

NAIC Meeting Minutes, Unitarian Universalist Church, April 3, 2024

ATTENDING: John Rowntree, President, Bobbi Knickerbocker, Leah Rumsey, Tori Markiewicz, Christa Tsechrintzis, Cynthia Whitaker, Mike Apfelberg, Tina Forbes, Greyson Aureli, Maddi Perry, Shelby Brown, Jim Jensen, Kim Hester, Allison Palm, Jon Spira-Savett, Judie Bryant, Vice president, Jocelyn Sharp-Henning, Secretary.

ZOOM: Kelly Turney, Karla Tolomeo, Betsy Cotton, Tom Woodward, Nonny Egbuonu, Nancy Meyer, Bill Manseau, Laurie Toupin.

John offered a prayer, followed by introductions of attendees.

Topic: Youth Homelessness in Greater Nashua. Guest speakers: Mike Apfelberg, United Way; Tina Forbes, Nashua Community College; Shelby Brown, Nashua School District; Greyson Aureli, H.E.A.L. and Stepping Stones.

Mike moderated the panel of guests. The Greater Nashua Continuum of Care Youth Homelessness Committee includes GSOP, United Way, Habitat for Humanity, Stepping Stones, the Nashua School Committee, etc. The Committee meets by Zoom the first Wednesday of the month at 9 am (tomorrow) and are looking for more participants.

Greater Nashua United Way has the following services/programs available for homeless youth:

The Youth Homeless Fund which is very flexible and used for things like transportation, food, clothing, etc.

Youth Homeless Scholarship Fund used for gas cards, refrigerators for Stepping Stones, Nashua School District youth needs, etc.

Grants to local organizations like Stepping Stones and Nashua Children's Home.

Individual supports.

School supply Pantry and Rosie's Pantry.

Youth Homeless Demo Project Grant (YHDP) which can use \$1 Million over 2 years for whatever needs there are in the Nashua area to help homeless youth. Harbor Care is administrator of the fund. UWGN will be opening up the grant process to the community.

Shelby Brown talked about school age youth homelessness and the McKinney Vento law.

Youth who are in transitional housing or homeless, up to age 18, or up to graduation are eligible. The goal is to remove barriers to education due to homelessness. Homeless students have a right to enroll regardless of paperwork needed.

This includes youth who share housing of others due to loss of housing, live in motels, camp grounds, emergency or transitional shelters, a public or private place not designed for humans, cars, bus or train stations, etc.

Homeless youth may receive a free public education, transportation to school, enroll immediately and attend while documents are being secured, receive a free lunch, and are eligible for special education services, Head Start, Title One services, etc.

Many youth who are not in the physical company of a parent or guardian are homeless because of lack of space in their living situation, family dysfunction, abusive situations, and are not enrolled in school. Around 1/3 identify as LGBTQ, and 10% are pregnant.

There are **280 homeless students enrolled this year**. Last year ended with 238 homeless students.

Current needs are clothing, car repairs, and assistance with senior activities, backpacks with school supplies, bus passes, gift cards, etc. Stay educated.

Tina Forbes, Nashua Community College: Youth couch surf or live in cars. NCC staff and faculty can refer students to a Basic Needs Coordinator, Amy Vazifdar, avazifdar@ccsnh.edu, or 603 578-8934, who can do a CARE referral (Concern Assessment Response Evaluation). Students can also self-refer.

Amy will confer with the Greater Nashua Continuum of Care to connect the student to resources, and follow up to help end their housing insecurity.

Mike emphasized that it is much more difficult when a student is homeless with a beloved pet. Creative problem solving is needed.

Greyson Aureli, Stepping Stones, Case Manager, and H.E.A.L. (Homeless Education Advocacy League) Youth Advisory Board: The H.E.A.L. Board has 4 active members who meet at Stepping Stones. They advocate for homeless youth, representing youth in Youth Homeless Demo Project (YHDP) meetings and projects.

At Stepping Stones, Greyson is the Case Manager for a drop-in center, creating a safe space to hang out and work on becoming self-sufficient. It is open 8-4 weekdays and provides showers, laundry, food, clothes, if needed.

Help is provided with legal documents, job boards, government assistance, resources, etc.

There is a Step-up Program in GATES Hall which is a transitional living program. There are daily chores to teach responsibility, a laundry and kitchen, weekly rent, a point system for responsible behavior, bus passes and gas cards, and transportation from Stepping Stones to GATES at the end of the day. The community is encouraged to get to know the youth.

Questions: What happens when you can't find the people to hire? Mike says finding people to hire is a challenge everywhere.

How can faith communities support this effort? Mike suggests joining the youth subcommittee of Continuum of Care to identify and help with needs. They meet the first Thursday of every month, 9am on Zoom. Mike will send the link to John who will forward it to the email list.

Allison announced the NAIC **Sacred Poetry: Multi Faith Perspectives** on April 10th cosponsored with the library from 7-8:30 pm. A panel moderated by a Rivier professor of 6 interfaith individuals will share poems. How is poetry part of your faith tradition? This is **drop in** at the library theater.

NAIC is also offering a 3-week **ZOOM book club** reading of My Neighbor's Faith on May 6th, 13th, and 20th from 7-8 pm. John will send out the registration form again. Allison Palm, John Rowntree, and Jon Spira-Savett will lead the nights. Six copies of the book are available to loan out.

The next **NAIC meeting is May 3rd at Pilgrim UCC**, 4 Watson Street.

Announcements:

Cynthia Whitaker of **Great Nashua Mental Health** passed out Strong as Granite cards. The NH Rapid Response # is 833-710-6477. Suicide and crisis lifeline is 988 and 211 has substance use resources. GNMH is looking for a Board member, preferably from the faith community. Reach out anytime to GNMH. The Strive to Thrive 5K Run and Walk event is May 18th from 10-1 pm. Sign up needed.

The UU Church invites you to **"My Queer Faith" with Kimayo** involving storytelling, live music and refreshments, with childcare, from 4-6 this Saturday, **April 6**. Allison is also looking for space in September to hold Sunday morning services for about 130 people at 10 am, while renovations are being done at the UU church.

Christ the King hosts the **NH Gay Men's Chorus** on May 4th.

United Way is looking for **computer volunteers** to teach basics, in person, maybe online, in small groups or 1-1. They are adopting a curriculum from AARP.

Habitat For Humanity will be talking at the Nashua Senior Activity Center this Friday, April 4th, about home repairs, from handrails to handicapped ramps, to help people stay in their homes.

Kelly from the United Methodist Church will attend the **United Methodist Conference** from April 23rd to May 4th. She is requesting prayers for the UMC to open doors and be more welcoming to all.

The UMC is hosting the **Granite State Ringers on May 18th at 2:30 pm**.

Nonny Egbuonu is the host of "Let's Talk" Zoom meetings which meet the 1st and 3rd Thursdays at noon and the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 9 am for one hour for people who are homebound and others to remain connected. The link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87618956985>.

Respectfully submitted,
Jocelyn Sharp-Henning, Secretary