

Unsung Heroes: Dave Gundersen & Holiday Inn Team!

Dave is the first recipient of OEO's Unsung Hero Award.

Nearly one year ago, the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity stepped up to provide onsite services to an expanding group of people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. The work required enormous flexibility, new partnerships, and a tenacious commitment to trauma-informed services. Within a few weeks,

CVOEO needed to quickly assemble both leadership and staff. What heroes would emerge to answer this call to service? Dave Gundersen and the Holiday Inn Team that's who!

Every day and night, Dave Gundersen and the staff at the Holiday Inn in South Burlington are onsite helping keep more than 120 adults safely housed. While DCF places people who need housing at the Holiday Inn and the Inn's staff manage the property, it's Dave and his team that provide the hands and heart to make the emergency housing site possible – delivering food and supplies, promoting public health, resolving conflicts, connecting guests to health services, and more.

Dave hired and sustained the team through significant transitions and challenges. They mourned the death of guests, celebrated others moving into new housing, and even managed a facility-wide quarantine. During a COVID outbreak, Dave helped coordinate testing for staff and guests and arranged resources to support personal needs – like laundry and medication delivery. His leadership helped prevent a public health crisis.

Here's what Dave's colleagues say about him:

- "Dave leads up front and models compassion, hard work and creativity. He deeply values and supports the team."
- "Dave is modest, sincere, intelligent and empathetic to staff and guests."
- "Dave is fair-minded, generously patient, professional and compassionate. He is one of the most committed leaders that I have ever met."
- "I can only hope to make as great an impact on the lives of others in the same way that he seemingly so effortlessly does."

We know that Dave would agree that the staff at the Holiday Inn are truly exceptional, so this award belongs to Dave & the Team.

