

Presidents & Boards – The Growth of Care & Share

1990s

Throughout the 1990s, when Care & Share was growing in its first decade, co-founder Debbie Mandel was the first person to be named “president” of the organization. She shared some memories and impressions as she thought back to those days, during a 2026 phone conversation with the C&S historians.

She said the four founders thought it was important to be organized and orderly. They worked well together as a Board, splitting the tasks to be done among themselves. In her recollection there was little discussion required because they all seemed to be of the same mind. She was amazed because they did not have a history of being friends previously to build upon. There was no friction amongst the four, as they fit the Care & Share mission into their daily work and family lives—as recounted in the prior chapter about the Founders.

Debbie held the position of president until the beginning of the new century. She has never relinquished the designation as co-Founder.

2000

Many eleven-year-old fifth graders start to take stock of their comings and goings of daily living. It helps them make more sense out of things and to see themselves getting ready for the long haul of junior high and high school. It is then that they prepare—by restructuring the spaces where they live and play, at least to the extent they can and are permitted to do so.

Care & Share did the same in January of 2000, entering its eleventh year. It continued to look for ways to maximize the use of its workspace. It continued to seek out permissions from state and local leaders for a permanent place to designate as the Care & Share Pantry.

Mae Hills, along with Betty Purvis, were the first two members in the early 1990s to join the founders in significant roles. Mae's was a persistent presence and consistent voice in making those appeals for a safe and suitable Pantry site. She was an advocate familiar to state and local legislators and political leaders.

In 2000 Mae Hills became Care & Share's next president after Debbie Mandel. She served in that position for the following four years. Characteristically, Mae was a doer and a motivator. The general meeting minutes of her four-year term reflect a multitude of committee chairs providing monthly reports of numerous activities and projects attributed to unselfish teamwork. Mae worked tirelessly to see that things were done, but did not seek the credit for their accomplishment. Under her energetic stewardship much of the mission of Care & Share—presented on the following thematic chapters of this narrative—moved forward, whether they were seasonal or year-round aspects of service.

Her activity summary assembled for the historians for each of those years is replete with assigning credit to other C&S members and supporters. There isn't one place she wrote that "I" did something.

2002- 2004

Mae conducted efficient and informative monthly meetings in Crescent Point at 417 Main Street in Niantic, on the second Thursday of each month, according to a press release issued by publicist Jan Logozzo. Those meetings left footprints tracing the movement of disciplined and purposeful C&S volunteers. Mae's agenda structure made sure each person had a chance to know where C&S had been and what their part might be in where it was headed. At least as much as could be hoped for, within the uncertainty of the outside factors influencing the mission. She often told people that Care & Share could only do as much as its supporters provided the means for the organization to do so.

Mae Hills guided the arc of delivering those services from each January to December in a manner appropriate to serving persons and families in need, not to nameless faces. She was no longer still one of six original people, driving here and there, as in the early years. By the end of her

term, Mae Hills delivered a core group of more than 60 volunteers to newly elected president Barbara Buzzelli. Recruitment efforts she began continued.

2005 -2006

By Fall 2005, C&S had 24 new members, for a total of more than 100, to help Barbara with: budgets and plans for the coming year . . . designated assistance arrangements . . . emergency assistance coordination . . . weekly bread and pantry food deliveries and pickups . . . springtime baskets . . . grant writing . . . fundraising . . . new ideas . . . new opportunities . . . new challenges . . . summer camperships . . . college scholarships . . . East Lyme Days and the Diamond Dig . . . Thanksgiving baskets . . . Holiday baskets . . . The Light Parade.

President Buzzelli sent Letters to Editors of local newspapers at the end of 2005, her first year in office. Twenty years later C&S historians, using a highlight summary written for this website's creation, to note that Barbara's letters indicated several important markers of Care & Share's community impact and support:

- ◆ Salem residents were included with those in East Lyme for Holiday season food and gifts.
- ◆ Niantic Lions were a major partner in the efforts.
- ◆ The Mitchells provided space for the Holiday Store at 55 Pennsylvania Avenue.
- ◆ Over 15,000 pounds of non-perishable food were collected and distributed from the Pantry.

In 2006, there were many things going on within Care & Share. Client needs continued unabated, both in the types of needs and the numbers of families and persons turning to Care & Share for assistance. Simultaneously, the organization was beginning its own internal growth spurt. Leadership and members were coming to the forefront who were not among the four initial founders and their first two principal lieutenants.

2007

Even the infrastructure of support and organization beckoned attention in the new year. Due to cramped quarters and institutional needs at Crescent Point, Care & Share's monthly meetings for general membership had been moved across the street to the meeting room in the Police Station, as of July 2006.

The rising tide of self-awareness that began in early 2007, was formalized in the autumn of that year, predominantly at the September General Meeting.

C&S had grown, quite demonstrably through 2006, in response to recruiting and the increasing requirements involved in helping neighbors in need. (19 years later at one of her last Historians' meetings in 2025—the formidable Mae Hills characterized such growth as “organic.”) Not only had services in 2006 been expanded and increased, the number of volunteers willing to become a part of the mission did as well.

And it turned out to be just in time. The January 4, 2007 issue of *The Lyme Times* quoted C&S President Buzzelli speaking about the immediately past year of 2006, “This past year there was a 20% increase in the number of families assisted and one third of those clients were new to Care & Share.”

And on the other side of the journey of life, the Care & Share community acknowledged in 2007 there were three members to be remembered by way of memorial funds. They were Eunice Logozzo, Hugh McIlhenny, and Lois Stahlischmidt.

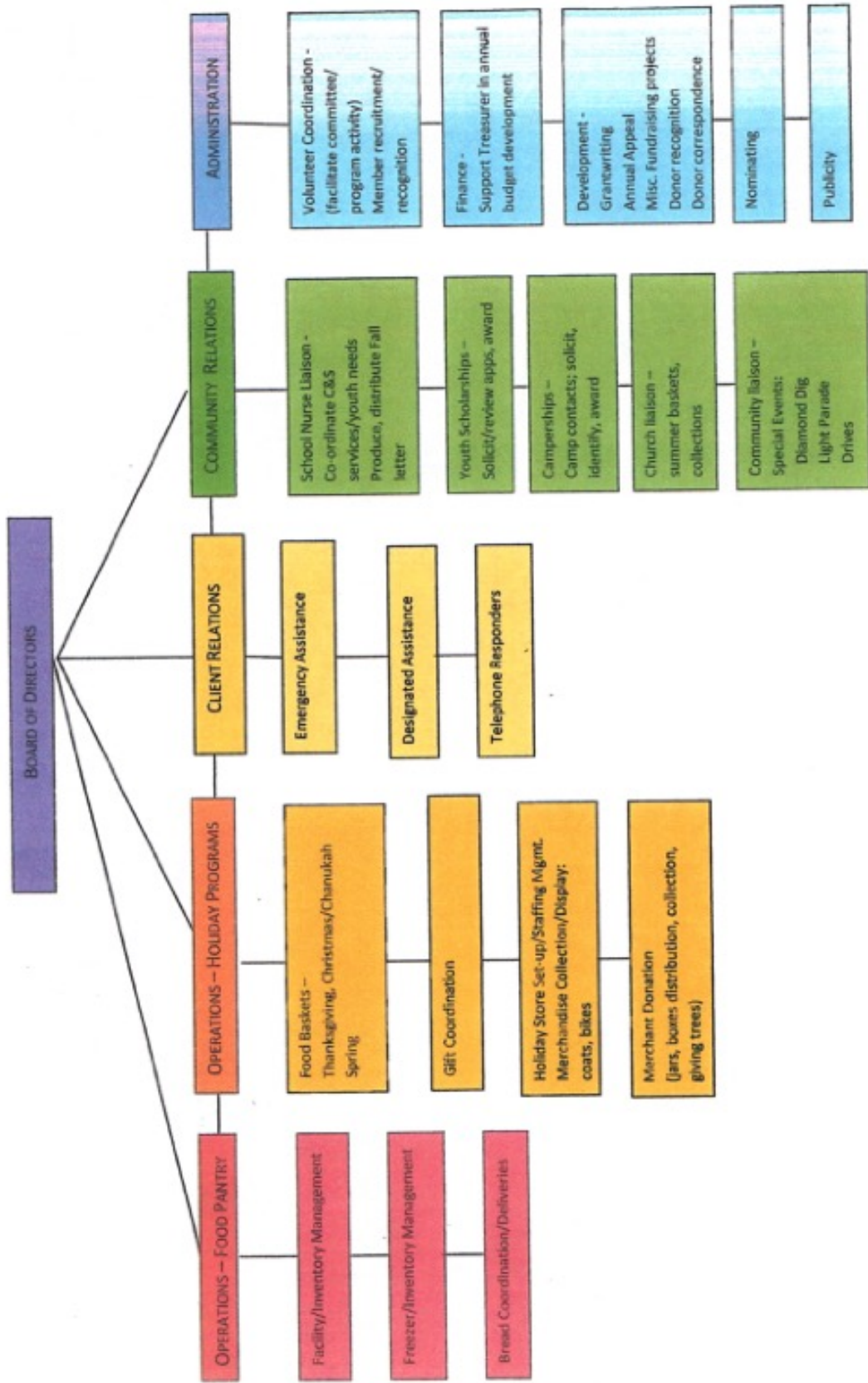
Board and Membership meeting minutes affirm that, as president, Barbara Buzzelli guided C&S leadership in an examination of its very structure. The organizational chart reproduced on the next page and an accompanying report created by Mary O'Connor for the July meeting became the framework to discuss “A Structure for Growth – Committee Organization.”

A key hands-on component of that discussion was the two page “Interest Survey” reproduced on the following two pages after the chart. (*Details are well worth the time to expand the pages on screen to read and reflect upon.*)

These items, studied many years, later illustrate three foundational realities:

- ◆ Barbara Buzzelli was at the helm of a desire to organize the exponential growth that had been taking place since 1989 and free forming itself under an inspirational president in Mae Hills for the prior four years of post-Founders leadership.
- ◆ From 8 Thanksgiving baskets that 4 women filled and delivered in 1989 with the help of organizations, churches, schools, and friends, Care & Share now had over 40 ways that 100+ volunteers could apply themselves to carry out their generous impulse to help others in 2007.
- ◆ A corporate wisdom was being formalized: volunteers needed to be respected and their longevity/retention required that they felt ownership over how their willingness to spend time and energy was to be seriously considered by leadership—themselves volunteers who would expect mature accountability in return.

CARE & SHARE OF EAST LYME, INC., STANDING COMMITTEES*



* Other committees activated as needed, e.g., by-laws, building feasibility

To: All Care & Share Members
 From: The Board of Directors
 Date: February 7, 2008
 Re: Survey of Volunteer Interests

Name: _____ Date: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
 Phone: (home) _____ (cell) _____
 Email: _____

So that we and the chairs of each committee can get an idea of who might be available during the year to help with the various Care & Share programs, we are asking all C&S members to complete the following survey. Because we understand that you most likely are not certain of your calendar or of possible commitments in future months, please understand that by checking that you have an interest in a particular program you are NOT making a commitment to volunteer. We are simply trying to see whom we might be able to call on later as well as to find out where we might need to recruit more new people.

As always, thank you for your continued support of C&S..... it is most appreciated!

2008 Care & Share Volunteer Interests Survey

Program Area (Please check at least one response for each program)

Operations - Food Pantry:

Facility Mgmt	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Food Pantry Inventory Mgmt	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Freezer Inventory Mgmt	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Bread Program	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Saturday Food Drive (Collection)	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more

Operations - Holiday Programs:

Food Basket Packing/Delivery - General	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Spring (March)	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Thanksgiving	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Christmas/Holiday	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Holiday Gift Coordination	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Holiday Store - General	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Merchandise Collection	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Coats	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Bikes	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Store Set-Up/Staffing Mgmt	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Merchant Donation - General	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Cash Jars	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Gift/Food Boxes	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more
Giving Trees	Interested	Possibly Interested	Not Interested	Want to know more

2008 Care & Share Volunteer Interests Survey

Program Area (Please check at least one response for each program)

Client Relations:

Emergency Assistance Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Designated Assistance Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Telephone Responder Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more

Community Relations:

School Nurse Liaison Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 School Communications (annual letter/other) Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Scholarship Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Campership Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Church Liaison Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Summer Picnic Baskets Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Youth Group Liaison Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Community Liaison Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Special Events - General Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Diamond Dig Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Light Parade Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Light Parade Auction Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Food Drives Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more

Administration:

Volunteer Coordination Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Member Recruitment/Recognition Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Finance Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Development - General Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Grant Writing Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Annual Appeal Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Fund Raisers Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Special Events Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Donor Recognition Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Donor Correspondence Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Nominating Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Publicity Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more
 Technology - Web Site Interested Possibly Interested Not Interested Want to know more

Other Suggestions/Interests:

With these tools in hand, the minutes for that potentially historic September general meeting at the Police Station describe it this way:

President Barbara Buzzelli turned the meeting over to Mary O'Connor who explained that the goal of the meeting is simply to engage the membership in the planning and thinking behind the various holiday activities, and in so doing to generate volunteer enthusiasm and commitment. Mary referred to this as a kind of holiday season rally. Additionally, for those new to the organization, or unclear as to what roles the volunteers can play, discussion will provide a chance to better understand the C&S holiday programs and related volunteer needs.

The twenty-five minute information and brainstorming sessions that followed generated written recommendations that laid the foundation for that year's holiday activities, integration of new members, reorientation for current membership perhaps not familiar with the scope of what C&S did outside the area of their immediate volunteerism, and plans for the future years ahead.

The minutes of the following meeting in October recount an informational report to members to clarify how candidates became clients to receive C&S assistance of various types. The process had a self-cleaning feature, that is, no clients were automatically carried over from year to year. In the autumn of each year: (a) all prior clients had to re-apply, indicating any changes in their situations, (b) all EL school students got a letter to promote new clients and volunteers and to update family information from former clients, (c) referrals were sought from churches, guidance counselors, human resource staff at long term residences, (d) C&S was listed on CT's 211 phone line as a resource.

2008

In the first quarter of 2008, the effort to grow and expand Care & Share internally and financially continued the momentum started in the prior year. Centers of activity and development were:

- ◆ Former President Mae Hills was tapped to be the new Volunteer Coordinator. She was to use the charts and lists explained, distributed, completed, and returned the prior autumn, to maximize volunteer interests within C&S.

- ◆ The Development Committee reported looking into promoting estate planning for C&S donations by talking to professionals in the field.
- ◆ Grant writing was also discussed as an area of activity to investigate.
- ◆ In that same springtime, conversations began with professional website designers and membership concerning re-energizing the website and how best to bring that about. Proposals were reviewed by the Board of Directors.

As with all Presidents in the monthly meeting era, Barbara Buzzelli made sure that the last meeting before the 2008 summer adjournment tied up loose ends and confirmed that all was ready for the coming months. Each committee was affirmed and given time for its report. The committee structures and member alignment of the prior year's planning was fresh and thriving.

This refreshed look for Care & Share was also evident publicly:

- ◆ The website was moving forward with an approved vendor (Easy Web Creations) to create an initial phase of the site, following the structure of a three-part content. Members were solicited for pictures and information to be incorporated into the website.
- ◆ Simultaneously, the Board established a new logo, a new standardized letterhead, and sanctioned type font. The organization was moving to a consistency in the appearance of paperwork, whether provided by outside vendors or C&S members preparing written and printed items. Credit for printing on new "Thank you" notes appeared as *JB Gates Graphic Arts Department*—from the correctional center in town.

Also in the 2008 August meeting, committee updates on building feasibility, C&S development, and the website came before the members on President Buzzelli's agenda. The first two committees had meetings slated with officials and consultants later that September. The initial portion of the website was reported as complete and under review. The grant to pay for the second half was cited as written and submitted to Eastern CT Association of Realtors.

A month later in September 2008, fairly established post-summer activities were continuing with consistency, including emergency assistance, planning for the coming holiday season, and special events. Holiday Store planning was underway, even though a store front was yet to be donated as a site. There were three items noteworthy for their novelty from past years: (a) The upgraded website was moving along with an approved first draft ready to go to the site designer for installation. (b) The Building Feasibility Committee had met with First Selectman Formica, learning that C&S space needs would be evaluated within the larger context of the Board of Selectmen's development plans for downtown Niantic. And, (c) brainstorming began for the coming year's 20th anniversary of Care & Share. It was a busy time at C&S.

Another historical item that bears out C&S's 2008 evolution is an October 8, 2008 email sent to membership seeking three volunteers to head up new initiatives: (a) A Community Liaison to bridge requests presented to Care & Share telephone responders with members and organizations in the area interested in making food donations or organizing fundraisers; (b) someone to maintain a computerized membership data base to facilitate contact and general communications; and (c) A School Coordinator to be a C&S liaison with PTAs and school-based food drives, coat collections, and fund raisers. In the throes of this, two things remained consistently clear. Care & Share was growing in direct response to its clients' and the East Lyme and Salem communities' needs—not to any design of self-aggrandizement. And Care & Share vowed to remain a completely volunteer organization.

The newly redesigned website was launched and officially introduced at the November 2008 general membership meeting at the Police Station.

There is an intriguing side note to add, straddling mid-2007 to autumn 2008:

Historians are challenged by time passing and sometimes are left to read between the lines. Two separate entries in the May 2008 minutes might suggest some unrest at the Pantry. Pre-packed bags of food were staged for persons coming without appointments and whom volunteers determined were being "insistent" about getting food anyway. Members were told to provide the small bag and direct the visitor to fill out the application forms in the bag and send them back to C&S to become a registered client., eligible for food pickups. A sidenote informs members that Burke's Tavern, across the

parking lot from the Pantry, would always have a person available to help if there were problems. A new specialized sheet was also included in the bag to detail how potential clients are to be courteous and polite to volunteers.

These entries provide a reminder that Care & Share's mission had not grown in a vacuum, but was influenced sometimes by the environment of hard times and desperation. (Mid-2007 Board of Directors' meeting minutes documented an occasion of a client becoming abusive at the Pantry, but a direct tie-in a year later was not established by documentation).

In the Fall of 2008, a session convened at the Police Station meeting room to discuss pros and cons of volunteers meeting clients at a designated location rather than entering client homes. That Fall, volunteers were notified to work on Saturdays in teams of two or more only, and to have a cell phone on hand.

2009

Expanding a sometimes-used earlier outreach, The Board formalized a new initiative in the last two months of the 2008 campaign. It was officially called Designated Assistance and was initiated in January 2009, with organizational activities beforehand. Dependent on C&S budgetary capabilities, selected applicants were to receive a monthly dollar amount to be put toward rent or electrical or fuel utilities. Twenty-one of forty-five applicants were chosen to begin the support in 2009.

Also at the opening of 2009, as C&S continued to grow and attend to many needs, the Board grew from seven members to nine, to co-ordinate and optimize volunteer Board members' time and focus it more effectively. Board of Director positions were now three years, Officers served one year at a time.

The Building Committee continued dialog with First Selectman Formica and State Representative Jutila, but no 2009 New Year's resolutions were yet reached.

The beginning of 2009 Website update indicated it was working well . It was satisfactorily linked to, and accessible from, the EL Website's Town Hall page. The new focus now was on accurate, up-to-date information. Monthly meetings triggered updates to the off-site Webmaster. By February it was evident a C&S volunteer was needed to be the Web Coordinator, within C&S

and between C&S and the Webmaster. Jim Hall became the Web Content Manager. Jim indicated updates were being made slower than C&S really required, and the process would have to be evaluated and improved.

The Building Committee was renamed to reflect its intent and goals more accurately. Its new name was The Permanent Location Committee. This was done in advance of a major, formal presentation requesting such a location from the Town Board of Selectmen in March, with spoken support from local, recognized dignitaries—Ed Jutila and Andy Pappas.

Standing committees spent energy and time becoming more explicit about procedures and added efficiency to serve increased demand. For example, the Emergency Assistance requests doubled year-to-date month-over-month. The weather offset year-to-date requests for Project Warm-up, but they balanced out in the first quarter before the April 1 deadline, showing a 2009 decrease.

A challenge and opportunity arose in late Spring 2009, when the Shoreline Food Pantry expanded from Old Lyme into East Lyme, with new space provided at the Niantic Community Church (a C&S supporting partner from inception) to serve the overflow of demand they could not provide in Old Lyme. A principal difference in assistance between the two groups was that Care & Share qualified clients, but Shoreline gave assistance “no questions asked.” C&S sensed it would need to keep its identity and services clarified, both relative to fund raising and to urge the Town to provide a permanent space to bolster the East Lyme identity of Care & Share. President Barbara Buzzelli met with Shoreline’s Sherri Weiss, who would manage the new Shoreline Pantry at month’s end. The July C&S minutes reported Shoreline was open and distributing food one evening a week, serving about 25 families weekly by August.

Neighbors needs for odds and ends were serviced by C&S “runners” doing errands and pick-ups of non-food (prescriptions, rent checks, store gift cards) as required. Separate from the Volunteer Coordinator, a different member/volunteer came forward to coordinate these errand runners, for efficiency and to keep requests from falling through the cracks.

The light of hope through Emergency Assistance cut across the shadow of the current social and economic landscape—with Care & Share assisting persons, who were unemployed or working hard at low-paying jobs; new clients just

trying to make ends meet. Food, rent, utilities and fuel assistance topped the list of needs provided to 99 families compared to 60 the prior year.

Meanwhile, Care & Share responded through Project Warm-up, but to fewer requests than the prior winter, and with the help of Marlborough Furniture Barn, families were able to outfit their empty rental dwellings.

20th anniversary celebration discussions continued. Considerations were given to cost, size, and location for the observance. The site selected was the Niantic Sportsman's Club, which offered free use of the facility and its bartender. The guests of honor for the night were Care & Share's 1989 Founders. Sensitive to the hard economic times, the observance was modest, with C&S member participating in preparations and resetting the club site afterwards.

Care & Share continued its annual practice of visiting schools in the first month of the new academic year. One school (LBH) requested breakfast foods, socks, and underwear. The Middle School was setting up for an October 2009 food drive.

To open her final autumn campaign, President Barbara Buzzelli publicly thanked Jan Logozzo for all her time and work in research and study to revise the Care & Share Bylaws—voted upon and accepted by the membership at the September meeting. Thus, the last internal piece was in place. Care & Share had arrived at a new organizational place during Barbara's five-year term.

2010

As 2010 dawned, Care & Share elected Jim Hall as its new President and the January meeting occasioned further discussions about how the organization would move forward making its unique contribution to the well-being of East Lyme and Salem client-neighbors. The members still had a heightened awareness of the long-reaching impact of the 2008 "housing bubble"-triggered recession. The job market had still not yet significantly improved and Care & Share budget plans for 2010 were crafted with an eye toward how many citizens would soon lose unemployment benefits and potentially turn to Care & Share for help. The 2010 budget line items affirmed the Core C&S financial priorities of Designated Assistance, Emergency Assistance, and the Pantry.

At the same January meeting, still held in the Police Station meeting room, Mae Hills honored out-going President Buzzelli, as she proclaimed:

“Because of Barbara’s excellent business sense and along with her excellent computer skills Barbara helped bring Care & Share into the 21st century. Barbara made our shoestring organization into a much more professional organization. Barbara updated our forms, was instrumental in developing our new website and developed ways in which communication with one another was possible. She performed her duties with style and grace. Barbara was always professional and caring. No matter what, Barbara let the buck stop with her. She had great compassion and always, always took care of everyone and tried her best to let no one go without. ‘Calm, good-natured, good with people, problem solver’ are attributes of Barbara’s that are so appreciated by all. Along with being President of Care & Share, Barbara also had a full-time job and is a hands-on grandmother of three!”

These sentiments tap into a longstanding aspect of Care & Share leaders’ personalities. Though rock-solid in their support of the organization, their family lives and community involvement were stratified and hardly monolithic. This was true as far back as the founding days, of which Connie Rue nostalgically recalled that time in town, in a 2026 email to the historians:

“Ours was the only ‘new’ bookstore in town and I know folks will remember it fondly. We were right next door to the Village Bake Shop. Summer visitors loved to visit the Village Bake Shop for their donut and coffee, then to us for their morning newspaper and a paperback for the beach! Summer was a great time in Niantic - like a second Christmas selling season for the local merchants.”

Another Autumn 2010 “handover” of volunteer service involved publicist Mary O’Connor. For many immediately prior years, C&S meeting minutes celebrated the noticeable expansion of public support and turnout for C&S events and requests for assistance—in large part credited to the consistent, high end quality press releases, stories, and featurettes written by Mary to appear in local and regional newspapers and media bulletins and organization newsletters and bulletin board flyers. More than a few donors and patrons of the Holiday Store and participants in the Diamond Dig over the years spontaneously attributed their awareness and participation to Mary’s publicity campaigns. Her knack of enticing readers toward the human-interest

side of a perennial story or event was a beacon illuminating the depth and character of the services Care & Share volunteers brought over and over again to the communities of East Lyme and Salem.

With Jim Hall's presidential guidance and hard work behind the scenes, two infrastructure items moved apace in the September and October 2010 meetings, attended by over 30 and 35 members, respectively.

- Mae Hills updated the membership on the Building/Vision Committee's search for a larger Care & Share space. She "remained hopeful" the Town would find one and the committee would continue attending Town meetings to keep the topic front and center.
- And Jim Hall reported that Rent-a-Space on King Arthur Drive offered to use the location for a Care & Share drop off spot, where donations could be left when the Pantry on Hope Street was closed, for later retrieval by C&S volunteers.

As well, one or two small ground floor storage units were available for heavy and oversized seasonal event items (tables, coat racks, etc.) then currently being kept on the second floor of the Hope Street Pantry.

Another two pieces of organizational business came forward at the same meetings:

- Additional volunteers were solicited for making home deliveries of food to clients.
- Care & Share's limited general liability insurance was clarified. Personal injury while delivering to clients, nor auto insurance was carried by C&S for volunteers.

These four seemingly unconnected items portrayed a maturing, twenty-one-year-old organization still serving neighbors out of a limited space, from which scores of personally insured members drove their own cars weekly, or more frequently, to deliver sustenance, concern, and hope to neighbors in need.

Nearer to the holidays, in November 2010, Niantic Rotary made a \$ 500.00 donation. Care & Share also benefited from a share of the proceeds from the Mighty Kids Triathlon Race, sponsored by the East Lyme Aquatic Center.

2011

In his statement for the historians constructing this website, Jim Hall wrote succinctly, “during the years that I was President, an apt term was transition and community.” He recalled, “The first transition was from the old house downtown to quarters in a rented storefront in Midway Mall. Unexpectedly we were there until the Town allowed us to use space at the Town Garage, as they were moving to new quarters.” Jim was characteristically modest about how much he and Steffie, his wife, gave their all to Care & Share—in those two years and for many others beforehand, and afterwards.

The first general session of membership in 2011 conducted the usual elections, budget introduction, and financial approval for the year. There was also an extremely hopeful report from Mae Hills involving the possibility of Care & Share being offered a portion of the maintenance building the Town of East Lyme was beginning to relocate from in the coming year or so.

In the spirit of “follow the money,” the 2011 budget set up a new line item for the Pantry’s Relocation. Mike Hills accepted the position of heading up a committee to look at and plan for occupancy and use of such a space, should the town make a formal offer. By the April meeting, Mae expressed the expectation that in the coming year the Town would take the 11 Hope Street property to create expanding parking downtown and that the newspapers reported the impending vacancy of the Town Garage by summer, to which the Pantry still hoped to relocate.

Summertime 2011 activities were in preparation stages by the beginning of April, including scholarship and camperships application solicitations.

Soon printing letters, brochures, and appeal communications would need a new source, as newspapers reported the Gates Correctional Institution would be closing June 1, 2011. The Gates Graphics Arts Department had long been the reliable partner for most of those Care & Share printing projects.

The good news about Midway Plaza was that Jim negotiated a lease extension until the end of the calendar year. This stabilized the program, allowed for inventory stocking for holiday baskets in addition to regular and emergency

needs. And lastly, this extension cleared the way for the Midway site's use for the 2011 Holiday Store.

Two more Pantry volunteers announced they were retiring at the end of the 2011 calendar year. Kay Ann Velasquez was leaving the Wednesday program after two years and Bert Martino, who had served as the Saturday Hours Coordinator for many years, was doing so as well. Two others were seeking replacements for 2012 and beyond—Jan Logozzo for sending 'Thank You' notes to donors of more than \$100 and Vince Martin to be Donations Manager. Vince said the new manager should be proficient with computer skills and comfortable handling cash and would work with Treasurer Donna Butler. Lastly, in 2012 the shifting of coordinators continued with Maria Loss stepping into Freezer Co-ordinator, Nancy Mikkelson's, snow shoes.

The 2011 trend of personnel transitions of committee heads had become clearly evident. In some cases, volunteers who had been serving double duty were looking to focus their efforts into fewer, or one, activity; or switching to something new to do at Care & Share. Other members opted not to lead committees going forward. And still others were leaving town.

In response, President Jim Hall announced a special format October Open House at the Midway Plaza Pantry. The goal was to attract and inform potential new volunteers from the community at large. The program replaced the standard monthly meeting and was designed as a meet-and-greet, with one-on-one personal conversations rather than formal presentations. Thirteen members volunteered to be on hand as greeters. Illustrating an example of the need for new volunteers, Jim indicated in his informational September 10 invitation email to members that there had been a 35% increase in Emergency Assistance food deliveries in the first eight months of the year, compared to the prior year.

The Open House was reported upon at the November 2011 meeting to have been a success, with much new interest and understanding of Care & Share's mission and role in the community. Several new volunteers came forward. By the November meeting, the Emergency Assistance budget was overspent; requiring a membership vote to increase the line item since more than \$500 was required to make it to the end of the calendar year. An additional \$6,000 was voted into the budget, transferred from other funds. At the same meeting, Nancy Mikkelson reported the Freezer Budget was nearing an overspent level

of \$500 as well, again due to client increases. She suggested a review of the freezer item purchase list to determine if any should be eliminated.

The Holiday Store (Shopping Day December 10) and the Holiday Basket assembly (December 14-17) and distribution both took place at the Midway Plaza site, one following the other in 2011. 117 families with more than 400 persons were served food or presents or both. 35 baskets were sponsored by families, businesses, organizations, and churches in the community. The remaining 82 were provided by Care & Share, with huge assistance from the Lions Club.

Perhaps Mae Hills spoke out the most exhilarating and joyous words of the last general meeting of 2011. She told those assembled that she had been informed that the Certificate of Occupancy had been issued for the new East Lyme Maintenance Building. Finally, the way was clear for the Building/Vision Committee to seek an appointment with the Town in the New Year to pursue Care & Share's hope to acquire a permanent Pantry space in the former, and now vacant, Town Garage.

After announcing the election results from the January 2012 meeting, during which Angie McLean was acknowledged as the incoming President, Jan Logozzo "on behalf of all the members of Care & Share, thanked all outgoing Officers for their hard work and particularly thanked Jim Hall who she said gave 110% to this organization." She stated that Jim had "raised Care & Share to another level" and was leaving the position with Care & Share "quite intact," as he moved on to Holiday Store and Pantry co-coordination.

Jim Hall told the assembly that the move to the former town garage space (12 Roxbury Road) would need a renovation that would require a special meeting to discuss and vote on using some of Care & Share's capital fund for that purpose. [The last several months forging ahead in that journey toward Roxbury Road are detailed in the prior page of this website featuring 2012 as a year of pantry transition].

2012

Early in her Presidency, Angie McLean presided over a very monumental April 2012 general membership meeting. Guests at that session were Mark Rolsma, President of the local Lions Club, First Selectman Paul Formica and Deputy

Selectman Mark Nickerson. Care & Share acknowledged the long-time association between the Lions and Care & Share, highlighting their iconic joint efforts on Holiday Baskets, and singling out the massive assistance from the Lions in moving the Pantry from Hope Street to Midway Plaza. Selectmen Formica and Nickerson expressed support for Care & Share in general and specifically concerning a move to Roxbury Road. They continued encouraging C&S members to attend public meetings, particularly the Selectmen's April 18 meeting where Roxbury Road was a significant agenda item.

An intriguing Care & Share evolution concerning Bread and Food and Pantry deliveries was beginning to take shape, as evidenced by monthly reports and a related announcement at that same April 2012 meeting:

The reports reflected that: (a) Bread deliveries, noted by Brian Gough to be spearheaded by Betty Purvis, were still being sourced by multiple weekly pick-ups at Stop & Shop and Starbucks, and C&S volunteers drove to make deliveries to Senior Centers, senior housing residents, the Salvation Army and Malta (b) The Emergency Assistance food deliveries were still at record levels, but Kay Martin reported that 33% of the provisions were actually picked up at the Pantry and not made as home deliveries (c) the recent Holiday Baskets were not all delivered to homes, many clients made arrangements and came to pick them up at the Pantry in the Midway Plaza.

In response, Sally Bender announced the trial of a new Pantry model:

- (a) For clients-with-transportation, C&S Responders would schedule a pre-determined Monday/Thursday/Saturday time slot to come to the Pantry for their food/food cards/supplies. A pair of C&S volunteers would meet them with their delivery already prepared.
- (b) For clients-without-transportation, C&S would still make home deliveries through the Arrangers and drivers.

Both Brian and Sally indicated more volunteers were needed.

A month later, under the new system, a call went out for two new Arranger volunteers, and the Emergency Assistance rate of food pick-ups at the Pantry over home delivery doubled.

For April, 40 deliveries were made to feed 126 persons, 5 new clients served, 2 financial assists with medications and home heating. In May 42 food deliveries/pick-ups fed 127 persons. There were 3 new clients and 9 clients received financial assistance toward insurance payments, prescriptions, rent and CL&P bills. July 2012 registered 41 deliveries/pick-ups feeding 113 persons. 8 new clients and 10 recipients of awards for assistance with CL&P, rent, and water bills. In August there were 50 deliveries/pick-ups for 159 persons. 9 families were awarded rent and utility assistance. 4 families got gift cards to use at Bob's for back-to-school clothes. The following month of September's tally for Emergency Assistance kept the cycle of increase going, with 42 food deliveries/pick-ups feeding 147 persons. There were 7 new clients and 2 clients got assistance for rent. With the calendar page turning into the last quarter of the year, October's 49 beneficiaries of Emergency Assistance fed 153 people, while financial assistance helped 5 clients pay utility and fuel bills. There were 5 new clients. In the last month of the year 6 new clients came for assistance and 24 were served food assistance.

Planning was underway by the beginning of May for the 2012 Diamond Dig, Camperships, and Scholarships. Northern Lights Gems again sponsored the Dig and as a new entry, the Shoreline Roller Derby ladies assisted in-the-booth activities, in their uniforms and on skates.

A few months into Angie McLean's presidency, the newer volunteers heading up areas of activity were settled in and all was working smoothly. Angie's many years of previous involvement in Care & Share were serving her and the organization well.

It was truly remarkable that all the day-to-day and hour-to-hour elements of Care & Share volunteers assisting neighbors-in-need in Flanders, Niantic and Salem moved ahead in 2012, against the backdrop of intense activity to arrive finally at the long-hoped-for goal of a permanent and identifiable home for the Care & Share Pantry and work center.

All those touched by Care & Share—volunteer leaders, committee chairs, and rank-and-file townspeople, and clients—were harvesting the fruits of efforts to grow Care & Share in direct proportion to the needs it was created to serve.

Over the years, each and every President, from Debbie Mandel, to Mae Hills, to Barbara Buzzelli, to Jim Hall, to Angie McLean had leant their distinct personality and gifts to foster the necessary next steps Care & Share and its fully volunteer ensemble of women, men, and children required in the moment.

And 2012 was to be that transcendent moment of “transition and community,” to quote Jim Hall.