

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Mercy
Housing and Shelter Corporation
Affiliate of Community Housing Advocates, Inc.

MY SISTERS' PLACE, Inc.
Affiliate of Community Housing Advocates, Inc.

COMMUNITY HOUSING ADVOCATES | MERCY HOUSING AND SHELTER CORPORATION | MY SISTERS' PLACE | Fall 2022



Summer has always evoked sweet thoughts of warm breezes, long days, family gatherings, and sea-side retreats. But summer does not bring an end to the work that we do. If anything, it is a time of increased needs. Children living in poverty, who often get free school meals, no longer have this as a resource. The people we serve continue to face the dilemma of always coming up short when deciding which to pay for first: food, rent, gas, or utilities. We have seen people, living on the fringe, and coming into the Friendship Center for food to help stretch their budget or to access other services, like employment, to help find a better paying job.

As you read through our newsletter, you'll see how we have been responding to the needs we see in the community: through the work of our wonderful volunteers; through a community-wide clothing giveaway; and through the creation of

new and much needed programs for young adults, to name just a few. And we look forward to the fall by anticipating seasonal needs and planning around those needs. You'll see that in this newsletter as well.

Thank you for helping us to not only prevent hunger and homelessness. Thank you for helping to provide hope.

Kara A. Capone
Chief Executive Officer

"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." — Dale Carnegie



CONTACT INFORMATION

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For more information about Mercy Housing and Shelter, visit
www.mercyhousingct.org

For more information about My Sisters' Place, visit
www.sistersplacect.org

OUR HOLIDAY WISH PROGRAM IS AROUND THE CORNER!



Contact Bree'Ana Johnson at **bjohnson@mercyhousingct.org** if you would like to get involved in making our clients' holidays brighter!

CONNECT WITH US!



@mercyhousingct
@mysistersplace_



Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation
My Sisters' Place



@CTMercyHousing
@MSPCT

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.

NEW YOUNG ADULT RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Sharing Community Support

Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and My Sisters' Place held two Clothing Giveaway days this past spring to provide men's and women's clothing, toiletries, and hand sanitizing products to those in need throughout Hartford. The first was held on May 18 at 102 Pliny Street, adjacent to our Sue Ann Shay Place Apartments. WFSB meteorologist Scot Haney promoted the clothing giveaway on the morning news; inspiring many to stop by with their family and friends. Over three hours, visitors secured quality clothing and necessities that helped them prepare for the warm summer months. In addition, Griffin Health was on site offering free vaccinations.

The second event, held on June 10 outside of our St. Elizabeth House, included the assistance of employees from CohnReznick, who were volunteering at Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation as part of their agency Day of Caring. A steady stream of visitors lined Main Street eager to peruse our clothing racks and receive the hygiene products of their choice. Many people took home clothing that met the needs of a family member in addition to themselves. A mother visiting the clothing giveaway was able to find outfits for each of the five people in her family, plus a formal top and skirt for her daughter to wear to her high school graduation!

Basic needs don't disappear during the spring and summer. The support of our donors and volunteers helps provide these opportunities to individuals and families in need. To find out how you can help, please visit our websites at www.mercyhousingct.org and www.sistersplacect.org.



The Haven at Charter Oak is Mercy Housing and Shelter's newest program to house young adults between the ages of 18-25. Funded by Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), The Haven is a Young Adult Services (YAS) transitional living program that provides a safe space for eligible young adults to stay while exploring their strengths and goals for the future. The Haven provides assistance in developing coping strategies, practicing community living, establishing daily routines, overcoming mental health challenges, and more.

The program is housed in a building that Mercy recently purchased from the Daughters of the Holy Spirit. Renovations were made and furnishings were bought turning this former convent into a home for up to ten young adults who would otherwise have nowhere else to live.

In early August, an open house was held as the finishing touches of this program were being completed, just days before the first client arrived. As CEO, Kara Capone stated, "Young adult services are so desperately needed. We are so proud to be partnering with DMHAS to make this happen!"



People from the community helped themselves to clothing and toiletries on May 18th.

Back to School Picnic

My Sisters' Place held its annual Back to School Picnic on August 10 to benefit our residential children and those children receiving services from us who reside in the community. The picnic serves two purposes: to bring the families of My Sisters' Place together for an evening of fun and relaxation, and to provide each child with the supplies they need to start the school year on the right foot.



Kara Capone, CEO, (left center) is shown with the State Farm award along with representative from Senator Chris Murphy's office and local State Farm agents.

Being prepared for school matters, as the ability to access needed resources is a contributing factor to chronic absenteeism. An April 27 article in EdWeek finds that "...the pandemic exacerbated challenges that cause lower-income families to struggle with attendance in previous years. They include...the income to buy clean clothes and school supplies." My Sisters' Place works to address this issue by ensuring each school-aged child receives a new backpack and school supplies, a pair of new sneakers and shoes, and an appropriately sized uniform from their specific school at our Back to School picnic.

In addition to receiving their new school supplies, the children and their families were treated to a delicious dinner cooked by St. Elizabeth House Chef, Arthur, free ice cream and cotton candy, and arts and crafts and carnival games facilitated by volunteers from UCONN and Travelers Insurance.

Another highlight of this year's event was State Farm Insurance and a representative from Senator Chris Murphy's office recognizing My Sisters' Place for winning the 2022 State Farm Neighborhood Assist Program award; the only nonprofit in Connecticut to do so! More details about this accomplishment can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, volunteers and board members, the children at My Sisters' Place are sure to have a spectacular school year!

URBAN LODGE RECAP

On June 22, spirits were high at Urban Lodge Brewing Company in Manchester as donors, board members, and staff mingled in honor of My Sisters' Place's 40th Anniversary. Between bites of delicious hors d'oeuvres and sips of Urban Lodge's craft beers, these guests enjoyed an intimate gathering full of reconnection and excitement for the future. The reception allowed My Sisters' Place to thank those who have supported them over the past 40 years. It highlighted the history of the organization, the impact it has made on the Hartford community, and previewed its newest project: the redevelopment of 102 Pliny



Street into 24 units of affordable housing. The reception also encouraged donors to re-engage with My Sisters' Place; whether it be through joining a committee, hosting a fundraising event in their home, or designating My Sisters' Place to be the beneficiary of a bequest or an estate. Those who attended the event left feeling inspired by the positive changes to come!



Only Organization in CT to Win!

My Sisters' Place (MSP) was recently awarded a \$25,000 State Farm Neighborhood Assist grant to support MSP's For the Love of Children Initiative (FLOCI).



This past February, State Farm hosted its annual Neighborhood Assist program and accepted 4,000 applications for worthy causes, from throughout the country. The applications focused on supporting communities in need. The 4,000 applications were reviewed and narrowed down to the top 200. The top 200 finalists were then posted online for the public to vote on throughout 10 days. In that time, 88,000 people cast more than 2 million votes in support of their favorite causes. MSP is also the only Neighborhood Assist grant winner in Connecticut this year.

FLOCI is a youth development program offering service to the formerly homeless children residing in My Sisters' Place's permanent, supportive housing. The initiative offers recreational and enrichment activities designed to prepare children for school, a tutoring program to specifically help with math, reading, homework skills and computer literacy, and a skill building program that helps youth build critical skills, such as resilience, community and conflict mitigation.

"We are so excited My Sister's Place gained enough votes to finish as one of the 100 grant winners," says State Farm Corporate Responsibility Analyst Jennifer Young. "Their ability to earn enough support to win this grant demonstrates the strength and commitment of the Hartford community, as well as their passion to help neighbors in need."

"My Sisters' Place is honored to be a recipient of a State Farm Neighborhood Assist grant, especially in such a milestone year," says Kara A. Capone, *Chief Executive Officer* of Community Housing Advocates. "My Sisters' Place is currently celebrating its 40th anniversary and this award will allow us to ensure that our For the Love of Children Initiative can continue offering a comprehensive array of supports designed to help young people succeed in school and address any challenges associated with their experiences of homelessness."



PERSEVERANCE + ASSISTANCE = EMPLOYMENT!

Our clients face a serious conundrum: employment is needed to maintain housing, but it is difficult to secure employment without stable housing. This is where Mercy's employment specialists like Karen come in. "It is a full-time job to find a job," she says. Karen works with clients to prepare them for work. From life skills such as phone etiquette to workplace expectations such as being on time and computer use, she meets the client where they are. Additionally, she has relationships with employers, allowing her to match clients with employers.



Dorian began working with Karen in early 2020. Karen assisted him enroll at Capital Community College (CCC), including setting up a Gmail account and applying for federal aid. When classes shifted on-line due to the pandemic, Karen connected him to a program providing free internet to low-income households. Dorian worked hard at his studies. He admits it was not easy and he thought of giving up on multiple occasions. Karen told Dorian about Best Chance, a free pre-manufacturing training and job placement assistance program. Dorian was admitted into the program in March 2021. His hard work paid off and he completed the training in June 2021.

Shortly after, Dorian met with Karen again, who assisted with interview preparation and attire. Dorian's perseverance and Karen's assistance led to him being hired at FHI, a supply chain solution company located in Manchester, in August 2021. Happy one year work anniversary Dorian!

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



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1. This family purchased sandwiches to feed the residents at St. Elizabeth House. Their purchase at Jersey Mike's supported Special Olympics that day as well!
2. Our Board of Directors served dinner at our Back-To-School event for My Sisters' Place's families.
3. In June, employees of CohnReznick painted a room at St. Elizabeth's that was being turned into a meditation/reading room for our residents.
4. Swiss Re employees beautified our new porch at our location on Wethersfield Avenue.
5. In July, interns from MDC helped organize clothing for a community give-away event.

6. In honor of International Women's Day, Ten Thousand Villages in West Hartford held a soap drive for My Sisters' Place.
7. Reid & Riege sends employees regularly to help serve meals in our Friendship Center.
8. Theta Alpha Sigma Alumnae Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. presented My Sisters' Place with a donation at their public meeting.
9. The Jewish Teen Learning Connection helped clean up the grounds at our newest residential site, The Haven at Charter Oak.
10. Friends of RHAM Lacrosse spent a day beautifying the grounds at our Sue Ann Shay Place Apartments.
11. Employees from Pratt and Whitney put together 156 hygiene kits in record time!

*You are
Invited!*



HOPE AND HOME
CELEBRATION 2022

The 4th Annual Hope & Home Event will take place on
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14TH FROM 6:00 P.M.-10:00 P.M.
at the Hartford Marriott



Join us for dinner, an open bar, and amazing auction items
as we support Mercy Housing and Shelter and My Sisters' Place.
We will also be celebrating My Sisters' Place 40th Anniversary!

More information can be found at:
www.hopeandhomet.com

We hope to see you there!