

The Hub

Catastrophic weather events and the COVID health crisis put extra pressure on community members. Sometimes these disasters cause financial hardships that people struggle to overcome. The Hub, a project of the nonprofit Woodstock Community Trust, was founded to help alleviate some of these needs, both in ordinary times and during a community crisis. It is designed with a system of volunteer advocates who help people connect with the services they need from an array of community organizations.

“There is a quick response with having someone hear your story, assess the needs, and hold your hand through the process,” says volunteer Denise Lyons of the Hub. “We get feedback from people who say that having one person understand your needs is very empowering. During a

crisis, people feel overwhelmed and find it hard to make decisions, so support is important.”

The Hub is run with a leadership team of three volunteers, a part-time administrator (Marian Koetsier), and an advisory group. Funding comes from area foundations and individual donors. The project was launched in November 2022 as a follow-up to the Woodstock Area Relief Fund that was founded to address the pandemic and to the preceding community response fund created after the 2011 Tropical Storm Irene.

“Post-flood in July 2023, we received more than 80 applications,” Denise says. “The need was intense.” People came for help because of lost wages and minor flood damage that could be helped with one grant. Yet about one-third of the applications were more complicated, involv-



Above and below: Sustainable Woodstock volunteers assisted residents of the Riverside Mobile Park after the July 2023 flood. Photos by Allison Clarkson.

ing FEMA and a need for larger supplemental grants from the Hub.

“People also need help during ordinary times, not just during a community crisis,” Denise says. “A setback such as a catastrophic illness can mean someone can’t pay their bills. Our mission is to make it easier for people in the community to get help when they need it. We’re a portal to other groups, such as faith institutions, the Ottauquechee Health Foundation, and Sustainable Woodstock.” The Hub



The Hub helped to fund Sustainable Woodstock’s work at the mobile park. Photo by Jenevra Wetmore.

serves the seven supervisory union towns, working with the towns’ assistance funds.

The Hub helps to expand people’s awareness of what types of help are available. For example, a food shelf client can be directed to the Hub to learn about other sources of assistance and also to fill out an application for help. Affordable housing issues have created greater living costs for some people, causing financial instability in households. The Hub helps by paying a rent or mortgage payment, a utility bill, or a car repair bill. “We pay bills,” Denise explains. “We help people so they don’t fall into a worse situation.”

People who need help and people who want to contribute funds can get contact and other information at woodstockcommunitytrust.org.

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