



# The Monadnock SHOPPER NEWS

The Original Keene Shopper – “The Weekly with a Heart” – 64th Year of Community Service / June 23, 2021

## Local Group’s Support For Asylum Seekers Enters A New Phase

By Ginnie Gavrin

In 2019, Project Home formed as a non-profit, all-volunteer organization in response to unsettling images of asylum seekers living in crowded detention centers while they awaited an asylum hearing.

The name, Project Home, was chosen deliberately by the group’s many volunteers, with the understanding that home is not simply housing. Home includes a community where security, safety, and the basic needs of food, healthcare, and shelter are respected. Within a year and a half, Project Home volunteers established support for three asylum-seeking families and two individuals in host homes in the Monadnock area.

Project Home is now looking for low-cost rental housing for a family of five currently living in Keene with a local household. A year after arriving in New England, this family is ready to take on new challenges. The next step in their journey is to move to a more independent living situation. Their three children have been thriving in school, the parents are learning English and building relationships in a new community, while Project Home’s legal team completes the necessary paperwork that will permit the adults to seek employment.

Project Home will continue to support them as they move toward complete financial independence over the next year.

Also, a team of Project Home volunteers will continue to provide the family with tutoring, medical, and other needs they might have. Anyone with suggestions for housing possibilities is asked to contact: [laura@gold-stein.com](mailto:laura@gold-stein.com)

The father of five said of his first months living in Keene, “Thank you Project Home. It’s too short that word... how thankful I was for meeting you... we love you... it’s not just about the money. It’s about feelings, heart. You are the greatest people.”

The feeling is mutual among the team of volunteers working with this family and the other



One of Project Home’s guests, an experienced rancher, volunteers to assist a local farmer in tagging a calf. (Photo by David Blair)

er guests supported by Project Home. Sarah Visser of Keene who recently moved here with her family from New York City, provides tutoring, help with shopping, as well as offering companionship – spending time and taking walks. She mentioned Project Home has brought great joy to her, opening an opportunity to connect and be helpful since her own arrival in a new and different community.

All of Project Home’s guests leave behind family, friends, homes, and jobs, undertaking a treacherous journey, hoping to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Some images from Project Home’s first year of operation provide a picture of starting a tentative new life in a supportive local community – three children arriving in New England in the middle of a snowstorm delighted by their first experience of snow. The shout of pride of a young mother passing her driver’s test. Non-English speaking children being welcomed into a new school and making new friends. A five-year-old celebrating his birthday in a safe home.

Within the structure that Project Home has evolved, volunteers have provided shelter as well as liaisons to schools, links to legal and medical care, rides to appointments, child care, translators, mental health and financial counseling, fund-raising, and social connections. As Project Home’s efforts keep evolving, new needs become apparent, and new volunteer opportunities arise.



A brother and sister from Honduras enjoy a visit to the Friendly Farm. (Photo by Denise Hartwell)



Jen and Gerard Kiernan, who are hosting a young man from Honduras in their home in Keene, enjoy an afternoon on their porch together. (Photo by Laura Williams)

Eric Swope of Harrisville has pitched in to help with everyday tasks such as laundry, groceries, checking in when families arrived and needed to quarantine. He has enjoyed teaching a young single mom to drive. He expressed how touched and impressed he was with just how challenging and exciting it was to learn to master that basic skill. “It was a big emotional deal for her when she passed her driver’s test,” he said. “And a big emotional deal for me!”

Project Home recently completed a successful first Annual Appeal, a fundraising campaign to sustain the organization’s ongoing costs by inviting large and small gifts from the community. Lisa Mahar, who worked on the outreach efforts to donors, stated she found the Keene area ready and willing to contribute as a way to express their concern for the issues that Project Home is addressing.

For more details about Project Home, or to volunteer, visit [ProjectHomeNH.org](http://ProjectHomeNH.org).