

2020

# Annual Update Newsletter



Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee

## Bringing Veterans Home

In the winter of 2018, Mike, a U.S. Army Veteran, became homeless. For months he lived in his car in freezing temperatures while continuing to work full-time. At one point he was treated for frostbite on his hands.



Finally, Mike heard about Preble Street Veterans Housing Services, a Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee (MHVAC) provider. He was connected with a caseworker and immediately worked with her to make improvements in his life. She was able to connect him to permanent housing and after moving in he was reunited with his partner and children.

Mike has been safely housed for a year and a half and is happy to be living with his family, working, and playing music.

*"Just having the stability to be able to rebuild in every way, financially, emotionally. There's no way I can put into words the amount of gratitude that I have, but you know, life is great. If I can help make one person aware so they don't have to sleep in their car or go through anything, then I want to do that. There's help out there."*

## Landlord Partner of the Year

Each year we like to take the opportunity to recognize one of our many outstanding landlord partners.

The winner of this year's Landlord Partner of the Year Award is **BJB Realty!**

Over the past several years, BJB Realty has remained flexible when screening applicants and worked collaboratively with our member providers, all while offering quality housing to countless Veterans in need.

Thank you BJB Realty for your partnership and commitment to ending Veteran homelessness in Maine!



*"We have been working with Preble Street Veterans Housing Services (VHS) for a few years now and our experience has been a good one. The benefits with working with their staff is that any issues that arise are communicated and resolved quickly and professionally."*

*BJB Realty is happy to help in the fight to end Veteran homelessness in Maine. Our Veterans gave us so much, the least we can do is try and help them get on their feet."*

*BJB Realty, LLC is honored to be recognized as a valued partner. Thank you and God Bless."*

— Brad Marin, Property Manager

# Update: MHVAC's Work to End Veteran Homelessness

## WHO WE ARE

The Maine Homeless Veterans Action Committee (MHVAC) — the Veteran Committee of the Maine Continuum of Care (MCoC) — exists to ensure Veteran homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring. MHVAC was adopted as a standing committee of the MCoC in the Fall of 2016.

Participating agencies include	
Preble Street	Maine Veterans of Foreign Wars
VA Maine Health Care System	Maine Elks Association
Easterseals Maine	United Veterans of Maine
Veterans Inc.	Garry Owen House
MaineHousing	Welcome to Housing, Home Goods Bank Inc.
Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services	Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
Volunteers of America: Northern New England	Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center
Betsy Ann Ross House of Hope	Furniture Friends
Bread of Life Ministries	American Legion Department of Maine
And many others!	

## WHAT WE DO

- **Develop** and oversee Maine's service system that responds to homelessness and housing insecurity among military Veterans.

Our system has **No Wrong Door**. We provide multiple access points that lead to the same destination — connection with housing and supportive services. A few examples of how our No Wrong Door system works:

- \* An elderly Veteran on a fixed income staying in an emergency shelter in Bangor is identified by one of our member provider's outreach workers and enrolled in support services to help the Veteran find a safe, affordable apartment, and connect them to local community resources.
- \* A Veteran who is sleeping in her car in Cape Elizabeth, after her hours at work were reduced, is referred to one of our member providers by her local town office. The member provider begins working to locate an apartment in the community, while providing her support in connecting with new employment, food, clothing, and other critical resources.
- \* A Veteran with multiple disabilities on a fixed income is sleeping in an RV without access to electricity or running water in Litchfield. The Veteran calls one of our member provider's referral lines and is immediately connected to their support services to help them obtain a safe, affordable apartment.
- **Maintain** a statewide By-Name List of all identified Veterans experiencing homelessness. We use this data to remain accountable and make regular improvements to our service system.
- **Regularly coordinate** resources and services through weekly conference calls among providers.
- In 2019, we **connected 254 unhoused Veteran families with safe, permanent housing**.



## Working Toward an End to Veteran Homelessness: A National Lens



"The Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee has worked tirelessly to develop new and innovative partnerships throughout the State to address Veteran homelessness. From collaborations with the VFW and American Legion to inviting elected officials to join in the Mayor's Challenge, MHVAC has demonstrated unwavering support for ensuring our Veterans are treated with the utmost respect and dignity. I applaud the hard work of the committee as a leader in New England, overcoming both urban and rural homelessness challenges. As the Committee approaches its goal of systematically ending Veteran homelessness, I encourage community leaders, landlords, and residents of the great State of Maine to come together to support these efforts. Now more than ever, we need the additional support of landlords to ensure we reach our goal of ending Veteran homelessness. Together, we will end Veteran homelessness in the State, and use Maine as a model for the rest of the country."

— *David Tille, Regional Administrator, New England Regional Office, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development*

*Eliminating Veteran homelessness has been a top priority for the Veterans Administration since 2009. Great progress has been made here in Maine and across the nation, yet more remains to be done. We are tremendously grateful for our partnerships with local governments and community agencies. Their support and collaboration have been essential to the progress we've made so far, and will continue to be vital to reaching our goal moving forward.*

— *Tracye B. Davis, FACHE, Medical Center Director, VA Maine Healthcare System*

"Across the country, urban, suburban, and rural communities alike have proven that by working together we can drive down the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness to as close to zero as possible, while also building systems that can effectively address Veterans' housing crises in the future. The USICH Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness serves as a road map and offers an evaluative tool to assist local communities to move forward. Since 2011, national point-in-time data documents a 51% reduction in the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness through 2019. This progress has been driven by urgent action at all levels of government and across all sectors. The State of Maine is efficiently deploying federal and local resources to assist Veterans with housing through strong partnerships across multiple agencies in both the public and private sector, including the enlistment of Mayors for the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran homelessness. As Maine continues to demonstrate its dedication and commitment to ending Veteran homelessness, USICH looks forward to including Maine in the current roster of 79 communities and three states that have successfully met the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks."

— *Bob Pulster, Regional Coordinator, National Initiatives Team, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness*



*Pictured from left to right: Bob Pulster, USICH; David Tille, HUD New England; Sarah Gaba and Vicky Rand, Community Housing of Maine; and Dan Hodgkins, Preble Street Veterans Housing Services*

# The Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

## WHAT IS THE MAYOR'S CHALLENGE?

The Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness is a call to action for all mayors and other state and local leaders to publicly commit to making sure that every Veteran who served America has a home in America. More information can be found [here](#) on USICH's website.

In Maine, the Mayors Challenge is open to all elected officials at any level of public service. MHVAC is fortunate to have the ongoing support of the following Mayors who have signed onto the Mayor's Challenge:

- **Mayor of Auburn, Jason Levesque**

*"As a Veteran, and now as Mayor of Auburn, I have experienced first hand the issues regarding Veteran homelessness facing our State. The 'Mayor's challenge' helped me focus on raising community action. We are close to, if not already, eliminating Veteran Homelessness in our city."*

Click [here](#) to read the op-ed Mayor Levesque published in the *Sun Journal* last year, "Veteran Homelessness is a Solvable Problem."

- **Mayor of Augusta, David Rollins**
- **Mayor of Biddeford, Alan Casavant**
- **Mayor of Lewiston, Mark Cayer**

*"As the Mayor of Lewiston, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of homelessness. Veterans' bring much value to any community. As Mayor and as a community, we must do everything in our power to eliminate Veteran homelessness."*

- **Mayor of Portland, Kate Snyder**

*"The City of Portland is proud to collaborate with the (Preble Street) Veterans Housing Services program in an effort to provide emergency shelter services as well as pathways for long-term housing opportunities so that homelessness amongst military Veterans is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Together, we can make strides in preventing and ending homelessness for Maine vets."*

- **Bangor City Councilor, Sarah Nichols** (former Council Chair)

MHVAC would like to thank the following former Mayors for signing onto the Mayors Challenge and for their support during their time in office:

- Former Mayor of Westbrook, **Mike Sanphy**
- Former Mayor of Portland, **Ethan Strimling**
- Former Mayor of Brewer, **Bev Uhlenhake**
- Former Mayor of Lewiston, **Kristen Cloutier**



*Pictured: Members of MHVAC with Mayor Levesque*

# The Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness

A message from Congressman **Jared Golden**:



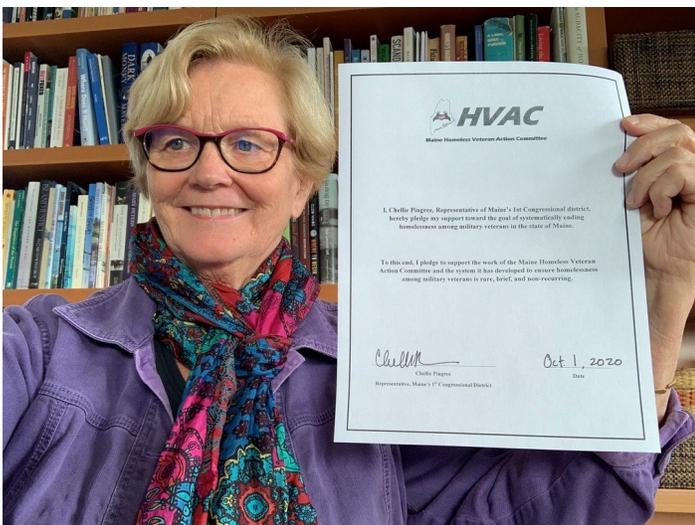
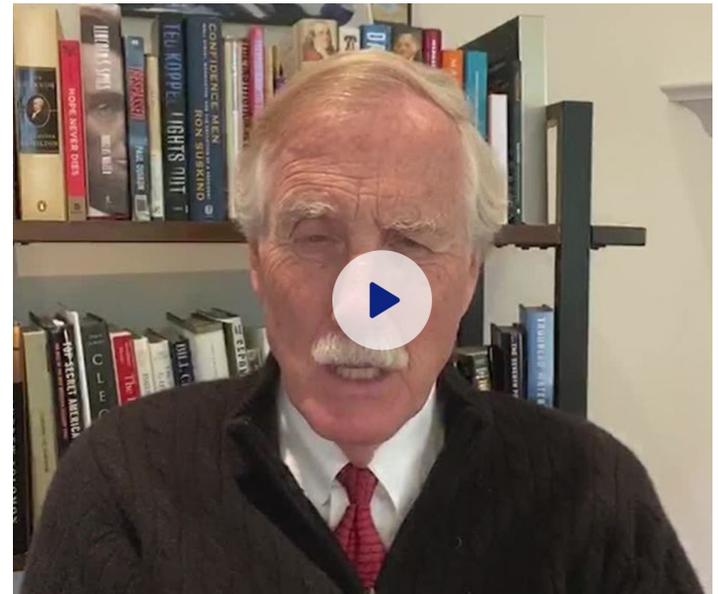
A message from Maine Senator **Susan Collins**:



A message from Congresswoman **Chellie Pingree**:

*"As an advocate for federal policy to end Veteran homelessness, I support the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness. This pledge affirms our commitment to protect those who served, and I believe we can do that with collaborations from all levels of government. No one should face homelessness, especially those who made immense sacrifices on behalf of our country."*

A message from Maine Senator **Angus King**:



## Ways you can help end Veteran homelessness!

### THEY WERE THERE FOR US — WE MUST BE THERE FOR THEM.

- **Rent to a Veteran experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.** If you are a landlord and you have available units, you can help by listing them in Padmission, our free, user friendly listing service! More details [here](#).

\* Know of a landlord who might be interested? Encourage them to [contact us!](#)

- **Help us move Veterans into housing.** Many of the Veterans we serve need help moving furniture and household items into their new apartments. Furniture and household items are important for stability and restoring a sense of normalcy. For more information please contact MHVAC co-chairs: [Mike Gray](#) and [Arwen Agee](#).

- **Help us raise awareness about our committee's work and the issue of homelessness among Veterans in Maine.** *Share this newsletter* with your landlord, coworkers, colleagues, elected officials, friends, and family members, and encourage them to do the same!

\* When sharing content from this newsletter on social media, please use the hashtags:  
#mhvac  
#endingveteranhomelessnessinmaine

- **Refer any Veterans you know who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability to:**

\* Preble Street Veterans Housing Services:  
1-800-377-5709

\* The VA National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-424-3838

\* 211 Maine

### HAVE OTHER IDEAS FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK?

Interested in joining or partnering with our committee?

Please contact MHVAC co-chairs: [Mike Gray](#) and [Arwen Agee](#).



# MHVAC

**Maine Homeless Veteran Action Committee**