

Hartford, VT

Dismas House Dedication: A home of transition for former prisoners

*- Rita Whalen McCaffrey,
founder, Dismas of Vermont, Inc.*

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 22nd AT 5:00 PM, DISMAS OF VT WILL dedicate the 4th Dismas House in Hartford, Vermont. The celebration will take place at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, a few doors down from the recently opened Dismas House. The brothers at the Priory have played a significant role in their support to the Dismas community and in the development of Dismas of Vermont. Our relationship spans the past 29 years, which have been years of encouragement, as we began organizing our first Dismas House in 1985. We are most grateful for their loving support!

Just prior to the Dedication there will be a house tour given by Dismas House Residents. Invited guests at the Dedication will be the Inter-Faith Community, Government Dignitaries, Upper Valley Service Clubs, local Non-profit Organizations, Dismas House Benefactors, Dismas family and friends.

Hartford Dismas opened its doors a few months ago to a beautifully renovated home for women and men in transition from Vermont prisons. We were first invited to Hartford six years ago, to give a presentation to a group of professionals concerned with transitional housing for former prisoners. A capitol campaign was necessary to raise significant funds for renovating a three family house into a single home.

The good news is that renovations were completed in March and we have hired and trained two new staff: Ben Andrews and Debbie Diegoli. Today, we have eight residents, three women and five men, with a few more applicants arriving upon their release. Exterior house repair and painting will begin very soon.

The Dedication will be a celebration of our latest Dismas House, the 4th in Vermont, along with Dismas Houses in Burlington, Rutland, and Winooski. Our newest house is located in Hartford Village and is humming with healthy activities as community volunteers come to cook the evening meal, Monday through Friday, and residents are



1st dinner at Hartford Dismas House, with volunteer cooks, March, 2014.

looking for jobs with several already gainfully employed. There is a wonderful spirit in the house as folks are becoming a community, living in a clean and sober home, where they are helping each other to face the many challenges in their lives. It is truly a beautiful thing to witness!

Dismas of Vermont recently passed a milestone, having served more than 1,000 former prisoners since 1986. We look forward to the Dedication, along with our brothers, realizing with joy, we are now able to serve 54 residents in our four Dismas Houses and three Satellite Apartments in Vermont. ■