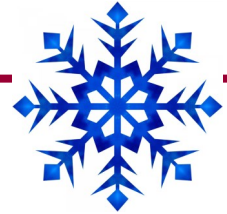


WACH Times

Wareham Area Committee for the Homeless, Inc.



WINTER 2024

A December to Remember ...

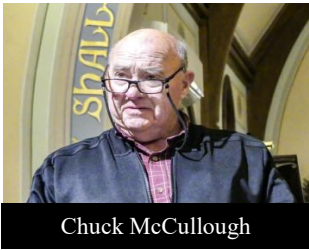


Remembrance Tree for the Homeless at Besse Park

This year for the first time Turning Point was able to obtain one of the Town of **Wareham's Remembrance Trees** in Besse Park. Tree #5 was dedicated to those individuals who died in the past year, either unsheltered or as a result of having been unsheltered at some time (life expectancy for unsheltered individuals is 48 years of age).

The tree was decorated simply with white stars having the person's name. A notice at the top mentioned the National Homeless Persons Memorial Day ceremony.

On December 21, the longest night of the year as winter begins, the Wareham Area Committee for the Homeless/Turning Point once again recognized **National Homeless Persons Memorial Day** with a ceremony at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Wareham. The brief and poignant ceremony, remembering those who had lost their lives due to being unsheltered, featured WACH Board President Chuck McCullough with an emotional overview of the dire situation faced by these people and a stirring call to action in the fight to obtain housing for all. A town proclamation noting the day was read. Memorial candles were lit by Turning Point's Executive Director Shirley Santos as Brandon Reynolds of Father Bill's & Mainspring read the eight names of those who passed. The Church of the Good Shepherd's music ministry provided moving and meaningful musical accompaniment for the ceremony. Speakers during the ceremony were Rev. Dan Bernier of Good Shepherd; Rev. Ginny Doran of Trinity Christian Church; Rev. Jeff Gray, Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene; and Rev. Philomena Hare, First Congregational Church. Increased attendance was noted this year and plans are underway for next year's ceremony.



Chuck McCullough



Shirley Santos, Executive Director of Turning Point lights the memorial candles as names are read.



This year Turning Point also participated in **Wareham's Christmas Parade** for the first time. Turning Point Volunteer Janet Kelly led the project, which included a program-themed Spyder vehicle and volunteers in festive holiday attire and



costumes to feature the programs and services Turning Point offers. Wareham Middle School's running club were helper elves handing out candy along the route, and the High School's Jr. ROTC members were costumed to represent Turning Point's "Taste of Our Towns" and Golf Tournament fundraisers. A colorful banner thanking the community for their ongoing support for Turning Point and its programs led the way.

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There was definitely magic in the air this holiday season at Turning Point's facility in Wareham. The **Holiday Magic Program** supported **206 families** and **483 children**. A total of 133 families were matched with sponsors and 73 were supported by Turning Point. Holiday Magic coordinator Kim Houdlette matched sponsors with families, and Turning Point volunteer Mary Hanlon organized and trained the volunteers. Christmas was enjoyed by families and children in need because

of the hard work and efforts of the **Holiday Magic Team** that included many community volunteers. Special thanks to the Wareham Police, Fire and School Transportation Departments for "Stuff a Bus" and "Stuff a Cruiser" toy drives, the Toys for Tots program, Wareham Harbor Master for a trailer, donations, and a myriad of local businesses and organizations too numerous to list here. It is truly a **team effort** and we couldn't do it without community volunteers, schools, churches, businesses and organizations willing to do toy, clothing and gift card drives or sponsor a child or family to make the holiday magic happen in the eight towns in the Turning Point service area.



Mezza Luna hosted a Holiday Magic Committee and Volunteer appreciation luncheon on December 27 for more than twenty people. Volunteers and committee members enjoyed a buffet of chicken parmesan, meatballs, ravioli, roasted vegetables and delectable desserts. Many thanks to Mezza Luna for hosting this event pro bono and for all they do for Turning Point throughout the year!

Turning Point's Emergency Response Plan (ERP)

Last year's bitter cold spell in February 2023 emphasized the need to shelter those sleeping outside during a deep freeze event or blizzard conditions. That weekend when wind chill factors contributed to below zero temperatures, Turning Point, with some financial assistance from Town officials, brought 19 unsheltered individuals in into motels in what was assuredly a life saving intervention. This year, WACH's Board Chair Chuck McCullough developed an Emergency Response Plan to be prepared with specific procedures and guidelines to implement the Plan to keep the unsheltered safe and warm during extreme winter weather events.



Turning Point supported 18 unsheltered people in the first extreme weather event in 2024 on January 19-21, extending the 2-night plan to 3 nights when the low temps continued. There were 3 additional unsheltered people who chose to stay in their cars. The need is great. If you would like to donate to this program, call **508-728-5384** or email wach1@verizon.net.

SAVE THE DATE!

APRIL 28, 2024

Golf Tournament
The Bay Pointe Club

MAY 19, 2024

**Wareham Walks
for the Homeless**

SEPT. 16, 2024

Taste of Our Towns



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WACH Coordinates Aid to Migrants

In October, the Town of Wareham became host to a group of 49 migrants from Haiti with no notice. Wareham residents rose to the challenge of caring for the families, with WACH and Turning Point, under the direction of Shirley Santos, providing critical roles in coordinating and providing necessary items for these families. Turning Point's facility at 3 Viking Drive was the collection site, supply depot and distribution headquarters for the motels. Contributions came from Wareham churches, a number of local citizens and area businesses and organizations. The Wareham School Department welcomed the children and accommodated their ESL and other adjustment needs. ESL classes were also provided for adults through Church of the Pines. On December 20, the Commonwealth moved the group to another part of the state. Luckily, Turning Point volunteers put packages together for the children before they left. Turning Point is thankful for the outpouring of community support and is justifiably proud of its ability to step into a leadership position for this unprecedented event.

WACH Welcomes Outreach Worker



The Wareham Area Committee for the Homeless (WACH) welcomes a second outreach worker, **Linda Burnell**. Linda joins **Brandon Reynolds** who works out of the Turning Point facility in ongoing efforts to bring those living outside into shelter and provide services through Father Bill's & Mainspring. Linda is from this area and feels a special connection in her calling to help these south coast individuals and looks forward to this challenging work with the chronic homeless in our community.