

Marlborough's Evening of Giving Benefits Roland's House

Marlborough's annual Evening of Giving next week will benefit Roland's House shelter on Mechanic Street. There will be food, entertainment and raffles.

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Bob Kays, chairman of the Evening of Giving, is seen at last year's event with Susan Gentili, right, director of Continuum of Care and Services for the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, which supervises the Mechanic Street shelter which the benefit helps. Also in this photo is Jean Peters, a member of the committee. [FILE PHOTO / MARY WENZEL]

MARLBOROUGH – The city will once again showcase its spirit of generosity this week when the community comes together to raise money for Roland's House during the 29th annual Evening of Giving.

The Evening of Giving will be held from 7:30 p.m. to midnight Thursday at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel.

The Marlborough-Hudson Community Shelter – later renamed Roland’s House – was initially located in the basement of the Walker Building. The shelter was only open during evening and overnight hours, and had no showers or paid staff. Former City Councilor Roland Simoneau and his wife, Joan, saw the need for an upgraded shelter and created a committee aimed at organizing the first Evening of Giving in 1990.

The annual event has raised close to \$1 million over the past 28 years for shelter now located at 57 Mechanic St. It was named in Simoneau’s memory in December 2005, six months after he died. Roland’s House is a temporary emergency shelter that houses 18 men and women and is operated by the South Middlesex Opportunity Council.

Last year’s Evening of Giving raised about \$40,000, said Bob Kays, chairman of the committee organizing this year’s festivities.

Funds raised have been used to install new windows and floors, a new heating system, conduct upgrades to the kitchen and remodel the bathrooms. The money has also paid for food and staff, said Kays.

“It’s just a small portion of what Roland’s House costs a year,” Kays said of the money raised at the event.

More than 30 local restaurants will sample their best dishes. There will also be music, entertainment and a raw bar with shrimp, oysters and clams.

“That’s a main feature of the evening,” Kays said of the raw bar.

Attendees are encouraged to donate new socks, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream, deodorant and shampoo that will be given to those in need at the shelter.

Kays estimates more than 1,000 people will attend. During the inaugural Evening of Giving, organizers expected about 400 people and more than 750 attended, said Kays.

Kays, who has been involved with the event since its inception, called the Evening of Giving a fun-filled way for the community to help those in need.

“The people that attend are very generous,” he said. “It’s very gratifying.”

Tickets are \$30. For more information and reservations call Madeline Dupuis at 508-485-5705.

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