

COMMUNITY



Community Housing Advocates ■ Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation ■ My Sisters' Place

September 2020



Who knew that when I joined Community Housing Advocates (CHA) in mid-March that our world as we knew it would be changed forever? COVID-19 has certainly affected all of us – at home, at work, physically and mentally. What has NOT changed is CHA's commitment to those we serve. I am proud to lead

a team of dedicated employees from Mercy Housing and Shelter and from My Sisters' Place who care deeply about the most vulnerable in our community.

This is our first formal newsletter since Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place combined to form CHA. Together as CHA, these two long-standing organizations provide critical services to thousands of people in Greater Hartford and Middlesex Counties. As the name of our newsletter, *Community Building*, implies, it is our mission to empower our clients to restructure their lives and become active members of our community.

Kara A. Capone
Chief Executive Officer



Our Services Continue – Despite COVID-19

Our daily lives as we knew them came to a screeching halt in March. A national pandemic had begun a few months previously and was spreading rapidly throughout the United States. We were inundated with warnings: stay home, wash your hands, wear a mask. Those of us who were able, began working from home and children finished their school year from a distance.

But what about those without a home?

We at Mercy Housing and Shelter and My Sisters' Place have not let COVID-19 interrupt the critical services we provide. Our essential employees continue to care for our

Story continues next page... >

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Remember that you can choose Mercy Housing and Shelter or My Sisters' Place to benefit every time you click on "Place my order"! Go to <http://smile.amazon.com/> to choose one of our organizations* today and click away! We have received hundreds of dollars to date through this program and we remain grateful for this additional support.

*Please be mindful that there are multiple organizations with similar names. Both Mercy Housing and Shelter and My Sisters' Place are located in Hartford, CT.

Contact information

Christina Lessard
Director of Development
860-808-2044

For more information about Mercy Housing and Shelter, visit www.mercyhousingct.org.
For more information about My Sisters' Place, visit www.sistersplacect.org.

Follow us on Facebook:
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Mercy Housing and Shelter and My Sisters' Place always has, and always will, treat people with the compassion and dignity that they deserve no matter the color of their skin, heritage or sexual orientation. We are proud of our inclusiveness.



From left to right: Art, Renee, Sharese and Bill work together to prepare lunches to go at our Friendship Center.

clients in a safe manner with recommendations in place from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and federal and state briefings.

Our non-essential employees continue working behind the scenes as well. Temperatures of staff are taken and recorded every time they report to

work. Masks are worn by clients and staff and social distancing is observed. Protocols are in place in case a client is symptomatic. Common areas in our residential programs are closed to prevent gatherings of large numbers of people. Additionally, our meal program run by our Friendship Center on Main Street in Hartford has switched to a

grab and go model. All of us remain diligent in minimizing the risk of COVID-19 to our clients, staff and our community.

COVID-19 has certainly changed the way we provide our services, but it has not stopped us from providing the services! ■

“
We remain committed to those who need us the most. Those without a home.”



In June, My Sisters' Place was awarded funding from the City of Hartford to provide services to formerly homeless children living in our housing programs. Services include recreational and enrichment activities designed to prepare young

children for school and support social development; tutoring to help build math, reading and homework skills, including computer literacy; and skill building specific to children impacted by homelessness to achieve

developmental milestones and develop critical skills like resilience, communication and conflict mitigation. This program is called *For the Love of Children Initiative* (FLOCI) and is anticipated to positively affect 85 low income, minority children living in Hartford.

A mother of two enrolled in the FLOCI and resident of our Sue Ann Shay Apartments, states: “I can speak first-hand to the immense need for youth development programs and I’m grateful my children can benefit from them.” Thank you City of Hartford for investing in our children! ■



Deviance with her two daughters.

Not giving up...

Six years ago, Deviance was involved in a car accident that killed her fiancé and left her in a coma for eight days and unable to walk. Up until that point, she thought her life was fairly normal. She loved dance classes as a young girl, finished high school through homeschooling by her mother, always had family to live with, and held a job.

But reality sunk in. She had to learn to walk again, raise her one-year old daughter on her own and find a suitable place to live. Deviance was determined to succeed. While recovering from her injuries in a rehabilitation facility, she learned of an opportunity to apply for supportive and affordable housing nearby. She was even transported to apply for the housing on a stretcher! Ultimately, she settled at Sue Ann Shay Apartments, a program of My Sisters' Place, and has happily held her own lease there for six years. She stated, "Up until my apartment here, I never had a home of my own." She was thrilled to "turn my own key and pay my own light bill."

Securing her own place to live isn't enough for Deviance. She was recently laid off due to the COVID

crisis, but that hasn't dampened her spirits. She completed her Bachelor's in Business Administration from Southern New Hampshire University in April and plans to pursue a Master of Business Administration. She was disappointed that graduation ceremonies were cancelled due to the current health scenario because she wanted her two daughters to witness her accomplishment. Along the way to achieving her Bachelor's degree, she has also become certified as a phlebotomy technician and a pharmacy technician. Deviance received her driver's permit in February and will go for her driver's license once she can get an appointment at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Deviance has also raised her credit score from the 400's to high 700's, with the dream of homeownership not too far away.

She continues to work on herself and is determined to pursue her dreams. She credits her mother for her guidance and her daughters as her inspiration.

Keep going Deviance. We are behind you all the way! ■

Save the Date!

Thursday, November 5, 2020

2nd Annual Hope & Home Celebration



For everyone's safety, this year's event will be virtual!

Details coming soon!

If you are interested in sponsoring or donating, please contact Christina Lessard at clessard@mercyhousingct.org or 860-808-2044.

“

I know for myself

I did not choose to be homeless—

I had no other choice.”

We love our volunteers!



Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we have had to ask our volunteers to stay at home for their safety and the safety of our clients. This is only temporary, and we are working on getting our volunteers back where they want to be – helping us help our clients!

In the meantime, we are always in need of non-perishable food items, toiletries, laundry detergent, new linens, and cleaning supplies. If you need help with generating ideas for a drive, please contact us. Or feel free to arrange a drive amongst your family and friends, using social distancing, of course! ■



Community
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Advocates, Inc.

Support, Empowerment & Independence

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