



seeds of hope and happiness. And we are committed to meeting the needs of those most vulnerable, especially during a changing economic climate, when many of us are still feeling the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of basic needs.

As always, I am beyond grateful for our generous supporters and remain inspired by the people who bring our mission to life each and every day.

Kara A. Capone

Chief Executive Officer



"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

- Theodore Roosevelt



HOPE AND HOME
CELEBRATION 2022

Just announced! Save the Date for our 4th Annual Hope and Home Celebration on October 14, 2022. Details and more on page 4.



Spring is a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can be. If the seasons change, so can we. Over the last several months, it has been truly remarkable to see life return to Downton Hartford as a post-pandemic "new normal" begins to set in. We at Community Housing Advocates are looking forward to returning to pre-pandemic levels of volunteering, events, and opportunities to engage our community in our vital mission. After all, "Happiness held is the seed; Happiness shared is the flower." (John Harrington)

In this time of new beginnings and growth, I am continually energized by the fresh ideas and creative problem solving that our staff brings to tackle the unique challenges and opportunities our organization faces. We are eager to be out in our community planting those


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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.

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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.

Holiday Wishes Come True

Our annual Holiday Wish Program provides individuals and families served by Mercy Housing and Shelter and My Sisters' Place with two physical gifts and one gift card of their choice, helping them fulfill their basic needs and experience joy. This year, 26 corporate and private donors from throughout Connecticut donated, wrapped, and delivered more than 900 gifts to our agency. By December 25, our individuals and families were opening colorful packages containing clothing, cookware, bedding, and more!

Christmas Wish CT provided a significant donation of toys and new clothing for children, in addition to treating the children in our programs a private holiday party at Nomad's Adventure Quest.

While many of the gifts requested help our individuals and families feel safe and comfortable in their homes, some are truly life changing. A person in one of Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation's programs requested a single gift this year: a bicycle. This person walks or takes the bus for daily activities, including

to meet with their case manager. A generous employee at Travelers fulfilled this individual's request, making their holiday wish come true.

If you are inspired to join our Holiday Wish program in 2022, email Colleen Burns at cburns@mercyhousingct.org! More information about the program will be distributed to interested parties this summer. ■

Thank you to our 2021 Holiday Wish Program donors:

Century 21 AllPoints
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Christ the King Parish
Christmas Wish CT
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The Headache Center
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Mary Jane Rises



Jane amongst the clothing she takes pride in organizing for those who need it.

It was the passing of her mother almost two years ago that was the pivotable moment for Mary Jane, or “Jane” as she prefers to be called. Her mother had never turned her back on her during 35 years of actively using crack cocaine and alcohol. Jane always had a place to go, a roof over her head, food to eat, and money to support her habit. But now her mother was gone.

Jane left Philadelphia, the only city she had ever lived in, and arrived in Hartford in May of 2020. After completing a local detox program, she arrived at the Women’s Recovery Program at Mercy Housing’s St. Elizabeth House. She had never been clean for a month at this point. She struggled in the beginning. She didn’t know how to surrender what she was used to doing for all of those years.

But she knew that she wanted and, more importantly, needed help.

As she worked through the program, Jane never felt alone. She credits her case manager, Serlena, for keeping her on track and for believing in her. “The staff at Mercy Housing saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself.”

“This was the best decision I’ve made in my life,” she said. Last June she celebrated one year in recovery with a large picnic attended by family and friends. People traveled from Philly to be there with her. It was at this celebration that Jane’s daughter forgave her. In Jane’s words: “My daughter, my only child, went through the addiction with me. Her forgiveness of me were the sweetest words that a mother could ever hear.”

Jane currently holds a 91 average in a GED class that Mercy staff encouraged her to take. She will graduate in May as a certified nursing assistant, and currently works at Hartford Hospital part-time. She holds a lease to her own apartment in Vernon and has her own car. In her spare time, she organizes donated clothing at Mercy Housing and runs a women’s group she calls “I Rise”. She says, “People, especially women, who are struggling with addiction have had their heads down for so long. We need to lift our heads, look at ourselves and start loving who we are.” Additionally, she wants people “to not look back, but focus on the future. There is always hope. Believe in yourself.”

Jane wishes her mother could see her now. ■

Friendship Center Receives \$100,000

During a time of increased food insecurity, Mercy Housing's Friendship Center received a donation of \$100,000 from Navigate Affordable Housing Partners. "This couldn't have come at a better time," said Kara Capone, CEO of Community Housing Advocates, the umbrella organization to Mercy Housing and Shelter. "Between COVID-related expenses and the rising costs of food, this generous donation will allow us to continue to meet the critical needs of our community."

One of only two day-shelters in Hartford, the Friendship Center offers services when many traditional

shelters are closed. Patrons can take advantage of shower and comfort facilities, a food pantry, access health screenings provided by graduate nursing student interns, as well as receive assistance accessing programs to meet their needs such as benefits, housing programs, behavioral health and substance abuse treatment, all through the outreach case manager. The Friendship Center also provides thousands of meals annually via its breakfast and lunch service provided Tuesday through Saturday.

Lisa McCarroll, CEO of Navigate Affordable Housing Partners, said: "Our goal with the Navigate Gives

Back grants is to help like-minded organizations fulfill their missions. Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation's commitment to eliminating homelessness aligns with our belief that everyone deserves safe, affordable, and quality housing. We appreciate everything you do for the community."

Navigate Affordable Housing Partners is a nonprofit that actively works to enhance all aspects of the housing industry to ensure that people have access to quality, livable housing choices. They are headquartered in Alabama with offices in Mississippi, Virginia, and Connecticut. ■



Pictured above: Tom Gerundo, Contract Administration Coordinator for Navigate Housing Partners' CT office, presents the check within the Friendship Center to Kara Capone, CEO of Community Housing Advocates.

Thank You, Travelers!



Despite the numerous preventative protocols put in place, Mercy Housing and Shelter was impacted by the Omicron variant of COVID. The staff of St. Elizabeth House were affected, including the chefs who prepare three meals a day, seven days a week for the residents as well as prepare two meals a day for the Friendship Center five times a week.

Board of Director, Elisabeth “Lisa” Hoisl, is a Vice President at Travelers and knew her

company was donating meals to local organizations while their employee cafeterias were closed. Lisa explained the dilemma at St. Elizabeth House and secured 125 prepared meals, five days a week, for the months of January and February.

On behalf of the hundreds who were fed, thank you, Travelers, and Lisa, for this generous support during a difficult time! ■



Hope and Home 2022

Community Housing Advocates will be celebrating the efforts of Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and My Sisters' Place in the fight to end homelessness at the 4th Annual Hope and Home Celebration; to be held Friday, October 14 from 6-10 PM at the Hartford Marriott Downtown. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Friendship Center at Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and the Youth

Program at My Sisters' Place. Visit hopeandhomet.com for more information. ■



CHA Board of Directors and Executive Leadership at our 3rd Annual Hope and Home Celebration.

My Sisters' Place Celebrates 40th Anniversary!

In 1982, a group of social services organizations, along with two nuns Sister Sue Ann Shay and Sister Judy Beaumont, became alarmed at the number of homeless women and children in Greater Hartford. In order to address the needs of the homeless, they pooled their resources and incorporated themselves under the name My Sisters' Place.

Since that time, My Sisters' Place has grown and flourished while remaining steadfast to its mission: ending homelessness by empowering women, families, and others in Greater Hartford to achieve independence and stability in their community by providing housing and supportive services. To commemorate its 40th anniversary, My Sisters' Place will be honoring those who have made an impact upon the organization at the 4th Annual Hope & Home Event in October and highlighting its programs and services through a multimedia campaign. Keep an eye on your inbox to see everything My Sisters' Place has in store for this year! ■



Transforming lives since 1982

Annual Report

Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and My Sisters' Place are pleased to announce that their annual reports are now available! Both organizations are proud to acknowledge the donors who have given to them over the past fiscal year.

The reports can be found by clicking [here](#). If you wish to receive a physical copy, please email Colleen Burns, Communications and Development Associate, at cburns@mercyhousingct.org with your mailing address. ■

