

# HUNDRED NIGHTS

HUNDRED NIGHTS, INC • COLD WEATHER SHELTER • OPEN DOORS RESOURCE CENTER

## A FEW MORE NIGHTS: There's a reason some people can't leave the Hundred Nights shelter

Keene Sentinel Editorial | April 15, 2018

The Hundred Nights shelter will “officially” close for the winter season in a day or two, and it’s fortunate it’s stayed open this long, given the poor prognostication powers of a certain Pennsylvania groundhog Feb. 2.

Despite the unusual length of this winter season, Hundred Nights has had fewer guests than a year ago. That’s not because demand is down — the shelter has been at capacity virtually the entire winter — but because the city has clamped down, making clear the shelter would face repercussions if it takes in more clients than it’s licensed for. (Hundred Nights would like to add that we agree with their reasoning – which is why we need a bigger space.)

Since Hundred Nights’ unsuccessful request for a variance to move into a larger space on Rear Washington Vernon Street last May, an effort mainly thwarted by opposition from neighboring property owners, it’s become apparent there’s a growing discomfort in Keene for the shelter’s clientele, that at times borders on anger.

We’ve seen it when drivers at key intersections roll down their windows not to offer help to those asking for money, but to hurl insults at them. We saw it in social media posts after one familiar downtown panhandler won a lottery prize. It’s been made clear in letters and columns on our pages, and it was very evident in the public discussion last year regarding the proposed Hundred Nights move.

Surely there are several factors behind this resentment. From some, there’s a clear message that panhandlers could find regular jobs if they really wanted to, and that the homeless seen on the city’s streets could rebound if they were willing to play by the rules of conventional society — and there’s some truth to this. Perhaps seeing street people is off-putting because it reminds us how close to that edge we are ourselves. The prospect of being approached and asked for money may lead to guilt because we don’t help as much as we really could, or it might trigger a fear of being confronted, or even accosted.

And maybe some people in the region just aren’t as compassionate and empathetic as we’d like to think they are. Whatever the cause, the dynamic is clear, and it’s unlikely to change anytime soon. Hundred Nights may wrap up its winter season this week, but that doesn’t mean it will be empty.

The shelter and drop-in center, like other agencies, offers help year-round in various ways to those who need it most. If you see its clients



### MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of Hundred Nights, Inc. is to provide shelter and crisis related services to the displaced or homeless. Our goal is to support the invisible members of our society who deserve dignity and a voice that is heard; through community, collaboration and guidance.*

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and think they're "not like us" — that the issues in their lives are far different from those you face — consider who will remain in the shelter once its season is done. According to director Mindy Cambiar, while some clients are moving on to couch surf or head elsewhere, and others are looking to set up camp somewhere in the woods or another quiet place during the warmer weather, a few stragglers will stay behind because they physically can't leave. They're too sick.

This is an aspect of the area's homeless population few ponder day to day. When Cambiar and her staff and board say their clients are just like everyone else, they don't mean in terms of habits and circumstances, though that's sometimes true. They mean the people they help also face the same issues everyone else does. That includes the same health problems we're all subject to: heart conditions; allergies; infections; cancer.

There is a safety net in place to help the most-needy get medical help, but it has limits. Even those with more robust health insurance plans will reach a point where they're told they must convalesce elsewhere. Most of us return home to be cared for by relatives, perhaps with some assistance from a visiting nurse or aide.

But if they didn't have that option, where might they go? Even the county nursing home, which exists to care for the elderly and infirmed, has limited space, capped by law. Most of us have, unfortunately, had someone in our lives touched by a serious, debilitating, even terminal illness; someone who had to be taken in and cared for. It's a common occurrence.

So, the next time you're thinking of "those people" — the ones served by Hundred Nights, The Community Kitchen, Southwestern Community Services and other agencies — picture such a friend or relative, if they didn't have that caregiver at home or the resources to be placed in a nursing home or rehabilitation center. Where would they be? And how would you think of them?

## SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE



Our Spring and Shout fund raising dance was held on March 24th, 2018 at the Keene Country Club. It was a very successful event. In fact, it was a sellout! We danced, we laughed, we ate great food and the band was awesome! Special thanks to three of the Keene Dancing With The Stars couples who showcased their dances for us! We held a silent auction during the dance and that was successful also. We were able to raise \$10,000 to help keep our doors open and we had a lot of fun doing it. Thank you all!



In mid- November 2017 until early January, 2018 we were chosen to be the local non-profit to receive funds from the annual Subaru Share the Love promotion. The promotion entailed car buyers choosing between four charities - three national and one local - to be the recipient of \$250.00 for every car sold during that time frame. Hundred Nights received \$13,656.96 from this promotion. We are so grateful to Fenton Family Dealerships and all the local car-buyers for choosing Hundred Nights! Thank you!

Keep an eye out for Touch a Truck/Trunk or Treat on October 13th and the Annual Holiday Auction on December 8th!

## WISH LIST

*Thank you to everyone who so generously donates items that are needed here at Hundred Nights, Inc.! We all appreciate everything that you bring here. This is what is most needed at this time:*

- Deodorant, Conditioner, Shampoo,
- Tampons
- Razors
- Coffee, Sugar, Sweetener and Creamer
- Work Boots, Sneakers, Shoes, Sandals – all sizes needed!
- Snacks (Fresh fruit, Cheese-sticks, Hard Boiled Eggs) and Lunch foods
- Salad Dressings, Ketchup, BBQ sauce, Teriyaki Sauce
- Juices, Ice Tea Mix
- Backpacks
- Kleenex
- Medicated Foot Powder
- Clothes for warm weather
- Tents, Sleeping bags, Tarps

# Spring Has Sprung? Shelter Update...

It may not seem like it yet since the temperatures are hardly Spring-like and it's currently even snowing again (aaarrggghhh), but the calendar says it's Spring. There are telltale signs for sure. Daffodils, tulips and crocus are peeking through the soil, albiet in some places also through the snow so there is hope that warmer temperatures and sunny days are fast approaching. We remain very busy here at the shelter since we pushed our closing date forward due to the extreme weather! Our original intent was to have April 15th as the last night of shelter – in fact we even had a "Last Night Party" on the 15th with special snacks! But today, on April 16th, the wind is howling, the snow is blowing and we hear that rain and sleet will be with us all week! We will be officially open through the weekend of April 22. The Open Doors Resource Center is open year round as usual from 9 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday and weekends from at least 4 pm to 6 pm. A light breakfast and a full lunch is served daily and on weekends dinner is served.

Here are some of the statistics from this season:

<b>October 15, 2017 to April 15, 2018</b>	<b>Shelter</b>	<b>Resource Center</b>
# of People	171	458
# of Bed-Nights Shelter/Visits to RC	3,603	6,572
# Males	115	297
# Females	56	161
# Under age 18	13	25
# Over age 55	19	56
# Veterans	9	20
# who received professional foot care	98	
# of haircuts provided by The Barbary		42
# of pairs of socks distributed	925	
# ID's/birth certificates purchased for people		19
# of successful Food Stamp Applications assisted with		5
# of people assisted with housing applications		35
# of People referred to other agencies/services	171	458

As we wind down our overnight season we want all of our dedicated volunteers to know how thankful we are that you have been here for us. From Intake and Overnight volunteers, people who donate food, supplies, clothing and money, Friends of Hundred Nights, Board members and everything in between we just couldn't do it without your support.





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*My name is Carol, I'm 52 years old and for the first time in my life, I became homeless this year.*

I had lost my job after 21 years and drained my savings to try to keep my apartment until I could no longer financially afford it. As I packed my last few belongings into my car it finally hit home, "I am homeless."

Then Hundred Nights came into my life on February 8th 2018, or should I say we came into each other's lives. That first day at arriving at Hundred Nights, I was nervous and extremely afraid. My first meeting that day was with some of the staff members and volunteers. I had never in my life dreamed that I would end up being in a homeless shelter.

The volunteers and staff saw how much this experience was affecting me, and helped and encouraged me through this new transition in my life. I don't even have the words to describe how it felt. On that day and during the following weeks ahead, I met many people: all the staff, many volunteers, and yes, many homeless people, who were all kind and encouraging.

"I am homeless." You know, sometimes people do not choose to be homeless. In some cases, life chooses it for them.

My journey was scary but also very rewarding. Everyone whom I've had the pleasure of meeting was part of the best life changing experience I have ever had. I am grateful.

I focused on what I needed to do and was fortunate to have the experience of first finding a part time job and then being offered a position at Hundred Nights. They said I fit right in! I saved for almost two months and was able to get back on my feet and moved into my new apartment on April 8, 2018, two months to the day after arriving at Hundred Nights.

I have learned that no one is immune to becoming homeless. If it happened to me, it can happen to anyone. So when you see a homeless person on the streets, please be kind and show compassion towards them. Everyone has a story. This is my story. I was homeless.

## OTHER NEWS



***In other news, we continue to search for a suitable building with a larger space to meet our needs. There are a few possibilities but nothing nailed down quite yet. We live in hope and we welcome any suggestions from anyone.***

**WE ARE LOOKING TO ASSEMBLE VOLUNTEERS TO PARTICIPATE IN OFFERING AFTERNOON PROGRAMS TO OUR GUESTS OR TO BE A 1-ON-1 MENTOR/ADVOCATE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIFFICULTIES NAVIGATING. IF YOU HAVE SOME TIME, PATIENCE AND/OR SKILLS TO SHARE PLEASE CALL MINDY OR JEFF AT 603-352-5197.**

"Since a friend introduced me to Hundred Nights 3 years ago, I have been a volunteer. I never realized there was an issue in the Keene area that the shelter addresses, probably because I was not very observant. The shelter's staff and volunteers are a dedicated and compassionate group of people. It has been wonderful experience working with them and has been enlightening. No matter the circumstances that bring the guests to Hundred Nights, they deserve to be treated with compassion, respect and dignity. Their stories need to be heard. Thanks to its supporters and donors, Hundred Nights will continue to offer their services. I hope Hundred Nights guests have been helped as much as knowing them has helped me."

- Chuck Mobilia, Shelter Intake Volunteer