



Everyone deserves a home.

# 2023 COTS PHONATHON

Nov. 27-Nov. 30th, 2023

Welcome to the **COTS Phonathon**, our biggest fundraiser of the year! Our goal: Raise \$250,000 to ensure the continued success of our shelters, services, and prevention outreach. More than 50 volunteers make 5,000 calls to COTS supporters.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, GENEROSITY, AND KINDNESS. WE COULD NOT DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!**

## CALLER INSTRUCTIONS

1. Watch our short [Caller Instruction Video](#) to learn about your Virtual Phonathon "Call Sheets."
2. Begin **making your calls** by clicking the first name on your Call Station Spreadsheet. The link to your calling station will be emailed to you on your first calling day. We will only call the phone numbers **once**.
3. If you get a **busy signal** or no answer, *hang up*. If you get a **voice mail**, leave a message: Follow the attached script.
4. If a **supporter answers the phone**, introduce yourself as a *COTS volunteer*. Thank them for their past support and ask if they received mail from COTS recently.
5. Tell them about our special **Challenge Grant** that will match their contribution above and beyond their prior Phonathon gifts. If they did not give to the COTS Phonathon last year, this means their entire gift will be doubled.
6. If a donor wants to make a **credit card donation** let them know that the most secure option is to donate through our website ([cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org)) or tell them about the mailing with the remittance envelope.
7. Make note of any special requests (holiday cards, etc.) on the Google Form.

8. Add any **important comments, requests, or information** the donor shares in **notes** section. Please know that COTS staff will read each note you enter to determine if follow-up is needed so please only include information that warrants a follow-up call.
  9. When you **finish a call**, click "**submit**," and you will see "your response has been recorded" on your screen. Close the form window after you see that your response has been recorded. Return to your Call Station Spreadsheet.
  10. Mark the **Called** check box in the Calling Station Spreadsheet to indicate you've completed the call.
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### **Tips for Getting Those Pledges!**

- Say that you are a **volunteer** for COTS. Engage in a conversation – smile (they can hear it even though they can't see it!), be warm, be friendly. Ask how they are doing.
- Find common ground—you support COTS by volunteering, they support COTS by donating!
- Mention the Challenge Grant and ask for a specific amount above their previous pledge.
  - Example: "Could you give \$50 this year?"
- Always thank people for their gift. If they're not donating tonight, thank them for their past support.
- We are grateful for all donations of any size – EVERY DOLLAR HELPS!

### ***Need help?***

If you have questions or are having technical difficulties, please type your question into the "chat" in the Zoom. This is the best and quickest way to get your question answered. You can also email Romy at [romyt@cotsonline.org](mailto:romyt@cotsonline.org). She will actively check this email during calling hours. If you have urgent questions during calling hours, text or call Romy at (802) 343-6903. If you do not know the answer to a question from a donor, please let them know that a COTS staff person will follow up with them and make a note of the question in the Google form.

## A 'dialogue' not a 'script'

"Good evening, I'm \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a volunteer calling on behalf of COTS. I want to thank you for your past support of COTS programs and services and ask if this is a good time to chat for a few minutes. How are you doing tonight?

I'm calling you tonight as part of the annual COTS Phonathon, which raises money for COTS programs and services for people experiencing homelessness throughout the year. Together, we can help COTS provide safe, warm shelter, housing, and essential services for families and adults during the winter months ahead.

Your generosity in the past has made a huge difference for the children and adults COTS serves. COTS cannot do their meaningful work for neighbors experiencing homelessness without the kindness of people like you. We are grateful for your consideration of a gift this year.

Last year, you made a gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ during the Phonathon. Thank you! We wanted to let you know that we have a special CHALLENGE GRANT from New England Federal Credit Union that matches contributions above and beyond prior Phonathon gifts.

And, if you've never donated through the Phonathon before, this means your entire gift will be doubled.

Would you consider a pledge of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help neighbors experiencing homelessness during the cold winter months and throughout the year?

**If YES:** "Thank you so much! Please send your gift in the remittance envelope we recently mailed to you or go to [cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org) to make your donation online." (If a donor says they recently mailed their gift, please click "just sent in a gift" under Special Request, and if provided, add the gift amount in the "Notes for Staff" section.)

**If NO:** "Thank you for your support in the past. May we keep you on our mailing list?"

**If the donor needs to think it over:** "Thank you for your consideration. Please review the materials we sent to you, visit COTS' website, or call the COTS staff at (802) 864-7402 with any questions you have."

**If they already gave:** "Then please consider this a thank you call. We truly appreciate your continued support for COTS shelters, housing, and services."

## **What if the donor says ...**

### **I just received a newsletter requesting a donation ...**

“COTS did just send out a newsletter to supporters, so you must be one of them. You can use the envelope in the newsletter or the special mailing COTS just sent to return your donation to COTS.”

### **I gave to the United Way ...**

“Thank you. They are an important community partner and help fund COTS’ family shelters.”

### **I can’t give to every group that asks ...**

“A donation to COTS is an investment in the health and safety of our community. Your contribution will provide for families and individuals who otherwise may be sleeping outdoors this winter.”

### **Does my company match my donation?**

“Many companies do match employee contributions. You can check with your Human Resources department to find out.”

### **I want to order Holiday Gift Cards ...**

“Great! I’ll make a note of this so someone can get back to you and arrange this.” (For the volunteer—click the “Holiday Card Interest” under Special Request, and add any other information to the “Notes for Staff” section.)

### **I want to volunteer or bring a meal ...**

“Please call us 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and ask for Romy. Our phone number is (802) 864-7402. Or visit [cotsonline.org/volunteer](http://cotsonline.org/volunteer).”

### **I want to donate hygiene products ...**

“Please call us 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and ask for Romy. Our phone number is (802) 864 - 7402.

### **I want to donate clothing, furniture, baby items, etc. ...**

COTS does not accept clothing or furniture. Those items can be donated to Goodwill and ReSOURCE. COTS guests can get vouchers to shop at these partner nonprofit organizations.”

### **I want to talk to a staff person (or the donor has a question that you can’t answer):**

“Please call the COTS office at (802) 864-7402 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday and ask for Rebekah Mott. Or we can have a staffer call you back. What’s a good number and time to you reach you during the day?”

## Phonathon Script: 2023

### Script for Voice Mail Message

## COTS Phonathon: How to leave a message

### *If they Gave* to Phonathon in 2022:

My name is XXX, and I am a **volunteer** at this year's COTS Phonathon. I am calling to thank you for being a compassionate supporter of the people COTS serves.

You can continue your support of neighbors experiencing homelessness this year by returning the envelope you received in the mail, going online to [cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org), or by calling COTS back at (802) 864-7402. We are so grateful that you are a part of our COTS community!

I wanted to make sure you saw the letter and newsletter we mailed last week– and let you know we have a Special Challenge Grant right now that will match an increase to your gift last year if you give again this year.

If you recently donated to COTS, please consider this our first thank you! We are grateful for your gift. Together, we will provide safe, warm shelter, housing, and essential services for families and adults during the winter months ahead. **Thank you again!**

If they did **NOT** give to Phonathon in 2022:

My name is XXX, and I am a **volunteer** at this year's COTS Phonathon. I am calling to thank you for being a compassionate supporter of the people COTS serves.

You can continue your support of neighbors experiencing homelessness this year by returning the envelope you received in the mail, going online to [cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org) or by calling COTS back at (802) 864-7402. We are so grateful for your that you are a part of our COTS community!

I wanted to make sure you saw the letter and newsletter we mailed last week – and let you know we have a Special Challenge Grant right now that will double your gift if you give this year.

If you recently donated to COTS, please consider this our first thank you! We are grateful for your gift. Together, we will provide safe, warm shelter, housing, and essential services for families and adults during the winter months ahead. **Thank you again!**

## **COTS Phonathon 2023**

### **FAQ for Callers**

#### **Your Frequently Asked Questions: Phonathon 2023**

##### **What's new with COTS?**

- COTS enhanced the team of support at our Family Shelters to include onsite mental health support. Our Children's Mental Health Liaison works closely with our Children's Education Advocate and Family Housing Navigator to address mental health barriers to accessing housing and support children in shelter to mitigate the trauma of homelessness.
- COTS is nearing completion of 16 brand new apartments for families who are currently experiencing homelessness. These will be deeply affordable permanent apartments for families with children.
- COTS is planning to add a Community Enrichment Liaison for our permanent residents to help increase engagement and wellness for our tenants.

##### **Are you still collecting toys for the children in COTS shelters this year?**

- Yes. We encourage supporters to donate gift cards, so parents can order gifts for their children online – and we can simplify the process to make it safer for everyone: our guests, our supporters, and our staff. We also have a wish list online at [cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org) for specific items. We accept new and unused toys and gifts for children aged 0-17.

##### **How can I sign up to volunteer?**

- You can check out current volunteer opportunities at [cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org). We are especially always looking for more volunteers to provide and serve lunch and the Daystation.

##### **Did Rita Markley retire? Who is the new Executive Director?**

- Yes, Rita retired last fall after dedicating 30 years to leading COTS. Jonathan Farrell is the new Executive Director. He has worked in various roles at COTS for 11 years, most recently as Facilities and Operations Director.

### **When is the 2023 COTS Walk?**

- The COTS Walk will take place in person again this year on May 5, 2023. We will kick off in Battery Street Park and walk the 3.6 mile loop someone experiencing homelessness might take to access services.

### **Is City Market having its annual Tree Sale for COTS?**

- Yes, the City Market Tree Sale begins Wednesday, November 29, at the downtown location. This year, the South End store also will sell trees, beginning Friday, Dec. 1.

### **Are you having the COTS Candlelight Vigil this year?**

- Yes, it will be held on Dec. 21, the longest night of the year, in conjunction with National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to honor those who have died while homeless. We invite you join us on the City Hall steps to light a candle on this night and remember those who have faced the crisis of homelessness amid this global pandemic.

### **What does COTS need?**

- Please check out our Wish List on our Web site ([cotsonline.org](http://cotsonline.org)) for the most-in-need items. We always need new personal hygiene items. COTS does not currently accept used home goods, clothes, or furniture.