



# COMMUNITY BUILDING

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

## what's *happening*

### My Sisters' Place Creating *new* Affordable Housing Units

#### CEO INSIGHTS



Homeless services aren't what they used to be. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. When I first started working in homeless services in the mid-90s, the

scarce services available were at best disjointed and difficult to navigate.

When nonprofit, private and government leaders gathered about 25 years ago, it was decided that we can end homelessness. More effective policies and practices were put into place, like diversion, rapid rehousing, centralizing access to housing, and expansion of supportive housing. This resulted in Connecticut emerging as a national leader in creating innovative homelessness services.

The statistics speak for themselves. From 2007 to 2022 in Connecticut:

- ▶ The total homeless population decreased by **35%**
- ▶ The number of unsheltered people living "on the streets" decreased by **64%**
- ▶ Those considered chronically homeless decreased by **89%**

Your support, which funds our services, is making a positive impact and moving us closer to our goal of ending homelessness. However, we still have a long way to go. As you read through this newsletter you will find a variety of ways that you can support our important mission.

*Kara A. Capone*  
Chief Executive Officer

**THE SOUND OF JACKHAMMERS** and saws can be heard coming from 102 Pliny Street in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood of Hartford, as new life is being built into the once vacant My Sisters' Place property.

Empty since 2017, the building has been gutted and is now being transformed into 24 residential units of affordable and supportive housing for families and individuals in need.

Located just across the parking lot from the Sue Ann Shay Place Apartments at 76 Pliny Street, the location of the new housing project is ideal. Families living here will have the benefits of sharing in some of the resources at Sue Ann Shay Place including youth programs, computer labs, case management, property management and security. With proximity to Albany Avenue, all the residents will also have access to public transportation, community health centers, the YMCA, and grocery shopping as well.



During a ceremonial groundbreaking celebration for the project in May, Kara Capone, *CEO of Community Housing Advocates*, the parent organization to My Sisters' Place, talked about the great need for housing.

"We're currently seeing increases in homeless families and homeless elderly individuals nationally, so we are trying to stay ahead of the trends in the Hartford area," commented Capone. "Developing housing like this will help. It is one more tool in our toolbox toward ending homelessness."

Funding for this \$8 million dollar project came from a variety of federal, state and local resources with significant support coming from the Connecticut Department of Housing (CT DOH). CT DOH Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno

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says that working to prevent homelessness is a major priority for her and the DOH.

"Nobody deserves to be in a shelter, especially kids. Prevention for us is big. We want to make sure that we put the resources where they are needed... to make a difference. So for me, this project is awesome," she said.

Other funding partners for this project include the US Housing and Urban Development, CT Department of Housing, Eversource, CT Housing Finance Authority, The Corporation for Supportive Housing, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the City of Hartford, Mayor Luke Bronin, the CT Department of Mental Health and Addictive Services and the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone.

## DONOR spotlight



## Hartford Federal Credit Union Gives Back

**THANK YOU** to the Hartford Credit Union for choosing My Sisters' Place (MSP) as one of the recipients of their Gives 2023 campaign.

In March, MSP was one of eight charities presented with a check for \$10,000 as the first phase of the Hartford Federal Credit Union's new campaign. Their \$250,000 charitable giving initiative provides donations to charitable organizations that offer vital services to people of modest means.

MSP is grateful and honored to have been selected as one of the recipients.



## Mercy Housing celebrates 40 Years of Impacting Lives

**MAJOR DONORS, LONG-TIME** supporters and members of the Board of Directors attended a special anniversary celebration commemorating the 40-years of impact that Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation has had on more than one-hundred-thousand lives in Hartford and Middlesex counties.

In 1983 the Sisters of Mercy of Connecticut saw that the need for housing was great and began the organization with a commitment to helping the hungry and homeless in Hartford. They purchased St. Elizabeth House at 118 Main Street, and began the Friendship Center soup kitchen, a day shelter, an emergency shelter and a transitional living program for homeless men and women.

Fast forward to 2023 and Mercy Housing has expanded to include invaluable programs and services such as:

- ▶ **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAMS** across Hartford, Tolland and Middlesex Counties
- ▶ **SHORT AND LONG-TERM HOUSING** for homeless adults along with a comprehensive array of supports designed to help them address the complex issues that resulted in them becoming homeless.
- ▶ **SHELTER DIVERSION PROGRAM** aims to divert individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis by connecting them to alternative housing options and mainstream resources.
- ▶ **MERCY'S RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM** uses targeted financial assistance and short-term services to quickly return individuals and families who have slipped into homelessness back into housing and stability.

"Our goal is to provide stability and empower people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to become independent, so that they may live and work with dignity and respect," commented Kara Capone, *CEO of Community Housing Advocates*, Mercy Housing's parent organization.

Future plans for the organization include finding opportunities to better serve the elderly homeless, which is the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, while also partnering with other agencies to break down service silos to better serve those in need.

"We've come a long way in forty-years, but we still have much to do to realize our goal, which is to eliminate homelessness altogether," added Capone.

## LEGISLATIVE VISITS FOCUS ON *crucial needs*

THE IMPORTANT LIFE-CHANGING WORK BEING DONE AT MERCY HOUSING IS CATCHING THE ATTENTION OF LAWMAKERS.



In May US Representative John Larson, CT 1st District, took a tour of St. Elizabeth's at 118 Main Street, and learned about the many services offered there, including short term residential care for women in recovery, veterans, homeless men and those living with HIV/AIDS. The Congressman was told about the difficulties in keeping trained staff to assist the individuals in these programs due to budgetary constraints. Larson was also shown the need to provide shelter from the elements for those waiting in line for a meal at the Friendship Center.

In March US Senator Richard Blumenthal toured The Haven at Charter Oak, where he learned about the needs being met for young adults who have aged out of the foster care system and need a place to live as well as supportive care.

Legislators are invited to tour the facilities to educate themselves about both the hardships facing those who find themselves homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, as well as to learn of the challenges Mercy Shelter and My Sisters' Place face in overcoming funding issues to meet those needs.

## CHRISTMAS IN JULY

### Making Holiday Wishes Come True

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT** the teams at Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place are already planning to make sure that our families and individuals feel the love and cheer that comes with the holiday season.

That love and cheer, which is spread to our community through our Holiday Wish Program, is only made possible by the kindness of businesses, organizations and people like you.

Every December we give donated gifts and gift cards to children, women and men enrolled in our programs. While we won't have the Holiday Gifts Wish Lists to share until the end of October, we already know that we will need quite a few gift cards.

To help us kick off this year's Holiday Wish Program we are asking you to consider donating gift cards in increments of \$25 now, which will be paired with two other gifts for each of our clients in December. This will help staff to plan ahead and make sure that holiday wishes come true.

We often receive requests for gift cards from **Amazon, Walmart, Stop & Shop** and other more generic cards that can be used anywhere.

*Thank you!*

Your kindness will go a long way to warming the hearts of those who will receive your gift.



## Spring Job Fair a Big Hit

**CLIENTS AND JOB SEEKERS** in the Hartford area took advantage of the opportunity to meet with over 25 employers at a job fair hosted by both My Sisters' Place and Mercy Housing in April.

Approximately 60 people attended the event, which was held in the youth center at Sue Ann Shay Place at 76 Pliny Street. At least one of residents in attendance found a full-time job the day of the fair.

MSP and Mercy staff work hard to offer events like this to provide opportunities for residents to find employment to help them work toward gaining independence. Another job fair is being planned for the fall.

# Do Something Today to Make a Difference Tomorrow



**YOU HOLD THE KEY** to the future of My Sisters' Place and Mercy Housing. Your giving makes a difference. There are many planned gift options that can honor your charitable intentions, while meeting your financial and tax planning goals.



Common options include:

- ▶ **BEQUEST BY WILL:** You can make a charitable gift by designating a percentage or specific dollar amount of your estate. Charitable bequests are generally free from estate taxes.
- ▶ **LIVING TRUSTS:** You can have a living trust created, whereby a person you designate as the trustee, is given the responsibility of managing your assets for the benefit of the eventual beneficiary. The living trust is designed to allow for the easy transfer of your assets, while bypassing the expensive and complex legal process.
- ▶ **RETIREMENT PLANS:** You can make a charitable gift using the beneficiary designations of your IRA, 401(k) or other retirement plan. This gift avoids estate and income taxation on the assets accumulated tax-free during your lifetime.
- ▶ **CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUSTS:** These are gifts that provide income. You can make a gift now, get immediate tax benefits and ensure that you or a loved one receives income payments for life, with the remainder going to My Sisters' Place and/or Mercy Housing.
- ▶ **FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS:** Most bank and financial institutions will allow you to name a charity as a beneficiary of your CDs, mutual funds and annuities.
- ▶ **LIFE INSURANCE BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS:** You can choose to name My Sisters' Place and/or Mercy Housing as a beneficiary of a percentage of your life insurance payment.
- ▶ **GIFTS OF APPRECIATED PROPERTY:** You can make a gift of long term appreciated assets including publicly traded securities, real estate and personal property (such as works of art, rare books, antiques). This will remove that property from your estate, possibly resulting in a reduction of estate taxes.

*Thank you* for your kind consideration.

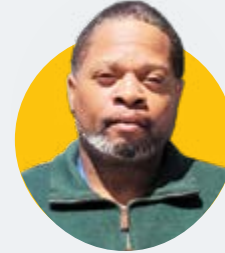
## IMPACTING LIVES

*Affecting Change*



*I went from sleeping in an abandoned vehicle during the COVID-19 pandemic to living inside a beautiful apartment, because Mercy chose to help and bless me with a second chance and an opportunity at a successful life and career."*

-GERALD



What a wonderful success story to tell! Gerald is one of countless others whose lives have been transformed because of the incredible kindness and generosity of people like you!

Because of your support in the past fiscal year we have accomplished the following:

### My Sisters' Place

**842**

families/individuals received rental assistance, affordable/supportive housing and residential supports

**50**

homeless families/individuals received help in finding new homes

**70**

children received support through youth education and enrichment programs

**135**

families/individuals participated in the Housing Mobility Program

### Mercy Housing

**64,853**

meals were served to those in need

**321**

families/individuals were helped through Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing programs.

**47%**

of those moved from homelessness into housing.

**168**

individuals with behavioral health challenges were assisted on the road to recovery and provided housing

*Thank you* for the role you play in helping us to empower people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to become independent, so that they may live and work with dignity and respect.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



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1. Volunteers from Travelers Insurance prepared and served sandwiches in the Friendship Center and distributed items to residents and community members from our food pantry.
2. The Farmington Valley Chapter of The Links, Inc. held its annual diaper drive for My Sisters' Place at the YG Club at Dunkin' Park.
3. St. Thomas and St. Timothy Parish of West Hartford's Social Action Committee ran a diaper drive and collected over \$2,000 to support the children of My Sisters' Place.
4. My Sisters' Place was a beneficiary of Ss. Isidore and Maria Parish's Lenten giving program, providing food, clothing, toiletries and household goods for the individuals and families we serve.
5. St. James Church in West Hartford continued its tradition of donating Easter baskets to the individuals and families served by Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and My Sisters' Place.
6. The Sports and Medical Sciences Academy, a Hartford magnet middle and high school, collected over 6,000 non-perishable food items for the food pantry at St. Elizabeth House.
7. The Mike and Mary Smile Club, with support from Lux, Bond and Green, provided a delicious Mardi Gras meal for the St. Elizabeth House residents.
8. My Sisters' Place was the January 2023 winner of Kia of East Hartford's Hearts for Hartford charity contest.
9. Aali's Heart held a braiding and hairstyling workshop for the women and girls of My Sisters' Place.
10. RBC Wealth Management donated cleaning supplies, household goods and diapers to My Sisters' Place.
11. Bulkeley High School North's Girl Scout Troop 82203 donated care kits to My Sisters' Place, a project the girls independently planned and executed using excess funds from the troop's cookie sales.

Due to space limitations we are unable to include photos of all the great support we receive. However, we are grateful to you all nonetheless.

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*You're Invited!*

**HOPE AND HOME CELEBRATION 2023**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13 | HARTFORD MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN 6PM—10PM

Help us celebrate Mercy Housing's 40 years of working to end homelessness, and the great work of My Sisters' Place

**MUSIC - OPEN BAR - DINNER - AUCTION**

**Discounted Tickets**

Tickets are \$125 through August 15. \*August 16 the price goes to \$150.

Details visit <https://bit.ly/HopeHome23> or scan the QR code

Questions call 860.808.2044 AScheidecker@MercyHousingCT.org



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