

Salem News You Don't Get in *The Salem News*

201 Incidents involving homeless individuals in one month, June 1-30, 2026

We open this report with two scenarios of homelessness. In the first, a woman who has been made to vacate the newly closed Transitional Shelter on Canal Street tells a video interviewer that she works two jobs, 80 hours a week, but doesn't earn enough for housing. She would like to stay at Lifebridge, but the facility requires her to sign up daily for a bed. She cannot take time off from work to sign up during that required time period.

"Salem needs to help us," she says.

The pain of her dilemma is apparent. But she has conflated two entities: Lifebridge, which has not made it easy for her to secure shelter, and the city of Salem, which is funded by overburdened taxpayers.

The second scenario is the escalation of larceny and robbery. In June there were two instances of larceny—one at Lifebridge, the other at a local business—and three robberies: a break and enter, an unarmed robbery, and an armed robbery. To clarify the difference, larceny (often referred to as theft) does not involve violence, while robbery does, whether with implied or actual force. Additionally, in early June the police arrested a homeless man for unlawful possession of a weapon and ammunition.

Homelessness remains a 'major issue,' Salem Police Chief Lucas Miller said in his annual state-of-the-department report released this week.

—Reported by Scott Souza, *Salem Patch*, June 4, 2026

—Joanne Mattera

81 Medical Aid Responses

Medical Aid responses are slightly higher than in May. Of the 81 responses in June, there were **five mental health issues**, an **overdose**, and two situations described as "**section 12/35**," meaning that the person was committed to a mental health facility for observation or help. Police also responded to a **suicidal person**. Here is the breakdown:

. 29 Responses to the Lifebridge area

16 responses to Lifebridge
11 to Riley Plaza across from Lifebridge
2 to the Transition Shelter on Canal Street

. 24 Responses to Downtown locations

4 to Charlotte Forten Park on Derby Street
2 to the Post Office on Margin Street
2 to Speedway on Derby Street
One each:
Citgo Quick Mart on North Street
City Hall Annex
Dept. of Transitional Assistance on Congress Street
Emergency Department of Salem Hospital
Fire Dept. Headquarters on Lafayette Street
Friendship on Derby Wharf
Hawthorne Animal Hospital on Canal Street
Lafayette Hotel on Lafayette Street
(continued)

Lafayette Park
 North Shore Community Development Coalition
 on Lafayette Street
 Pequot Highlands apartments on First Street
 Salem Common
 Salem Depot
 Salem District Court
 Salem Police Department
 Steve's Market on Margin Street

. 12 Responses to unspecified addresses

2 to Margin Street
 2 to Washington Street

One each:

Canal Street
 Colonial Road
 Derby Street
 Essex Street
 Gedney Court
 Jefferson/Winthrop Streets
 Lafayette Street
 Wharf Street

. 16 Responses to the Highland Avenue area

3 at McDonald's on Traders Way
 3 at Planet Fitness
 2 at Shaws
 2 at Target
 2 at undisclosed locations on Highland Avenue

One each:

M&T Bank on Traders Way
 Market Basket
 Taco Bell on Traders Way

Hampton Inn on Washington Street
 High Street Park
 The Juicery on Washington Street
 Salem Common
 Mary Jane Lee Park on Palmer Street
 Seagrass dispensary on Dodge Street
 Sea Level Oyster Bar on the Wharf
 Speedway on Derby Street

. 7 Responses to unspecified addresses

2 on Washington Street

One each on:

Boston Street
 Canal Street
 Federal Street
 Margin Street
 Ocean Avenue

62 Unwanted Presences

I've grouped three categories here—**Loitering**, **Suspicious Persons**, and **Trespassing**—because all involve people being where they are not invited. The police are called when a request to move along is disregarded, or an individual keeps returning, or when the caller sees something that does not look right.

51 Loitering responses

The police term is "Undesirable/unwanted guest." For businesses, loitering can result in loss of income. We'd like to cultivate our businesses. Downtown stores are a convenience for us. And they pay taxes. Homeowners and renters responding to undesirable/unwanted guests do so because they expect a reasonable quality of life in and around their home. No one wants to walk out of an apartment to find someone sleeping or shooting up in the hallway or vestibule of their building or camped out in their backyard.

. 35 Responses to specific locations

5 at Speedway on Derby Street
 3 at the Emergency Department of Salem Hospital
 2 at Hampton Inn on Washington Street
 2 at Old Town Hall
 2 at the Peabody Essex Museum
 2 at the Salem Post Office
 2 at Shaw's Supermarket on Traders Way

One each:

Lifebridge
 All Souls Lounge on Derby Street
 (continued)

In this issue

Police Incident Narrative	Page 1-4
Contextualizing the Information	Page 4
A Formerly Homeless Voice	Page 5
"You Called the Police?"	Page 6
Graphics	Page 7

20 Well-Being Checks

A well-being check is usually called in by an individual or a business owner who sees someone who appears to be unwell.

. 13 Responses to specific locations

2 to Riley Plaza

One each:

Lifebridge
 Crust Town on Loring Avenue
 CVS on Essex Street

The Brix Apartments on Washington Street
Broad Street Park at Collins Middle School
Church Street Apartments lobby
CVS on Canal Street
Far from the Tree on Jackson Street
Immaculate Conception Rectory on Federal Street
Melt Ice Cream on Washington Street
New Liberty Innovation School at East India Square
North Shore Medical Center on Highland Avenue
Salem Depot
Salem Seven Convenience Store on North Street
Speedway on North Street
Starbucks on Washington Street
Walgreens on New Derby Street
Wendy's Restaurant on Lafayette Street

.16 Responses to redacted locations

3 on Lafayette Street
2 on Essex Street
2 on North Street
2 on Washington Street

One each:

Central Street
Chestnut/Cambridge Street
Jackson Street
Jefferson Avenue
Margin Street
Riley Plaza
Ropes Street

8 Suspicious Persons

A suspicious person is one whose behavior suggests that an illegal act has been committed or is about to be. Instinct and past experience may be a guide for reporting. Police would have a record of prior suspicious activity.

One each:

Broad Street Park at Collins Middle School
Derby Wharf
Dilisio Brothers Masonry on Broadway
Hawthorne Hotel
Lafayette Street
Salem Common
Speedway on Derby Street
Stop & Shop on Howley Street

3 Trespassing

This is the unauthorized entry into a person's yard or home or to a business.

One each:

CVS on Essex Street
Speedway on Derby Street
A redacted address on Charter Street

.....

14 Responses to breaching the peace

Disputes are typically verbal. **Fights** are physical. **Disturbances** disrupt the peace with noise or physical activity, as determined by the responding police officer.

5 Disturbances

Salem Post Office
Town House Condos on Washington Street
Redacted addresses on:
Bridge Street
Lafayette Street
Washington Street

6 Disputes

Lifebridge
Charlotte Forten Park
Longboards Restaurant on the Wharf
Riley Plaza
Speedway on Derby Street
Redacted address at Essex/Flint Street

3 Fights

2 at Speedway on Derby Street
1 at Riley Plaza

.....

12 Arrests, Assaults, Harassment

It is not clear from the police reports how many of these incidents were between members of the homeless community and how many were directed outward.

5 Arrests

2 at Riley Plaza
1 at Lifebridge
1 at Dunkin Donuts on Washington Street
1 on Margin/Prescott Streets

4 Assaults

Charlotte Forten Park
Riley Plaza
Washington Street
Witch City Mall

3 Harassments

2 at Lifebridge
1 at the Salem Post Office

.....

Larceny and Robbery

As noted in the opener, larceny is theft that does not involve violence, whereas robbery does, whether by physical intimidation or actual contact.

2 Larcenies

Lifebridge

Dunkin Donuts on Washington Street

3 Robberies

Unarmed, listed at Salem Police Department

Armed at Forest River Park

Breaking and Entering at a redacted address on Congress Street

7 Individual events

911 open line for Tanglewood Lane

Animal Control at Steve's Market on Margin

DPW request at Charlotte Forten Park

Individual taken into protective custody at Charlotte Forten Park

Lost & Found at Village Tavern in East India Square

Noise on Central Street

Suspicious Item at Shetland Park

11 Community Impact Unit Reports

A proactive police team, known by its initials as the CIU, reaches out to help homeless individuals. In many instances a mutual rapport has developed over time.

6 Directed Patrols

On foot or on bikes, Directed Patrol officers focus on areas that have seen greater activity or more serious incidents. As with the CIU reports, these reports are not a matter of public record.

Contextualizing the Information

"Now I see what the Downtown neighbors are complaining about," commented a person on social media. She was referring to the presence of unhoused people beyond Riley Plaza. Here are a few examples:

Charlotte Forten Park While Riley Plaza, Downtown's most visible gathering place, is the *de facto* outdoor extension of Lifebridge, Charlotte Forten Park on Derby Street—named after a prominent African American abolitionist, educator, and poet who made Salem her home—has become an auxiliary hangout for unhoused individuals. In 2019 the city spent a

reported \$1.4 million on the project. Now it is rarely used by the public because of the strong homeless presence.

In June, for instance, there were four medical interventions, an assault, a dispute, and a person taken into protective custody. The police had to call the Department of Public Works to clean up the space.

The Post Office Police responded to two requests for medical aid, two instances of loitering, a disturbance, and an incident of harassment.

Speedway on Derby Street Of all the businesses in town, this Speedway is the most beleaguered. There were five instances of loitering, two fights, a dispute, an instance of trespassing, and a reported suspicious person.

Derby Wharf The numbers here are low, but they are new for this report, which does not bode well for the warm weather. A redacted location on Wharf Street and the Friendship were both sites of medical aid rendered by the SPD. Additionally, police responded to a well-being call at Sea Level Oyster Bar, a dispute at Longboards restaurant, and a suspicious person in the vicinity.

Sex offenders The presence of homeless adults, particularly male, in any park or playground is unnerving because there are known to be registered sex offenders in the homeless community, including at Lifebridge. Two adult males were reported loitering in Broad Street Park near the Collins Middle School, and a suspicious person was reported as well. One man was reported loitering at the High Street Playground, and one near the New Liberty Innovation School in East India Square.

If you have a child, or if this issue concerns you, log on here and follow the prompts:

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/sex-offender-registry-board>

Chief Miller: "Homelessness is not a problem that we can arrest our way out of . . . With the warmer weather, we will spend more time in targeted locations, including in the woods, doing both outreach and law enforcement."

--Reported by Scott Souza for *Salem Patch*, June 5, 2026

A formerly homeless woman speaks out in social media

"Lifebridge needs to start focusing on better managed care in their current facility. They cannot be allowed or encouraged to expand without first correcting the failed system they run currently. They need to be more concerned with better mental health care. Health care in general. Work programs. Permanent housing programs. More available drug and alcohol treatment. Even mandatory treatment for those not actively participating in available programs to work toward housing and stability.

"They need to partner with the Salem Police Department to bring the tough love some of these people need. If they are out committing crimes, publicly intoxicated, or otherwise being a menace they should be given the hard choices: treatment, participation in programs to help stabilize their lives, or jail. No more making the welfare and shelter systems a career/permanent situation.

"There need to be shelters in place in more than just Lynn and Salem. Why do we take the brunt of the homeless population? You don't see these things happening in Marblehead, Swampscott, Peabody, Danvers...they all send their homeless to Salem! They need to have shelter that provides therapy, drug and alcohol counseling, strict supervision for safety of everyone in the building. They need security at the shelter to help mitigate any infractions within the shelter. They need many, many things, but expanding isn't one of them right now! It will only make the current situation downtown so much worse!

"The residents of Salem should never be expected to put up with homeless people shitting, missing, shooting up, nor sleeping on their property. I've experienced personally unhoused individuals camping in my back yard!

"Using our basement as a toilet! People have complained of unhoused individuals sleeping and shooting up in their entryways. We should never be subjected to these things. The crime, sexual assaults, robberies, threat to residents

simply walking down the street. An elderly gentleman was assaulted by an unhoused individual walking along the canal by Wendy's when a big group of them took over the entire area behind Wendy's along the canal. Here they came and stayed in tents, with their shit buckets, trash strewn everywhere, shitting into the canal, shooting up on a couch and lazy boy recliner they had brought over there. They even had a damn charcoal grill!

"People including myself were afraid to let their children near there for fear of something happening...and I know for a fact because my 11yr old son at the time was accosted by one of them and threatened because he had no money to give them! This is what tax paying citizens are putting up with daily! Where is our peace and enjoyment we are promised by law?!?!

"Where is our tax money going because it sure isn't going in to helping these people, other than giving them a place to crash at night and 3 meals a day! These people need real help! The solution is multi-faceted and comprehensive. But expansion is very low on the list of priorities when it comes to what Lifebridge needs!

"I am also speaking as someone who has experienced homelessness. People who are driven and motivated to get themselves and their loved ones out will do it. It took me four months! Four months I saved, followed the rules, and did all I can including hitting the pavement and the net in search of an apartment suitable for my family. I did it in four months!

"People who want better for themselves work hard to get where they want to be. Lifers take advantage of what is supposed to be a hand up, not a handout out! We need to end that! Stricter rules need to be in place to prevent welfare and government assisted lifers! With the obvious exemption of people who actually need to have that assistance long term...people with disabilities, the elderly, etc. The entire system needs a complete overhaul and we are done putting up with the way things are now! Compassion only goes so far until you become a victim of the unchecked bullshit going on within that community!"



In other words.. you called the police on homeless people 199 times in a month.

May's narrative report carried the headline, "199 incidents involving homeless individuals in one month."

I post a link to each month's report on several Facebook groups with a Salem readership. I've blurred the commenter's name in the screen grab above, but you can see his response. He identified himself as homeless. There was some back and forth with other commenters jumping into the fray, but I'm sharing my response here:

Let's clarify. Many of those calls came from Lifebridge itself. Since it has no security or medical teams in place at the facility, this non-taxpaying entity depends on the services provided by Salem. **Let's repeat that:** Despite the number of calls made by Lifebridge for medical emergencies, including overdoses, as well as fights, thefts, loitering (loitering?), and harassment, Lifebridge has no staff in place for medical emergencies or security. That falls to our municipal services. And who pays for those services? Taxpayers.

Additional calls came from homeless individuals concerned about their friends, as well as neighbors and businesses concerned about the welfare of an unhoused person. Businesses are also concerned for the safety of their clients, as well they should be. Beyond that, calls came from homeowners concerned that unhoused people were sleeping or camped out in the lobbies, doorways, hallways, and yards of their dwellings. One should not have to climb over bodies to get into one's home. Moreover, people with children are extremely concerned about the presence of drugs, about harassment, and about sexual violence—this latter a real and present danger.

Finally, a significant number of reported incidents were the result of police patrols.

The commenter went on to say: "Making people uncomfortable is not a crime. Maybe you don't belong in the city."

Actually, loitering and trespassing *are* crimes. Being homeless does not give unhoused people the freedom to disrespect a home and a city where housed citizens work hard and pay taxes and expect in return a decent quality of life. There is no way you can justify the discomfort of taxpayers and renters who have to deal with illegal drug use, trespassing, loitering, larceny, breaking and entering, the threat of physical violence, or violence itself.

As for telling someone she doesn't belong in a city in which she pays taxes that help support the business of homelessness, while the director of Lifebridge makes a quarter of a million dollars a year, takes a special kind of ignorance.

However, perhaps this commenter is on to something. I am not alone in thinking about moving before construction starts on the Lifebridge expansion, probably some time in 2028. The construction of a large complex shoehorned into a small neighborhood will be a protracted nightmare of noise, dust, and traffic.

And let's acknowledge that a shiny new facility will attract even more unhoused people to Salem. Will they all find a bed in the new facility? Doubtful. So if Lifebridge is going to solve the homeless crisis, it will need to build ever more buildings—and with its history of expanding, that's a real possibility—to the point where Salem will crumble under the weight of a facility that draws ever more resources from the city for people who contribute nothing to the financial or cultural well-being of the city.

Want to make your voice heard?

- . Mayor Pangallo: mayor@salem.com
- . City Councilors: citycouncilors@salem.com
- . State Senator: joan.lovely@masenate.gov
- . Representative: manny.cruz@mahouse.gov

. If you have a story you wish to share, contact me: joannemattera@gmail.com

Incidents: June 1-30, 2026

TYPE	INCIDENT
Medical Aid	81
Wellness Check	20
Unwanted Presence	62
Breach the Peace	14
Arrests, Assaults, Harassment	12
Larceny, Robbery	5
Individual Events	7
TOTAL INCIDENTS	201
SOURCE: Salem Police Dept. Terms as used by SPD.	
Infograph courtesy GESNA/ONOH.	

PERCENTAGE OF 201 INCIDENTS: JUNE 1-30, 2026

