

INSIDE: FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTHCARE, HOUSING, JUSTICE, LOVE

SPRING
2021

curbside

NEWS FROM PREBLE STREET

And we did that

In 1996, the City of Portland and other local nonprofits approached Preble Street to take over the Teen Center for at-risk, homeless, and runaway youth; and in 2004, when the Salvation Army announced plans to close the only area overnight shelter for homeless youth, Preble Street took over operations within days.

When the YWCA closed, leaving 68 vulnerable women without housing or shelter in 2010, Preble Street immediately created a space for them. When the opioid epidemic began to ravage Maine, Preble Street partnered with medical professionals, lawmakers, and policy experts to create legislation and services that provide health and housing for people with substance use disorder. When 390 asylum seeking individuals and families arrived unexpectedly in Portland in 2019, Preble Street food production increased by 50% overnight to ensure everyone had nourishing meals three times a day. And today, in response to a global pandemic, Preble Street continues to adapt and respond and use all available resources to empower the people and communities it serves.



The site of the Preble Street Teen Center, ca. 2001.



Preble Street Food Programs and Street Outreach Collaborative staff bring meals and social work services to people in Monument Square in Portland.

including people in extremely crowded housing, group home residents and their caregivers, and people who have been discharged from incarceration. In response to various outbreaks in the community, we have had referrals from hospitals, shelters, social service agencies, sober homes, and correctional facilities. One client reflected that a safe and comfortable place to live with support from a dedicated caseworker and consistent, high quality services made all the difference when they recently sought and obtained permanent housing. **Preble Street also helped a partner organization open a quarantine shelter in Lewiston and took over operations of the Lewiston shelter in May 2021.**

Near the outset of COVID-19, **the Veterans Administration asked Preble Street to provide emergency housing for Veterans and their families throughout Maine.** And we did that. Every night since then, Preble Street has sheltered up to 80 families in emergency housing in 10 different counties throughout the state.

On the cover: Food Programs staff Caroline Clark hands out breakfast in Monument Square, Portland. In the year since the pandemic hit, Preble Street has served over one million meals to community members in need.

Adapting to deliver services and follow its mission, no matter the crisis; learning from challenges; fulfilling the social responsibility to step up and serve those in need when no other options are available — this is what Preble Street does.

Responding to urgent needs

Pre-COVID, Preble Street operated two shelters with 64 beds total. Today, the agency is responsible for nearly 300 beds, with more to come.

Last March when the pandemic hit, **the State called on Preble Street to immediately open a 50-bed wellness shelter on the University of Southern Maine campus** to help spread people out from overcrowded shelters where social distancing was impossible. We did that.

Two weeks later **the State called again and asked Preble Street to create a separate Quarantine Shelter**, which was implemented immediately. This Quarantine Shelter has served more people who are housed than people experiencing homelessness,

“Preble Street initiatives have “served as an important part of the public health response to COVID-19, reducing the risk of transmission amongst households and communities.”

— Steven McDermott, *MaineHousing Strategic Planning & Outreach Coordinator*

And then, in December, the State called once again and asked Preble Street to open yet another temporary emergency shelter as soon as possible. And we did that.

These efforts have taken place while **Preble Street Emergency Food Programs** has almost doubled and is expected to produce one million meals in 2021. Many meals are delivered by a fleet of volunteer drivers to area hotels where the State has allocated space for people to maintain distance and safety and quarantine after testing positive.

To underscore the importance of cultural diversity within the community while addressing the food needs of immigrant community members, **Preble Street recently launched a Culturally Appropriate Meals program** after learning that many immigrant families with children who were staying in local motel and hotel shelters were hungry because they were unable to find or cook familiar meals for their families. Preble Street hired a longtime volunteer from one of the refugee communities to produce Central African culturally appropriate meals that are delivered to area motels by volunteers. The need doubled in just a few weeks, and in the first full month, staff and volunteers distributed 2,760 meals. The objectives of this project include gathering data to identify and assess the food needs of New Mainers who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability and to engage community partners in a collaborative and sustainable system for meeting these needs long-term.



Preble Street staff and volunteers prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner — including fish tacos with pineapple salsa, chipotle aioli, and rice and beans (pictured top left) — for delivery to people sheltered in Portland area hotels.

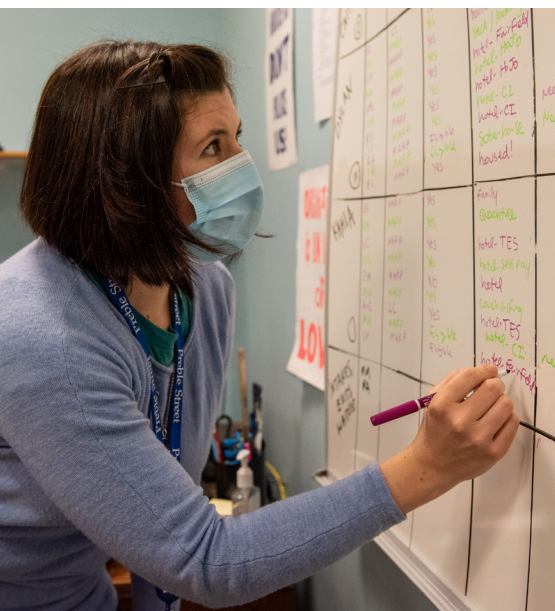


Khadija Ahmed prepares tilapia with garlic, ginger, nutmeg, salt, and oil for immigrant neighbors.

Launched over the summer, **the Street Outreach Collaborative — social work without walls** — provides daily meals at various stops around Portland where unhoused people spend time or have appointments and connects people with shelter and health services, IDs, and clothing and helps them work toward housing goals.

In partnership with MaineHousing, Preble Street has also started a new Rapid Re-Housing program that connects individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing as quickly as possible to avoid chronic homelessness. Rapid Re-Housing case management focuses on wraparound services including connections to medical providers and mental health and substance use treatment, access to benefits, and employment opportunities — all with the goal of maintaining housing stability. The 21 individuals who moved into housing through the Rapid Re-Housing program between October and March collectively experienced more than 18.5 years of homelessness.

In January 2021, 37% of guests at the Preble Street Quarantine Shelter were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Due to inherently racist systems in our country, individuals who are BIPOC are disproportionately affected by homelessness, hunger, and poverty.



Left: Preble Street Health Services Director Caitlin Corrigan updates current shelter placements for clients receiving intensive case management. Right: In March, Greater Portland Health held a COVID-19 vaccine clinic at Preble Street for clients age 60 and older.

The Maine Medical Center-Preble Street Learning Collaborative has remained open throughout the pandemic and currently serves up to 70 people each day — many of whom are unhoused and unsheltered — providing connections to medical care, social work support, and access to basic needs, supplies, and hygiene services. And **in partnership with Greater Portland Health, Preble Street helped more than 250 clients receive COVID-19 vaccines.**

And there's more to do

What defines the Preble Street mission, above all, is removing the barriers people face in their fight against poverty. Preble Street constantly reviews its services as community needs change in order to most efficiently empower people and communities. COVID-19 created historic barriers for our vulnerable neighbors, and the Preble Street response demonstrates the strength of the agency, throughout public health crises and beyond, to adapt to changes, ensure services remain strong and effective, and build capacity and develop new responses — no matter what.



The Preble Street Healing Center will offer services and activities for survivors of human trafficking.

Healing for survivors of human trafficking

Working with survivors of human trafficking across Maine, Preble Street has seen too many people suffering from this horrific exploitation — and it is building a solution.

When construction is complete, **the Preble Street Healing Center will offer comprehensive services and activities that offer survivors a chance to find safety, freedom, and the opportunity to reclaim their lives.** This new program will offer a range of services including activities such as yoga, art, and writing; trauma therapy; connection to medical services, mental health counseling and substance use treatment; shelter and housing referrals; and advocacy through the criminal justice system.



After two years of homelessness and having to stay in separate shelters, Joel (pictured left) — who works as a mechanic — and his wife enrolled in the **Preble Street Rapid Re-Housing program**. Today they are safely housed and off the streets!

Tommy (pictured right) connected with a Preble Street caseworker while staying at the temporary Sullivan Wellness Shelter last summer. When the shelter closed, Tommy continued working with his caseworker through the Rapid Re-Housing program and is now loving his new home!

Rapid Re-Housing is an evidence-based model that uses casework and financial assistance to help individuals and families return to housing quickly.

Wellness for people experiencing homelessness & health issues

There are dozens of people who are not being served by the current shelter system, and additional beds are urgently needed. Many people experiencing unsheltered homelessness desperately want relief from the elements, but do not want to go to a shelter that is not trauma-informed; where their spouse or partner is not allowed to stay; where they may have been criminalized for symptoms of untreated mental health or substance use disorder.

Recognizing that shelters play a critically important role in public health, **Preble Street received unanimous approval from the Portland Planning Board to open a new permanent Wellness Shelter.**

Smaller shelters where safety is created and maintained through relationships allow people to heal and build trust. At the Sullivan Wellness Shelter operated by Preble Street at the University of Southern Maine in the summer of 2020, people built authentic relationships that opened the door for people to access healthcare and treatment, to develop housing plans, and to hope.

Currently under construction at the site of the Resource Center, the new 24/7 Wellness Shelter will provide

warmth, safety, and intensive services to 40 men and women experiencing homelessness and complex health and behavioral issues who cannot access any other shelter. Guests don't have to line up for entry at night or leave in the morning. They don't have to carry their belongings from place to place as they wait for meals and other services throughout the city. Staffed by Preble Street social work professionals with services and meals on-site, this program offers an opportunity for individuals to work toward housing, healthcare, and employment.



The Preble Street Wellness Shelter will provide warmth, safety, and intensive services to people experiencing homelessness and health issues.

Housing & hope for thousands of Mainers

Through all of this, the tireless, professional staff at Preble Street Teen Services, Anti-Trafficking Services, the Florence House Shelter and Housing First programs have also continued without pause the heroic work of making sure the most vulnerable people in our community have food, shelter, healthcare, housing, justice, and love.

“ The pandemic really shines a light on the reality that things change, and you need to adapt in order to meet needs. It's hard to know what to expect and what the next emergency will be — and beyond being prepared it's vital to evolve with the times. To continue to grow and develop. To keep learning and building skill and capacity.

The response of Preble Street to COVID-19 has emphasized the strength of the agency to adapt to the changing landscape and make sure the services we provide remain strong. Despite everything else that was going on during a global health crisis, Preble Street thought quickly, made changes fast, and ensured clients weren't left behind.

— Andrew Bove, Vice President of Social Work



Preble Street ♥ Volunteers

With the Central Kitchen now operating as a full-time production and distribution facility, a team of dedicated volunteers has assembled to deliver thousands of meals each week to Mainers experiencing hunger. Not even an extended recovery from surgery was able to stop longtime volunteer **Cathy** from helping with this effort — her husband **Bo** and son **Will** generously stepped in during her absence, and now the three of them are able to volunteer together!

Logan consistently takes on new responsibilities and makes sure pantry guests get everything they're looking for, and that they are treated kindly and with respect.

Randi drives over an hour to volunteer and is such a pleasure to be around.

Jimmy always takes initiative in the kitchen and even comes up with new recipes!

Val volunteers at Preble Street multiple times a week. She's kind, she's a hard worker, and she's always game for a good conversation.

Toufiq never slows down when he comes in for a shift. He has an extraordinary work ethic and motivates and lifts up all the volunteers and staff in his presence.

James cooks, cleans, and packages meals — but it's the joy and laughter he brings to the kitchen that staff appreciate most.

“ I volunteer for the chance to give something back to the community, make a difference to the people around me, and to develop new skills ... and it gives me a greater perspective and self-awareness. — Toufiq



Speaking up for solutions

For more than a year, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing hardships for individuals, families, and children and has resulted in many people relying on food pantries and emergency shelter. In addition to responding to these direct needs in our communities, Preble Street continues to advocate for increased access and participation in federal programs like SNAP, shelter and warmth for our neighbors who are unhoused, and policy changes that address the root causes of homelessness and food insecurity.

This year, over 1,000 bills were proposed to the Maine legislature, including many that seek to improve the lives of Mainers who are experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and poverty. With the knowledge that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color experience higher rates of food insecurity and homelessness in Maine, proposed legislation that focuses on racial equity is a priority for Preble Street.

The Preble Street Advocacy team actively participates in the Maine legislative session to champion proposed bills that would support and empower communities we serve, while also fighting against bills that would create additional barriers and hardship. With remote public hearings and individuals testifying on Zoom rather than at the State House in Augusta, the Advocacy team ensures that community members with lived experience have the tools and support to share their voices with lawmakers.



How did you get involved with Preble Street?

Through outreach from fellow board members Jay Tansey and Terry Sutton, both of whom I have the pleasure of working with in my professional life. Terri and Jay are very persuasive champions for the mission and work of Preble Street, and after meeting John (Board President) and Mark (Executive Director) I became convinced that I could add value.

There are a lot of nonprofit organizations in southern Maine. Why do you think Preble Street stands out in the crowd?

What is it that Preble Street does better than anyone else?

Without a doubt, Preble Street is beloved by many people. The organization does good work and that work is visible to all who live in southern Maine. One thing that Preble Street does better than many organizations — everywhere — is stay true to its mission. Those organizations that manage to stay authentic and aware will stand the test of time.

Why is the work Preble Street does important to you or to others who might consider supporting these efforts?

I could say that service to the community is baked into my DNA, but in truth it is more nurture than nature. Despite growing up with family members who struggled with substance use disorder and mental health, I was not always a compassionate person. When I was in grade school, my mother volunteered me to work with older women at a local church a few times a month. The experience made me understand that aging humbles us all and we really need community. Around that time was the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis in this country, and I witnessed a most inhumane act

of discrimination against a neighbor who was ill and dying from complications with AIDS. While many people in my community were shocked, they were indifferent in helping. But there were some, like my mother, who did help. In that year I came to understand that we need organizations, like Preble Street, that help and protect the most vulnerable people. This world would be an even more scary place without them.

What specific projects or aspects of Preble Street are you committed to?

I love hearing from the staff at Preble Street! I used to work in the nonprofit sector and that work is way more demanding than being a board member. If I hear a staff person talk about success or an accomplishment, I am overjoyed. Because of this I am so happy to be on the Personnel Committee. The health and happiness of its team is an important key to a successful organization. It's a privilege to serve on this committee, to be a member of the board of directors, and to contribute to the mission of Preble Street.

What do you do when you're not at Preble Street?

When I am not working at my day job in corporate communications at Covetrus, I spend my time entertaining my two cats, Jolene and Roxanne. Just prior to the shutdown last year, my partner and I purchased our first home — which the previous owners stopped updating circa 1976 — so I also spend a fair amount of time planning and executing updates.

Board Profile: Kiní Schoop



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NEWS FROM PREBLE STREET

Pictured here: volunteers and staff at the now-daily food pantry. Below the fold: a sampling of the delicious, dignified meals prepared and distributed daily from the Preble Street Central Kitchen.

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.



Preble Street depends on the community to keep us going — especially in a time of crisis.



Supporting Preble Street with a recurring monthly donation is the most convenient and impactful way to move Mainers forward.

Become a monthly donor and make long-term impact with just one click!

For more info: preblestreet.org/donate