



COTS nationally recognized for best practices

Nonprofit receives multiple honors and awards

- **Fannie Mae: Maxwell Award of Excellence**, for the creating low-income housing (1992)
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Blue Ribbon Best Practice Award**, for the Families in Transition program (1998)
- **U.S. Conference of Mayors: Best Practice Award**, for creating continuum of care (1998)
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: National Best Practice Award**, for the Homeward program (1999)
- **Green Mountain Coffee and Ashoka: Changemaker Honoree**, for the Housing Resource Center's prevention and rehousing work (2010)
- **American Institute of Architects, Vermont Chapter: People's Choice Award** for Canal Street Veterans Housing (2011)
- **Efficiency Vermont: New Construction Honor Award**, for innovative architectural design of Canal Street Veterans Housing (2012)
- **Vermont Campus Compact: Engaged Community Partner Award** (2012)
- **Champlain College, Center for Service & Civic Engagement: Community Partnership Award** (2014)
- **Vermont Campus Compact: Engaged Partner Finalist**, for partnership with the University of Vermont (2014)
- **Preservation Trust of Vermont Award: Historic renovation of 95 North Avenue** (2018)

COTS Executive Director Rita Markley has received these honors, in recognition of her work at COTS:

- **Vermonters of the Year** by The Burlington Free Press (1999)
- **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award** (2001)
- **Champlain College's Distinguished Citizen** (2013)
- **Honorary doctorate from Saint Michael's College** (2016)
- **Bob Skiff Community Improvement Award**, presented by the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation (2017)

COTS is an appointed member of the Governor's Interagency Council to End Homelessness.



More than shelter

COTS works in partnership to enact solutions to end homelessness

COTS is the largest service provider for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in Vermont. We are a private Vermont nonprofit, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

We served about **2,400 people** this past year. These individuals and families are primarily low- and extremely low-income households.

COTS' housing-focused shelters provide an emergency crisis response, year-round. We incorporate "trauma-informed design" into our two family shelters, overnight shelter for adults, and in our Daystation, our daytime center for homeless adults. Our services go way beyond shelter, though. Here's a look at some of our other programs (learn more at: cotsonline.org).

Homelessness prevention support & services

The **COTS Housing Resource Center** helps families and individuals in crisis **avoid** homelessness or move into housing more quickly. The program primarily serves families and individuals earning at or below 50% HUD Area Median Income guidelines (or \$45,900 for a family of four). Job loss or unexpected expenses (such as medical bills) are the primary reason people seek assistance. COTS has helped *hundreds* of households **avert** homelessness, *stabilize*, or move more quickly into sustainable and permanent housing since this program's launch 10 years ago. These efforts also eliminate or shorten shelter stays and reduce the number of transitions children experience in families struggling to find suitable permanent housing.

Children's educational & wellness activities

Children raised with housing instability are often at the greatest risk of becoming homeless themselves. With that in mind, we take a long-term approach to homelessness prevention with our children's programming in shelter. We aim to *effectively* intervene **now** to stabilize parents and children, help them build new skills, and stop homelessness from happening in the future. COTS has implemented additional support for children, including:



Education: We help parents connect their children with high-quality early learning, literacy, and educational enrichment opportunities. We work closely with parents to secure child care, preschool, after-school, and summer camp placements that will be sustainable long after they leave shelter. While families are in shelter, we coordinate volunteer-based learning activities, including field trips, art projects, and the COTS' "Book Buddies" reading initiative. Staff members offer in-shelter tutoring, computer literacy, and homework help. We also partner with local colleges, universities, and schools to provide support and enrichment to children in shelter.

Health & Nutrition: We work with families on nutrition and wellness. We plant, maintain, and harvest vegetables from our Main Street Family Shelter large kitchen garden (pictured, above left). Guests and staff members then incorporate the herbs and veggies into healthy after-school snacks and dinners. The garden also helps children improve their math and science skills while fostering cooperation and responsibility. Our staff members work with the children to help them prepare, cook, and share their harvest with their families encouraging healthier eating habits, physical activity, and a deeper appreciation for the environment.

Transitional & permanent housing options

COTS provides a variety of **transitional** and **permanent affordable housing** options for formerly homeless families, as well as veterans, people who are elderly or disabled, and others at risk of becoming homeless.

"Welcome to COTS - it's a beautiful place, full of awesome and amazingly helpful staff. These are people who care very much. I'll never forget any of you."

— A thank you message from a guest who was helped by the COTS Housing Resource Center

YEAR in NUMBERS

Overall, we helped **2,356 people** (including **756 children**) last year.*

COTS SHELTERS

- **FAMILY SHELTERS**
56 families (including **85 children**) stayed in a COTS family shelter. We can host **15 families** each night.
- **ADULT OVERNIGHT SHELTER**
253 individuals stayed in COTS' year-round program shelter, which provides **36 emergency beds** each night.
- **ADULT DAYTIME DROP-IN CENTER**
151 individuals visited the Daystation, a daytime center for homeless adults, where a noontime meal is served daily with the help of volunteers. An average of **45 people** visited daily.

HOUSING NAVIGATION

- **COTS FAMILY HOUSING SERVICES:**
123 families, including those staying in emergency shelter or the community, received support from COTS staff.
- **COTS ADULT HOUSING SERVICES:**
170 single, homeless adults received outreach and support from COTS staff.

PREVENTION SUPPORT

- **PREVENTION ASSISTANCE:**
269 households (including **283 children**) received prevention assistance through the COTS Housing Resource Center (HRC).
- **REHOUSING ASSISTANCE:**
87 households (including **66 children**) received rehousing help through COTS' HRC program.

COTS HOUSING

- **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING:**
23 units of housing for families and individuals are offered by COTS at the **Smith House** and **Canal Street Veterans Housing**.
- **PERMANENT HOUSING:**
72 units of housing are offered by COTS at the **Smith House**, **The Wilson**, **St. John's Hall**, **95 North Avenue** (with Housing Vermont), **Canal Street Veterans Housing** (with Housing Vermont).

* COTS services provided: 7/1/17-6/30/18.