



HOUSING SOLUTIONS LAB



Mike Roy, 18, dribbles a basketball in the parking lot outside his family's room at the Red Roof Inn in New London last week. Roy has lived at the motel for more than two years with his mother, Sabrina Babey, her fiancé, William Waddicor, and two dogs and a cat. They are in the process of being evicted. "I thought this would be a layover, this was never meant to be permanent," said Waddicor.

Another Taiwan visit by officials of U.S.

Five lawmakers are led by Sen. Markey of Mass.

By **JOHNSON LAI** and **KEN MORITSUGU**
Associated Press

Taipei, Taiwan — A delegation of American lawmakers arrived in Taiwan on Sunday, just 12 days after a visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that prompted an angry China to launch days of threatening military drills around the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its control.

The five-member delegation, led by Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, will meet President Tsai Ing-wen and other officials to discuss U.S.-Taiwan relations, regional security, trade, investment and other issues, the American Institute in Taiwan said. The institute represents the U.S. government, which does not have official ties with Taiwan.

China responded to Pelosi's Aug. 2 visit by sending missiles, warships and warplanes into the seas and skies around Taiwan for several days afterward. The Chinese government ob-

SEE U.S. PAGE A5

For many ensnared in crisis, motels offer little to call home 'Not a way to live'

Stories by **ELIZABETH REGAN**
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The Day

New London
IT WAS SUPPOSED to be the last resort. Jessica Varas and her fiancé, Mark Beaudrot, arrived at the Red Roof Inn on Colman Street with their two young daughters a year and a half ago.

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The 106-room motel, which has long had a reputation as a destination for those with nowhere else to go, is largely hidden from view amid a perimeter of trees separating it from two residential areas and the convoluted sprawl of Interstate 95's access roads. Notorious for drug activity and general disturbances, needles on the ground outside point to overdoses within: Police dispatch logs reveal 13 of them in a 12-month span starting last June. One was fatal.

Varas and Beaudrot had just been evicted from their second-story apartment a mile down the street. In a pandemic-altered rental market that put more demand than ever

LIFE AT THE INN

New London police are practically a daily presence at Red Roof Inn

372 calls for **building checks**

59 calls for **disturbances**

29 calls for **domestic incidents**

16 calls for **possible overdoses**

15 calls for **larceny**

7 attempts to **serve a warrant**

5 **animal-related calls**

3 calls for **drug sale or possession**

3 calls for **dead bodies**

1 call for a **fatal overdose**

According to dispatch logs kept by the New London Police Department, officers responded to more than 500 calls at the Red Roof Inn between June 1, 2021, and May 31 of this year. The logs reflect only calls to the motel — not necessarily incidents that led to reports or arrests.

on too little supply, door after door closed in front of the couple before they could get an application in.

Varas, 32, recalled walking into their motel room for the first time. She said she sank down on the edge of the bed where nothing felt right. They had two month's rental assis-

tance from the Mystic-based homelessness prevention agency Always Home and guidance on how to seek out more pandemic-related funding from the state. What they didn't have was a landlord who would rent them a safe, affordable place for a family of four.

The motel's willingness to provide rooms for any paying guests was well known, and she said she'd already handed over the money at the front desk. So they stayed.

"I don't like it here," she thought at the time. "I don't like the feel here. I just don't feel good here."

Now that door is closing on them, too. Savinder Hospitality, the limited liability corporation behind the Red Roof Inn franchise headed by Amita Verma of New Jersey and operated locally by vice president Gulshan Soni, initiated eviction proceedings against Varas and Beaudrot in July for nonpayment of rent. They owe more than \$5,000.

The family is among 18 cases brought to New London's housing court by the Red Roof Inn over the past two years, according to court documents. Soni in a phone interview earlier this month told The Day about eight to 10 long-term tenants need to go.

They owe more than \$200,000 in total, according to the landlord.

"In one sense, they need a shelter," he said of the clientele. "But they need to respect the property. They're

SEE MOTEL PAGE A3

A son steps aboard Eagle and into his father's world

Tour of CG barque recalls member of the U.S. crew that sailed it from Germany

By **KEVIN ARNOLD**
Day Staff Writer

New London — When he was a boy, Jeffrey Glowski said he built a toy model of the ship his father sailed across the Atlantic Ocean.

Now, 76 years after the Coast Guard barque Eagle first arrived in New London, Glowski was aboard the ship he previously had never seen in person.

"It was just a little sentimental, really," Glowski said of the experience. "Amazing."

Glowski's father, Jerome Glowski, was a member of the original commissioning crew that pieced Eagle back together in the aftermath of World War II in Bremerhaven, Germany. Jerome had been stationed in Newfoundland for most of the war on submarine duty, Jeffrey said, but was one of the few who flew to Germany with Cmdr. Gordon McGowan to claim the Coast Guard's war prize, named Horst Wessel at the time, while the allies divvied up the remnants of the German fleet.

SEE EAGLE PAGE A5

In recovery and looking for a way forward

New London
DARLENE KRIPPS, with her history of escaping bad situations, can't extricate herself from the Red Roof Inn.

It was almost 20 years ago that she made the news after walking away from York Correctional Institution while serving a three-year sentence for burglary. Police at the time said she was discovered in the woods of Rhode Island with a rifle, according to The Day archives.

"I was blond-hair and blue-eyed going into prison and I really had to toughen up," she said from the second floor balcony of the motel. "I think that it works living here."

Kripps moved to the Red Roof Inn more than a year ago after being evicted from her apartment in Norwich for not paying rent.

Support from a pandemic-related rental assistance program to cover her \$1,000-per-month rent got her through some tight spots, but it didn't get her caught up. Now she's being evicted again.

Kripps credited the methadone clinic she attends in Westerly with trying to help her find other housing, but added they cannot provide financial assistance to augment the \$841 per month she gets in disability benefits.

She shares the room with her grown son but said his child, who used to live with them, can't visit because it's not safe.

"We honestly need someone to give us a boost and get us into a place and give us the opportunity to pay our bills and live in an apart-

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ment with my dog and our grandson like normal people do," she said.

Kripps, 58, recounted growing up nearby in a pink house. But as an adult, she said she's been surrounded by foreclosures.

"It's like our whole family is homeless, trying to figure out ways with limited income to get through and just be stable," she said. "That's all we really want. Not this. I didn't want to come back to this."

As someone in recovery from addiction, she said the atmosphere at the motel is not conducive to sobriety.

"We've seen some people die

here," Kripps said of the motel. "We've seen raids. People kicking in the doors, saving somebody that was sick in a room."

There was one body that lay rotting for hours before being discovered, she said. Then there was the biohazard crew that came for the man who "exploded in the room across the way."

Kripps described owners who fail to clean up after their pets, which is a problem in neighborhoods everywhere. But even complaints about dog poop take on a new dimension at the Red Roof Inn.

"We're picking it up, we're stepping in it," Kripps said. "And some of it, is it human? I don't know, maybe it is. I'm telling you, it's too much." e.regan@theday.com

WEATHER

Today, partly sunny and pleasant. High 79. Tuesday, mixed clouds and sun. High 77. **B8**

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The story of Narcan man and the nurse

By ELIZABETH REGAN
Day Staff Writer

New London

AMONG THE LONG-TERM holdouts facing eviction from the Red Roof Inn are the self-described “Narcan man and the nurse.”

William Waddicor III, 33, and his fiancée Sabrina Babey, 41, aren't medically trained, but they said they've saved dozens of people over the past two years using the overdose antidote naloxone.

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Babey, whose experience in an actual medical setting comes from her status as a patient rather than a nurse, does her best to treat the symptoms of life at the Red Roof.

“Someone got stabbed by their girlfriend and I fixed it,” she said. “I put butterfly strips on her.”

It was a local social services agency — she can't remember which one — that first directed them to the Red Roof Inn with enough money for a one-night stay after they were kicked out of the house where they lived with a family member. Soon enough, the family and the landlord agreed to a month-to-month lease for \$1,100.

They fell behind in rent several months later, according to the court documents that signaled the beginning of multiple eviction proceedings in the two years they've lived at the motel.

For Babey, all of it has been traumatizing. She's depressed and anxious in a way she never was before checking in at the front desk for the first time. She's triggered by the ones who could be saved and the ones who couldn't, like the neighbor who died of an overdose last week. And as disturbing as it is to watch people suffer, it can be just as painful when they party.

She said the worst part is the knocking she hears on her door at all hours of the night. Some are looking for drugs. Others ask to buy



“I literally feel like this place is going to kill me. I'm going to die here.”

SABRINA BABEY, PHOTOGRAPHED OUTSIDE HER ROOM AT THE RED ROOF INN IN NEW LONDON EARLIER THIS MONTH

her body for an hour.

“This is the equivalent to the Amityville Horror,” she said. “This is the Amityville Horror of New London.”

Babey described family life in the cramped room: She's diabetic and asthmatic, with a broken ankle and leg from when she tripped amid the clutter. Her son Michael Roy, who graduated Grasso Technical High School in June, is autistic and prone to outbursts of anger. Waddicor has not worked for the past couple of years and panhandles for alcohol at package stores and gas stations.

The family currently relies on Babey's \$841 per month disability benefit. Waddicor, who used to be a construction flagger, acts as caretaker for his fiancée. She's been

in the hospital four times since they arrived at the motel, she said.

The room, which covers less than 300 square feet, has two full-sized beds. The lives of the three adults — plus two dogs and a cat — spill out into the 2000 Dodge Caravan parked in front.

Now, the couple says the air conditioning hasn't worked all summer. Their microwave broke two months ago and their malfunctioning refrigerator freezes the milk and sandwich meat they keep inside.

Gulshan Soni, vice president of the motel's Savinder Hospitality LLC, told a Ledge Light Health District inspector he is only legally obligated to provide tenants with a key to the room, heat and hot water, according

to health district reports. He said he does not have to provide housekeeping or products such as toilet paper for people who are not paying.

Babey, the middle child out of 13 siblings, described growing up with a mom and dad who both owned homes. She lamented she cannot offer that kind of stability to her only son.

“I grew up the way that you're supposed to,” she said. “He hasn't been brought up the way he was supposed to. He shouldn't have been able to know any of this stuff at age 16.”

Fifteen of more than 500 police dispatch calls in the logs provided by city police in response to a Freedom of Information request emanated from Babey and Waddicor's room.

The couple confirmed two of those calls were for overdoses they said involved a friend invited repeatedly to their room so she wouldn't have to be by herself while using drugs. They confirmed calls for threats made in situations involving their son. They confirmed attempts by police to serve warrants.

Court documents show Babey and Waddicor have separate misdemeanor shoplifting arrests pending, with an additional failure to appear charge for Waddicor. He said he didn't show up at court because the front desk of the motel withheld or sent back mail alerting them to both criminal and housing court dates.

Two other tenants who were served with eviction papers this year alleged in court filings that the motel either withheld or returned their mail to the sender.

Soni said those who still live at the motel without paying rent are “troublemakers” united against him.

“They are lying,” he said. He said he has instituted a new policy that involves guests signing a log when they get their mail to better track what comes and goes.

A hearing is scheduled for later this month after a legal aid attorney advised Babey to file an injunction to halt the eviction on the grounds that putting her out on the streets would be life threatening because she has diabetes medication that must be refrigerated.

Yet Babey acknowledged the feeling that staying, too, could be the death of her. She cited her worsening diabetes, which is difficult to control when she can't afford to eat right. She also spoke of thoughts of suicide that she's managed to ward off so far because she knows her son needs her around.

“I literally feel like this place is going to kill me,” she said. “I'm going to die here.”

Crying from a broken wheelchair in front of the room where she's not supposed to be, Babey said this isn't living. “This is just existing.” e.regan@theday.com

Motels are a last resort for some vulnerable families

FROM A1

not respecting.”

Needles and crack pipes

The dispatch logs for the year spanning June 1, 2021, through May 31 render the dark reality of New London's Red Roof Inn in numbers: Three dead bodies, not including the fatal overdoses; 29 calls for suspected domestic violence; and 59 reports of general disturbances.

During the same time period, officers stopped in to check on the buildings 372 times. According to Records Division Sgt. Matthew Cassiere, those kind of patrols are intended to deter crime and create a police presence at certain businesses and bars.

Varas and Beaudrot said it's no place to raise children.

The girls — Logan, 3, and Gianna, 2 — are spending their young lives largely confined to the motel room or the narrow industrial terrace that runs the length of the second story. Sometimes they have lunch on a kid-sized table set up outside the door, or make chalk drawings on the balcony, or use their tiny feet to propel them from one end to the other on a scooter.

“Last summer we were out playing and I found needles on the ground, crack pipes,” Varas said. “That's why we stay up here. I mean, it gets boring for the kids, but at least they're safe.”

The story goes like this, they said: Beaudrot, 36, got sick with endocarditis, a life-threatening inflammation of the heart resulting from an infection, about two years ago. It was the same time Varas gave birth to their younger daughter. With Varas subsequently working just eight hours a week because there weren't enough shifts to go around the Dollar Tree where she worked, the couple got behind in rent payments, first at their apartment and now at the motel. Now she's working full time at the Dollar General store on Colman Street while her fiancé cares for the kids.

What they need is a chance, they said. They need a landlord willing to look past previous evictions, what their credit

looks like and how much they make.

“Some places want you to make three times the rent, and how can I do that? I'm one person,” Varas said, citing a weekly paycheck of about \$500 per week. Beaudrot gets \$700 per month in temporary state assistance. They pay \$1,100 a month for the room.

She said experience has shown she would have more financial and relocation assistance available to her if it were just her and the girls.

“Seems like there's no help for whole families,” she said. “If I was a single mother or domestic violence (case), I would have help. Which doesn't seem fair. You should want whole families to be together.”

‘Not a way to live’

Soni blamed social service agencies and governmental entities in New London and Norwich for setting up clients at the motel without the ability to pay rent in the long term.

“Now it's hurting us,” he said. “We are a business. We still have to pay taxes. We have to pay the employees. They put these people here, and now they've washed their hands.”

The businessman is also a partner in the nearby Clarion Inn and Shaking Crab restaurant.

Cathy Zall, executive director of the New London Homeless Hospitality Center, acknowledged a failed effort to use hotels as permanent housing amid the pandemic. She said it was a promising idea at the start, when hotel bookings were down and affordable housing options were scarce.

“The idea was to convert a hotel room into a unit that qualifies as an efficiency unit by adding some basic cooking capacity — normally some kind of a hot plate. The unit is then treated like a longer term housing option,” she said in an email.

The center provided a security deposit and about three months' rent for somewhere between five and eight clients who chose to live at the motel, according to Zall. The hope was that the rental assistance would put them in a position to continue paying rent on their



HOUSING LAB The Series

Affordable and safe housing is a basic need for every member of our community, and yet it's in short supply. The Day wants to be part of the solution and has undertaken a yearlong investigation into the crisis.

In coming weeks, we'll bring you stories and photos about the Crystal Avenue high-rise apartments in New London; health and housing; evictions; the housing market and more.

You'll find all of the content online at www.theday.com/housinglab.

Mike Roy, far left, and William Waddicor discuss the Red Roof Inn.

own once the subsidy ended.

“Unfortunately, on the whole, this did not work out as we had hoped,” she said. The agency found that giving clients temporary help paying rent is not enough for those living with many day-to-day challenges.

The affordable housing advocacy group Partnership for Strong Communities said those who are chronically homeless — that is, they've been homeless for 12 months in a row or a combined total of 12 months over three years — account for about a third of those without a stable roof over their heads at any given time. They often have chronic conditions like mental illness, substance abuse or a physical disability that makes it difficult to maintain a job and remain in their home.

New London Mayor Michael Passero and human services director Jeanne Milstein said the motel is no place for long-term tenants.

“We've been aware of the situation; I've been working on remedies for a while,” Passero said. “But it's difficult. Housing is difficult, especially when it comes to people with the least resources and with other issues in their life.”

Milstein, describing herself as the city's one-woman human services department, said her goal is to work with

area agencies locally and at the state level, as well as landlords, to get people “rapidly rehoused” in places that don't include motel rooms. She said she hasn't spoken directly with anyone living at the Red Roof Inn.

‘No quality of life there’

Passero cited a recent meeting with Soni and New London Police Chief Brian Wright that was held after officials received numerous complaints from neighbors and area businesses.

“Now we're at the stage of finding out who's left there and what's going to happen to the people. They need to be moved; whether they need to be evicted or not, it's complicated,” Passero said. “But it's not good for them to be there, that's for sure. There's no quality of life there.”

In the context of the pandemic, Milstein cited success when the city rented a vacant former nursing home to house and isolate homeless COVID-19-positive patients instead of spreading them out in motel rooms across the region. She credited Zall with spearheading the grant-funded effort to staff the impromptu site on a 24-hour-per-day basis.

“It was a much safer environment than motels because a lot of times, people need

help. They need support. They need services, and that isn't provided by a hotel/motel owner,” Milstein said.

Proponents for supportive housing argue it is less expensive for the state to fund increased rental assistance and more services for people on the edge than it is to pay for the situations that can result from homelessness: incarceration, nursing home care, hospitalization or chronic emergency room visits.

Milstein cited the new “right to counsel” law that went into effect this year as one positive development. The measure makes Connecticut the second state in the country to provide free legal representation for low-income residents being evicted.

Natalie Wagner, executive director of the Connecticut Bar Foundation, said the program was rolled out in New London in March. Since then, 47 tenants in the city were represented by lawyers from legal aid organizations and eight received brief advice and remote counsel.

Varas said her call to the eviction hotline revealed there were no attorneys available at the time to help her. The program's website encourages tenants to call back early the following week if caseload capacity is reached.

Still, even winning an evic-

tion case is a small consolation at the Red Roof Inn, where Varas said four people in one room at a run-down drug den is “not a way to live.”

“My kids don't have nap times. They don't go to bed at the same time every night. They don't sleep through the night. It's hard. They need more structure. And it's not even like I can take them to go run out back because I'm scared they're going to step on a needle.”

Both Zall and Milstein warned the imbalance between housing supply and demand is tipping even further due to forces of the pandemic.

Milstein acknowledged the crisis means that hotels “may have to be a part of a whole array of what we offer” — but only if there are wraparound support services so the most vulnerable residents aren't forced to navigate the system alone.

Zall said the agency had more state and federal funding to work with in the depths of the pandemic than it does now, even as they face the worsening effects of the rental market and evictions.

“We need to keep trying to find solutions — which might include hotels with the right design — or we will see an increase in sheltered homelessness,” she said. e.regan@theday.com