

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

157 Incidents involving homeless individuals in one month. February 1-28

“I’ll f--king kill you!”

Welcome to the Lifebridge block of Margin Street, where the new normal is verbal—sometimes physical—aggression. Salem resident Cindy Johnson was the recipient of this particular abuse as she was winding down her run on Sunday morning, February 15. It gets worse, as she describes in my conversation with her on Page 3.

This event is one of 157 in February that comprise the monthly Police Incident Report of unhoused individuals in Salem. What follows is my narrative, compiled from this information. As I state every month, my intention is not to stigmatize all unhoused people in our city but to keep us informed of activities in the homeless community. Many are residents of Lifebridge; others are attracted by the facility, not living there, but perhaps dropping in for meals. There is a lot going on that is not reported by any other source, hence this monthly compilation.

Two major snowstorms undoubtedly increased the amount of medical aid rendered, but there were also an alarming number of calls requiring police intervention, including a sexual assault, two stabbings, three domestic incidents, five larcenies, vandalism, arrests, and more. Is there another group in Salem that requires as much police attention?

—Joanne Mattera

Statistics for February 1-28

As you might expect, police responded frequently to the Lifebridge complex, which now includes the Margin Street building as well as the former Christopher Columbus Club on Endicott Street, and the Canal Street building that houses the overflow shelter and thrift shop. The area surrounding Lifebridge, including Margin, Norman, and High Streets, as well as lower Endicott and Riley Plaza, saw numerous additional responses. I have highlighted how much police response takes place in this specific area, where working people maintain their homes, children play, and students travel on foot to and from school.

Given so much activity here, why does Lifebridge not have its own 24/7 security team instead of using the Salem Police to do its work for them?

However, if you think the Lifebridge neighborhood is the only one with police activity, take note of locations reported throughout Downtown and farther afield. The See Click Fix website reports many instances of problematic homeless

behavior. Again, not all unhoused people create these problems, but this is a population in which poverty, mental health issues, and drug addiction are significant. We are not unsympathetic to their plight, but we are aware of how a small cohort has impacted life in our neighborhood and the city at large. In the information that follows, I list Lifebridge and Margin Street first, followed by businesses, and then streets and parks. Addresses of private homes are redacted in the information I receive, so you see only street names.

14 Disturbances

Lifebridge, **twice**

Margin Street

McDonalds, Canal Street

Salem Hospital Emergency Dept.

Salem House of Pizza, **Endicott Street**

Starbucks, Washington Street

Village Tavern, Essex Street

Boston Street, **3 times**

Lafayette/Derby Streets

Riley Plaza

Washington Street

8 Disputes

Lifebridge, **5 times**

Margin Street

Salem Depot

Walgreens, New Derby Street

8 Suspicious Persons

Lifebridge

Margin Street

Essex Street

Front Street

Grove Street

High Street

March Street

Wax Museum

5 Larcenies

All five at Lifebridge

3 Arrests

Margin Street

Essex Street

Walgreens, New Derby Street

3 Domestic disputes

Lifebridge

Margin Street

Pope Street

2 Stabbings

Margin Street

Salem House of Pizza, Endicott Street

And one incident each of:

Drunk individual

Margin Street

Fighting

Barr Street

Harassment

Boston Street

Lost and Found

Washington Street

Malicious Damage

Salem District Court

Missing Person search

Margin Street

PC Evaluation

Salem Police

Property Check

Lifebridge Thrift Shop

Sexual Assault

Hawthorne Boulevard

Shoplifting

Walgreens on New Derby Street

Trespassing

Boston Street

Vandalism

Salem Police Department

Multiple repeated calls**52 Medical Aid calls**

This list includes four mental health responses, assistance to two suicidal persons, and an overdose

Lifebridge, **12 times**

Margin Street, **18 times**

Burger King, Highland Avenue, **2 times**

Maria's Place, Jefferson Avenue

Salem Police Department, **3 times**

Shaw's Supermarket, Traders Way

Taco Bell, Highland Avenue

Boston Street

Bridge Street

Canal Street

Essex Street, **2 times**

Fire Department Headquarters

Lappin Park

Norman Street, **2 times**

Paradise Road

Rainbow Terrace

Riley Plaza

Salem Depot

Traders Way, **2 times**

36 Loitering calls

In police parlance, someone loitering is identified as an Undesirable/Unwanted Guest

Margin Street, **6 times**

Lifebridge, **3 times**

If this facility is serving unhoused clients, what makes a homeless person an "undesirable or unwanted guest"? Where do they then go? Also:

Alternative Therapies Group, Grove Street

The Babe restaurant, Washington Street

Domino's Pizza, Canal Street

Dunkin Donuts, Washington Street

North Shore Community Development Coalition,
Lafayette Street
Salem Five, Washington Street
Salem Hospital Emergency Department
Salem Post Office, **Margin Street**
Salem Public Library
Silver Moon Comics, Church Street
Witch City Mall, **3 times**
Beckett Street
Boston Street, **2 times**
Derby Street
Green Street
Harmony Grove Road
Jefferson Avenue, **3 times**
Lafayette Street, **2 times**
Salem Green, **2 times**
Weatherly Drive

14 Well Being Checks

Margin Street, 2 times

Dunkin Donuts, Washington Street
CVS, Essex Street
Pyramid Books, Derby Street
Shetland Park
Essex/Derby Street
Chestnut Street, **2 times**
Fort Avenue
Highland Avenue
Jefferson Avenue
Riley Plaza
Washington Street

Community Impact Unit

The CIU issued 12 reports in February. This is a group of officers who reach out to unhoused individuals. In this cold month with so much snow, the CIU endeavored to help folks secure places to stay safe and warm. There is no information available to me as to how many individuals were helped and in what ways, but the number of reports—at least twice what I normally see issued in one month—suggests a full schedule of assistance.

Life in the Lifebridge Neighborhood

Cindy Johnson was at mile six of an eight-mile run as she passed High Street and entered the Lifebridge block of Margin Street. It was 8:15 on Sunday morning, February 15, when her run was interrupted by verbal and physical threats from a Lifebridge resident.

JM: What happened, Cindy?

CJ: A man sitting in a wheelchair screamed, “What the fuck are you looking at, bitch?” as I ran by with my son, I replied, “Nothing.” He

continued to swear and yell and then got up out of his wheelchair and started following us, shaking his fists and waving his arms.

JM: He got up out of his chair?

CJ: Yes, he ran after us until the corner of Endicott Street. I kept looking back for safety reasons but also kept running.

JM: Did you feel you were in danger?

CJ: Yes. He ran after us yelling, “I’ll fucking kill you!”

JM: How did you respond?

CJ: I ran to the police station.

JM: You must have been fearful

CJ: My heart started racing and I ran faster. It was all very shocking. It took me a few hours to calm down, but the incident stayed with me most of the day. I drove back to the station after my run and gave a fuller report to an officer. As I drove by, I noticed the man was still sitting in the same location.

JM: How did the police respond?

CJ: They sent a unit there and told him to keep to himself. They said were aware of this man because he has been causing problems. They also said a witness had called in the incident.

JM: Will you change your running route?

CJ: I’ve been diverting my runs around Lifebridge, which brings new hazards given the snow. Now I’m forced to share a narrow road with cars on that bend of Margin by the police station. I’m not sure which is more dangerous. I’ve minded my own business as I’ve passed by Lifebridge—it only takes 30 seconds to go by it—but I can’t take the risk after what happened.

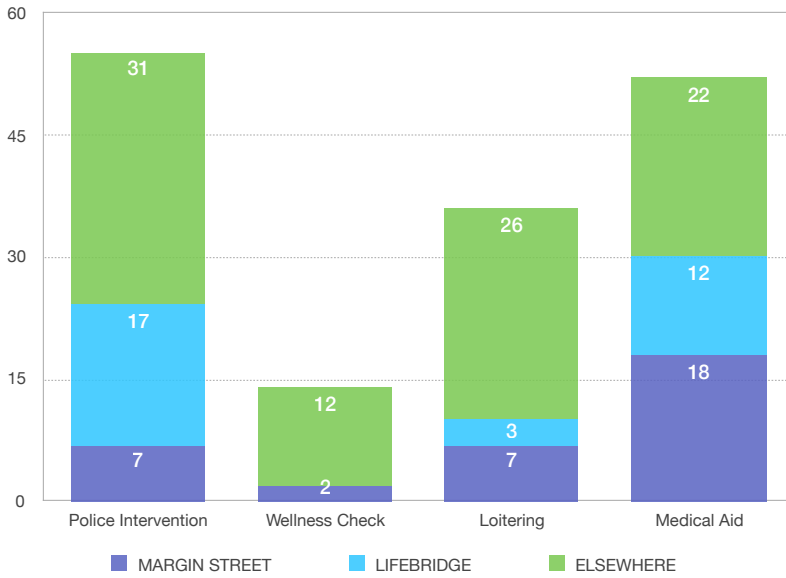
JM: Do you have any advice for your neighbors?

CJ: Yes. Please stay alert in this area and trust your instincts. The officer informed me they’re encountering people at Lifebridge from all over the country now. This man in particular has had similar interactions with other people.

Here’s a police update from Johnson:

“They gave the guy a summons to court for Threat to Commit a Crime. It’s not an arrestable offense, but they said the courts do have the power to do something.” She’s monitoring the court schedule, and I’ll include the results in next month’s report.

INCIDENTS BY LOCATION: FEBRUARY 1-28, 2026



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	MARGIN STREET	LIFEBRIDGE	ELSEWHERE	TOTAL INCIDENTS
POLICE INTERVENTION	7	17	31	55
WELLNESS CHECK	2	0	12	14
LOITERING	7	3	26	36
MEDICAL AID	18	12	22	52
TOTAL BY LOCATION	34	32	91	157

SOURCE: Salem Police Dept. Terms as used by SPD.
 Infograph courtesy GESNA/ONOH.