



At Home

NEWS FROM CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST | SPRING 2020

Visit our Website for Support

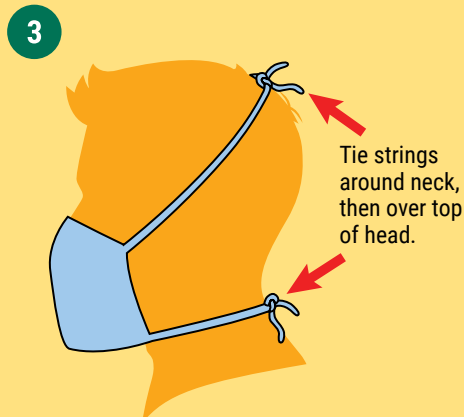
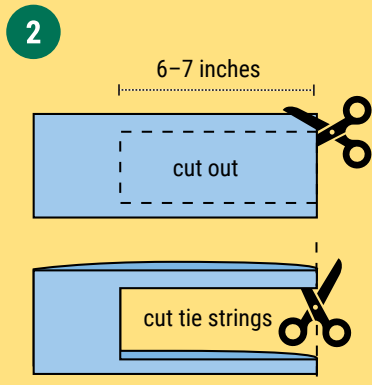
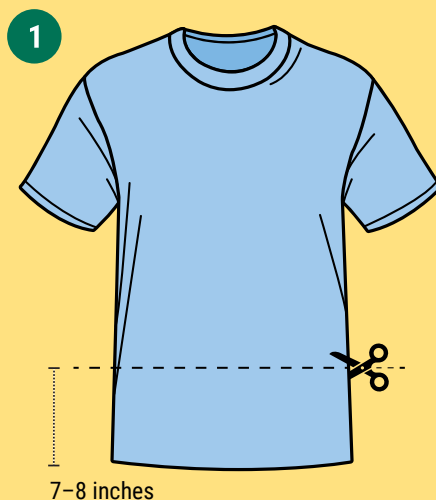
www.getahome.org/covid-19-support



Quick Cut T-shirt Cloth Face Covering (no sew method)

Materials

- T-shirt
- Scissors



Dear CHT Members,

Spring always feel a bit miraculous. The sun, the leaves and flowers, and the birds all come back and sweep away the grey days and brown landscape. As we begin to emerge from the coronavirus lockdown, these signs of hope and renewal are even more welcome, and given the scale of uncertainty we all still face, reassuring. So it is with cautious optimism, and deep gratitude to all who are working to keep us safe, that we bring you our spring newsletter.

Coming together as a community will mean something very different this spring. Caring for each other now requires us to retreat and to avoid the joys of gathering, because only in this way can we protect the most vulnerable among us and support the courageous healthcare and other essential workers on the front lines of the crisis.

For CHT this has meant first and foremost assuring that all of you who live in our housing are secure in your homes, and that we are here to help with any additional needs that come up. Our immediate response was to ensure the health of our workers as well as residents by establishing new procedures that supported distancing, new cleaning and sanitary procedures, and multiple platforms of communication to help everyone comply and stay in touch.

The second priority was to help residents access all the health and financial resources available. Please see the resource page here and keep an eye our website for updates, but also do not hesitate to call your property manager or homeownership staffer if you have a question or urgent need. We have ramped up our social services and adapted

our work with other nonprofits to provide housing for people who are ill and do not have a home or are in congregate facilities where they cannot isolate.

We also purchased a van for the Community Health Centers of Burlington to use for outreach testing for the duration of the crisis, and are supporting CVOEO in their creation of a recovery center.

We know that harder economic times will continue after this disruption and we have turned our attention to pushing for the funding that supports the people we serve, and low-income households more generally. We are also advocating for permanent, safe housing solutions for those who have been temporarily sheltered during the pandemic. This virus has revealed just how essential housing is to public health, and it challenges us anew to eradicate homelessness and expand housing security to all in our community.

I want to call out the amazing dedication, creativity, and adaptability of CHT staff throughout this crisis. Whether working from home or in the field, our workers are stepping up and providing leadership in the community wherever we are needed. CHT is resilient because of them and because of the generous community that supports us. We are so grateful to all who have donated to us at this time, many stretching to make extra gifts or accelerate pledges.

Thank you,

Brenda Torpy, CEO

Supporting our Tenants During the Pandemic

In addition to the changes in our maintenance protocols, we have made several changes in our property management department to better serve our tenants during the pandemic. These are evolving, and as things begin to return to normal some of this information may hopefully be outdated!



One significant addition has been a new communication tool so we can reach tenants via email and text messages. This not only reduces the possibility of inadvertently spreading the virus, but allows us to communicate more frequently

and connect residents to more information. This has been especially valuable in the ever-changing health recommendations, new programs to support tenants, information on our shifts in protocols, and simply to keep in touch. We look forward to using this tool for happier purposes in the future.

Early on we made a decision that we wouldn't evict anyone who couldn't pay their rent because they had lost work due to the pandemic or needed to care for a family member during this time. We've also reached out to many tenants to provide support and collect information so we can be better advocates on your behalf. We hope that little things like making laundry free – also a way to limit surfaces that need to be cleaned! – have helped in even a small way.

CHT understands that this has been a very difficult time for residents – possible loss of work, needing to stay home more, remote education, fear of illness and perhaps being sick or caring for someone who is sick. We also understand that some of our new practices are even more limiting: closing of playgrounds, asking to limit outside visitors, and only doing critical maintenance repairs. Thank you for your sacrifices.

Property Maintenance Q & A

We conducted a quick interview with Patrick Datillio, who leads our 18-person maintenance team, about the ways his staff has changed and adapted with the pandemic.

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| <p>Q. What are your staff doing now that's different than what they did in February?</p> <p>A. We created an Emergency Response Team (ERT) in the department. We have twelve technicians who have volunteered to address maintenance emergencies inside of people's homes. All remaining techs are working on common areas in our buildings.</p> <p>Q. What kind of training did your staff get?</p> <p>A. Our ERT team had to take an online training program on how to properly use the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) we issued them. All other training was based off CDC recommendations with regard to safely working during a pandemic.</p> <p>Q. Do they have PPE?</p> <p>A. Yes, each of our maintenance staff have been issued PPE.</p> | <p>Q. What are maintenance staff hearing from residents?</p> <p>A. Our maintenance technicians have been hearing positive things from our residents. Most of our residents respect the work we are currently doing and appreciate the sacrifice our technicians are taking in terms of exposure. That's been heartening.</p> <p>Q. If there were one or two things that you'd like residents to know, what would those be?</p> <p>A. I think the most important message we would like our residents to know is that if they see us on site performing work, to please respect social distancing and avoid any close contact with our technicians. A second message would be to thank them for their patience. We are all living in unprecedented times. The pandemic has created a host of challenges for the CHT maintenance department and we are doing our best to address the needs and issues at our buildings throughout the portfolio.</p> |
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Protecting and Supporting the Most Vulnerable in this Crisis



We have all heard that the most effective tool to stop the spread of the coronavirus is social distancing and washing hands. These prevention measures have been virtually impossible for people living in a shelter, in an encampment, or on the streets.

The response has been multifold: move people into motels where they can have a bathroom of their own, establish recovery centers to preserve the capacity of hospitals to treat those who most needed it, and a middle ground: for those suspected to be sick with Covid-19, quickly isolate and prevent the spread of the virus. CHT has been helping in each of these areas, including transforming Harbor Place into this last category of quick isolation for those with symptoms.

Three meals daily have been provided to guests, we've established delivery service for those who need or want more supplies or medicine, and connected them to our social workers to support them in a difficult time safely. All of this

effort has been in coordination with the State's response team, local nonprofit partners and in communication with the Town of Shelburne. We believe that these actions have slowed the spread of COVID-19 and has prevented the loss of lives.

As part of this response, we also purchased a van to loan to the Community Health Centers of Burlington to fill a gap in coronavirus testing capacity. The van will be used by our partners and staffed by medical professionals for as long as it is needed to visit places where people may not have access to transportation or cannot get to a hospital or testing site.

Lastly, we have ramped up our advocacy to work with the State to find a housing solution for the hundreds of Vermonters who have been temporarily housed in motels. As we move back to normalcy, social distancing will still be important and this is simply impossible when folks live on the streets, tent encampments, or shelters. It has never been more obvious that housing is health care.

What's changed with the HomeOwnership Center?

We conducted an interview with Jaclyn Marcotte, who works in our HomeOwnership Center, on changes to the department's functions and how they are serving the public.

- Q.** How are financial counselors meeting with households during the stay at home order?

A. Our staff have transitioned to providing one on one counseling over the phone or through a secure video conferencing software.

Q. How are workshops being offered during the stay at home order?

A. Workshops like Homebuyer Education continue to be offered online while the Shared Equity Homeownership Info Session is launching a web version this month.

Q. Should homeowners be concerned with foreclosure?

A. The federal government has placed a temporary suspension on foreclosures. If you can't immediately pay your mortgage because of financial hardship from the COVID-19 emergency, you should notify your lender. Mortgage rates are changing daily, and homeowners may want to take advantage by refinancing their current mortgage. CHT also offered a free webinar regarding COVID-19 and information homeowners should know. If you were not able to attend the webinar contact us for that information.

Q. How is the pandemic affecting people who are trying to buy or sell a home?

A. With social distancing, open houses are transforming into individual showings and virtual walkthroughs. We are still marketing homes, but the sales process is taking a little longer and many potential buyers have had income changes that effect their ability to purchase.

Q. Are you offering individualized financial counseling to tenants who may have lost income because of the pandemic?

A. Yes. Our staff are calling tenants that have expressed financial hardship to offer counseling and support to apply for federal and state assistance.



Happy Retirement, Linda Mansfield!

If you made your way through our front doors at any point over the past 26 years, you likely knew Linda Mansfield. Linda began working at Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation (one of the precursors to CHT) back in 1994, after being recruited by her good friend – and college roommate – Susan Ainsworth-Daniels. Oh, the stories we have heard from those two.



For many of us, she was our “work mom,” and we loved everything that came with her – her humor, quirkiness, curiosity, endless sticky notes, disregard of time and her uncanny one-liners (to wit: “I’m so beyond outcomes!”). These will always be engrained in our memories, and forever a part of CHT.

Many people knew Linda as the face of CHT. Her eagerness to help everyone who came through our doors was immeasurable – no matter the day and what was on her plate, she would go above and beyond to provide the level of customer service that she knew everyone deserved. She had the ability to make everyone feel at home, and she developed countless friendships with our residents over the years.

Due to the current Covid-19 crisis, Linda’s retirement wasn’t quite what we had planned, and we are all looking forward to the day we can give her the send-off she deserves. Linda, you will always be part of our family, and we will miss you dearly. Thanks for your many years of contributions to CHT, and for never failing to make us laugh. Enjoy retirement!



Health First: Steps to Safe Gardening

Many people are turning to gardens as a healthy way to get out of the house, engage kids, grow affordable food, and boost morale during this challenging time. Each year Champlain Housing Trust provides space for over 100 household gardens and partners with the Vermont Community Garden Network to provide technical support to our resident gardeners.

The program will be slightly different this season. Community projects will happen in shifts, and there will be limits on the number of people that can be in the garden at one time. Instead of providing community tools, each gardener will receive hand tools and a pair of gloves. Plant starts and seeds will be distributed at a drop-in/take-out style event to maintain social distancing. Ongoing technical support will be available by email, phone, and bi-weekly emails.

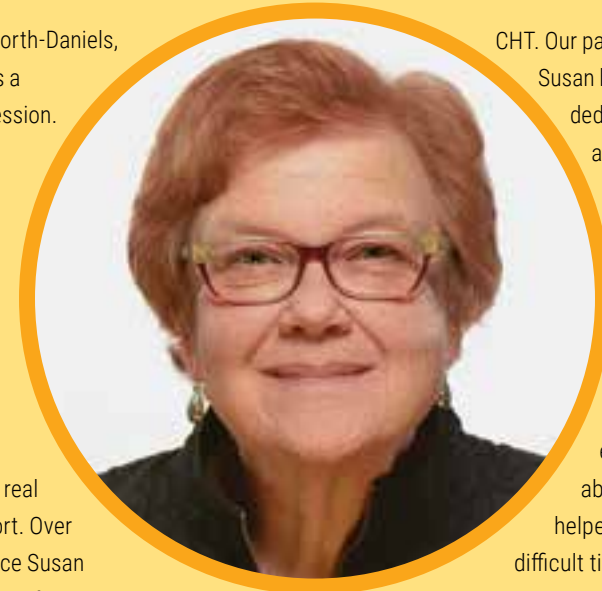
There are several guidelines that we need you to follow for the health and safety of you and your fellow gardeners: Stay home when you are sick. Wash your hands often. Avoid touching your face. Wear gloves and a facemask. Maintain a safe 6-foot social distance. In the garden specifically, be mindful of the surfaces where the virus can live. Wear gloves when touching the hose or gate. Bring your tools and take them when you leave. And although there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread through food, it is best to wash your produce before eating it.



Remembering Susan Ainsworth-Daniels

For Susan Ainsworth-Daniels, social work was a vocation, not a profession. In her 30 years of service at CHT she helped thousands of people and built lasting relationships with the most vulnerable people we serve. Thanks to her, many have secure homes and a real community of support. Over her decades of service Susan also mentored dozens of social work interns and, as we grew, supervised a social work team who supported our elderly renters in our rural communities and new residents moving out of homelessness.

Susan was always available to back-up our team at Harbor Place and supported the resident services staff and managers at our special needs properties. A big part of her job was liaising with other social service providers, either coordinating services for individual CHT residents or helping caseworkers secure appropriate housing for their clients through



CHT. Our partners respected Susan her for her selfless dedication, longevity and ability to get results.

When our staff gathered to remember and honor Susan – remotely as we do now – almost everyone had a story about how Susan helped them through a difficult time. She made new people welcome. She made lasting friendships. She always had time to lend an ear and offer support. Susan thought of her co-workers as family and she made us so. Susan was everyone's big sister – or cool aunt – because Susan knew how to have fun and to find joy in the little things. Her big laugh and even bigger heart will be missed, and remembered by all.

CHT, with the blessing of Susan's family, created Susan's Fund to be supportive of the next generation of social workers: www.getahome.org/susan-ainsworth-daniels





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COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND

MAKE A GIFT at www.getahome.org/covid-19-fund

