



## The Bangor Area Homeless Shelter

263 Main Street • Bangor, ME 04401-6403  
Phone (207) 947-0092 • Fax (207) 945-9032

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## Annual Report

September 20, 2011

Fiscal Year 2011



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### **Mission Statement**

It is the mission of the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter to support and strengthen the community by providing shelter and supportive services to people who are homeless, or at risk and to advocate for collaborative, locally driven solutions to end homelessness.

### **Vision Statement**

It is the vision of the BAHS to be a leading partner in insuring that no person in the Greater Bangor area ever has to spend a night on the streets or in the woods because he or she cannot find or cannot afford safe housing. We believe in the principle that safe, affordable housing is a fundamental human right and our primary aim is to offer a stabilizing base and support for homeless men and women as they transition back into the community. We believe that services offered should actively involve those in need of assistance, be of high quality and be delivered with dignity and respect. Our concern is for both emergency care and the development of affordable housing for all.

The Board of Directors and the Executive Director and the staff successfully led the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter (BAHS) through another year. Impressive accomplishments and significant changes took place at the Shelter during fiscal year 2011.

We went kicking and screaming into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century when our new website was developed and launched. This tool allows us to advocate and communicate to a much larger community. If you have not had a chance to see the website, please go and take a look at [bangorareashelter.org](http://bangorareashelter.org). It is **impressive!**

This year BAHS participated in the first "Springboard" event held in Bangor. This event provided an opportunity for the Shelter's leadership to engage the expertise of select community leaders on a difficult issue facing the Shelter. The community leaders offered ideas, suggestions, and potential approaches for dealing with the profound changes in the environment in which the Shelter operates.

Another successful Hike for the Homeless was held in April 2011. More than 1,300 people participated! We raised awareness, some much needed funds, as well as made lots of new friends and supporters. It is **impressive!**

The Board continued to move to a new format of governance. The committee structure was changed and committee descriptions and functions were documented. A new format for conducting meetings was adopted to provide more time at meetings for meaningful and substantive discussion. We continue to look for and add bright new stars to the Board. This Board continues to amaze me with its dedication, active involvement, and support of the Shelter and the Executive Director. It is **impressive!**

Our staff continues to do the hard work each day of providing assistance to the homeless in our community. The staff is skilled, professional and tireless in their coordination of supports to fit each person's need. It is **impressive!**

All of our accomplishments would not have been possible without the support of our many volunteers. Volunteers continue to be the backbone of the Shelter. They provide meals, donations of money, goods, time, energy, knowledge, and many more important resources that add to the day-to-day operations of the Shelter. It is **impressive!**

If you would like to see how you could help, go to the BAHS website at [bangorareashelter.org](http://bangorareashelter.org) for the volunteer opportunities available.

As we have shared with you before, the policy and funding environment in which we operate has been volatile for some time. Given the current situation being one of moving targets it is difficult to predict what will take place. The "unknowns" in the environment outweigh the "knowns". We continue to stay informed on the key information that will guide future decisions.

Dennis Marble will continue to provide outreach to update the community on funding and policy from Augusta, Maine State Housing (MSHA), and others. Our seasonal newsletter, *The Shift Report*, will also provide updates.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank all of our supporters. We appreciate your support of the work that we do at the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter. We encourage you to hold us accountable and share your thoughts and suggestions about community needs and the direction we should take as we push forward in these uncertain and tough economic times.

Thanks for all you do!

Sharon Brasslett  
Board President  
2011

This past fiscal year was one having both new challenges and successes as well as continuing examples of historic trends. Sort of stealing from a line in the song, "New York, New York," demand was up and funding was down—government funding, that is. (I've attached a chart showing how clearly overnight use of the Shelter has increased. Part of the reason this past year spiked was the addition of 5 permanent beds.)

With the tough economic times continuing, and knowing that last fall's elections would result in policy and funding threats, we spent more time engaged with the legislature and the governor's office than in recent years. Beginning with a breakfast meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup> for area legislators, local officials and representatives from other shelters, I was in steady communication with our delegation for the next 6 months. The financial threats to the Shelter were mostly indirect, but those directed at the people we serve reached draconian levels at times. In order to support efforts led by other advocates (like Maine Equal Justice and the Statewide Homeless Council), I stated our position in informal gatherings and during public testimony in front of joint standing committees. Thanks to the work of our area delegation, we had a meeting with the Governor on St. Patrick's Day. Frankly, he began the meeting by stating, "this better not be about money because there isn't any," and in fact never asked why we had wanted to meet with him. With the end of the session in May, the worst of the threats had been avoided (and credit certainly goes to Appropriations for balanced and bi-partisan work). As I write, however, the Governor has created a new commission charged with finding an additional \$125 million in cuts (quote: "Cut 'til it hurts.") and with this process has apparently taken authority away from the legislature and awarded it to his office.

In contrast to the government, private sources and individuals continued with a trend we've now seen for two decades. Last winter's Annual Appeal broke all previous benchmarks with a total funds received of **\$99,478!!** With amounts ranging from less than \$5.00 to individual donations at \$10,000, this category of giving has approached the level of *all* government homeless support (which now is less than 24% of our annual costs). And people are involved! This past April more than **1,300 people** participated in our annual Hike for the Homeless!

We continue to need this wonderful level of support as we are facing definite threats on the horizon. Maine's Department of Health and Human Services still cannot display any direct support for the shelters that are keeping many mentally ill people safe. Maine Housing has shown an inclination towards making major changes with how shelters are currently funded. MSHA and HUD are requiring more data collection and oversight without providing any financial resources to help us do so. The Governor is looking for more cuts. Congress has appeared inept and driven more by political sound bites than by leadership. Some local leaders have been voicing concerns that their City is doing too much to help poor people while surrounding communities get off the hook. And some non-profit agencies are clearly guiding their operations and shifting gears in order to pursue funding rather than focus on their missions with high intensity.

Please know how much you, our supporters and colleagues, mean to us. We understand that we would not be in business without such support. I pledge to you that we will continue to keep our eyes on our mission and those in need, and that through our efforts we are fulfilling a contract with you to use your resources as strategically and efficiently as possible. We will be looking to make positive changes as we go forward. We will make efforts to continue to ensure that all who come to these doors are connected with the services and supports they need while engaging our guests in more ways that will allow them to connect with and make contributions to our broader community. We will continue to work to help create more safe and appropriate affordable housing and to help secure for this region a quantity of housing vouchers equal to demand. And we want to be transparent as we work and to be available to your thoughts and

questions—please go to our (still new) website at [bangorareashelter.org](http://bangorareashelter.org) (and thanks, Sutherland Weston and Oxford Networks!).

Of course, the *real* work of assisting people who are experiencing homelessness and additional pains and emergencies is performed by our terrific employees. We have a great team of staff led by a skilled and experienced Program manager, Rowena Griffin. So when I say things like “... we will continue to keep our eye on our mission...” and “...will ensure that those who come to our doors are connected with supports...” I am speaking of our staff team.

Finally, know that your Board of Directors is fully engaged. Just as we know we have a community that supports us, I hope the community knows that we have a competent, caring, able and fully invested Board of Directors!

Here’s hoping to a collective near future that sees us safely getting by while we see the opportunity for and work towards better public policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis R. Marble