

Rebuilding Lives

Stories from Caritas Communities ■ Summer 2020

Preventing Homelessness. Improving Lives. One Room at a Time.

RESIDENT PROFILE

"I cherish everything I have."
— George Guzman

When talking to George, it quickly becomes clear that he likes to keep things simple and maintains a positive attitude. The most important things to him are his family, his job, and his small apartment where he has lived for 2 years.

He takes pride as a valued employee at Target, where he works in the stock room and helps out as a Spanish translator when needed. He takes a 40 minute bus ride, arrives early every day, and has never missed a day of work without a doctor's note. He proudly shares that he earned "Team Member of the Month" award twice in the past three years. He enjoys a nice community of co-workers and loyal customers who ask for him by name.

George grew up in a poor housing development in Worcester, and ended up making some "very bad decisions" causing "mental and emotional stress" for himself and his loved-ones. He moved to Boston to make a change, and is

extremely grateful for Caritas for "opening the door" for him and being a big part of his success. Wanting to give back, George makes a contribution from his paycheck to the United Way and designates his gift to youth programs, and is looking for a volunteer opportunity to mentor troubled youth. "If I can do it," says George, "you can do it!"

George has two daughters. Isabelle is "a very hard working woman" who is very outgoing and funny and likes to dress well. Twice a month George takes a train out to Worcester to visit his daughter Nennia and six grandchildren ages of 9 months to 9 years old. With Nennia's encouragement, he quit spending money on fast food breakfast and lunch every day, bought himself a coffee maker and packs his lunch. She also sends him home from his visits with a large container of rice,



George Guzman, Allston resident, in front of Target where he has been a valued employee for three years.

beans and chicken. He said his budget is a lot better now, and he has some extra money at the end of the month for things he needs and enjoys.

He feels fortunate to have kept his job during the pandemic, although his hours were reduced for a while which made it very hard to keep up with expenses. He keeps his room very tidy, his haircut stylish, and occasionally treats himself to clothes or sneakers that show off his unique sense of fashion. "I cherish everything I have because I work hard, and I've earned it." ■



"If I can do it, you can do it!"

George, pictured here with his "Team Member of the Month" awards.



Dear Friends,

I hope as you read this, you and your loved-ones are safe and well.

As an organization that has been housing low-income individuals for 35 years, we know how to plan ahead, and how to react when life throws us curve balls. Nothing, however, could have prepared us for a worldwide pandemic. Our ability to withstand this challenge is because you, our partners, stepped up in a big way to ensure that Caritas survives this crisis and comes out stronger. With you by our side, the Caritas team was able to roll up its sleeves and get to work without missing a beat.

- Operations quickly developed emergency protocols for front-line and remote employees, resident health and safety, technology and reporting procedures, and much more.
- Resident Services reached out to all effected residents to assist with applications for unemployment benefits, rental assistance, SNAP, and more and to help navigate the variety of local resources available.
- Finance and Human Resources quickly pulled together a PPP application through the CARES act which was granted by Cambridge Savings Bank and has provided critical funds to keep us afloat.
- Development and Communications shifted our fundraising strategy, reached out to our donors with updates and special appeals, and applied for every available grant and emergency funding opportunity with great success.

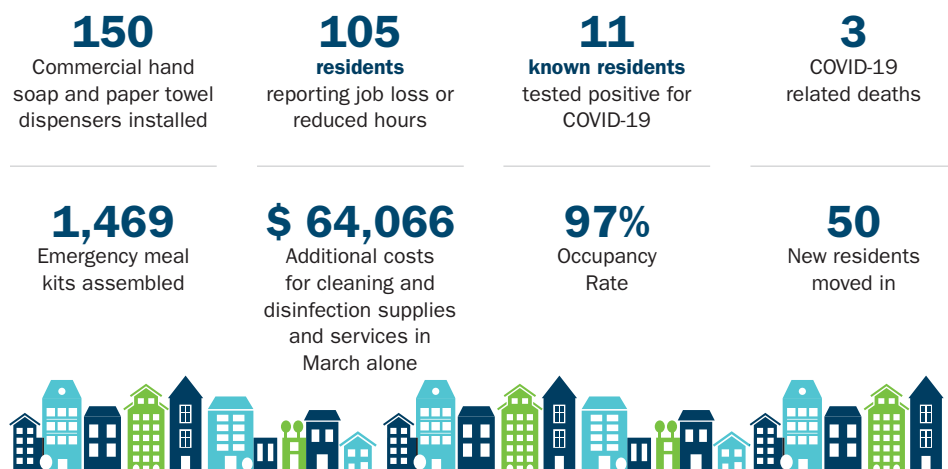
These efforts have paid off, as is demonstrated in the overall health and wellbeing of our residents and our organization. While the pandemic is certainly not over, I am so proud of how we have done so far, and am confident in our ability to come together and face the challenges that lie ahead.

In gratitude,

Karin Cassel Mitterando

Executive Director

COVID-19: The Pandemic's First Wave By the Numbers



Thank You Donors!

When COVID-19 struck and business as we knew it came to a close, we knew we had to prepare for the financial impact of lost rent and increased expenses. We are heart-warmed by the tremendous generosity of donors who stepped forward to strengthen Caritas and ensure that our residents stay housed and as safe as possible. Thank you to these critical partners who have funded our COVID-19 response efforts.*

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*As of July 13, 2020

Continued on page 3

Brittany Golden – Building Community

As a Resident Services Coordinator, Brittany Golden works in five properties housing 274 residents. She sees her role as two-fold. One is to help residents adjust to communal living, the other is to connect residents with community services that will help them stabilize and thrive in permanent housing.

Recently, Brittany was able to help a long-term, elderly resident on a fixed income who was persistently behind on rent and at risk of losing his housing. He resisted, but Brittany finally convinced him to accept help from Minuteman Senior Services' Money Management Program. He is now receiving assistance with his monthly budget and is stable for the first time in years.

One of Brittany's favorite parts of her work is building community within each house. "Every house is so different, and has its own unique personality," said Brittany. "Hosting holiday gatherings and summer BBQs are a great way to bring the residents together to relax and have

fun." Those events are cancelled for now, and while residents miss getting together, they are also hyper-sensitive to the risks of living in close quarters during the pandemic.

Brittany studied human services and criminal justice at Northeastern. Volunteer work and jobs with Hearth, Inc. and the New England Center and Home for Veterans kept drawing her toward a career helping people find and retain stable housing. Since joining Caritas 3 years ago, Brittany has completed her Masters at Salem State and is now a LCSW.

Outside of work, Brittany loves to travel. Whether it's an international vacation or a road trip to New Hampshire, Brittany likes to get out and explore the world, which has made time during the pandemic hard. She talks to her mom everyday on the phone, and is able to visit with her twin sister often, but, like all of us, is looking forward to a return to normalcy. It can't come soon enough. ■



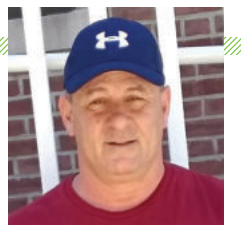
"I want to help residents not just resolve the current problems they face, but get the help they need to live independently and sustainably."

— Brittany

RESIDENT PROFILE

"I'm really grateful to be here."

In his own words
— Bryan Mattson, Army Veteran



"I suffer from PTSD from my military service and two years ago, I really started to struggle. I lost my marriage and job and finally sought help. I went to a residential program in Framingham to get housing. Prior to that, I had never experienced communal housing. After a few months, I came to the VA's transitional program for six weeks and applied for an SRO at the BVQ (Bedford Veterans Quarters). I've been here since last December, and I like the location on the campus of the VA where I am eligible for my benefits.

I'm so grateful for the job I was offered to work the front desk here. I get paid

and I can help the people that I can relate to.

I'm going back to school to renew my licensing to drive tractor-trailer trucks. I'm looking for help to pay for the refresher class and then I'll be able to set up my road test with the state police and get my license back. I drove for 14 years and already have a few job offers pending as my license is in good standing because of my clean driving record.

In my estimation, since coming to the BVQ, I have gotten my life back on track. I have a car and my family and friends are taking small steps to come back into

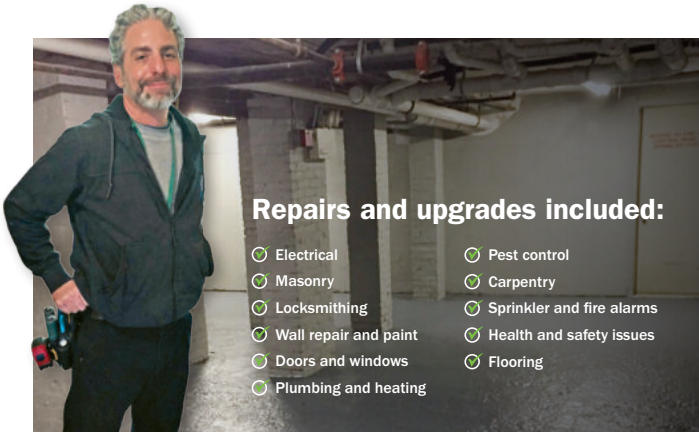
Thank You Donors!

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my life. When I first got here, I didn't know what to expect. It's the best thing that could have happened to me. I especially want to thank Gail (BVQ House Manager) and Christine (Caritas Case Manager), because without their support, I wouldn't be as far as I am in getting things back on track. I also would like to thank Joe Conner (BVQ resident and Caritas BVQ employee) for his support and direction. They are all so supportive and always there to help, and I feel that this is the perfect situation for me right now. It is awesome. I'm really grateful to them and really grateful to be here." ■

HUD Inspection Success!

We started off 2020 receiving short notice that we had to prepare 12 properties with 263 units for a notoriously challenging HUD Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) inspection, conducted to certify that we are providing our residents with decent, safe, and sanitary housing that is always in good repair. Our operations team quickly jumped into action. Led by our experienced Chief Operations Officer, Victor Martinez, and Director of Facilities, Jed Ader (pictured), our maintenance team received special training and worked overtime to prepare the buildings. We received a score of 91 out of 100 which is well above the passing score of 60. This is an incredible accomplishment and a testament to the caring and dedication our staff has for Caritas and our residents. Go team! ■



Repairs and upgrades included:

- Electrical
- Pest control
- Masonry
- Carpentry
- Locksmithing
- Sprinkler and fire alarms
- Wall repair and paint
- Health and safety issues
- Doors and windows
- Flooring
- Plumbing and heating

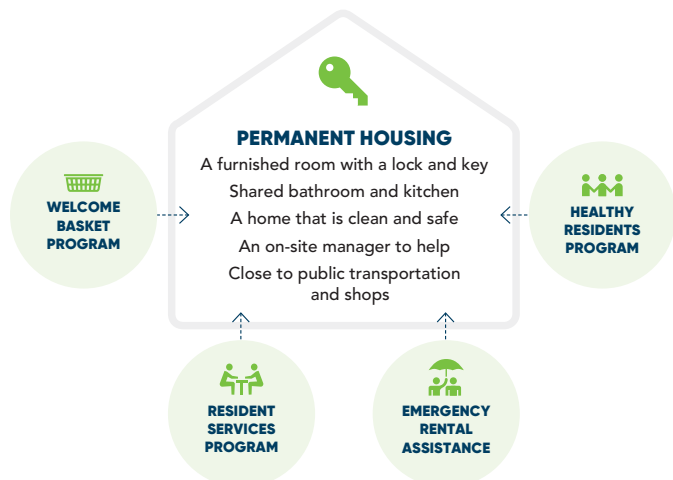
Newly cleaned and painted basement at 28 Mt. Pleasant Ave, Roxbury

The Caritas Experience

WHERE RESIDENTS COME FROM:



OUR MODEL FOR SUCCESS:



Note: Percentages are based on a 2019 resident survey.



7th Annual Get Social *ly Distant* for a Good Cause.

2020 Campaign to Keep Residents Healthy • Caritas Communities Young Leaders Group

Thanks to our 2020 Sponsors

We missed gathering this year for our annual event to raise money for Welcome Baskets, but our Young Leaders came through with a mini-campaign to support the program. We look forward to "Getting Social" next year!

\$1,000

BrooklineBank

Ginny and Frank Corcoran

\$500

Brendan Corcoran
Genevieve and Tim Corcoran
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David Greenblatt
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\$100

James Curley
Mike Duffy
Jenna Frost

Erica and Matt Picheny
Matt Romines

It's not too late to support the 2020 Campaign to Keep Residents Healthy. Go to: <https://caritascommunities.org/support-us/young-leaders-initiative/young-leaders-event-2020/>

Save the Date

35th Anniversary Gala

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Live-Stream Program

Creative Approaches to Gathering

Stay tuned for more details.



Give the Gift of a Home.

Please support Caritas Communities. Contact Vernell Clouden-Duval at vcloudenduval@caritascommunities.org, 781.843.1242 or visit www.caritascommunities.org



Adopt a House

Your company can make a big impact by sponsoring a house and participating in ongoing volunteer work in support of our residents, while receiving a naming opportunity and recognition benefits. Contact Karin Cassel Mitterando at kcassel@caritascommunities.org.

Rebuilding Lives

This newsletter is published twice a year for supporters and friends of Caritas Communities. For information about Caritas or to arrange a tour of our properties, please contact Karin Cassel Mitterando, Executive Director at 781.843.1242 ext. 23 or kcassel@caritascommunities.org. Amy Meneely, Director of Communications, Editor and Writer. Wendy Price, Volunteer Coordinator, Contributor. One Visual Mind, Design. Caritas Communities, 25 Braintree Hill Office Park, Suite 206 Braintree, MA 02184 www.caritascommunities.org ■ 781.843.1242 Copyright 2020.