Gruniger

When I applied for the position as a Volunteer for Peace at the Dismas House, I had no real clue about how it would be. I was positively surprised after I arrived in Burlington. I thought Dismas House would have a formal and institutional character, but I found the house had a very welcoming atmosphere. I felt comfortable quickly and felt like it was kind of home. I never felt unsafe. I think the worst part for me was realizing that I had to share the bathroom with 8 other people.

Living at the Dismas House was like living in a huge family. So many different characters and life experiences coming together. There were times of happiness and times of turbulence. I heard many tragic but also heartwarming stories. I also shared stories about my life and gave my housemates an idea about life in another country. The intercultural exchange is one of the greatest parts of the VFP's program. Most residents never had the chance, or will ever get the chance, to travel beyond the US border, but the international volunteers bring an authentic experience of living in the greater world.

Before I arrived, I thought I would be more in the position of a social worker. But I realized that this is just a small part



Live-in Volunteer for Peace, Janine Gruniger.

of it. Of course I gave support, for example in filling out application forms, but most of the time I just tried to be a stable and reliable influence. I hope I had a positive impact on the people in the house and will stay in touch with them. I can definitely say that the people in the house and all the experiences I had there influenced my personality and I learned a lot about myself.

Leunig's Partners with Burlington Dismas House - to Improve the Lives of their Neighbors



On any given day Burlington restaurant Leunig's Bistro is a busy place serving delicious food with the look and feel of a fine Parisian cafe. They have a loyal following of regulars as well as the foodies who are looking for a unique dining experience on Church Street.

Owners Bob Conlon and Executive Chef Donnell Collins decided early on that they wanted to give back to the community by featuring area non-

profits. One day each month, Leunig's donates 10% of sales to a worthy local charity and raffle off a gift certificate for Dinner for Two, with the proceeds going to the designated charity. The charity will receive proceeds from the raffle as well as half of the proceeds from that month's sales of Community Partner Cards. Leunig's patrons get to learn a little more about the needs of the community and area non-profits raise much needed income.

OUR WISH LIST

Bureaus in Working Condition

Flat Screen TV

Wardrobe for Hanging Clothes

Tableware

Glasses

Contact Zoe Bishop
at 802-658-0381

or zoe@dismasofvt.org
to donate items.

Thank you for your support!

We are especially grateful to Leunig's owners for inviting us to participate, and fortunate to be a part of a community where local businesses support non-profits.

From the Desk of the Director – Richard Gagne, House Director, East Allen Dismas House

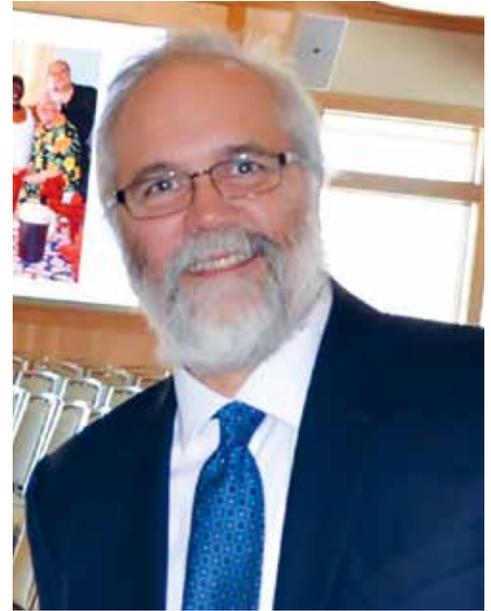
Some number of years ago we made a Dismas video and there was a line in it, spoken by a resident, that I have always felt to be very powerful because it described so well the sense of alienation, of not belonging, that so many men and women feel as they transition out of prison back into their community. Norm said, "When I came to Dismas House I felt like I was coming to a regular house in a regular neighborhood, but I was not a regular person." He had a strong sense of being different than everyone else, and that difference made him unacceptable in the eyes of others as well as in his own eyes.

Fast forward to summer, 2017, East Allen Dismas House in Winooski. One particular evening, we had a group of first time volunteer cooks. In keeping with its well-deserved reputation as being an open and welcoming city, the group was composed of Winooski Police Chief Rick Hebert, three other officers, as well as the new City Manager Jessie Baker, and the staff of the Winooski Community Justice Center. Their presence and their words conveyed a powerful message, the same message

that all our volunteer cooks convey, "We accept you, we care about you as an individual person, and we support you!" It's just that this is not the message a person who has been incarcerated would expect to hear from a police officer. And that it is why they felt it especially important that they be there.

We were engaged in some pretty normal discussions- one topic was cars, police cars and how the new ones, the muscle cars and the SUVs, compared to the old Crown Vics. And how was it determined who drove what? Then one of the officers got serious and said, "One of the reasons I came here tonight is because I want all of you to accept me as just a regular person, just like everyone else." The other officers concurred. It was not lost on me that here we had a table filled with former prisoners and police officers, two groups that we might ordinarily think couldn't be more different and at odds, seeking "acceptance" from one another. Perfect!

- Richard Gagne
Director, Winooski Dismas House



Richard Gagne, House Director for East Allen House.

Resident Story: My Life, My Gardens *(cont'd from page 1)*

homeless camps to being married to the love of my life and owning my own home. After my wife passed away I fell apart and started drinking after being sober for many years, and ended up back in jail until I was accepted and invited to come to Dismas House.

Today, I keep going because I am at Dismas House. It's hard for me to share my past because I don't think other people would want to know a drunk. But at Dismas I don't have to worry about being thought of as just a jailbird. People who come through the doors know that already and accept and respect me for who I am today so I can relax and not be on guard.

Now I try to find hope in all of the little things. Today, if you happen to come to Dismas you might see me working in the gardens. It is a small thing but it gives me hope to be creating a beautiful space for people who haven't had natural beauty in their lives in a while and may not even think they deserve it.

BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Richard Gagne...
House Director, Winooski
Zoe Bishop...
Assistant House Director, Burlington
Sue Drollette...
Assistant House Director, Winooski

Supporting Dismas Houses
in Burlington, Hartford,
Rutland and Winooski

Dismas Across Vermont

Reconciling Former Prisoners with Society, and Society with Former Prisoners for 31 Years!

Did You Know?

- In the last year 58 men and 17 women lived at Dismas.
- Dismas provided 13,000 bed nights and 39,000 meals altogether.
- 944 evening meals were cooked by volunteers.
- 62 (or 83%) Dismas residents rejoined the workforce in Vermont.
- 86 visits between residents and children occurred under our roof.
- Of those residents who met or exceeded their minimum commitment to stay 3 months, 68% transitioned to independent living.

What Goes Around Comes Around

by Jan-Roberta Tarjan, Executive Director

"What goes around comes around." When our residents courageously reach OUT into the community to volunteer, either singly or as a group, they are illustrating in a fantastically tangible way the reconciliation which is at the heart of the Dismas mission. But that is only one half of the reconciliation equation. Local citizens and neighbors also reach IN to us, affirming for residents that they are worthy, valuable people and that we believe in them. The circle is completed. The joys of learning through serving, of building something good, amounts to good medicine for everyone.

The same can be said for donating to Dismas. Philanthropy is the gift that keeps on giving, enriching the lives of donors as well as our residents, as together, they witness individuals and communities grow stronger, and know they are part of that success.

Across the state of Vermont, in our four homes and in our four communities, volunteering and donating are strong traditions. Take a look at these photos: some volunteer in a very exuberant, physical style, and others contribute while sitting quietly around the table, leaning into their Dismas task. Volunteering for a day or every month; donating a dollar or a gift of many more digits; it is "all good." And, it is all part of loving reconciliation

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DISMAS OF VERMONT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Bruce Wyatt

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Jennifer Blair... *Business Manager, DOV*
Richard Gagne... *Program Manager, DOV*

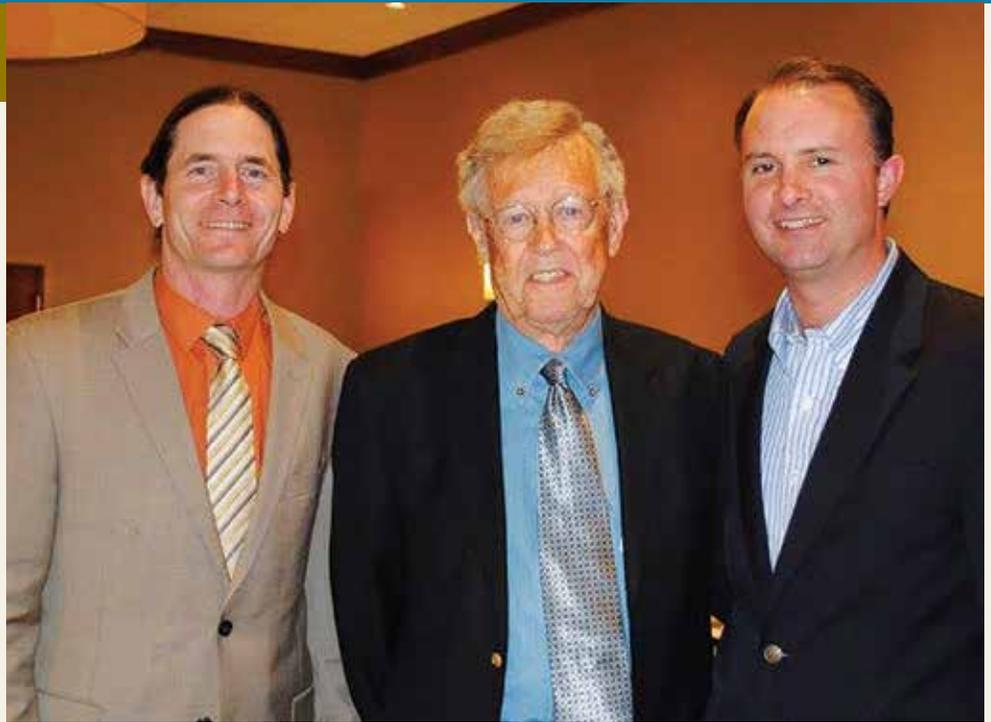


Exuberant volunteers preparing for the massive Burlington Dismas Plant Sale.

Keeping it Together

How do you keep Dismas of Vermont, Inc., with our separate Dismas Houses in four different Vermont locations, functioning together as one inspired, caring, and sustained community? How does Dismas across Vermont retain its sense of teamwork, keep it local, and keep it intimate so that residents really do feel at home and supported by real people in real communities?

We do have a tiny statewide staff to keep our infrastructure coherent. First, as Executive Director, I work with our Business Manager and our one quarter-time Program Manager to make sure that important things such as insurances, legal compliances, policies, communications, and financial auditing are all in place to keep us strong. Second, our statewide Board is representational, made up of members from all our locations. Third, as Executive Director I make sure to circulate between all our houses, meeting our residents and supporting our staffs, and getting staff members from across the state together once a month. Last but not least—and definitely the most fun—



Grateful for our Friends: Judge Frank McCaffrey (Ret.), has volunteered half his lifetime as a leader for Dismas, hand-in-hand with his other half, Rita Whalen McCaffrey, our Founder. Here Frank is flanked by our good friends Vermont Attorney General T.J. Donovan (right) and Vermont Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, both speakers at the Rutland Dismas Annual Community Celebration.

staff members and Board members from all Dismas House communities gather once a year in November as the Community Assembly. Our three -day retreat at Weston Priory is hosted by the Benedictine Brothers. It is like a giant sleepover, where, tucked away in the hills, and without social media and ringing cell phones, we have time to share ideas, get to know one another, reflect on our

mission, plan for the future and have simple fun together while dining in style on the most elaborate pot-luck food in Vermont.

We keep it together by taking the time to celebrate one another and the fantastic mission we have in common.

What Goes Around Comes Around

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and resolute action for building a beautiful, just and compassionate community. Grateful thanks to all our volunteers and donors!

Retired Senior Volunteer Corps (RSVP) friends around the Rutland Dismas dining table, having fun while sending off a mailing.



Ways to Give

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

No matter how you give, why you give, or how much you give, your gift is vital to Dismas of Vermont's programs. Leaving a philanthropic legacy through planned giving is a powerful and meaningful way to give back. You can give to support one of our local programs, or to Dismas of Vermont in general. Please contact either the program you wish to support, or our Executive Director, Jan Tarjan, for more information or assistance.

GIFTS BY CHECK:

Checks should be made out to the local program you wish to support, or to Dismas of Vermont Statewide if you prefer, and mailed to the addresses listed on this page.

GIFTS BY CREDIT CARD:

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

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.

HONOR AND MEMORIAL GIFTS:

These gifts offer a meaningful way to pay tribute to loved ones.

GIFTS OF STOCKS, SECURITIES:

You can make a gift of stock by contacting our brokerage account with MassMutual.

ACCOUNT NAME: Dismas of Vermont Inc.

ACCOUNT NUMBER: R72025577

DTC NUMBER: 0226

MASSMUTUAL RE: Roger Webster Phone: 802-264-6620

PLANNED GIVING/BEQUESTS:

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

DISMAS PROGRAM LOCATIONS:

Burlington Dismas House

Locations at:

96 Buell Street, Burlington, VT 05401

103 East Allen Street, Winooski, VT 05404

Kimberly Parsons and Richard Gagne, House Directors

(802) 658-0381

kim@dismasofvt.org

Hartford Dismas House

1673 Maple Street, Hartford, VT 05047

Renee DePalo, House Director

(802) 698-8661

renee@dismasofvt.org

Rutland Dismas House

103 Park Avenue, Rutland, Vermont 05701

Terese Black, House Director

(802) 775-5539

terese@dismasofvt.org

Dismas of Vermont, Inc.

103 East Allen Street, Winooski, VT 05404

Jan-Roberta Tarjan, Executive Director

(603) 795-2770

jan@dismasofvt.org



Jan-Roberta Tarjan, Executive Director, playing "Banana Grams" late into the evening with a young resident.



The Cycle of Volunteering at Dismas

A cycle of giving through volunteering: IBM employees volunteer at the 15th Annual Dismas Perennial Plant Sale, raising over \$5,000 for Dismas. Dismas residents and staff volunteer in the rain and mud at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Farm. On this particular day, they planted hundreds of sweet potatoes and helped “raise” a greenhouse. The farm donates vegetables to Vermonters in need.



Big Changes At The Annual Celebration Auction

The Burlington Dismas Community Celebration this past April wore a new face and sported new activities! Our setting was the elegant University of Vermont Alumni House, on Summit St. in the Hill District. The gracious, sumptuous old mansion was a thrill to visit. Community members were able to wander through gorgeously paneled rooms, bidding on silent auction treasures, and chatting comfortably with one another in sitting rooms furnished from a bygone era. Musicians, beverages and hearty hors d’oeuvres completed the ambiance. We added a photo-booth and photographer, where old friends and new could don a mask or a hat and laugh while memorializing the event together, and walk away with their portrait in hand.

During the formal program, we were informed and inspired by the vignette performances of the community theatre group Intersections, who portrayed the real – life struggles of individuals and families affected by incarceration, poverty, addiction and trauma.

Master of Ceremonies and honored speaker, Vermont Attorney General T.J. Donovan, emphasized the centrality and urgency of the Dismas mission and work during these challenging times. Nothing, of course, was more effecting and essential than the words spoken by Dismas residents, addressing the room in such a personal and heartfelt way.

Thank you to all the friends of Burlington Dismas who made our event a truly community-wide celebration, and whose support is so critical to our success.



UVM Alumni House on Summit Street.



Longtime Burlington Dismas Program Board member, MaryKate Rowan, and friends at the Annual Community Celebration last April.

Burlington Dismas of Vermont

Why I joined the Burlington Dismas House Board: Giving Back By Serving

Gretchen Kruesi – Burlington Dismas House Board Member

Volunteering on a non-profit board brings countless positives to my life. While being a board member for several nonprofits has grown my network, the real impact and change comes when I do some hands-on work affecting change in an organization. The people who serve on boards are a wonderful sort. They are willing to raise their hand for board service to better our community and make positive impacts in the lives of individuals. I am forever enriched by being in their company.

The work of Dismas House is near and dear to my heart. I am far richer for the opportunity to leverage my skills where I can most make an impact for Dismas House and thus my community and the residents. Contact Kimberly Parsons at Burlington Dismas House if you are interested in hearing more about Board opportunities.



Gretchen Kruesi



DIALING FOR DISMAS!

PHONATHON FUNDRAISER DATES

Monday, November 13

Tuesday, November 14

Wednesday, November 15

Please consider volunteering for your Annual Phon-a-thon this year. Calls will be made at St. Michaels College in the evenings.

Call Zoe at 802-658-0381 or email her at zoe@dismasoft.org

Residents, staff, board members, and other volunteers have fun together at this event!

BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE

96 Buell Street
Burlington, VT 05401

(802) 658-0381
dismasoft.org



**United Way of
Northwest Vermont**