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FEATURED

Temporary overnight warming center opens in Ellsworth

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Warming center co-managers Billie Jo Warren and Renee Mozeliak receive a delivery of freshly made soup from Northern Light Maine Coast Hospital.

Photo Courtesy of Northern Light Health

ELLSWORTH — “Between 5-10 nightly, and increasing,” says Healthy Acadia Communications Director Tracey Carlson of usage of a new overnight warming center.

On any given night, hundreds of Maine people and hundreds of thousands of individuals and families across the U.S. are temporarily unhoused or experiencing chronic homelessness.

In response, Healthy Acadia, a nonprofit community health organization serving Hancock and Washington counties, convened a coalition of municipal agencies, community-serving organizations, local leaders and community members and key collaborative partners at the state and regional levels. A temporary overnight warming center was identified as a high-priority need to serve local communities during the coldest months of the year.

On Dec. 23, Healthy Acadia, in collaboration with many partners, opened a temporary overnight warming center at its INSPIRE Recovery Center, located at 24 Church St. in Ellsworth.

The warming center is open every evening, including holidays, through April 30, from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. It serves individuals and families who don't have a place to live, or who are otherwise in need of warmth and safety, as space allows. Coffee, drinks and snacks are available throughout the night, and a hot meal is served daily at 7:30 p.m. No pre-registration is necessary; community members are welcome to come to 24 Church St. at any time between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. to get warmth, rest and/or food. For more information or to find out if there is space at any given time, call 412-2288 or email warmingcenter@healthyacadia.org. Anyone is also welcome to simply stop by.

“I am so appreciative of the support our local community has expressed for the warming center,” said Paige Johnston, Healthy Acadia’s Maine Recovery Core director. “We have been blessed with donations of supplies and food, folks coming in to volunteer their time, and nightly safety checks from Ellsworth Police Department.”

The warming center is made possible by support for emergency shelters from the state’s Emergency Winter Energy Relief Plan, which earned strong bipartisan support from the Legislature, along with Witham Family Hotels Charitable Fund, Maine Community Foundation and many individual donors. In addition, Northern Light Health Maine Coast Hospital, St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church and First Congregational Church of Ellsworth have each committed to providing home-cooked meals weekly. H.O.M.E. has donated Hannaford gift cards and supplies, and community members have donated many needed items.

“I never realized there was such a need for this in our community until I started working in this field,” said Billie Jo Warren, warming center co-manager. “I have met some of the most amazing people and I am honored to have heard their stories. I am proud to work for an organization that sees the needs in our community, and I’m happy to say I have finally found a job that I truly love.”

