Warming Centers to Open in Four North Central Massachusetts Communities This Winter

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Warming Centers to Open in Four North Central Massachusetts Communities This Winter

As temperatures drop across North Central Massachusetts, warming centers in Athol, Winchendon, Fitchburg and Leominster are preparing to open, providing individuals experiencing homelessness with a warm, safe place to go during extreme winter weather.

For people living unsheltered, snow, ice and freezing temperatures can pose serious health risks and even become life-threatening. Warming centers offer more than a place to escape the cold. They provide a welcoming environment where individuals can connect with supportive staff, access resources and take steps toward greater stability.

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the launch of a new warming center in Winchendon and expand services in Fitchburg, Leominster and Athol.

This investment is made possible through the support of United Way of North Central Massachusetts, the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, the Ron Ansin Warming Center Fund and a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

"With rising housing costs and more individuals facing housing insecurity and living unsheltered, warming centers are a critical lifeline. They provide more than a safe, warm place during freezing temperatures. They also connect individuals with support and resources that can help them work toward a more stable future," said Kory Eng, President & CEO of United Way of North Central Massachusetts.

The partnership also continues a legacy of community generosity.

"The Community Foundation is excited to partner with the United Way and North Central communities to keep our neighbors safe in extreme weather. In particular, I appreciate the leadership of Community Foundation fundholder, Ken Ansin, who is continuing his father's legacy of generosity toward the less fortunate members of our community," said Steve Adams, CEO of the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts.

A Lifeline When Temperatures Drop

Now entering its fourth year, the City of Fitchburg's Winter Warming Center serves approximately 40 individuals each time it opens. Guests have access to a safe space, ongoing support and connections to healthcare and stable housing resources.

The impact of these services is reflected in the words of those who have found refuge there. Richard, a guest of the Fitchburg Warming Center last winter, shared:

"I wish to convey my utmost appreciation for the wonderful work being done on behalf of 'us'...who, without this Warming Center would find ourselves in dire straits. The extreme weather is bearable because of your empathy."

Each community's warming center is supported by local partners working together to meet the needs of their neighbors:

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North Quabbin Community Coalition.

- **Winchendon:** A new Warming Center will be coordinated by the Winchendon CAC, a core United Way partner agency.

"No one in our community should have to face a freezing night without a warm, safe place to go. We're grateful to United Way of North Central Massachusetts for helping us make that possible right here in Winchendon. We want every person who comes through our doors to know they matter and that they'll be welcomed with kindness and care," said Shaina Cunningham, Associate Director of the Winchendon CAC.

A Community Effort That Makes a Difference

Warming centers open when weather conditions warrant, with community alerts announcing when services are available. Their success depends on strong local partnerships, community investment and a shared commitment to looking out for our neighbors.

Through this collaboration, United Way of North Central Massachusetts and its partners are helping ensure that more individuals across the region have somewhere warm and safe to turn when winter weather becomes dangerous.

Because everyone deserves a safe place to go when the temperatures drop.

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