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## Marlborough to celebrate 22nd 'Evening of Giving'

*By Bonnie Adams, Government Editor*



Members of the Evening of Giving Committee include (front, l to r) Debbie Beausoleil, Jean Peters, Joan Simoneau, Elaine Fallon, (back, l to r) Renee Perdicaro, Chair Bob Kays, Kylie Turcotte, Ava Belcher, Sharon Santello and Nancy Hough. Not pictured: Leon Roberge, Nicole Carey, David Bouvier, Madeline Dupuis, Maureen Young, Aura Gauthier, Susan Gentile, Jim Hickey, Paulina Lynch, Tom Mason, Ivette Mesmar, Barbara Maguire, Anne Marie Maddox, Matthew Simoneau, Lisa Ragan and Trisha Pope.

**Marlborough** – Over the past 21 years, the “Evening of Giving,” an annual fund-raiser to benefit Roland’s House, a Marlborough homeless shelter, has raised just over \$700,000. This year’s event will be held Thursday, Dec. 8, from 7:30 p.m. to midnight at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough. The night will feature live music, food from local restaurants and a cash bar.

The fund-raiser was started by the late Roland Simoneau in 1993. He was inspired to do so after a homeless man froze to death a few years earlier in Hudson. At that time, Simoneau convinced Marlborough city officials to open a shelter in the basement of the Walker Building on Main Street.

Several years later, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) offered to have the shelter relocate to its Mechanic Street, Marlborough location if funding could be found. Simoneau, along with several other volunteers, decided to hold a gala fund-raiser to help finance the new location. According to committee Chair Bob Kays, the event has raised close to \$35,000 each year.

After Simoneau passed away in 2006, the shelter was renamed Roland's House in his honor.

Many of the original committee members, including Kays, continue to serve.

"It is hard work raising donations, but not as hard as being homeless," Kays said. "This is so close to my heart. It's a small way to give back to people who really need help to get their lives back together."

When the committee was raising money for the first few events, Kays said he felt there was a perception that the homeless were "just bums who didn't want to work."

"Many of them are actually veterans and/or mentally ill," he added. "These are people who are just less fortunate than most. I think the Evening of Giving has helped to bring awareness to this issue and changed some minds."

Susan Gentili, the director of the Emergency Services Division for SMOC, said, "From Oct. 1, 2010 through Sept. 30, 2011 Roland's House provided safe shelter, meals and supportive services to 121 homeless people. Monies from the Evening of Giving make up approximately 17 percent of the shelter's annual operating budget."

Tickets are \$30 each, or \$300 for a table of 10 and may be purchased from Kays at the Prospector Bar and Grill on Lincoln Street or by calling Paulina Lynch, 508-485-3741 or Madeline Dupuis, 508-485-5705.

A raffle will also be held with a first prize of \$5,000, one \$1,000 prize, and three \$500 prizes. Only 300 tickets will be sold, for \$50 each. Contact Kays, Lynch or Dupuis to purchase.

For more information on this event and a complete list of participating restaurants, go to [www.communityadvocate.com/marlborough](http://www.communityadvocate.com/marlborough).

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