

equinox news

Winter/Spring 2019

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“ Many have never had an adult they could count on to ease their fears or support their dreams. ”

From Homelessness to Hope

Equinox's TLP helps homeless youth envision and build a brighter future

By the time “Rami” arrived at Equinox at 17, he had already been in and out of homeless shelters in New York City, had sold drugs to help support his mother and siblings, and had completed an inpatient treatment program for drug addiction.

Rami was without a home, but not without dreams. He wanted to go to college, and he wanted a good future. But he needed help, starting with what every young person needs: a roof over their heads, enough food to eat, and the support and guidance of caring, stable adults.

He has found that, and more, at the Equinox Transitional Living Program (TLP) for homeless youth.

TLP is the only program of its kind in the Capital Region. It serves about 30 homeless youth, ages 16 to 21, each year. The program is designed to help homeless youth build a path toward self-sufficiency. Youth admitted to TLP must be employed or seeking employment, or enrolled or seeking enrollment in school or a vocational training program.

If they are not yet employed or enrolled in school, TLP connects them with volunteer work at the City Mission, the Veterans Administration or at the Boys and Girls Club.

TLP can accommodate up to 16 youth and one infant at a time, and is usually filled to capacity. Youth may stay up to 12 months living in safe, stable housing in one of two neighboring buildings in downtown Albany. One has independent, supervised apartments; the other has

dorm-style living, which provides more supervision and interaction with staff.

TLP addresses other basic needs including food and health services, and then helps youth focus on longer term goals for employment and/or education and permanent housing.

“The kids who arrive at TLP have had so little,” said TLP Manager Kiana Miller. “Many have never had an adult they could count on to celebrate their accomplishments, ease their fears, or support their dreams. Most have never even had their own birthday cake.”

When he first entered TLP, Rami, an exceptional chess player, was afraid to ask staff for help. Homeless youth, like Rami, live in an almost constant state of crisis, and it can take time to feel safe relying on other people. But TLP counselors are persistent about reaching out to youth, finding ways to connect and to establish trust.

“Within a few weeks of my arrival into the program I was given my own apartment. There is always more than enough food, and the staff are very kind, helpful and resourceful. They are also very open so I can talk to them about pretty much anything without being judged,” said Rami.

In one-to-one coaching and group sessions, youth work on independent living skills such as interpersonal communication, healthy relationships, navigating systems, parenting, accessing community resources, individualized goal planning, household and money management, and creating a resume, preparing for a job interview and professional behavior. *(Continued on pg. 4)*



Message From the CEO The Road Less Traveled

A few weeks ago, in a small piece I wrote for the employee newsletter, I rhetorically asked the question: “Why do we do this work?” It’s a question that I often think about even after more than 30 years in the field.

For those of us who labor in the helping professions, the question makes sense in a rather obvious way. As aspiring human service professionals, most of us asked this question when we were students and first contemplating our choice of a helping occupation. And as our careers developed, we periodically reflected on this choice as in response to the highs and the lows typically encountered in this work.

The answer doesn’t lie in the money – that’s universally accepted.

The work isn’t easy, and in some segments of our society it isn’t particularly respected either.

So why do we do this work?

The answer, as I suggested in the employee piece, lies in the realization we experience when we come face to face with the men, women or children who so desperately need our help. It lies in the eyes of that person we helped today.

And a single quality we all share, I think, is the spark of hope that gets kindled every time we glimpse how our efforts enable a client to conquer, if even for a day, their seemingly insurmountable hurdles.

All the members of the “Equinox Community” do this work—even if in diverse ways and in varying roles. Some of us do the direct work with clients, others work behind the scenes in an administrative function. Still more of you serve on the board of directors or volunteer. And many of you “work” to simply spread the word. Of course, those of you who generously offer financial support represent yet another aspect of the community laboring to lift up the many vulnerable and wounded lives we serve.

To all of you, I say thank you. You have chosen, as Robert Frost, in his epic poem, so poignantly described:

*I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

John Henley

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Foundation Grants Received July 2018–February 2019

Equinox is grateful to all the private foundations that generously support our programs and the thousands of individuals we serve.



The Daniel & Susan Pfau Foundation • \$35,000

The Pfau Foundation has provided ongoing and critical financial support for the Youth Outreach Center, mentoring programs, and Street Outreach Program. Their partnership has helped us make a real difference in the lives of hundreds of at-risk youth.



SEFCU • \$25,000

SEFCU’s generous grant for our Transitional Living Program (TLP) is helping homeless youth work toward their employment, education, and housing goals. Equinox has been the recipient of several SEFCU fundraisers and community programs. We are most appreciative to have such a strong community partner!

First Niagara Legacy Foundation • \$15,000

Mentoring Matters Grant
for Youth Mentoring Program

Frederick McDonald Trust • \$10,000

for Agency General Operating

The Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation • \$5,000

for Agency General Operating

John D. Picotte Family Foundation/ The Community Foundation of the Greater Capital Region • \$5,000

for the Transitional Living Program for homeless youth

Cohoes Savings Foundation • \$5,000

for Domestic Violence Outreach Services

J.M. McDonald Foundation • \$5,000

for Youth Services



Mohawk Honda Marks 100th Anniversary and Equinox Gets a Gift!

To celebrate 100 years in the automobile business, Mohawk Honda donated \$10,000 each to 10 Capital Region charities. Equinox is very thankful to be a recipient of this generosity and wishes Mohawk Honda another successful 100 years! Pictured is Equinox CEO John Henley at the check presentation ceremony.

A (Department of) Labor of Love

Equinox is most appreciative to NYS Department of Labor employees for donating monetary gifts and needed items for families receiving domestic violence services. The NYS DOL has been a long-time ally of Equinox, and we are grateful for it. Pictured (l-r): NYS DOL Commissioner Roberta Reardon, Deputy Commissioner Employment Security Mary Batch, and Equinox CEO John Henley. *(See page 4—From Homelessness to Hope—to read more about NYS DOL support.)*

Holiday Gift Drive Brings Out the Spirit of Giving

Equinox is very grateful to all the area businesses, families and individuals who collected items for our clients and who participated in our Holiday Gift Drive. Because of these generous acts, the holidays were brighter for families receiving Domestic Violence Services, and the teens and young adults in our outreach and residential programs.

A special thank you to **BlueShield of NENY, College of Saint Rose, Congregation Beth Emeth, Crisafulli Bros. Plumbing & Heating Contractors, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Office of Right of Way, SEFCU, SEI Design Group, Wilson, Elser, Moskowitz, Edelman & Dicker LLP, and Zonta Club.**

Caring Students!

A big thank you to the students of **Colonie Central High School**. As the focus of the school's 2018-2019 iCARE program, Equinox has been the recipient of several wonderful activities to raise awareness and funds to support Equinox Domestic Violence Services and other programs. The school community donated and delivered nearly 300 holiday gifts for children and families receiving Equinox services. A team of eight iCARE students *(pictured above)* even wrapped all the gifts!



Morning of Kindness

Many thanks to the Curran family, and the hundreds of other families, who participated in the *Morning of Kindness* Christmas Eve Day Community Initiative, donating holiday gifts to nonprofit organizations across the Capital Region.

Swinburne Project Breaks Ground!

After several years of planning, work has begun on the Swinburne Building at 526 Central Avenue, just steps away from Equinox's headquarters at 500 Central. When completed—expected to be August 2020—Swinburne will offer 74 housing units that will be a mix of affordable and market rate apartments for the community, along with 15 apartments for victims of domestic violence and five for individuals with mental health disorders.

Two Equinox Case Managers, Domestic Violence Outreach Services, Human Resources, and the Development Offices will also make their home at the new building. The first floor will feature a Whitney Young Health Primary Care Clinic, a pharmacy and other commercial space.



60 million Americans face the day-to-day reality of living with a mental illness; 10 million American adults have a serious mental illness.

Equinox offers a range of outpatient and residential services to best meet the needs of adults with serious mental illness, including those with a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. Support is available to family members through our Family Resources program. Equinox is one of the only mental health providers in the county that serves Medicaid-eligible individuals. Discover more about our services at equinoxinc.org.

From Homelessness to Hope

(Continued from pg. 1)

With a recently awarded grant from the NYS Department of Labor, Equinox is substantially enhancing its career and education exploration services for TLP youth. Career Case Managers will help each youth identify education and career goals and create a roadmap to achieving their goals. Staff will research and accompany youth on field trips to career and college information fairs, and visits to colleges and vocational programs. Youth will be assisted in locating and obtaining opportunities for job shadowing, apprenticeships and internships, as well as permanent employment. To support successful work and school experiences, youth will receive everyday essentials that can make all the difference—like appropriate attire, a driver's license or bus passes, and lunch money—not to mention coming home to a healthy dinner with fellow residents and staff.

"We operate on the belief that if not for Equinox and TLP—and the support of our community—many of these young people would be on the street, slipping further away from a chance for a healthy and productive future," said John Henley, Equinox CEO.

Career advisor, instructor, house parent, counselor, family. TLP fills many roles.

"My experience at Equinox has been on a scale from 1-10, I'd say a 10," said Rami. "Whenever I need something like to go to a job interview or to court, staff are always readily available to provide transportation. They also help with any problems or homework I need help with in college. My goals are to obtain a CASAC [Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor] and my Associates degree within the next 2 years. Then my long term goal is to transfer to UAlbany for another 2 years to achieve a bachelor's in psychology. Equinox makes all of this possible by providing me with all the necessities I need to make college my No.1 priority." ●



A Time of Thanks and Celebration

The 2018 Equinox Community Thanksgiving Dinner

A Cherished Tradition Feeds 10,000 Neighbors in Need, and More!



Thanksgiving 2018 (T-Day) was again an amazing demonstration of our community's generous spirit. Nearly 4,000 volunteers lent a hand in the planning, preparation—chopping, peeling, cooking—and delivery of 9,600 Thanksgiving meals throughout the Capital Region. Another 500 dinners were served by volunteers at the First Presbyterian Church in Albany, the site of the first Equinox Thanksgiving Dinner in 1969.

But wait, there's more! The day after Thanksgiving, Equinox worked with The Food Pantries of the Capital District to deliver 100 gallons of turkey soup (made during T-Day preparations) along with any extra meals and pans of food to local food pantries, soup kitchens, missions and shelters.

2019 Marks 50th Anniversary of the Equinox Thanksgiving Community Dinner

Follow our website and Facebook page throughout the year to see how we are marking this milestone!



2018 ThanksGathering Celebration

Gratitude...and a Great Event!

Delicious food, local wine & craft beer sampling, live music, and a great downtown venue set the stage for a fun night for the more than 200 friends of Equinox who gathered at the Albany Capital Center on October 25. Many thanks to all of our generous sponsors, and to those who donated items to the raffle and gift card pull. Your support helped make the evening special, and most importantly, helps us continue to provide effective, compassionate services and positive opportunities to more than 5,200 individuals every year.



A very special thank you to Equinox Companies—Property Development & Management, our returning Presenting Sponsor. (We share not only a great name, but a commitment to serving the community!) Many thanks to our media sponsor, Albany Broadcasting; and to our other major sponsors Hannay Reels, KeyBank, Marshall & Sterling Insurance, Schuyler Companies, and Tri City Rentals.



Pictured left: Presenting Sponsor J. Eric King, president of Equinox Companies, far right with his wife Cathy Thiel, and their guests Ed and Ellen Flink. **Center:** Michael DiCrescenzo, owner of Altamont Vineyard and Winery with Joan Dembinski. Michael and Joan are both key volunteer chefs for Equinox's Thanksgiving Community Dinner served at the First Presbyterian Church in Albany. **Far right:** Guests had a great time on the dance floor!



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We'd love to keep in touch!

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- Cooking Demonstration by The Fabulous Beekman Boys
- Wine & Craft Beer Tasting with Sampling of Beekman 1802 Jams
- Culinary Delectables by 2Shea Catering
- Cash Bar with Complimentary Wine for the First hour (Courtesy of Empire Wine & Liquor)
- Dueling Pianos with Chris Dollard & Richie Phillips

Plus, Pearl Grant Richmans Pop-Up Store with Beekman 1802 products and other gifts—just in time for Mother's Day, raffle prizes, and a copy of The Fabulous Beekman Boys cookbook
A Seat at the Table with every reservation!

Thursday, May 9, 2019
5:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Shaker Heritage Barn
25 Meeting House Road, Albany

\$100 per Reservation, \$180 per Couple
\$75 Jr. or \$140 Jr. Couple (35 and younger)

For more information, contact Rachael Carey at 518.434.6135 x5302 or rcarey@equinoxinc.org or register online at equinoxinc.org