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# THE HOST POST

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The official newsletter of HOST

H.O.S.T.  
(**H**ousing **O**ptions for **S**tudents **T**oday)

A shared resource, across campuses



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*Open a Home...Change a Life*



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## WELCOME

by Keith Martin

Greetings! I'm thrilled in helping jumpstart our 1st official issue of the HOST POST, which will go out quarterly. This newsletter not only serves as a resource for updated and other relevant information but as an opportunity for you to know important dates, events, reminders, as well as exciting milestones/achievements from HOST. In this and forthcoming newsletters, we will highlight and feature stories from some of our HOST, students, and Advisory Council members.

We continue evolving as a resource for college students here in Wake County. We know that efforts in supporting our students would not be possible if it were not for our various volunteers and stakeholders. With this in mind, we continue to solicit your support and involvement with HOST.



## SAVE THE DATE!

STOP BY OUR OPEN HOUSE!



# HOST

HOUSING OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS TODAY

August 23, 4:30-6:00pm

Presentation 5:30-5:45pm

1801 Hillsborough St • Pullen Memorial Baptist Church

Join us to learn about our new program to support college students experiencing housing insecurity and find out how to get involved.

Please RSVP here:

<https://forms.gle/usUnWqAAuVfTr2Hx7>

## THANKING OUR PARTNERS!

We greatly appreciate the support of the BWEL Foundation <https://www.bwelnc.org/>. BWEL Board members were willing to invest countless hours to prepare to accept HOST donations and hire our first employee so that we could begin serving students as soon as possible. Special thanks to Annaka Sikkink and Keena Johnson. They took a chance on us, and we are forever grateful.

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church <https://www.pullen.org/> has extended radical hospitality to HOST by providing a large, light-filled space for HOST operations. Come see us at 1801 Hillsborough St., convenient to the downtown campuses!

## MEET OUR HOST COORDINATOR – LIBBY STEPHENS

My first job after graduating from college was as a full-time volunteer at a community center in Hamilton, Ontario. In lieu of a salary for my work, I received a monthly stipend and lived in an intentional community with staff from the community center and local college students. Just as hosts and students will need to do in our host homes, I had to learn how to negotiate boundaries and expectations with people I did not necessarily have a lot in common. Building relationships and maintaining the community wasn't always easy, but the good far outweighed the bad. It was an experience that has impacted so many other areas of my life.

Creating community is at the core of HOST's host home model. It is about creating opportunities for students who are struggling with housing issues to support each other, for hosts to support each other as they strive to support students, and for students and hosts to build relationships with each other. This idea of building relationships, sharing a home, and intermingling lives are what I find most exciting about the HOST Program. The connections and relationships we help foster between people can be a life-changing experience for hosts and students.

This idea of building community has already been happening with HOST. An idea that started with a small planning team focused around needs on NC State's campus has now expanded to include students at Shaw, Wake Tech, and other Raleigh colleges and universities. BWEL Foundation has provided a fiscal "home" for HOST and has taken on the role of employer so that HOST could hire me, the first employee. We have also partnered with Passage Home to receive funding to hire a case manager to work with HOST and provide financial support for students. Pullen Memorial Baptist Church has offered their support by providing free office space in downtown Raleigh for HOST. We are connecting to other community leaders and organizations to provide resources and support for HOST and the students we are working with. We are reaching out into the community to recruit hosts to open their homes for students.



Watching the years of community-building come together is very exciting, and we are almost ready to host our first student. We have four host families who have almost completed the onboarding process and one more who is starting the process. We also have one student referral and plan to have the student enrolled and matched with a host family by the end of July. Passage Home has hired a case manager who will be the HOST Student Advocate and work one-on-one with students in HOST's program. We will start work in the next few weeks with A Lotta Love, a local non-profit that will help us furnish the new HOST office space to provide a welcoming and comfortable gathering spot for students in our program to connect with each other, hosts, and staff.

We will be celebrating our connections and our community at our Open House at the new HOST office on August 23. I hope you will join us. I look forward to meeting you and continuing to build relationships that will help us support college students in our community.

## HOST IN THE NEWS

We are constantly thinking of creative ways and platforms in bringing awareness to student homelessness and HOST. Recently, we have been featured in both a magazine and news article. Check out the links to our features below:

- Raleigh Magazine article- <https://raleighmag.com/2022/05/host-halting-homelessness/>
- US News Article- <https://www.usnews.com/education/articles/resources-for-college-students-facing-housing-insecurity>



## MEET OUR HOST – DR. CARRIE DOW-SMITH



I am a pediatrician at WakeMed and enjoy caring for a very diverse patient population of babies, children, and teens. I see firsthand how hard families are working, and know there are way too many in our community struggling to make ends meet. One clear path to reducing family stress and improving outcomes is education. I became interested in the HOST home program because I am passionate about helping students reach their potential. I have so much respect for the hard work my young patients have put into their schooling, and am incredibly proud when they are able to overcome the many obstacles and jump through the many hoops needed to get them into college. I have seen too many times how small things--a needed car repair, an illness, a job change--can derail the delicate balance and force young people to drop out of school. To be so close to obtaining a degree and breaking the cycle of poverty, to have already invested time and money and then have to abandon this goal, is absolutely heartbreaking to me.

My family and I want to do what we can to help students through a hard patch so that they can move forward to pursue a productive career. Being a pediatrician is all about prevention, and I'm hopeful that playing a small part in helping a student complete a college degree will go a long way to prevent bad outcomes not only for that student, but for their future children, and even their children's children. What a great investment in the future of our community!



US News recently had a “healthiest counties” ranking, and I think equity is an incredibly important reason to support HOST homes. Wake County ranks #1 in North Carolina in terms of healthiest counties, and #147 in the nation. We beat the national average in all 10 major categories besides one: health equity, where we are far below average and one of the three worst counties among the top 200 healthiest counties in the country <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/rankings>

My husband Vincent and I have been interested in becoming a host home since we first heard about the project in its very early phases a couple of years ago. It is so exciting to be looking forward to hosting a student this coming year! We attended an information session where we heard from staff members about the need, the program, and the process. We downloaded and completed the HOST application. Together, we had an interview with a staff member who discussed with us our motivation, space, schedule, lifestyle, and more details about what to expect as a host family. We are looking forward to being able to connect with students in the future and offer this support.



## MEET OUR ADVISORY COUNCIL– DIAMOND HAMILTON



Diamond Hamilton is an undergraduate student at NC State majoring in social work. Her involvement with HOST began nearly one year ago after learning about the program through her advisor. During the pandemic, she discovered her passion for assisting those experiencing homelessness and supporting first-generation college students. Becoming a member of the HOST advisory board provided an opportunity to merge those interests. As a board member, she learned about the prevalence of housing and food insecurity on college campuses while providing a student's perspective on ongoing conversations.

In order to take an active role in the development of HOST, Diamond decided to complete a summer internship. While working on the enrollment process for students, locating case management training materials, and establishing outreach strategies, Diamond has engaged in meaningful conversations with community leaders and collaborated with fellow board members. These conversations emphasized the importance of trauma-informed care and preventing unintentional harm. Her internship has caused her to consider the level of responsibility educational institutions and community members have in supporting students experiencing homelessness.

One of the most notable projects she's worked on is the development of a student advisory board. This will serve as a tool for amplifying student voices while engaging and including young adults in the decision-making regarding services geared towards them. The hope is to recruit students with lived experience who are willing to share their expertise and provide an opportunity for their peers to learn more about youth homelessness. The student advisory board will provide a space for students to advocate for themselves and their needs while also developing leadership skills. As a student herself, Diamond feels a personal connection to this project as she understands the importance of empowering and uplifting students who feel unheard and unseen.

As her internship comes to an end, Diamond has taken the time to reflect on her journey thus far. A highlight of her experience was attending the annual Point Source Youth National Symposium on Solutions to End Youth Homelessness. This conference allowed her to learn about how to create safe, secure housing for youth directly from people with lived experience, and explore the most recent research on youth homelessness. The knowledge and experience she's gained throughout her internship have motivated her to become involved in more efforts to end youth homelessness. It's been an honor to see the progression of HOST and she looks forward to seeing the program continue to grow.

## MEET OUR ADVISORY COUNCIL– KEITH MARTIN

Keith G. Martin serves as the Senior Academic Advisor for the Student Success & Advising Center within the College of Education at NC State University. In his role, he uses proactive and appreciative advising for 1st and 2nd-year education majors with course selection, university and tutorial resources, student success, and degree attainment.

He is also a Ph.D. student in the Higher Education Opportunity, Equity, and Justice program area of study at NC State. His research interests are in the following: college access, retention, and student success; food and housing insecurities; and college environment and climate impact on underrepresented student experiences. Martin has an unwavering belief that all pursuing Higher Education should have a meaningful and equitable learning experience.



For Martin, having the opportunity to serve with HOST is something that is both personal and rewarding to him. In understanding his peers and his own personal story, he believes that HOST is a great resource for a vulnerable and sometimes unseen student population. It is his hope to help bring awareness while also sharing with others ways that they can support students who are housing and food insecure. He came to learn more about HOST through the PEAK Training at NC State University. This training focused on ways in which faculty/staff at NC State University could better support students whose basic needs were unmet. As a relatively new member of the HOST Advisory Council, Martin is eager to help with the momentum in serving unhoused students. As he continues his role as a novice editor for the HOST newsletter, he hopes that others would be inspired to uplift and take action.

Martin is happily married and has a toddler son. He enjoys a good mix of food, music, and travel. One of his favorite past times is hopping in his car and driving miles on end with his radio blasting!

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### LEARN MORE

Feel free to learn more about student homelessness by checking out the links below:

<https://www.bwelnc.org/>

<https://www.cbs17.com/news/local-news/wake-county-news/new-programs-at-ncsu-address-student-homelessness/>

<https://www.ednc.org/how-advocates-at-one-university-are-addressing-student-homelessness/>

<https://raleighnc.gov/news/2021-10-21-raleigh-partners-national-league-cities-address-equitable-youth-recovery-and>

<https://www.wunc.org/news/2022-06-07/nc-state-program-to-address-student-homelessness>

## HOW TO HELP

### PARTICIPATE

Volunteer to become a host family by opening your home to a student that is experiencing homelessness

Serve on our Advisory Council.

Host a Fundraising Event.

### COMMUNICATE

Pass the word about HOST to your relatives, neighbors, work associates, and friends who may be able to open their homes as volunteer hosts for students in our community

### DONATE

Make a financial contribution to HOST and grow the program to support students

Contribute items to students "welcome kits"

### ADVOCATE

Talk about HOST with your company, place of worship, service club, and/or corporate foundation to consider a donation or grant to HOST

You can make a tax-free contribution via the HOST Website  
<https://www.bwelnc.org/host/>

For more information, contact Libby Stephens, Program Coordinator AT [Host@bwelnc.org](mailto:Host@bwelnc.org)

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@hostnc