

The HUB has been busy, assisting 86 applicants so far

By Tom Ayres

Senior Staff Writer

The HUB, the nascent, seven-town mutual aid network that has operated under **the** auspices of **the** Woodstock Community Trust and **the** Ottauquechee Health Foundation since last November, has provided more than 80 individuals and families facing financial crises with critically needed funds over **the** past six months.

Initiated last fall, **The HUB** brought together nearly 30 community service organizations and volunteers representing Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, and Woodstock to identify and provide financial support for people in need for such essentials as paying utility bills, medical expenses, car payments and other transportation costs, home repairs, combating food insecurity, and more.

“It’s been a startup experience, learning as we go, figuring out our computer systems, trying to get **the** word out and how not to overwhelm our case workers, communicating with **the** public to let them know who we are and **the** help that we have available,” commented Denise Lyons of Taftsville, an organizational psychologist and member of **The HUB** leadership team, during a phone conversation Sunday afternoon. “It was challenging to know what **the** demand would be. Initially, we were getting a lot of requests and asking ourselves if this was pent-up demand or if this is just what winter will always be like, because we had so many requests for fuel assistance. It’s probably our hypothesis right now that winter is always going to be **the** biggest demand time.”

Lyons’ colleague and **The HUB**’s volunteer “strategist,” Marian Koetsier, is a Woodstock Village resident who keeps tabs on a lot of **the** mutual aid network’s data. Koetsier also took part in **the** Sunday afternoon discussion. “**The HUB** advisers — our case advocates — worked with 86 applicants through **the** end of this past week,” Koetsier offered. “More than half of that — 64 percent, actually — was for heating assistance. We also assisted with housing needs like mortgage or rent payments and home repairs. And we had people with transportation needs — help with car payments and significant repairs, a mix of things including gas for getting to and from work. And oftentimes **the** needs would be related to medical and health care issues and expenses.”

The HUB concept grew out of **the** remnants of an older organization — **the** Woodstock Area Relief Fund, commonly known as WARF. **The HUB** was also inspired and

See **THE HUB** - Page [6A](#)

THE HUB

From Page 4A informed by other mutual aid networks that sprouted across Vermont during **the** COVID pandemic, such as RAMAN, **the** Randolph Area Mutual Aid Network, which serves people in crisis in Braintree, Brookfield, and Randolph in Orange County. “We’re very aware of **the** kinds of crises that our neighbors were experiencing during **the** pandemic and also aware that many people face those kinds of events in **the** course of their ordinary, daily lives as well – situations such as divorce, job loss, family illness, or simply financial stress,” Lyons told **the** Standard shortly after **The HUB** launched last year.

Of **the** nearly 90 individuals and families who received assistance from **The HUB** in **the** last six months, Woodstock had **the** most applicants, Koetsier said. “Of course, Woodstock has **the** most population,” **The HUB** strategist noted. “I’d say maybe 30 to 40 percent of **the** people we supported were from Woodstock, with **the** rest spread pretty evenly around **the** region.”

The HUB offers local residents much needed financial support through its four case advocates and network of volunteers and collaborating organizations. People can use **the** network as a centralized conduit for connecting

confidentially with numerous community-based funding resources in **the** region, including Barnard Helping Hands, **the** Plymouth Memory Tree, and **the** Faulkner Fund in Woodstock. Residents of Bridgewater, Killington, Pomfret, and Reading can find confidential connections to other regional service organizations that are part of **The HUB**'s collaborative network, including **the** King's Daughters and Sons, Pivotal Steps, and **the** Ottauquechee Health Foundation.

Interested parties can connect with **The HUB** and its varied local funding resources by completing an application online at apply.thehubneighbors.org, sending an email to apply@thehubneighbors.org, calling **the** volunteer help line at [\(802\) 457-7214](tel:8024577214), or picking up an application form for support at **the** Ottauquechee Health Foundation office at Simmons House at 30 Pleasant Street in Woodstock.

[Copyright © 2023 The Vermont Standard 4/20/2023](#)

[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)
