FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Contact: Rick DeAngelis, (802) 371-7745

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Good Samaritan Haven Works with the State to Secure Homeless Population

In a massive logistical effort, Good Samaritan Haven worked with Capstone Community Development and the State of Vermont to relocate shelter guests from three different shelters into a former motel in Montpelier on Sunday night. Montpelier City officials were notified of the move.

In a carefully coordinated operation managed by Good Samaritan Haven, forty residents of the Bethany overflow shelter in Montpelier, the Seminary Street House, and the Hedding Overflow Shelter, were moved. The Agency of Human Services and the Department of Health provided critical support and guidance. The Montpelier Senior Activity Center assisted with transportation.

DeAngelis, described the process as smooth, and expressed gratitude for the “Herculean efforts” of his staff who have been working day and night to move members of the vulnerable homeless population into a secure setting, “You are an incredible team. I am honored to be working with you.”

Smiles could be seen in the people being moved on the buses. After weeks and in many cases, years of living in congregate settings, homeless individuals are finally being settled into a location where their health is more carefully managed and the health of those in the greater community is taken into consideration.

Good Samaritan guest Brooke Kurutza described the mood: “Staff led everything well so far and I’m confident we can all work together. We should be grateful and positive for this opportunity... We have our own rooms and do not have to share one large dorm”

In an email to local officials, DeAngelis outlined steps that are being taken to manage security and health concerns at the new facility.

- The Good Samaritan team includes 3 overnight staff, 2 of which will be awake. These staff members are experienced and have received training on how to maintain public health standards.
- GSH has established a highly structured individual check-in to rooms managed by our staff. Each guest must sign a shelter agreement which addresses many behavioral requirements.
- GSH has access to the Econolodge’s security cameras and will install additional cameras this week.
- GSH has a medical liaison for any questions about symptoms or public health procedures.
- An expanded team is being put into place Monday including mental health services.
- There are no other guests in the Econolodge.
- GSH knows each of these individuals and maintains a list of critical information including symptoms of mental illness, and use of MAT – Medically Assisted Treatment.
DeAngelis summarized his email with the following statement, “Finally, I want to give you my personal pledge as a long-time Montpelier resident that my staff and I are doing everything we can with the limits of this situation to protect the Montpelier community and our shelter guests.”

The move of the homeless population into motels, and the conversion of motels into well-managed centers that include wrap-around services for the population has been an active idea in the homeless policy arena for some time. Harbor House in Burlington was such an effort that was supported by both the University of Vermont Medical Center and the Champlain Housing Trust. Studies show that these facilities have the potential to bring down costs for other institutions such as hospitals, the criminal justice system, and schools. In the current COVID-19 public health crisis, the benefits of physical isolation of the population, especially of this portion that is at high-risk, is self-evident.

In an email sent out to employees and supporters of Good Samaritan Haven, DeAngelis described his sense of fulfillment in making this move: “I've attached a photo of the Econolodge sparkling with light like a great city on the hill. Visiting there I was moved by our caring compassionate staff and the shared humanity of all: hotel manager, staff, and guests. I found it very hopeful and imagined a different kind of future.”