



Employee Spotlight: Interview with Michael Dunphy, Youth Engagement Specialist

What is your current position?

I am an overnight person at Mason Place and a Youth Engagement Specialist (YES).

How long have you been at Shaw House?

Five Years.

What keeps you coming back every day?

I like the engagement with the youth. Every time I come in, I like to have one or two positive experiences with the few youths that we have.

From your perspective, what do people seek out from Shaw House?

Basically, to get off the streets, have a bed, and interact with people their own age. Some come in looking for resources that will help them out of their situations.

What is the most rewarding success story that you have had?

There are two that I can think of. One kid that started here, had his head on right but had a lot of drama in his life. Now he is living on his own, taking care of his kid, and living good. The other person that I am thinking of, she got a job and is raising her kid. She looks healthy and is getting ready to join the army. I am so proud of her.

What do you find most challenging working with youth experiencing homelessness?

They tend to be stubborn because they are very headstrong. They have to understand that they are here for a reason and in order to be here then they must follow the rule, even if it stinks. They look for loopholes and will try to get around, and I have to say 'No.'



What is one thing that you would like the community as a whole to know about youth experiencing homelessness?

That they are not bad, they just got dealt a bum hand in life and they are doing the best they can. I would say they are not troublemakers, all in all they are good kids just trying to live and survive.

In your opinion, what qualities or characteristics contribute to an effective youth engagement specialist?

Patience. Patience would be a huge one. Compassion. Being able to listen, just listen. Help them out when they have something that is troubling them, don't just brush them off. That's what they are used to, and we are trying to prove that not all adults in their life are bad. They are trying to be independent, and we are here to help them find that independence but on the other hand keep them on the straight and narrow and sometimes those two lines will not meet.

Homeless services we provide.

Streetlight Outreach Project

Mobile street-based program that connects youth up to age 24 with services and assists youth in meeting basic needs.

Transitional Living (Mason Place)

8 bed transitional living program for youth 16.5-20 years old, that offers long and short term placements to help transition the youth into permanent, safe, and stable living situations.

Emergency Shelter

The only youth homelessness shelter contracted with the State of Maine to provide shelter services in Penobscot, Hancock, Washington, Aroostook, and Piscataquis counties. It is a safe haven for youth from ages 10 to 20 that provides food, water, a bed, shower, and access to laundry and basic clothing.

Day Program

Provides youth with a safe alternative to the street during daytime hours, as well as, food, water, shelter, clothing, hygiene supplies, targeted case management, and referral services for things like counseling. Community Based Housing (Youth Homeless Demonstration Project). Through master leasing and agency subsidized rental assistance, young people have access to transitional beds when needed, and can then seamlessly transition to a permanent housing placement when they are ready.

Transitional Housing and Transitional Living Program

Youth served through TH live in multi-bedroom units that are master leased by Community Care or ACAP. Each youth has their own furnished bedroom and will share furnished common areas (living room, kitchen, or similar) with other youth living in the unit.

Rapid Re-Housing (Youth Homeless Demonstration Project)

Youth served through RRH live in units selected by them and leased in their name. Shaw House helps with providing some basic furnishings (bed, bedding, toiletries) and supports youth in getting the rest through community resources.

How we work and how we can help (Prevent • Assist • Solve)

Prevent

Family Mediation

Mobile Diversion and Navigation

Shelter Diversion

Assist

Shelter

Drop In

Street Outreach

Solve

Transitional Group Living

Rapid Re-Housing

Transitional Housing



INTERVIEW

Interview with Annabelle

An intern from the University of Maine sat down to have a conversation with Annabelle.

Q: Can you talk to me about how you're currently involved with Shaw House?

A: This program (RRH YHDP) helped me get an apartment when we were living outside and I was pregnant. They help me get to doctors appointments, vital documents, food and they find things to help us. (connect with services)

Q: Have you been a part of other programs for homelessness?

A: I was in the Shaw House shelter as well as our Day Program and Outreach.

Q: Would you feel comfortable telling me about your experiences with homelessness?

A: I was looking for a safe place after being in an unsafe situation, I didn't trust Shaw House at first but found the people to be reliable and helpful eventually.

Q: What are some of your goals for the future? Does Shaw House support/ help you achieve those goals?

A: I'd like to find a bigger place like a 2 bedroom or a trailer. I want to keep saving and getting a remote job. I want to have a healthy happy baby. I am going to stay with this program for as long as I can. Yes, they do help with the appointments and the resources. They are very flexible and they go with the flow which makes things easy. We have been able to save a lot of money, we were living outside and this program helps us save so we can get ahead.

Q: If you could share one thing the community should know about youth experiencing homelessness, what would it be?

A: It is very hard. We can't do this alone, we are one big community. Everyone deserves help and helpers are willing to give it. Just pay it forward. We don't want to be greedy. Asking for help is scary. Most people think we just want money but we need help.



What We Know

- By Sean Scovil, LCSW, LADC

It is typical for many Maine youth to rely on their parents for housing, financial, social, and emotional support well into their mid-twenties. The youth accessing public housing however, are expected to be self-sufficient at age eighteen.

One of the greatest challenges facing youth accessing Shaw House is a lack of familial support. Many youth have strained connections with their families and may struggle to build a strong support network outside of their family. Without the guidance, love, or resources of a supportive family, youth often find themselves feeling isolated and having to find their own way.

Learning to live independently is hard, especially without anyone to fall back on. Without support, one missed bill payment, temporary job loss, medical problem, or unexpected expense can become overwhelming or difficult to manage. Challenges like these put young people at risk for unstable housing and a potential return to homelessness. Unsupported youth are more likely to live in risky situations such as renting rooms and illegal housing; falling victim to landlord or lease holders' whims, such as unlawful evictions; and potentially being exposed to victimization or other dangerous situations. Those already housed in apartments may struggle to navigate challenges within the apartment complex, maintain relationships with landlords and roommates, budget money, and find and maintain employment.

For all of these reasons, Shaw House has committed to supporting youth independence through the creation of a network of innovative support programs tailored to meet the specific needs of each youth. We recognize that support comes in many forms, at varying levels and based on individual need. Sometimes it's a listening ear, financial assistance, help solving problems, and other times, youth may need reminders about sticking to a budget or guidance to mediate a disagreement between roommates. Whether youth are looking for an apartment through Rapid Re-housing, learning living and social skills at the Mason Place Transitional Living Program, or settling into a long term lease with a roommate in Transitional Housing, youth find Shaw House support. For those already housed, our Open Table program connects youth with a dedicated support team that can provide on-going support in the years to come. Research and our own experience tell us that young people who have received comprehensive transitional planning have increased success in maintaining stable and adequate housing. Transition planning involves a hands-on approach and access to resources like the programs within the Shaw House network. It includes taking the time to assess the young person's needs, help them secure housing, and ensure they have adequate financial and social supports to stay adequately housed.

All youth need guidance and support to start their adult lives. This means youth in care need a system that allows for kindness and understanding, flexibility, and compassion.

A Word from the Executive Director

- *David McCluskey*



We want to begin this year's annual message by sharing some exciting developments with you. We have been very busy over the past year writing grants and developing new services to support young people who find themselves experiencing homelessness. The first development we want to share is that Shaw House is now a part of Community Care. Community Care is a behavioral health service provider who has been operating across the State of Maine since 1995. In addition to behavioral health services, Community Care also holds a number of contracts with the Office of Children and Family Services. Combining these two organizations has been a long but very worthwhile process. We can assure you that the mission of Shaw House continues.

This time last year, Shaw House began two new exciting services, both funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through Maine State House Authority, (MSHA). Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-housing services combine the ability for us to provide rent resources for young people with the support of helpers called Youth Transition Coordinators to assist them in finding and maintaining independent living. With the help and trust of wonderful property managers, we have been able to give a number of young adults a chance at breaking their homelessness cycle.

The other new service is a sort of outreach program called Mobile Diversion and Navigation. The goal of this service is to aid those who are homeless, or are at risk of homelessness, locate and take advantage of resources which will stabilize their housing situation.

We hope you enjoy reading about our efforts and learning a bit about what those who experience homelessness go through. As always, we appreciate the support of the Bangor Region community and citizens, our donors, and all of our funders. We hope you have a peaceful and happy 2023.



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Supporting Maine's Homeless Youth

Monetary donations to support the Shaw House can be made through PayPal at info@shawhouse.us or by check to: Shaw House, Attn: Finance Department
P.O. Box 936, Bangor, ME 04401

Other items needed:

1. **Low value gift-cards** (\$5 value) to Dollar Tree, Dunkin Donuts, McDonald's, etc. to be used as incentives for youth
2. **Heat and Eat items** such as Chef Boyardee canned goods, soup, etc. and packaged food/snacks to be used when conducting Outreach to provide youth living on the street with food that they can eat easily.
3. **Hygiene items**
4. **New undergarments** (adult size sports bras, boxer shorts, underwear, socks, etc.)

Homeless Youth Awareness.... Did you Know?

One in 10 young adults ages 18-25 experienced homelessness over a 12-month period.



That's approximately 3.5 million young adults

One in 30 youth ages 13-17 experienced homelessness over a 12-month period.



That's approximately 700,000 youth

Open Table is a national model relying on volunteers to surround a homeless youth with a safe and supportive community. Often homeless youth experience isolation and disconnection from their communities and leaves them stranded at the Shaw House with no clear direction. The Open Table model dedicates volunteers to represent different domains of life, such as housing, finance, healthcare, education/occupation, community life and transportation for each youth. Over the 1-year commitment the volunteers work with the youth to integrate them back into the community and act as guides for the youth to become independent. This model is proven to help homeless youth reach their life goals and complete their transition out of homelessness. Please contact us if you have interest in volunteering at a table and making a huge difference.