

FALL
2018



curbside

NEWS FROM PREBLE STREET



You Don't Need a Home to Vote

Through the annual You Don't Need a Home to Vote campaign, Homeless Voices for Justice educates people struggling with homelessness and poverty about their right to vote even if they don't have a home, and assists them in the voting process from registration and absentee voting to accompanying them to polling locations and ensuring their rights are upheld.

Over the past 20 years, HVJ has registered more than 2,400 voters and informed many more people about their voting rights.

As part of the campaign in October, Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice hosted federal, state, and city candidates at its annual informational tours and forums at the Preble Street Soup Kitchen.



Responding to the Opioid Epidemic

By Mark R. Swann, MSPA, Preble Street Executive Director

Disappointed does not even come close to describing how we felt at Preble Street when Governor LePage vetoed LD 1711 "An Act to Save Lives by Creating the Homeless Opioid Users Service Engagement Pilot Project" — or H.O.U.S.E. — on the day before it would have become law. Devastated and profoundly sad are better descriptors.

In the face of a mounting public health crisis and despite bipartisan support in both houses of the legislature, this important bill disappeared with the stroke of a gubernatorial pen.

A Garden Grows in Bayside

Again this summer, Teen Services staff and youth collaborated with Cultivating Community to plant and harvest a garden in the Teen Center courtyard. This year tomatoes, strawberries, rhubarb, herbs, and an assortment of flowers all flourished, and much of the food was harvested and used by Preble Street Food Programs to prepare meals for the youth to enjoy.

“It helps keep my focus away from all the bad stuff on the streets.”

One youth in particular, Ryan, dedicated several hours a week to the garden while holding down a full-time job and working with case management staff on finding stable, independent housing.

Ryan first came to Preble Street last winter and has been working on the garden since early spring. “I’ve been tending to it when I can,” Ryan says. “It helps keep my focus away from all the bad stuff on the streets.”

“We started the garden to provide more engagement opportunities in the drop-in for the young people needing our services,” says Teen Services Supervisor Kiersten Mulcahy. “The garden gives youth the opportunity to build something beautiful from scratch every spring, nurture it while it grows, and watch their project give back to the community by providing food for the kitchen and a peaceful space for people to relax.”



“Kiersten and I teamed up and got it going this year,” says Ryan. “How the layout was, where different things were growing. We worked very hard on it, and it’s come out great, I think.”

Ryan aspires to take his green thumb to work on a farm one day. “Either that or working in a restaurant, working on the line or doing prep work would be really cool. It’s something I’ve been interested in since I was a kid.”

“The one plant that has got me really going with this whole thing is the baby tomato. Because homegrown baby tomatoes, during a cookout in early September, is like a childhood memory. It’s the best. Homegrown cherry tomatoes will always beat store bought cherry tomatoes — I don’t care what anyone says. If you grow tomatoes well enough they will be hands down the best ones you’ll ever have. That’s

what I was really, really working on, and I’m still working on that. They still haven’t ripened yet but they’re starting to, so hopefully they’ll come around.”

Gil began engaging with staff and rediscovered his love of art after months of cycling through isolation and hospitalization during his first year at Huston Commons.

Since then, he has created 15 pieces for the Preble Street Art Show, an annual event showcasing work from artists living at Logan Place, Florence House, and Huston Commons — Preble Street’s Housing First permanent, supportive housing programs for chronically homeless individuals.

At the same time, Gil has also become an effective advocate for himself and other tenants and an inspiration for his neighbors.

Detail of artwork



Responding to the Opioid Epidemic

(continued from cover)

The bill disappeared, but our friends and neighbors who suffer from substance use disorder did not. Every day — every single day — clients at Preble Street ask for help in seeking treatment from this relentless and deadly disease. They ask for help in getting into a detox program, entering a recovery program. They are desperate for help in getting sober. But, tragically, most often there is no help available. The services just aren't there. Treatment programs barely exist, and those that do are mostly for people with insurance, people who have homes, people who have the stability in their lives that few of the people we serve have. So, over and over again these clients are denied treatment.

The H.O.U.S.E. bill would have developed and funded a treatment — and housing — program specifically focused on people experiencing homelessness, based on best practice and research done in Boston and Baltimore. Combining Medication Assisted Treatment, low-barrier housing options, and intensive case management, it would have offered hope to those who have so little right now.

Without a serious, sustained, compassionate, and responsible commitment from the State of Maine, our efforts will only make a small dent in the problem. Preble Street will continue doing what we can, and we will work relentlessly to keep people alive at our shelters, soup kitchens and drop-in centers; but we will also continue to advocate as loudly and strongly as we can with the next administration in Augusta for them to do the right thing.

Today, tomorrow, and until there are no more memorial candles to light, please contact your legislators, write letters to the editor, and talk to family and friends about solutions. Insist on action. *Lives are on the line.*

"Get together. Do it. Speak out. The more voices, the merrier. They will listen... You can make a difference. You need to speak up, and change it."

Tim Keefe, advocate



Pictured: Preble Street Social Change Advocate Heather Zimmerman addresses legislators at the Resource Center Soup Kitchen

In September, the National Conference of State Legislatures brought a Health Innovations Task Force to Preble Street. Twenty state legislators and staff, as well as private partners from across the country, learned about the innovative services and advocacy efforts Preble Street provides to address the opioid epidemic.

As this public health crisis kills nearly one Mainer every single day, Preble Street provides urgently needed comprehensive health services and advocates rigorously for expanded treatment programs and policies to save lives.

A Picture of Love

By Donna J. Yellen, MSW, Preble Street Deputy Director

In the morning sunlight of a warm autumn day, I watch three men talking in the Resource Center courtyard. All are well known — and beloved — by staff and interns at Preble Street. One is sitting on the step, one is in his wheelchair, and the other on his bicycle, leaning fervently into a conversation for which I wish I could be a fly on the wall. I see animation, excitement, patience, and respect as a conversation happens with words I cannot hear.

The challenges these three men have faced throughout their long lives are so severe that no one in our country, with all its resources, should have to endure them. Collective decades of homelessness on top of chronic illnesses, mental health issues, substance use disorder, and complex medical conditions have left these men scarred but with a wisdom that comes only from survival.

One of them now lives in a Preble Street Housing First permanent apartment, happy to finally be able to call someplace “home” after years of sleeping in shelters or in the woods. Another worked with Preble Street Veterans Housing Services and now has an apartment in the community. The third is wracked by severe recurring delusions that undermine his housing stability, as caseworkers at Preble Street remain determined to find him housing, while making sure wherever he is, he can be safe and nourished.

Preble Street founder Joe Kreisler was my supervisor when I came to the agency 24 years ago as a Master of Social Work intern from the University of New England. He taught me and all his students the essence of good social work: approaching anyone who comes through the doors with unconditional respect, regardless of whether they are looking for a healthy meal or warm shelter, someone to listen, or the tools to remove the obstacles that prevent them from moving beyond the crisis in their lives.

The beauty of Preble Street is that these qualities Joe taught — and that are carried forward in the work of each staff, intern, and volunteer — are also passed on to each other by the people who need Preble Street services.

That is what I watched that morning at Preble Street.

It was a picture of love.

“Typically, social workers are taught to meet people where they are. At Preble Street we meet people where they are, and we don’t leave them there.”

Ashish Shrestha, Resource Center staff



Where Love Stops and Stays

August 23 marked the 25th anniversary of the Resource Center at its current location. The first of 13 programs run by Preble Street today, the Resource Center serves 275 people daily, meeting basic needs and providing casework.

Board Profile: Jane Bradley

I was watching television and happened upon an interview of Kurt Messerschmidt, the former cantor of Temple Beth El in Portland, when he was 100 years old. Cantor Messerschmidt, a survivor of the Holocaust, was recounting a bit of his story about his release from Auschwitz at the end of World War II and his miraculous reunion with his wife Sonja, from whom he'd been separated when they were deported from Berlin and shipped to the concentration camp. After the war, the reunited Messerschmidts

emigrated to the United States and came to Portland. In the interview, Cantor Messerschmidt described Sonja's unbridled joy at being here in Maine. He said, "From the moment she entered Maine she occupied it. 'This is *my* mountain,' she said. 'This is *my* river; this is *my* ocean.'"

For reasons I really can't explain, I've been thinking a lot lately about the sense of place. Maybe it's because of recent repeated images of people on the move, migrations of masses of humanity from one continent to another in almost biblical proportions. Maybe it's last winter's sight of bright flowing floral African fabric against the backdrop of graying snowbanks on the side of Congress Street. I'm surprised at how they can do that. I watch in awe, thinking how hard it must be to leave one world for another unknown and unfamiliar — I who feel so rooted in the late afternoon light reflecting off the window panes of our neighbors' homes on the spit of land across from ours, in the dank smell of the flats when the tide goes out, in the noticeable shift of the wind at noon. And then again, I'm surprised at

"In the late 1990s, my family began to focus on our philanthropic efforts in our community. As a District Court Judge in Portland, I had become aware of the great work Preble Street was doing for people experiencing homelessness, including youth.

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As the homelessness crisis worsens due to opioids and the lack of available mental health services and as public funding declines, the ability of Preble Street to identify and develop productive approaches to the complicated problems of homelessness remains strong. In addition to responding internally to adjust to outside changes, Preble Street finds creative ways to partner with other organizations to help address issues of homelessness and its causes." *Jane Bradley*

my surprise — I whose grandparents left Minsk or Pinsk or some other village in eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century and boarded a boat for Ellis Island.

I was struck by Sonja Messerschmidt's joy as recounted by her husband: such a testament to the power of the sense of place — that need for belonging, for attachment to a piece of this earth.

The mission here at Preble Street, the effort to meet the need for housing, recognizing the primacy of that need, providing the strength, the tools, the support to secure a home for those left to drift, is not merely a solution to a social problem but an exercise of human kindness that nourishes the hunger to belong to a piece of this planet, to justify one's very existence in the right to inhabit a space, no matter how small.

What a gift: to give the opportunity and the freedom to occupy.

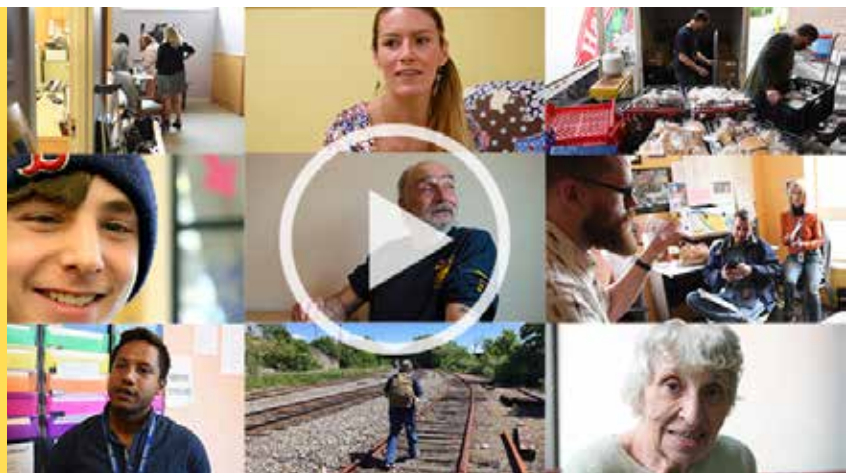
At the 44th Preble Street Annual Celebration we celebrated impact, solutions, and moving forward with stories of keeping plates full, doors open, and hope alive. Bringing these stories to life, with camera in hand, from Bayside to Bangor we set out to provide a snapshot of how people move forward into opportunity and hope.

To watch, visit www.preblestreet.org/annual-celebration

You'll hear from clients, staff, and advocates, and see sides of Preble Street you may not know exist.



Jane Bradley, Preble Street Board of Directors



Volunteer Spotlight

Inspired by Mark Swann and the Preble Street mission, Portland resident John Coleman — chairman and founder of The VIA Agency — had been doing pro bono marketing projects for Preble Street for years when he began volunteering on a regular basis in 2014.

John considers sharing food a form of sharing love, and he makes meals together with fellow volunteer John Heald for each of the three Preble Street Housing First programs: Logan Place, Huston Commons, and Florence House.

In Housing First, “people who have lived on the streets for years ... completely recalibrate their lives ... They can gain a sense of confidence, pride, and calm that is impossible to possess when you are homeless.”

“We love planning holiday or seasonally themed meals for each of the communities. We prepare the meals and then sit with the tenants and get caught up on things in their lives. It’s very special and fun to be able to share food and build relationships with such interesting people! I love talking to people, so that’s the highlight.”

Coleman has been amazed to see first-hand how transformational Housing First is.

“These residences give people who have lived on the streets for years a chance to completely recalibrate their lives for the better. It’s astounding to see how different people can be once they have a safe and steady place to call home. They can gain a sense of confidence, pride, and calm that is impossible to possess when you are homeless. If Maine wanted to end homelessness, we could do so by investing in more Housing First residences. They truly give life and hope to so many people who before had so little.”

An integral part of the Preble Street Housing First community, John treats everyone with respect and warmth, recognizes the value of being home, and credits the staff and tenants for creating a welcoming environment at each program. “The Preble Street staff are incredibly talented and committed, and the tenants are such interesting and special folks. It’s a gift to spend time there.”



John Heald, left, and John Coleman prepare a meal at Huston Commons.

Q What have you learned from volunteering?

A Sharing food is a form of sharing love. It’s more interesting to listen than to talk. And butter and salt makes everything taste better.

Visiting Portland, students from Chowan University in North Carolina volunteered at the Resource Center Soup Kitchen four days in a row, serving hundreds of meals, chopping thousands of vegetables, and greeting each client with a warm smile. Going above and beyond the call of duty to be good volunteers, the group endeavored to understand the true meaning of hunger and homelessness in order to be better advocates.

One night, they were each given a budget of \$2 to get dinner. The students opted to pool their finances, proving that a strong community is greater than the sum of its parts. Alone, they could only afford potato chips. Together, they bought a roasted chicken, bananas, bread, and sandwich fixings. They expressed their surprise to learn how expensive it can be to find fresh produce, and discussed at length the issue of hunger and food insecurity on college campuses.

“We could all get home and have nothing,” one student remarked after speaking with a client who told her his story of losing everything in a house fire. “It’s been a really humbling experience.”



How Will You Be Remembered?

Leaving a legacy gift to Preble Street creates *solutions* to homelessness and hunger in our communities while meeting urgent needs, and empowering people to move forward in their lives.

The Legacy Society recognizes our friends who have made Preble Street a central part of their personal philanthropy. These members build a lasting legacy by establishing a planned gift.

Preble Street is so much more than just a soup kitchen in the city. Over the years, we've grown to provide services throughout Maine, to connect individuals and families, youth, veterans, and survivors of human trafficking to housing, medical care, jobs, emergency shelter, and nutritious meals when it's needed most to help people move beyond the crisis in their lives.

Your support of Preble Street is an investment in better communities.

Make Preble Street a part of your personal philanthropy by including us in your estate plan, establishing a life income gift, or donating your life insurance policy or annual IRA Required Minimum Distribution to Preble Street.

For more information call 207-775-0026 or visit preblestreet.org/donate.

IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70½ and older, you can make a donation of up to \$100,000 by directing your annual Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA until December 31 of each year without having to pay income taxes on this money.



YES! We want your donations of food, clothing, and toiletries!

FOOD: Coffee, tea, cereal, juice, cooking oil, rice, pasta, beans, soup, tuna, sauce.

CLOTHING: (for men, women, and teens). Jackets, hats, gloves (large and durable), thermal underwear, jeans, boots, sneakers, socks, hooded sweatshirts. Towels, backpacks, duffle bags, laundry detergent.

TOILETRIES: Deodorant, razors, shaving cream, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, combs, sunscreen.

For more information visit
www.preblestreet.org/donate



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NEWS FROM PREBLE STREET

TO:

THE MISSION OF PREBLE STREET IS

TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE BARRIER-FREE SERVICES TO EMPOWER PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS WITH HOMELESSNESS, HOUSING, HUNGER, AND POVERTY, AND TO ADVOCATE FOR SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS.

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