



Building a more compassionate community one person at a time THE BEACON

Bethesda House Winter Newsletter: Hope Through the Cold

A Semi-Annual Publication of Bethesda House Schenectady, Inc.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Winter has a way of revealing what we might otherwise overlook. The cold finds every crack, every gap in our defenses – showing us exactly where we need to strengthen our foundation. This season of discomfort becomes, paradoxically, an opportunity for focus and renewal.

In 2025, amid significant upheaval both statewide and nationwide, Bethesda House provided more than 43,000 points of connection – moments when lives were touched, burdens were lifted, and futures began to shift. Cara House expanded our outreach across Schenectady County, while our programs continued bringing food, clothing, and medical care to some of the community's most vulnerable members. Together with you, we built something warmer and stronger.

Homelessness in our region continues to affect families, veterans, and individuals struggling with mental health, trauma, and poverty. Our staff works tirelessly to meet each person with dignity, addressing immediate needs while walking alongside them toward stability and healing. The answer to these challenges is not despair, but sustained, compassionate action.

Just as winter reveals where the cold seeps through, our work helps people with the foundational stages of identifying and addressing their own areas in need of strengthening. Our goal isn't merely to help people survive the harsh winter months, but to use this season's clarity to prepare for the year ahead – to emerge not just intact, but fortified.

As we enter these coldest months together, we thank you for being part of this work. Your support helps us turn winter's challenges into opportunities for transformation.

Kimarie A. Sheppard

This fall, Bethesda House was blessed by an extraordinary act of generosity when an anonymous donor pledged to match every dollar given – up to \$100,000 – effectively doubling the impact of each gift. This opportunity inspired our community to come together in a powerful way. From October 16 through December 31, 131 compassionate donors – many longtime supporters and many giving for the first time – helped us raise \$154,625 in support of our mission to serve those in our community experiencing homelessness and poverty.

At a time when economic uncertainty continues to place immense strain on our most vulnerable neighbors, this matching opportunity provided

more than just financial support – it provided hope. Because of these generous contributions, Bethesda House continues to offer safe shelter, nutritious meals, case management, and pathways to stability for those who need it most.

We are deeply grateful to our anonymous matching donor and to every individual who gave so generously. This extraordinary outpouring of support reflects the compassion and commitment of a community that believes everyone deserves dignity, care, and the opportunity for a better future. We look forward to continuing this vital work together and creating lasting change for our neighbors in need.

Understanding HUD Cuts

By Vincent Mitchell, Contributing Writer

If you've been hearing about changes to homeless housing programs, you're not alone in feeling concerned. Here's what's actually happening with federal funding and how it could affect Bethesda House and the people we serve.

On November 15, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced major changes to how it funds homeless assistance programs. In plain terms, they're taking money away from programs that help people stay permanently housed and redirecting it toward temporary housing programs.

For organizations like Bethesda House and the vulnerable individuals we serve, these policy shifts mark a threat to decades of progress. HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) program – the main federal stream for homeless services – currently spends about 87% of its money on permanent housing. The new policy caps that at just 30%.

The funding structure is also changing: previously, 90% of CoC money went to what's called "Tier

1" protected projects – the programs that communities rely on most and that have proven track records. Now, only 30% get that protection, while 70% become competitive funding that programs have to fight over each year. That means less stability and more uncertainty for everyone.

National advocates estimate these changes could push 170,000 people back into homelessness across the country.

Last year, New York State received \$326 million in CoC funding. Of that, \$146 million went to rental assistance, keeping 8,700 households in permanent housing. Families and individuals could lose their homes under the new policy.

For Schenectady, the stakes are especially high. Bethesda House has served our homeless neighbors since 1992, operating 31 HUD funded permanent supportive housing beds for people experiencing chronic homelessness with mental illness, chronic health, substance use disorder, and or physical disabilities. With our new facility, Cara House, 26



permanent supportive housing units, emergency shelter and medical respite beds were added to Schenectady County’s affordable housing inventory.

Our model has always been “Housing First,” as in, get people housing first, then address challenges like medical needs, mental health, or substance use. Research shows that this approach actually works, but it’s exactly what the federal government is now moving away from.

The administration says the new approach – transitional housing with work requirements and treatment programs, usually limited to 24 months – will promote self-sufficiency by addressing root causes like substance use and mental illness.

But research shows permanent supportive housing is the most effective solution for chronic homelessness. Studies find that transitional housing programs exclude people who need help most, that individuals take longer to get into permanent housing through these programs, and that they’re less likely to stay housed afterward.

HUD normally releases funding notices in August, giving affected communities six months to prepare. This year’s November notice means some communities started running out of money during the holidays. New awards aren’t expected until May 2026, with funds accessible 30–90 days later – potentially eight months operating in limbo through the coldest months when shelter needs peak.

These changes create unprecedented challenges: financial instability for projects built with multiple funding sources, requirements to restructure away from evidence-based models, and disruption to projects in the middle of two-year grant cycles. Several states have filed lawsuits challenging these changes as unlawful.

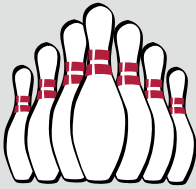
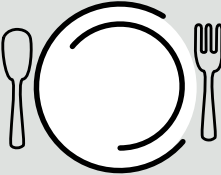
Congress is working on the fiscal year 2026 HUD appropriations bill. Advocacy groups are pushing for language to renew all existing Continuum of Care contracts for twelve months, providing stability during policy review.

Bethesda House has spent over three decades building trust and effective programs in our community. The coming months will determine whether Congress protects these investments. What’s at stake isn’t just policy or funding – it’s people’s homes, stability, and futures.

We’re in this together, and we’ll keep fighting for solutions that work. Stay informed, stay connected, and know that we’re doing everything we can to serve our neighbors who need us most.

Save the Dates!!!

Bethesda House’s Fundraisers are scheduled!

	May 8, 2026 Bowl for Bethesda
	October 15, 2026 Light Up Bethesda House Max410 Water’s Edge

Details for each event will be posted on our website:
www.bethesdahs.org
View our website for photos of
the May Bowling 2025 and October 2025 fundraisers.



How You Can Help This Winter

As many of us gather with loved ones in warm homes, our neighbors facing homelessness face the winter's most bitter challenges. The season of giving is also a time to extend compassion and support to those who need it most.

Bethesda House is dedicated to serving individuals experiencing homelessness in our community. This winter, you can help provide dignity, comfort, and care by donating from our list of essential items.

Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a real difference.



Our Wishlist

Our Wishlist – What We Need

Clothing

- Winter boots
(Men's 7–14, Women's 5–11)
- Winter coats
(S–3X, Men's & Women's)
- Long-sleeve shirts
(S–3X, Men's & Women's)
- Waterproof gloves
- Scarves and hats

Hygiene

- Body wash or bar soap
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes
Combs and brushes
- Shampoo

Medical Supplies

- Bandages
(band-aids and ace bandages)
- Gauze
- Medical tape
- Antibiotic ointment

Other Essentials

- Waterproof blankets
- Biodegradable wipes
- Lip balm
- Q-tips
- Nail clippers

Your generosity ensures that everyone in your community has access to the necessities they need to stay warm, healthy, and happy this winter.

Thank you for considering a donation to Bethesda House.

BETHESDA HOUSE WISH APPEAL

It's time for Bethesda House's Wish Appeal! Each year we compile a list of gifts for friends and supporters in the community who wish to donate. Bethesda House gratefully acknowledges the generous gifts we receive that help us support the needs of so many. The items on our

Wish List reflect our day-to-day needs. Donations are accepted Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 - 4:00 or by calling Bethesda House (518-374-7873) to make arrangements.

Adopt Our Food Pantry

A \$50 donation provides \$250 in food products from the Regional Food Bank.

A \$100 donation translates to over \$500 in food products from the Regional Food Bank.

Adopt An Apartment

Visit bethesdahs.org for details.

Gifts that Keep on Giving

Deferred gifts to Bethesda House can have a lasting effect on our future strength & sustainability. Please give serious consideration to:

- A bequest to Bethesda House
- A donation of a life insurance policy
- A gift of appreciated asset (stock, property)



Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc.
Friends of Bethesda House/Profile Update/Gift

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____

Fax _____

E-Mail _____

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____
(Please make checks payable to Bethesda House)

Credit Card: MC Visa AMEX Discover

No: _____

Exp. Date: _____ Sec. Code: _____

Signature: _____

Are you a GE Employee/Retiree? ____ Yes ____ No
(Bethesda House is a GE Match Recipient)

Would you like to learn more about volunteer opportunities at Bethesda House? ____ Yes ____ No

You can also make donations at www.bethesdahs.org

The Impossible Equation: Our Local Housing Crisis

By Vincent Mitchell, Contributing Writer

When we think about homelessness, we often assume that having some income or benefits should be enough to secure housing. However, across our community and nationwide, a harsh reality reveals why this assumption no longer works: the math simply doesn't add up.

A single adult receiving DSS assistance in New York is allocated \$378 per month for housing. For families, the allowance ranges from \$648 - \$836, depending on household/family size. At the same time, the rental market is entirely out of reach. There are no available units at these rates – none. This is not an exaggeration. It is an impossible equation that individuals and families confront every day, one that keeps people trapped in homelessness.

The gap between housing assistance and real-world rent has grown dramatically. Studio apartments that once rented for \$400 now cost \$900 or more, while one-bedroom units roughly exceed \$1,200. Even in lower-income neighborhoods, rents remain high because demand far outpaces supply. For someone working full-time at the minimum wage, the math doesn't work out. At \$16 per hour working 40 hours a week, a worker earns roughly \$2,560 per month before taxes. Housing experts recommend spending no more than 30% of your gross income on rent – about \$768 in this case – but apartments at that price point have vanished.

This affordability crisis hits many of our neighbors, including:

- Seniors on fixed incomes watching their savings drain away
- Veterans relying on disability benefits
- Single parents balancing childcare and low-wage work
- People with disabilities striving to live independently
- Full-time worker's earning the minimum wage

The individuals are not lazy or irresponsible. They are trapped in a market that has become completely disconnected from what low- and middle-income people can actually afford.

What Bethesda House Is Doing

At Bethesda House, we see the housing crisis up close through the families and individuals who turn to us for help. While emergency shelter remains essential, we know that lasting solutions require both immediate support and long-term strategies. Our work extends far beyond providing a safe place to sleep.

Through financial counseling, we help people stretch their resources and work to reduce debt. Our landlord mediation services work to preserve existing housing by resolving conflicts and preventing evictions before they occur. We also collaborate with community partners to create and identify truly affordable housing options.

The housing crisis is not the result of poor budgeting or inadequate effort. It is driven by a fundamental mismatch between what people can afford and what housing costs. Our neighbors are not asking for a handout – they are asking for a stable, affordable place to call home. Until the math changes, Bethesda House will continue to stand in the gap.



Bethesda House offers:

Permanent Supportive Housing to eligible chronically homeless adults

Scattered Site Apartments: 8 Beds
Lighthouse Program: 7 Beds
Liberty Apartments: 16 Beds
Cara House: 26 Beds

Transitional Housing for Veterans:

Lighthouse facility: 3 Beds
In partnership with the Veterans Administration, Veterans have housing and full access to case management services

Overnight Emergency Shelter

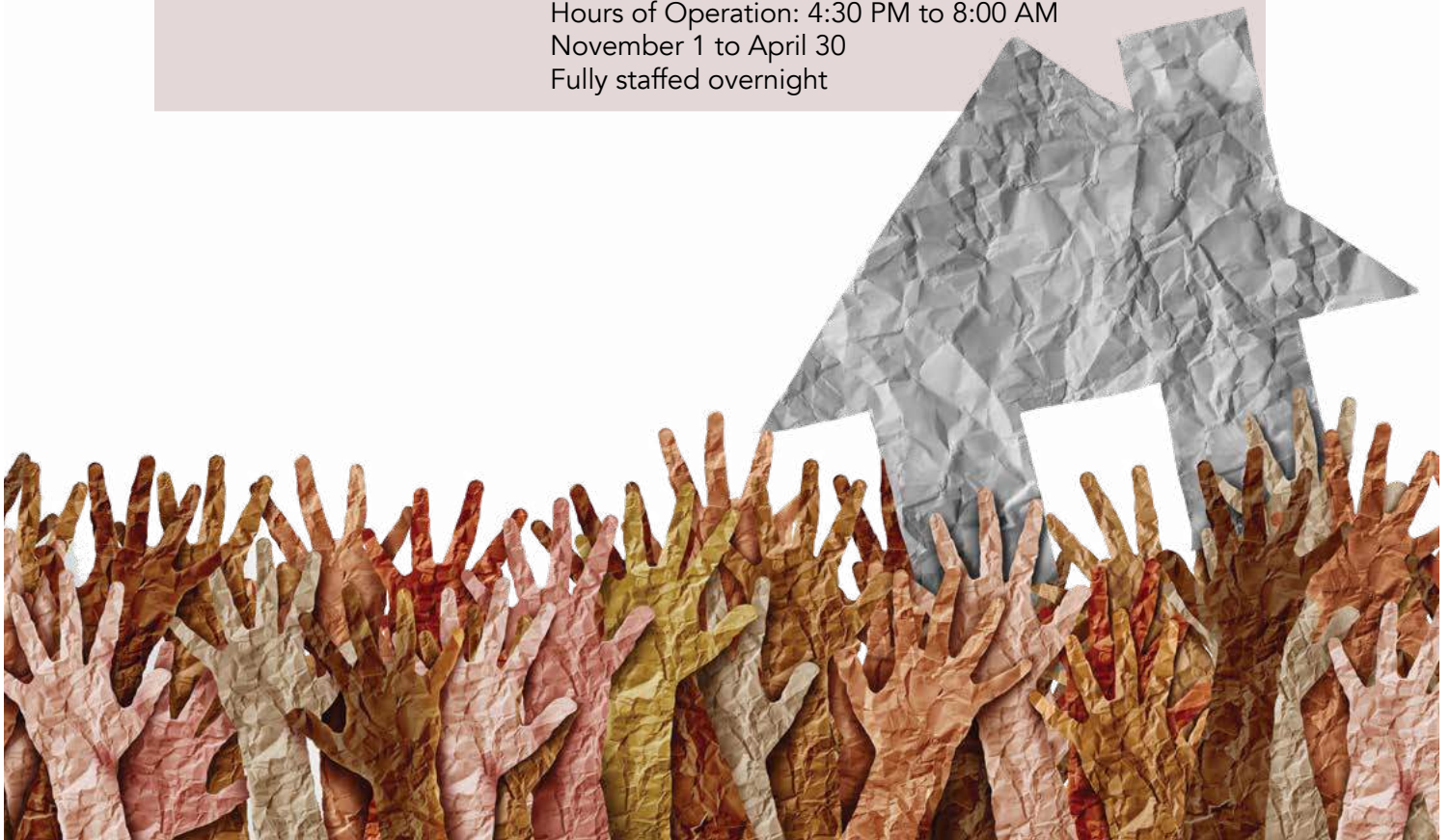
Cara House location: 10 beds for homeless single adults
Referrals are approved by Department of Social Services
Hours of Operation: 4:30 PM to 8:00 AM

6 Medical Respite Beds
Referrals are approved by Department of Social Services or Healthy Alliance

In Operation 365 days/year
Fully staffed overnight

Code Blue – Overnight Emergency Shelter

Catherine Street location: 26 shelter beds
Hours of Operation: 4:30 PM to 8:00 AM
November 1 to April 30
Fully staffed overnight



Friends up to \$100

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Werner, Richard & Eunice

Bethesda House is grateful to the individuals, congregations, businesses, and private foundations who donated from \$1 to over \$100,000. Your generosity

allows us to continue helping others by providing for basic needs in an environment that encourages and supports positive change.

We thank you and look forward to another successful year. Every donor is important to us. Our goal is to list each person or organization as the donor wishes. If your name does not appear as you would like it to, please contact the agency's Administration at either slotano@bethesda.org or (518) 374-7873, ext. 1220 so we may correct our records.

A very special Thank you to donors contributing through United Way, we are grateful that you chose to direct your donor dollars to Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc.

Thank you to donors who participate in the GE Match. Thank you to donors who participate in Clynk and other Hannaford fundraising initiatives. Your gifts of spirit and generosity are deeply appreciated.

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 Lynnwood Reformed Church
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 Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
 Panera
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 Baseball Club

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Mary Christoffel	Clarie Racicot	Linda Jateau
Robert Christoffel	Barbara Koster	Elaine Ognibene
Marianne Sheppard	George Moffett	Michael & Beverly Roscoe

Schenectady Quilters
 Sharran Coppola
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 St. George's of Clifton Park
 St. Joseph's Catholic Church
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 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
 Congregation Gates of Heaven
 The Ladies Philotochos
 Society of St. George
 Greek Orthodox Church

Bethesda House

Is an interfaith ministry to the homeless, disabled and economically disadvantaged citizens of Schenectady County, building a just, hospitable and inclusive community one person at a time by affirming the dignity and addressing the needs of each guest entering this House of Mercy.

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A Grateful Look Back at our Fall Fundraiser

Thank You for Lighting Up Lives



Thank you for joining us at our 15th Annual Fall Fundraiser, "Light Up Bethesda House." Your presence and generosity helped make October 16, 2025, a huge success, raising over **\$33,000** for our homeless neighbors.



What a magical evening it was! The night was filled with great food, friends, laughter, and fun. **Matthew Olmstead's** trivia entertainment, back by popular demand, had everyone laughing. Creative, unique baskets were raffled throughout the night, adding to the excitement and joy of the evening.



When you donate to Bethesda House, you can see the results of your giving! Every dollar raised provides critical services – food, clothing, our day program, medical and mental health counseling, and case management – to the homeless, vulnerable, and economically disadvantaged citizens of Schenectady County. Your contribution directly affirms the dignity of each guest entering our House of Mercy, offering hope and practical assistance when it's needed most.



As Hank Rosso wisely said, "Fundraising is the gentle art of teaching the joy of giving." You exemplified that joy through your generous spirit. Thank you for being part of our mission and for helping to light the way toward a more inclusive community.



Our Event's Generous Sponsors

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