

## Waiting for Home

On any given day, you might find Nick cleaning fish on the picnic table in the backyard of Dismas. In sub-zero temperatures, he has not so patiently waited for the ice to thicken enough for fishing.

Before coming to Dismas House, Nick had a much more significant challenge... serving 20 years in federal prison for selling cocaine. Nick grew up in Fairfax and was raised by his father, who passed away from cancer when Nick was 21. He never knew his mother, but remembers no one talked about her when he was growing up. Nick believes she was an alcoholic. He tells stories about his father and about growing up milking cows and working in the fields. "I had the best father in the world" Nick said, "because he raised us and took us everywhere". Nick is quick to admit he didn't do well in school. He graduated from 9th grade but can't read or write. Not until he was in his 50's and serving time in jail was he diagnosed with a severe learning disability. He started using cocaine after losing his father, and three years later went to prison.

When Nick was released from prison

and arrived in Vermont he had no money and no place to live. He had no family left and spent what little money he had on a hotel. His relief at being accepted at Dismas House was expressed repeatedly - "Dismas saved my life".



Resident skiers at winter retreat.

Nick has faced a couple of serious health issues and surgery while at Dismas. Staff provided support, but it was really the whole Dismas community who came together to help.

Housemates helped him get his socks on or fixed him breakfast and took care of him. Volunteer agencies helped us round up the handicapped accessible equipment needed, and Nick got well. Dismas House is the sum of the greater community-- volunteers, residents, staff and folks who make all of this possible through their donations.

Today Nick is either at work or gone fishing. He is passionate about both, has a good old -fashioned work ethic from his Dad, and works as many hours as his employer will give him. He is starting to plan his next transition, which will mean moving out of Dismas House into his own place. So once again he is waiting...but he is already home and has a community of supporters with him. ❖

## HOUSE HAPPENINGS

### Save the Date

**Sunday, April 15, 2018**

**33rd Annual Community Celebration**  
at UVM Alumni House on  
Summit Street, Burlington, VT  
(see page 3 for details)

### 16th Annual Dismas Perennial Plant Sale

**Thursday, May 24 through  
Saturday, May 26th  
9AM - 5PM**  
1033 Pine Street, Burlington, VT  
(see page 8 for information)

### Dismas on Facebook

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

[www.facebook.com/Burlington-Dismas-House](http://www.facebook.com/Burlington-Dismas-House)



Volunteer and resident at our in-house pottery class.

Most Dismas Residents struggle with an addiction to drugs or alcohol. And, since relapse is often a part of the road to recovery for addicts, it will happen from time to time that a Dismas resident will start using, and as that can put others' sobriety at risk it is my responsibility as House Director to ask that individual to leave Dismas. The individual then can appeal my decision; appeals are heard by the remainder of the Dismas residential community. The appeal process is structured, and occurs in the living area of the house. We had one such appeal recently and I am writing about it now because even after thirty-two years that I have been doing this, I am still struck by how powerful an event it is. The residential community are

the decision makers and the stakes are high. If they do not choose to grant the person's appeal, that individual will most likely be returned to jail or in some cases become homeless. Taking responsibility for a decision like this is never easy for people, but when they do it, they are making an investment in their own wellbeing as well as that of the whole House. That's the big picture, however. At the very personal level, what I see happening during an appeal meeting are residents holding each other accountable. They can be pretty tough, especially if they sense what they are hearing is BS. But, what I think is the most powerful part, that part that still leaves a profound impression on me every time, is after having just been tough on the individual bringing

the appeal, a person (often more than one) reaches out to them in a very personal way. I will hear something like, "I have been in your shoes, I know what you are going through, I know how bad it is right now, it can get better, I am here for you, you can reach out to me anytime." I have learned so much from Dismas residents about what it means to be a good person. ❖



*Richard Gagne,  
House Director for  
East Allen House.*

## Volunteering for Peace

– Isabelle Roser

Last summer I graduated from law school at home in Germany. So, in theory, I know a lot about criminology, reasons for delinquency, and the purpose of punishment. Once here at Dismas House, it took me only a short time to realize that no knowledge in the world can keep up with personal experiences. There is a human behind every statistic and every theory. When I heard about all the things most of the residents went through, I asked myself "Where would I be today if I had experienced all that?" It doesn't change the fact that people still make their own decisions, nor is it an excuse for committing a crime. But it puts things into perspective. It made me more grateful, and want to give something back to everybody who hasn't had much luck in life.

I was baking Christmas cookies in the kitchen with Jack, who had just got out of prison the week before. During rolling out the dough and cutting out cookies, he suddenly lifted his head, smiled, and said: "I haven't done this for quite a while". And I smiled back. Many times since I've been I've heard

"No one has asked me that for a long time." Sometimes these little things – like listening – are those which touch us the most. And together, all those little things contributed by everybody involved at Dismas can create something big.

My time here has taught me things no professor could have taught me, no lectures could have made me understand, and no book could have given me. I don't know yet where my career journey is going to take me, but for the first time I can imagine becoming a defense attorney one day. Most of all, thanks to the amazing people and inspiring encounters I've had at Dismas, this experience has had an impact on my character by simply helping me become a better person. ❖



*Harvesting for the hungry at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Farm.*



*Current and former residents at  
Sandbar State Beach*

# 33rd Annual Dismas Community Celebration

April 15, 2018 4:00-7:30 PM

*(New Schedule This Year! Program 5:00-6:00 PM)*

UVM ALUMNI HOUSE, 61 SUMMIT STREET IN BURLINGTON

Master of Ceremony – TJ Donovan, Vermont Attorney General  
Bob & Betsy Conlon and Chef Donnell Collins, owners of Leunig's  
to receive Jack Hickey Award.  
Peter & Marykate Rowan to receive Ann Atherton Volunteer Award.

## TICKET & DONATION FORM

YES, I will attend. Enclosed is my payment for \_\_\_\_\_ reservations at \$60 each, and a \$\_\_\_\_\_ donation to benefit the programs of Burlington Dismas House.

Sorry, I am unable to attend. I am enclosing a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to benefit the programs of Burlington Dismas House.

NAME(S) (Please list all Attendees)

NAME(S)

PHONE

EMAIL

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

## FOR RESERVATIONS

**Reserve OnLine at**  
[www.dismasofvt.org](http://www.dismasofvt.org)

**OR Call**  
802-658-0381

**OR Email**  
[zoe@dismasofvt.org](mailto:zoe@dismasofvt.org)

**OR Mail the form to:**  
Burlington Dismas House  
96 Buell Street  
Burlington, VT 05401

## EVENING SCHEDULE

4PM: Social Hour with light appetizers by Bevo and Silent Auction

5PM: Program & Awards

6PM: Hearty Appetizers by Bevo - a bold Vermont Company that uses many Vermont products - and Silent Auction

### Please Note:

Silent Auction will  
begin at 4:00 PM and  
close at 7:30 PM.

## Group Living at Dismas House

Many people might not know that we have a weekly house meeting at Dismas House. All residents are required to attend. Sometimes the topics are not so interesting – just the nitty gritty matters of 10 adults living together. We talk about dirty dishes a lot. We also have some deeper conversations about living in sobriety and supporting one another

as a community. The majority of people coming to Dismas House from incarceration struggle with drugs and alcohol. At a recent meeting, one resident said “Everyone has their own way of dealing with recovery, but what I have found is important to me is to live in the present, to always focus on another day sober. I also try to be thoughtful of

little things like waking up and having a really good cup of coffee and talking with housemates rather than waking up hung over and just trying to make it through the day.”  
❖



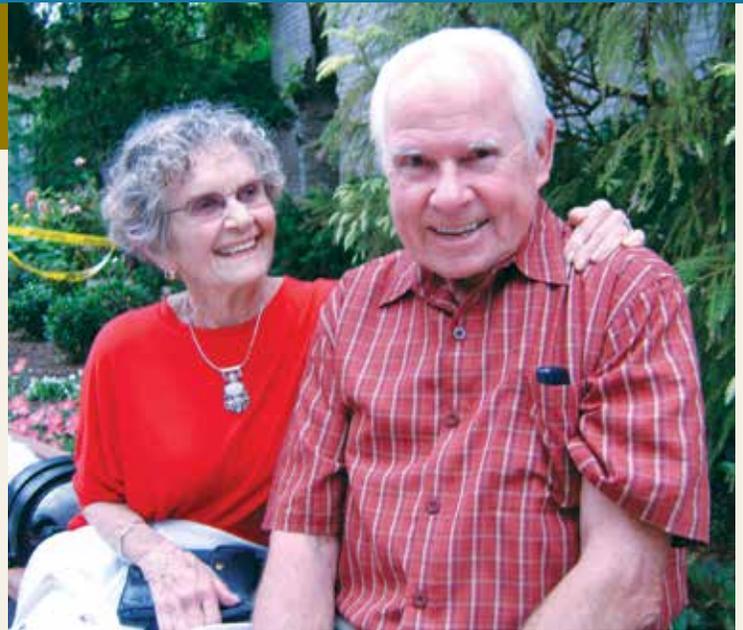
Kim Parsons,  
House Director,  
Buell Street House



## Donors Shine a Light for Rutland Dismas House

Dr. Theresa Nicklas and husband Robert Reimers recently made a wonderfully generous gift of \$12,500 to Rutland Dismas House in honor of Theresa's parents, Muriel and Jim Nicklas, who served as volunteer cooks and supporters of the Rutland Dismas House for fifteen years before moving away to be nearer their grandkids and family. Jim passed away in 2015. "Our donation was made on behalf of Muriel and Jim because they leave behind such fond memories of Rutland, and a humble legacy of service to Rutland Dismas House, which they hope will continue to grow with the help of dedicated volunteers and supporters of this great mission." Writes daughter Theresa and son-in-law Robert. Muriel, always a bright presence, commented about how much she loved to sit around the dinner table and hear residents' stories. A quote from Roy T. Bennett's *The Light in the Heart* expresses the spirit Muriel and Jim brought to Dismas:

*"Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone's life. Be the light that helps others see; it is what gives life its deepest significance."*



Honored: Muriel and Jim Nicklas

Dismas is deeply grateful for the light Muriel and Jim shone on the lives of residents for all those years, and for the renewal of that light which this very special gift represents. ❖

## Living Change: New Strategic Plan

*(continued from previous page)*

and we have moved into the implementation stage. All the basics you love about Dismas will not disappear. We will remain personal, community and mission driven, simple in our needs and compassionate in our outreach. The plan calls for streamlining our governance and oversight processes, examining our human resources and broadening our donor base by getting the good news about Dismas out there to those who can help.

From the base of our new strategic plan we can build a future which will continue to offer "second chances", promote community reconciliation and meet new challenges with innovation. Dismas will be "living change" toward a stronger future, just as do our residents. If you would like to hear more about Dismas of Vermont, and how you can be part of our mission, please contact me at [jan@dismasofvt.org](mailto:jan@dismasofvt.org). ❖



*Annual Celebration Dinners and Auctions at all three Dismas locations are happening this Spring! JOIN US and meet very special people, peruse auction goodies, honor our volunteers and hear from residents and distinguished speakers.*

*(Photo from the Burlington Dismas Annual Celebration, 2017)*

## 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.dismasoft.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@dismasoft.org](mailto:kim@dismasoft.org)

#### Hartford Dismas House

1673 Maple Street, Hartford, VT 05047

Renee DePalo, House Director

(802) 698-8661

[renee@dismasoft.org](mailto:renee@dismasoft.org)

#### Rutland Dismas House

103 Park Avenue, Rutland, Vermont 05701

Terese Black, House Director

(802) 775-5539

[terese@dismasoft.org](mailto:terese@dismasoft.org)

#### Dismas of Vermont, Inc.

103 East Allen Street, Winooski, VT 05404

Jan-Roberta Tarjan, Executive Director

(603) 795-2770

[jan@dismasoft.org](mailto:jan@dismasoft.org)

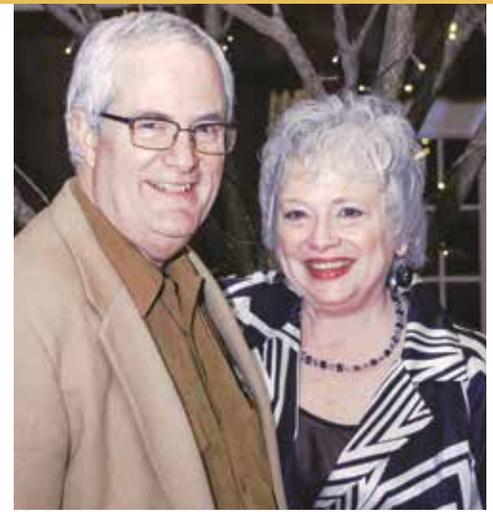


*Volunteering is reconciliation in action. Dismas residents planting trees at the Riverside Church in Hartford, VT.*

# Marykate and Peter Rowan to Receive Ann Atherton Award

This year's Ann Atherton Award recipients are Marykate and Peter Rowan. Their involvement with Dismas goes back to 2008 when we were preparing to open East Allen Dismas in Winooski. Marykate organized her class of Colchester High School students to take responsibility for providing one of the bedrooms with everything it would need to become a welcoming space for a new resident. When the house opened Marykate and Peter became regular volunteer cooks. Marykate is famous in the Dismas community for her love of a good party. Every month when they cook Marykate selects an appropriate theme for that month and will bring themed

tablecloths, napkins, and party favors. The best is when she provides colorful crepe paper King/Queen crowns that we all wear during the dinner. Feeling like a kid again does wonders to ease the burdens we are all carrying. Marykate and Peter have been very involved with our Board of Directors and Committee work. Marykate has been invaluable in making our annual Dismas Community Celebration such a great success. Marykate has also established some wonderful Dismas Community traditions. Every summer, she and Peter host a BBQ at Hazelett Beach in Mallets Bay where residents, staff and board members come together for food, volleyball, fishing, and kayaking.



*Peter and Marykate Rowan*

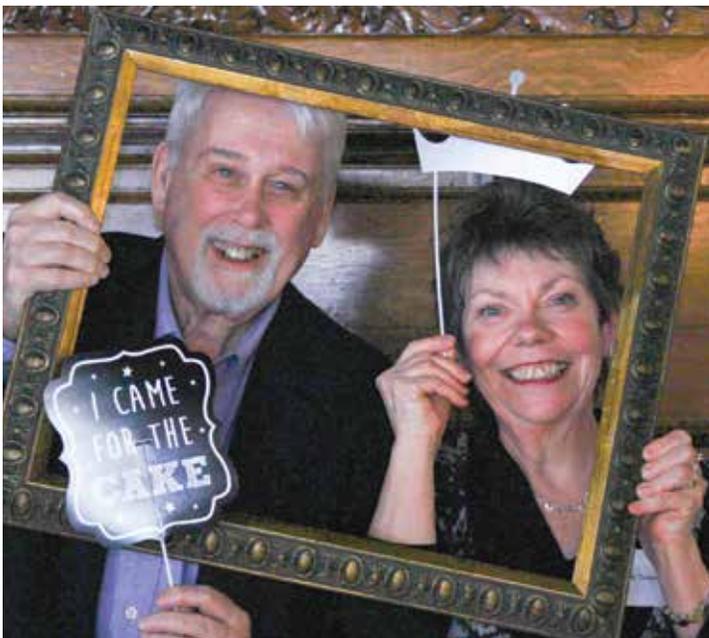
Another favorite is every December when Marykate takes folks from both houses to a tree farm so that people can select and cut their own Christmas tree, and of course, turns it into an opportunity to have a party. ❖

## 2018 Jack Hickey Award

Bob and Betsy Conlon and Chef Donnell Collins, co-owners of Leunig's Restaurant, believe in giving back to their community. Leunig's is a longtime sponsor of The Burlington Jazz Festival, First Night, Burlington City Arts and the Flynn Theater. They support many school, arts, and charitable organizations with donated gift cards for fundraising

events. Each September they host a Wine Dinner and Fashion Show raising more than \$200,000 for the Burlington Breast Care Center, and once a month Leunig's donates 10% of their sales to a local nonprofit. More than one meal has been given to a homeless person and some have received a short-term loan from the "Bank of Bob". Last but not least, Leunig's has hired Dismas residents.

Bob and Betsy Conlon and Chef Donnell Collins are true believers in giving folks a "Second Chance," and in supporting Burlington Dismas and the greater community. They are well deserving of the 2018 Jack Hickey Award. ❖



*Bob and Betsy Conlon*

### BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Harry... *President*  
Brad Martin... *Vice President*  
Debbie Ramsdell... *Secretary*

Christine Burt  
Alec Ewald  
Lachlan Francis  
Gretchen Kruesi  
MaryKate Rowan  
Peter Rowan  
Laird Stanard  
Billy St. Louis  
Bruce Wyatt

### COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY COMMITTED MEMBERS

Roger Gibault  
Kate Lavoie

### BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE STAFF

Kimberly Parsons  
*House Director, Burlington*  
Richard Gagne  
*House Director, Winooski*  
Zoe Bishop  
*Assistant House Director, Burlington*  
Sue Drollette  
*Assistant House Director, Winooski*  
Molly Robin-Abbott  
*Philanthropy Associate*

BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE  
96 Buell Street  
Burlington, VT 05401

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Permit No. 73

## *Burlington Dismas House*

### **Seeking Volunteer Manager for 16th Annual Burlington Dismas House Plant Sale**

Burlington Dismas House is seeking 1 or 2 volunteers who are passionate gardeners to manage our 16th Annual Perennial Plant Sale held in Burlington Vermont. We need gardeners who are able to identify perennials and like working with and organizing energetic teams of volunteers.

This annual event is well established. We receive donations of perennials from area gardeners and community volunteers. 10 hours per week for 4 weeks: from April 25th to May 25th, culminating in the sale. Must be available for 3 hour shifts to lead the

potting team (9am-noon or 1pm-4pm).

This is a fun event where you will get to know other gardeners and a great way to jump start the gardening season!

**All proceeds from the event benefit Burlington Dismas House.  
Contact: [kim@dismasofvt.org](mailto:kim@dismasofvt.org)**



#### **BURLINGTON DISMAS HOUSE**

96 Buell Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
(802) 658-0381  
[dismasofvt.org](http://dismasofvt.org)

