

Join Us!

FOR THE 34TH ANNUAL

COTS '23
Walk

SING A SONG OF HOME



MAY 7, 2023

ONLINE ACTIVITIES BEGIN APRIL 1

BATTERY PARK, BURLINGTON

1 PM - CHECK-IN

2 PM - WALK BEGINS

REGISTER OR DONATE TODAY AT
COTSONLINE.ORG/WALK

SPONSORED BY:



LAKE CHAMPLAIN
CHOCOLATES

DUNCAN *WISNIEWSKI

OUR GOAL

\$210,000

DETAILS

Sunday, May 7, 2023

www.cotsonline.org/walk

Weekday activities begin
online: **April 1, 2023**

www.cotsonline.org/cotswalk

Register online:

<http://give.cotsonline.org/COTSWalk>

ABOUT THE COTS WALK

The **34th annual COTS Walk** is an in-person 3.5-mile trek in downtown Burlington following the path a person facing the crisis of homelessness would travel to connect with COTS shelters, housing, and prevention services. Walkers will start and end in Battery Park, with music and family-friendly activities.

This is our *largest* annual event and a critical fundraiser. Thanks to the support of our generous sponsors, **all** of the money raised by walkers goes *directly* to support our work.

WHY IT MATTERS

The COTS Walk has two important purposes:

- To increase understanding and awareness about homelessness in our community, and;
- To raise money to support critical COTS services year-round.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

INTENTIONAL ROUTE: Follow our traditional COTS Walk route, which begins at Battery Park, travels down the Church Street Marketplace, up Main Street, and out into surrounding neighborhoods. Walk visitors will see inside COTS' many buildings and learn more about our story and the stories of the people we serve.

WHO JOINS US: Every year, about 2,000 walkers of all ages from businesses, schools, social organizations, religious groups, and neighborhoods come together from the region to participate in the annual COTS Walk.

ABOUT COTS

OUR MISSION

“COTS provides emergency shelter, services, and housing for people who are homeless or marginally housed in Vermont. COTS advocates for long-term solutions to end homelessness.”

COTS, founded in 1982, is the largest service provider for people experiencing homelessness and at risk of becoming homeless in Vermont. COTS is a nonprofit organization that advocates for long-term solutions to end homelessness while providing emergency shelter, services, homelessness prevention, and housing for people who are homeless or marginally housed.

We believe in the value and dignity of every human life; that housing is a fundamental human right; that emergency shelter is not the solution to homelessness.

**COTS SERVED 1,366 PEOPLE,
INCLUDING 317 CHILDREN,
LAST YEAR.**



TALKING ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

OUR THEME THIS YEAR



The COTS Walk is designed to be educational, engaging, and interactive. Our 2023 Walk theme, which will be incorporated into all aspects of the Walk, is: “sing a song of home.”

There is no one face of homelessness. While there are similarities, each person’s experience with homelessness and search for home is unique. We will honor their stories at the Walk.

Did you know?

- 1.5 million students (K-12) in the U.S. are homeless;
- Most homeless families “double up/couch surf”;
- 55 percent of children in shelters are infants (under age 1) and young children (age 6 and younger) – 10 and 45 percent, respectively.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Learn about SPENT

SPENT is a COTS-adapted, hands-on educational game to help players understand the challenges of living on an extremely tight budget. SPENT can be played in three versions, which are modifications of the classic games Jenga, Twister, and Marble Madness. SPENT is designed to be played with all ages, at events, and in community or classroom settings.

Find more COTS education offerings, including books, at cotsonline.org.

COTS has created **educational tools** for *parents* and *teachers* to use at home and in classrooms. These materials can stand alone or be integrated into existing curricula. COTS also offers speakers to provide additional background, guide classroom discussions, and offer a deeper understanding. Our questions and conversations are designed to be respectful, informative, and effective at inviting children and adults to ask questions, allowing them to learn more and dispel myths and misconceptions about the causes and the realities of homelessness. This valuable experience also empowers attendees to be part of the solution to ending homelessness.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

BE A WALKER

Set a fundraising goal, and ask friends, classmates, coworkers, family, and neighbors, in person and online, to make a pledge. And, join us virtually Walk Day to "walk the walk."

TAKE THE 'CHALLENGE'

If you raise at least **\$1,000 as an individual** -- or *\$2,500 as a team* -- a Challenge grant from an anonymous donor will match your Walk donations up to \$15,000. Challenge Walkers and Teams receive exclusive COTS swag, certificates, and public recognition in COTS communications and at our Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast.

WALK WITH A TEAM

The COTS Walk is especially fun when you walk with a group: classmates, co-workers, friends, family, and neighbors. Give your team a name and come up with creative ways to show your team spirit. Share photos of your team's experience on social media, tag COTS, and include #COTSWalk. For students, this is a great way to fulfill community service requirements and to develop your leadership skills.

MAKE A DONATION

Making a gift to COTS in honor of the COTS Walk is a valuable way you can help COTS reach its fundraising goal. Donate to help yourself reach your fundraising goal or donate to help another Walker reach their goal:

<http://give.cotsonline.org/COTSWalk>



FUNDRAISING TIPS

People give when they are asked. You are giving them the opportunity to be generous. We thank you all.

HOW TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

- Reach out to friends, family, and colleagues. Send an email, write a letter, text, or call. Ask them to consider a gift to support you.
- Share your story of why you walk on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and LinkedIn. Include your fundraising page link.
- Use the Walk Envelope COTS provides to collect offline donations.

SET UP YOUR FUNDRAISING PAGE

1. Register at <http://give.cotsonline.org/COTSWalk>
2. Click “Register as an individual,” if you not part of a team. Click “Create a team,” if you are a captain starting a team. Click “Join a team,” if you are a member of a team already created. **NOTE:** Registered individual walkers can always join a team later.
3. First-time Walkers: Enter your email address and create a password. Returning Walkers: If you registered online last year for the COTS Walk, log in with the email and password you previously used.
4. *Now for the fun part:* Personalize your page. Write a COTS Walk message. Add photos. Share your story of why you walk.
5. Most **important** step: Share your page via email and social media, and ask people to donate to help you reach your goal. And, be sure to thank them when they do.

SAMPLE MESSAGE FOR YOU

Unsure about what to write in your email or letter ask to family and friends? Here is an example you can use, edit, or personalize:

Dear <Friend>,

I have accepted the “COTS Walk Challenge” to raise \$1,000 for COTS (Committee on Temporary Shelter). COTS is Vermont’s largest service provider for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. COTS works to end homelessness through prevention in addition to providing emergency shelters for people who are in crisis.

Thanks to generous sponsors, every dollar I raise will go directly to support and services for families and individuals facing homelessness. Please help me reach my fundraising goal. You can write a check, donate cash, or give online through my secure link: <insert the link generated at the top of my fundraising page>. Gifts are tax-deductible.

Please feel free to share my message with others, and learn more about COTS at www.cotsonline.org. **Thank you** for your support.

Sincerely, <Me>



THE DIFFERENCE A DOLLAR MAKES

\$24

*covers the cost
of an ID, which is
needed to apply for
housing*

\$100

*covers four nights of
emergency shelter at
the Waystation for
single adults*

\$310

*covers the average
cost of moving and
storage*

\$535

*covers the average
utility assistance
payment*

\$1,100

*is the average financial
assist needed to help
households avoid
eviction*





OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS *

FAMILY SHELTER:

24 families, including **55 children**, stayed in a COTS family shelter and received housing and supportive services. Specialized programs were also offered for children.

THE WAYSTATION:

161 individuals stayed at the Waystation, COTS' year-round overnight shelter, and received housing and supportive services.

MOTEL OUTREACH TEAM:

405 adults and **64 children** experiencing homelessness in area hotels received re-housing and support services.

THE DAYSTATION:

280 individuals visited the Daystation, COTS' daytime drop-in center for lunch, showers, laundry, and services.

PREVENTION SUPPORT:

53 households, including **57 children**, received prevention assistance and services to avert homelessness.

RE-HOUSING SUPPORT:

90 households, including **65 children**, received re-housing assistance and services.

HOUSING NAVIGATION:

225 households, including **252 adults** and **159 children**, received housing and services through the COTS Housing Resource Center.

* COTS services provided during COTS FY22 (10/1/21 - 9/30/22).

MORE THAN SHELTER

COTS has adapted services and shelter in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our new mobile outreach team offers on-site services at area hotels. Learn more: cotsonline.org.

COTS is the largest service provider for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in Vermont. We helped **1,366** people, including **317** children, last year.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We provide **98 units** of affordable transitional and permanent housing.



EMERGENCY SHELTER

We provide year-round day and overnight emergency shelter for individuals and families with children.



HOUSING SERVICES

Housing Navigators help guests find sustainable permanent housing, as well as access community resources and mainstream benefits.



PREVENTION OUTREACH

Housing Resource Specialists help individuals and families stabilize and avert the crisis of homelessness.



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