



Everyone deserves a home.

2025 Annual Report

Prepared for 2025 Annual
Meeting in review of 2024
Fiscal Year (10/1/23- 9/30/24)

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Executive Director's Message

Dear COTS Community,

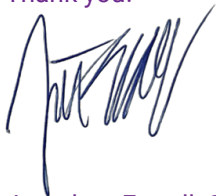
At this time last year, we were celebrating the near completion of Main Street Family Housing, the expansion of our Family Supportive Housing program, and the several years of outreach services to those temporarily housed in motels. We were planning a renovation and expansion of a permanent housing location, when we learned of a federal property that was going into an asset disposition program, the former social security building on Pearl Street. At the same time, our partners at the State were looking to expand shelter capacity both in the short-term for the coldest winter months, and into the future.

COTS was able to respond, as it often has, to this emerging need. We moved swiftly to engage our friends and supporters and look at how we might expand in response to the need in our community. We were able to acquire the building, launch a low-barrier winter shelter we call the Warming Station, and are well into planning the renovation of the space into a new, expanded home for our long-standing Waystation shelter for individuals. It's what we do, and we never do it alone. It takes support of a cadre of experts and supporters in various fields, and in our community, including those reading through our Annual Report this year, so THANK YOU!

We are pleased to be able to offer more shelter capacity this winter, and we will have 20 more dignified, housing-focused shelter beds added to our portfolio ahead of next winter. At the same time, we know that shelter is not the long-term answer. Our Daystation has never been busier, our Family Shelters have never been higher in demand, and more folks are seeking the support of the Family Supportive Housing team. Shelter is not the answer, and that's why over the course of the last year, we have supported 552 households at COTS through housing navigation, family supportive housing, and community outreach in addition to those who live in our 106 permanent, deeply affordable apartments. We strive to help create positive, permanent change, and have supported 126 households move from a homeless situation into permanent housing.

We are excited to present our year to you, a year of growth in very challenging times. As you flip through these pages, you will see a common thread emerging, the compassion and commitment of everyone on the COTS team working to meet folks where they are and walking with them on their journey back to sustainable permanent housing. Thank you for being a part of the COTS community,

Thank you!



Jonathan Farrell, COTS Executive Director



COTS Board of Directors

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Executive Director

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Property and Facilities Director

REBEKAH MOTT
Development & Communications Director

TAMMY SANTAMORE
Emergency Shelter and Outreach Director

SOPHIA SENNING
Housing Services Director

Our Mission

We advocate for long-term solutions to end homelessness and provide emergency shelter, services, and long-term housing for people who are experiencing homelessness or are 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.

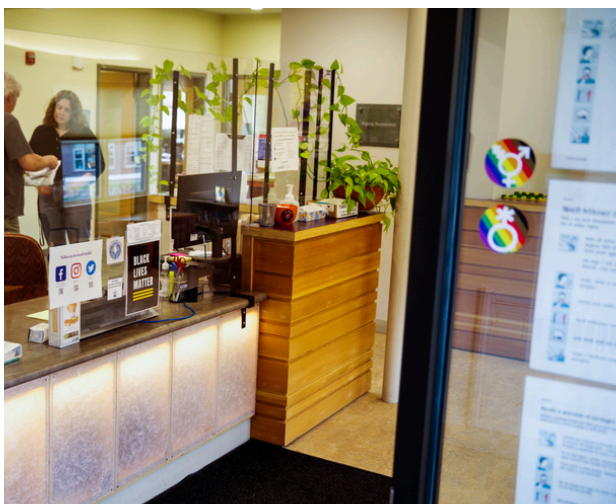


Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

COTS believes in the value and dignity of every human life. Our dedication to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging is not just an aspect of our mission and values, it is at the core of who we are. We strive to foster a safe, welcoming, and supportive space for all. To achieve this, we are committed to the following actions:

- We continuously collect and review feedback from those we serve and those we work with to ensure that we are living our values and treating everyone with dignity and respect.
- We acknowledge that members of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities are disproportionately impacted by homelessness. We actively work to ensure the services we offer and the support we provide are in alignment with the needs of these and other marginalized communities.
- We aim to recruit team members that reflect the diversity of our community and those we serve. Beyond recruitment, once an individual is part of our team, we focus on cultivating a culture that allows all members of Team COTS to bring their authentic selves to work.
- We invest the time and resources necessary to continually improve our understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, through intentional education, celebration, and reflection on our current practices.

We must intentionally address all barriers to accessing housing, the inequities in our systems, and the evolving needs of our community. We know that we are not there yet, that the work never ends, and that we can always improve.



COTS Commitment to Treating Everyone with Dignity

COTS remains unwavering in its commitment to serving the community, to our mission, and to creating safe and welcoming environments for our team and for those we serve.

We affirm our connection and investment in our communities, and will continue to serve marginalized communities and our most vulnerable neighbors.

Financial Report

The following financial information represents unaudited financials for the 2024 Fiscal Year. COTS works with an independent accounting firm to conduct annual financial audits, which are made available on our website at www.cotsonline.org.

The majority of COTS's revenue comes from private donations from the public. Thanks to the generous support of COTS donors and funders, we met fundraising targets for the year.

COTS Income and Revenues October 2023 - September 2024	
Total Federal Grants	\$310,489.16
Total General Public Support	\$2,249,534.58
Total Municipalities Revenue	\$37,033.92
Total Other Revenue	\$120,554.10
Total Program Revenue	\$60,610.88
Total Rental Income and Reimbursement	\$396,573.58
Total State Grants	\$902,579.64
Total United Way	\$31,235.32
Total Income	\$4,108,611.18

COTS donors at a glance

- The majority of gifts to COTS are \$40 or less.
- In 2024, 2,536 donors increased their gifts to COTS.
- Most new donors make their first gift to the COTS Walk.

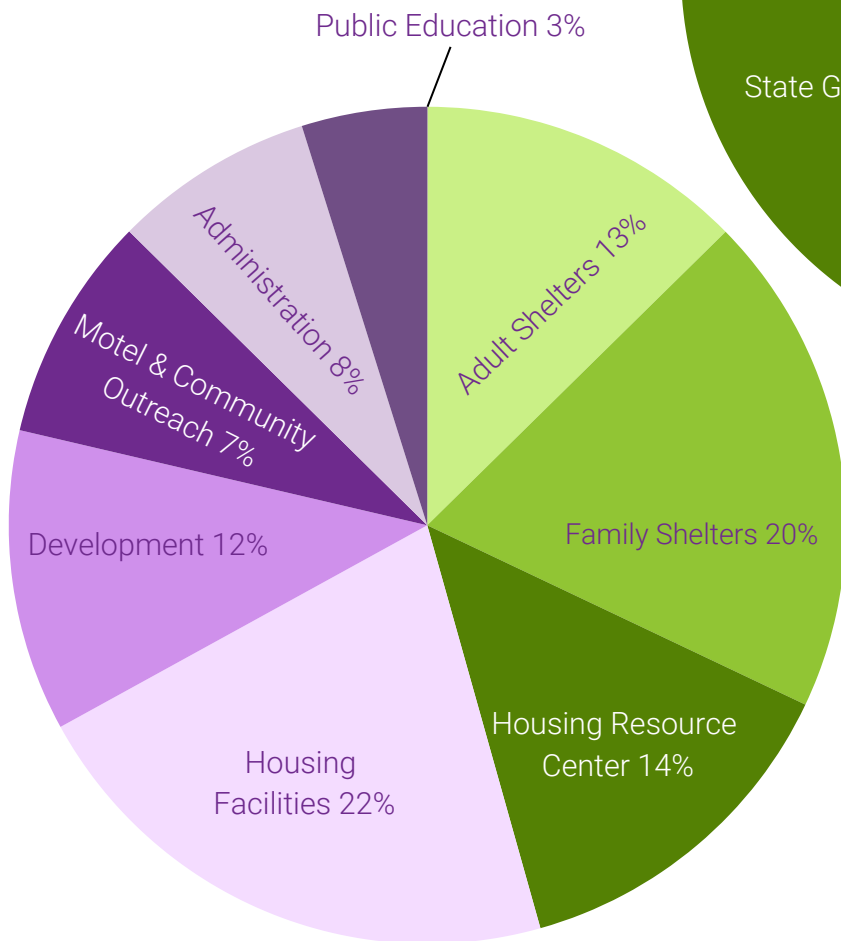
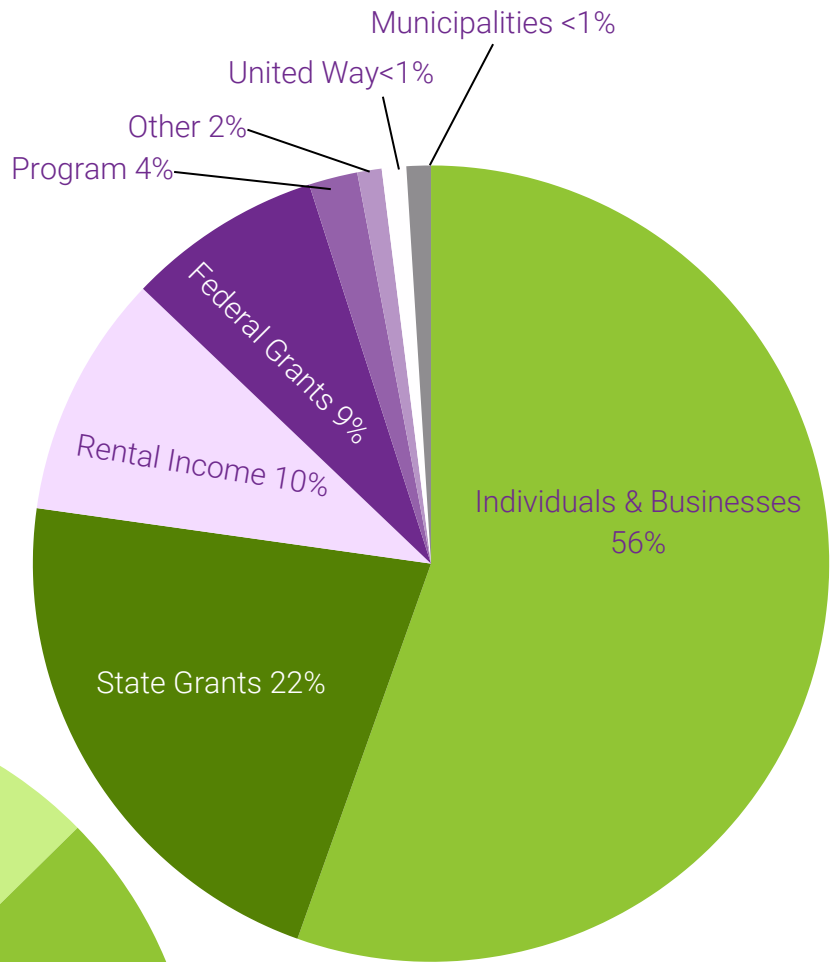
Client needs and programmatic costs continue to grow at a rapid pace. With prudent planning for the future, COTS maintains strong reserves to care for our portfolio of buildings. Full audited financials and 990 reports are available on our website at www.cotsonline.org.

COTS Expenses and Net Income October 2023 - September 2024	
Client Services and Prevention	\$160,732.02
Repairs and Maintenance	\$328,350.50
Operating Leases	\$67,754.97
Utilities	\$106,055.56
Contracts and Supplies	\$647,090.68
Personnel	\$2,870,986.05
Total Expenses	\$4,341,701.80



Revenues

The majority of COTS's revenue comes directly from our community, which includes annual donations, event fundraising, business and corporate support, family foundations and trusts, bequests and planned gifts, and gifts of stock or other assets.



Expenses

The majority of COTS's expenses go directly to clients in the form of shelter, housing, and outreach programs. A smaller portion supports fundraising, administration, and public education.



Everyone deserves a home.

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS *

FAMILY SHELTER:

36 families, including **65 children**, stayed in a COTS family shelter and received housing and supportive services. Specialized programs were also offered for children.

THE WAYSTATION:

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

MOTEL OUTREACH TEAM:

103 adults and **67 children** experiencing homelessness in area hotels received re-housing and support services.

THE DAYSTATION:

1,784 individuals visited the Daystation, COTS' daytime drop-in center for lunch, showers, laundry, and services.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

257 individuals received financial assistance and services.

FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:

41 households, including **91 children**, were enrolled in case management to obtain and retain permanent housing.

HOUSING NAVIGATION:

151 households, including **158 adults** and **65 children**, received services through the COTS Housing Resource Center.

* COTS services provided during COTS Fiscal Year (10/01/2023- 09/30/2024)

MORE THAN SHELTER

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

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 **2,618 people**, including **349 children**, last year.*

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We provide **114 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.



OUTREACH SERVICES

Outreach navigators connect with families and individuals staying in emergency motel shelter to help them find permanent housing.



CONTACT US

PO Box 1616
Burlington VT 05402

(802) 864-7402
info@cotsonline.org

cotsonline.org
f @COTSvt

Housing Services

COTS Housing Services programs include the Housing Resources Center, which provides housing navigation and prevention assistance, as well as our housing retention teams, which serve residents in COTS's permanent affordable housing buildings and our Family Supportive Housing program which serves families with children.

Message from Sophia Senning, Housing Services Director

I am proud to share the progress and impact the Housing Services team has had on our mission to end homelessness. Despite significant challenges, our team has worked tirelessly to provide stability and opportunity for those we serve. When reflecting on the past year, three key areas stand out as highlights.

Supporting COTS Tenants

The COTS Retention Coordinator has played a crucial role in ensuring tenants remain housed by providing support in securing financial assistance, engaging in tenant mediation, and facilitating community enrichment opportunities. Looking forward, we are committed to expanding this team to strengthen our ability to meet the diverse needs of our tenants.

Strengthening Family Supportive Housing

We are pleased to report that our Family Supportive Housing team is fully staffed with five team members, including two clinicians, assisting our community's most vulnerable families. These include families with Department for Children and Families (DCF) involvement, children under six, and those with multiple episodes of homelessness. In the past twelve months, we have enrolled 48 new families in the program, providing them with critical intensive support to achieve long-term stability.

Increasing Community Connections

A key priority has been enhancing our connection to community systems and resources. This has been seen across the agency, including the numerous partners regularly joining in the Daystation space. We have also hosted targeted staff training to improve our ability to access and navigate systems behalf of our clients. By strengthening these connections, we aim to provide more effective and holistic support.

The ongoing housing crisis continues to make it nearly impossible for people experiencing homelessness to find safe and affordable homes. Additionally, the recent reduction in federal housing subsidies will further limit the options for those in need. The demand for housing assistance far exceeds the resources available, and the rapidly evolving programs and policies require our team to stay nimble, continuously learning and adapting to ensure we can best support our clients.

Despite challenges, we are determined to maintain our efforts, strengthen partnerships, and advocate for sustainable housing solutions. Our progress is made possible by our dedicated staff, supportive partners, and our incredibly generous community.





Smith House



The Wilson



St. John's Hall



95 North Ave



Canal Street



Main Street Family Housing



Micah's Story

Micah connected with COTS outreach workers while staying in a motel through the emergency shelter program with his children. He successfully worked with his outreach worker to apply for an apartment at COTS's Main Street Family Housing building, where he and his family have thrived. During his time at Main Street Family Housing, Micah rebuilt a positive rental history and has now moved into a larger apartment in the community with his two children.

What do we mean when we say COTS housing is "deeply" affordable?

No COTS tenant will pay more than 30% of their income toward rent--regardless of their income. The COTS retention team supports residents and intervenes when challenges arise so they can remain stably housed.

Emergency Shelter and Outreach

COTS operates emergency shelter for single adults and families. Altogether, COTS has capacity for 36 adults in overnight shelter and serves around 80 adults daily at the Daystation. Additionally, COTS serves 15 families with children at two family shelter locations. Since 2020, COTS has operated an outreach program to serve households at emergency state-sponsored motel shelter. From January through April 2025, COTS is running an emergency low-barrier shelter for around 30 adults.

Message from Tammy Santamore, Emergency Shelter and Outreach Director

As the Emergency Shelter and Outreach Program Director, my two main goals this year were focused on:

1. Enhancing Client Services: Ensuring our guests have access to crucial resources and support, while also tackling the barriers that prevent them from fully engaging with services.
2. Staff Development and Retention: Implementing strategies to promote staff growth, improve job satisfaction, and maintain a skilled and committed team.

Despite facing increased demand, staffing challenges, and limited housing availability, we have continued to make considerable progress in supporting our guests. Our efforts are focused on enhancing the services we provide, removing barriers to access, and building strong partnerships to serve our community.

One key approach is bringing community partners to the Daystation, which helps us eliminate barriers like transportation issues, stigma associated with seeking help, and fear of missing essential services like showers, laundry, and meals.

However, the complex and evolving mental health needs of our guests, along with ongoing safety concerns, remain challenges we continually address.

Client Services & Partnerships

We remain committed to removing barriers to service access across multiple domains, including mental health, substance use, medical needs, education, employment, training, and public benefits. Some of the essential partners contributing to this effort are listed on the following page.

These collaborations play a crucial role in helping us connect our guests with services that can dramatically improve their quality of life.



Emergency Shelter and Outreach

Staff Development & Retention

As part of our commitment to staff development and retention, we have made significant strides. During the fiscal year, 36% of our Emergency Shelter and Outreach team members either increased their hours permanently, were promoted, or transitioned into new roles within the agency. This includes:

- Per diem to part-time roles
- Part-time to full-time roles
- Promotions to positions within the Emergency Shelter and Outreach programs

This investment in staff growth is key to maintaining a dedicated and motivated team capable of delivering quality services to our guests.

By focusing on both guest services and staff development, we are creating a foundation that ensures our program remains effective, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of both our guests and our team.



Building a Robust Network of Supports Through Community Partnerships:

- Department of Labor
- Associates for Training and Development
- Working Fields
- Burlington Police Departments Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention Programs (CAIP) consisting of Domestic Violence Advocate, Domestic Violence Prevention Officer, Victim Service Specialist, Community Support Supervisor, Community Support Liaisons, CARES Clinicians
- Agency of Human Services-Economic Services Division
- Community Health Centers of Burlington
- University of Vermont Medical Center - Community Care Liaison, WRAP Program
- Howard Center- First Call, Street Outreach, Community Support program, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Program, Mental Health Urgent Care, Safe Recovery
- Pathways Vermont
- Turning Point Recovery Center
- Agewell
- CVOEO-Chittenden Coordinated Entry, Community Resource Center, Financial Futures Programs, Feeding Champlain Valley, Champlain Valley Headstart
- Janet Munt Family room
- King Street Youth Center
- Elementary, middle, and high schools across Chittenden County



Warming Station and Future Waystation Shelter



Main Street Family Shelter



Firehouse Family Shelter



Daystation Drop-in Shelter



Waystation Adult Overnight Shelter

Kehinde's Story

“

COTS didn't just give us a place to live; they gave us stability, dignity, and a chance to move forward. The staff and administrators treated us with kindness and respect, never making us feel like charity cases but like a family they genuinely cared about. The family shelter employees became our support pillars. Their simple yet powerful words—"If you need anything, please let me know"—gave me a sense of belonging and relief during some of the darkest times of my life. COTS provided far more than just shelter. They offered us guidance, resources, and a pathway to proper stability.

COTS staff went above and beyond to help navigate the school system, ensuring they had a place to learn and grow despite arriving mid-year. Our COTS Housing Navigator's tireless efforts in advocating for our financial stability and working towards securing permanent housing changed the course of our future.

Every staff member at Main Street made COTS a temporary residence and a home. The impact of COTS on my life is immeasurable. Without their help, I might have lost everything—my family, education, and dreams. They saved us from homelessness, from despair, and from being torn apart indefinitely. And today, I am overjoyed to say that we have finally secured a permanent home! My family and I now have a stable place to call our own, where we can grow and thrive.

”

THE DIFFERENCE A DOLLAR MAKES

\$24

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

\$100

covers the cost of overnight shelter for an adult guest

\$535

covers the average utility assistance payment

\$1912

is the average financial assistance needed to help avoid eviction

Leave a Legacy

Create a lasting impact by strategically arranging your estate and assets to support COTS's mission of providing assistance, shelter, and affordable housing to Vermonters who are experiencing homelessness.

Consider COTS in your legacy planning, including:

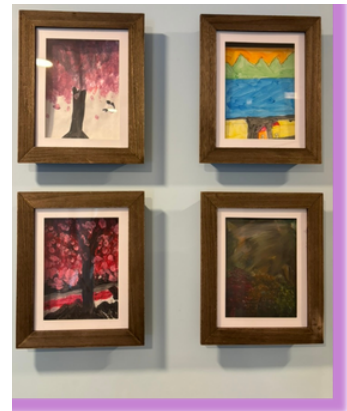
- IRA Qualified Charitable Contributions
- Bequests and Wills
- Beneficiary Designations

Join the COTS Legacy Society and let us know if you intend to make a planned gift!

Contact Rebekah Mott at rebekahm@cotsonline.org to learn more.

Spotlight on the Children's Mental Health Program at Family Shelter

Thanks to private grant funding, COTS provides a licensed mental health clinician onsite to serve families staying at Main Street and Firehouse Family Shelters. Below is a summary of activities families participated in this year as part of the mental health program.



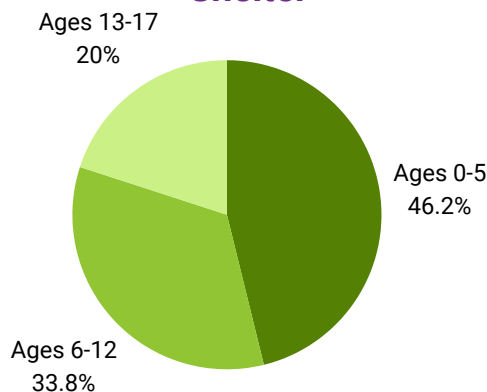
Children's art from the Family Shelter

27 individuals from **15** households

128 one-on-one meetings


96 hours with a professional


Children in the Family Shelter



Group Activities

 **Creative Expression:**
27 Groups; 157 Sign-ins; 9 households; 26 individuals

 **External Groups:**
9 Groups; 48 Sign-ins; 10 households; 27 individuals

 **Play Groups:**
22 Groups; 71 Sign-ins; 12 Households; 24 Individuals



Fast Facts:

- Help COTS raise \$1M to fund construction costs
- Create 20 additional shelter beds year-round
- Serve over 200 individuals annually
- Full ADA access
- Closer to Daystation services and Housing Resource Center
- Safer, more dignified space



An imagining of a new semi-private bedroom space



A draft rendering of the common space at the future Waystation shelter

Join the Campaign for a New Waystation

Starting on May 1, 2025, COTS plans to undergo extensive renovations to create an enhanced version of the Waystation program, expanding capacity and greatly improving the program space through trauma-informed design and a less congregate model.

This plan would allow COTS to move from a cramped space with dozens of bunk beds split between two gendered “dormitories,” to a flexible configuration of private or semi-private rooms that can be quickly adapted to meet the needs of our guests.

COTS has long identified the need for a new space to bring our flagship program up to our trauma-informed standard of practice for our guests. The 7,361 square foot building is nearly three times the footprint of our existing Waystation shelter, allowing us to expand year-round shelter capacity by 55 percent. The building is one floor, with fully ADA accessible entrances, a private parking area, and in close proximity to services, including the COTS Daystation shelter, the Vermont Department of Labor, and public transportation.

Make a gift to the Waystation Capital Campaign and support:

- Warm, safe shelter for around 200 people annually
- Connection to services to lift guests out of homelessness
- A pathway to housing and stability

As rates of homelessness rise in our community and more people than ever are living outside, supporting the creation of this housing-focused shelter is a tangible step you can take today to making a difference.

Contact Rebekah Mott to learn more at rebekahm@cotsonline.org or 802-383-8778.

Get Involved

More than half of COTS's annual budget comes from generous donations from our community. Our programs and major events are made possible by the kindness of hundreds of volunteers each year. There are many ways you can support our mission from volunteering, donating, and advocating in our community. Contact Rebekah Mott at rebekahm@cotsonline.org to learn more about how you can support COTS. We are grateful.

Ways to give:



Donate online at www.cotsonline.org/donate, or by mail to COTS at PO Box 1616, Burlington, VT 05402.



Transfer appreciated stocks or bonds as a gift. Under the right circumstances, you can deduct their full fair market value and avoid incurring capital gains tax. Talk to your financial advisor about the amount and timing of your gift, and give them the following information for transferring the security.

Send electronic certificates to:
Charles Schwab and Company, Inc.
FBO Committee on Temporary Shelter
Account # 6163-8032
DTC # 0164, code 40
Tax ID # 03-0285606



Check out COTS's in-kind donation wishlist at www.cotsonline.org/wishlist.



Many employers will match their employees' charitable contributions or volunteer hours.

1. Ask your company if they have a matching gift program. Your HR representative will probably have the details.
2. If your company uses an online portal for matching gifts, use that to submit your information. If your company uses a paper form, request a copy.
3. Complete and sign the employee portion of the form, and send it and your gift to COTS.





SAVE THE DATES:

COTS Walk on May 4th, 2025

Participants harness the power of community by raising money as teams or individuals. Join us for this family-friendly event and take a 3.6 mile walk through Burlington to learn more about COTS services.

Back to School Bonanza on August 2nd, 2025

Through business sponsorships and donations, we gather school supplies, first-day outfits, free haircuts, fun activities, and snacks to hand out to kids in our community who need a boost to get ready to head back to school.

COTS Phonathon from December 1st-4th, 2025

Join dozens of volunteers as we call past supporters to thank them and ask for their continued support to fund our programs and services.

COTS Candlelight Vigil on December 22nd, 2025

Honor Homeless Person's Memorial Day (Dec. 21) and mourn those who have lost their lives while experiencing homelessness and reflect on our hope for those still striving for a better life.

Volunteering at COTS:

You can volunteer at COTS in many ways, and we appreciate all types of skills and areas of expertise. COTS volunteer needs are constantly changing, so if you'd like to stay up-to-date on our volunteer opportunities, we encourage you to fill out our brief volunteer application to keep you on our volunteer list at www.cotsonline.org/volunteer. Please contact Romy at romyt@cotsonline.org with questions!

Current opportunities:

- Daystation lunch - prepare and serve lunch at the Daystation.
- After school mentor at family shelter.
- Respite provider at family shelter - give parents a break by doing an activity with children in the shelter space.

COTS Events:

COTS events run on volunteer power. Our events help us raise money for our programs and services, educate the community about our work, and give back directly to those in need. We could not hold these important events without our generous volunteers.



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