

## CEO INSIGHTS

### Winter—the Deadliest Time to Be Homeless

NORMALLY IN THESE NEWSLETTERS, we try to highlight all the good that we together, have done. And you will see that here – we do a lot of good for so many deserving people and we make a difference.

However, as I am sitting at my desk writing this now, I am sitting with the knowledge that as of December 6th, before the official start of winter, five people have already died while trying to live outdoors, in homeless encampments in and around Greater Hartford. Five people died of exposure, of self-medication, of sadness, of loneliness, of poverty, of lack of opportunity. They died, in a tent, laying on cardboard bedding, with holes in their shoes and wrapped in donated blankets, some with walkers or canes by their side. And when they died, it was just another day in Hartford. There was no press coverage. There was no notice at all – they remained invisible in death as they were invisible in life. This happened in our beautiful capital city, in one of the richest states, in the richest country, in the world. This. Shouldn't. Happen. We have the resources to end homelessness. What we are lacking is the will to do so. The need was too great and the funding too limited.



Continued on inside ➤

## DONOR spotlight

### Hartford Federal Credit Union Shows Support for Those in Need

We are pleased to shine the spotlight on the Hartford Federal Credit Union (HCFU) in this edition of our Community Building newsletter.



HFCU President & CEO Ed Danek (center) presents check to some of the staff at St. Elizabeth House.

At the end of the year last year we were delighted to receive a phone call out of the blue from HCFU letting us know that they had earmarked \$10,000 for Mercy Housing, and that they wanted to be our first Gold Sponsor for the 2024 Hope & Home Celebration!

This generous donation is part of the **Hartford Federal Credit Union** Gives campaign – the Credit Union's \$250,000 Community Giving Initiative. In March of last year HCFU also presented My Sisters' Place with a check for \$10,000!

We are grateful that both Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place were chosen among several other worthy organizations to receive such generous gifts.

Thank you Hartford Federal Credit Union!

Continued from first page ♥

My ask is not only for your financial support, but for your voice. Lend your voice to those with none and tell the powers that be, including the Governor along with your local, state, and federal representatives that you believe no one should die from homelessness. No One.

Tell them that you financially support the work of Mercy and My Sisters' Place, and they should too. Your voice matters and your call counts more than you know. For every one call they receive, it represents 100 other individuals that feel the same way.

At one point or another in our lives, we all have needed or will need help and kindness from others. And I want to thank you for providing that help, for extending your kindness, year over year, season by season.

*Kara A. Capone*  
Chief Executive Officer



## SECURITY DEPOSIT PROGRAM GETS BOOST FROM TOLLAND CHURCH

They started out with a goal of \$1,500 hoping to raise enough money to help one local family struggling to come up with funds needed to get into an apartment. However, after an anonymous donor offered to match their donations, the congregants of the **United Congregational Church of Tolland** raised close to \$6,500 for My Sisters' Place Security Deposit Program.

This program provides funds to those in need of security deposits and/or first month's rent. Coming up with those funds on their own is a huge barrier for those trying to stay out of the homeless system.

Information about MSP's program was shared with church members and their donations began coming in – including \$200 from the church's community outreach fund.

Their donation will be used to support MSP's program offered through the First Congregational Church of Vernon, which assists families in need in Tolland County.

*Thank you,* United Congregational Church of Tolland, for making a difference!

# Mercy Programs are Keys to Ending *Homelessness*

**ENDING HOMELESSNESS** begins by preventing it from occurring in the first place and by helping those experiencing homelessness find a home. This is the purpose of two of Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation's key programs: the Diversion Program and the Rapid Rehousing Program.



Mercy's Rapid Rehousing and Diversion Team (left to right): Lisa Rosario, Diversion Team Supervisor, Stephanie Corbin, Director of Programs, and Dave Dymant, Rapid Rehousing Program Manager

## 🏠 Diversion Program

The goal of the Diversion Program is to keep families and individuals experiencing a housing crisis in their current home. Mercy's Diversion team uses proven strategies to help those on the brink of becoming homeless by connecting them to natural supports, alternative housing options and mainstream resources.

"We will often have conversations with their landlord, roommate or family members to try to resolve issues that lead to the client's housing to become at risk," explained Stephanie Corbin, Director of Diversion and Rapid Rehousing for Mercy Housing. "Sometimes we are able to offer financial assistance to help with housing-related expenses, and we ensure that they are connected with important resources."

Unfortunately, the Diversion Program is facing a staffing and resource challenge, which directly impacts the number of people who can be served.

## 🏠 Rapid Rehousing Program

The Rapid Rehousing Program helps those who have become homeless to find housing as quickly as possible. These individuals are referred to the Mercy staff by the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network (CAN). Once they are enrolled in the Rapid Rehousing program, they are assigned a case manager who assists them with finding housing as well as provides time limited rental assistance to give them time to get back on their feet.

Corbin says programs like Diversion and Rapid Rehousing are crucial in the war against homelessness, but it is an uphill battle. "Shelters are currently overcrowded," she explains. "Meanwhile, there is a statewide shortage of Rapid Rehousing slots, which causes a bottleneck in the system keeping people stuck in shelters for a significantly longer period of time."

*We need your help!*

Contact your elected representative today and advocate for increased annualized funding for these critical Diversion and Rapid Rehousing resources.

Scan the QR code with your smart device to find your legislators and how to contact them.



## VOLUNTEER spotlight

# Holocaust Survivor's Memories Used to Help Children at MSP

AS THE FOUNDER of *The Book Room* run by My Sisters' Place, Weiner is very proud of her work to provide an assortment of books, motivating activities and a welcoming place to read for the formerly homeless children residing at the Sue Ann Shay Apartments on Pliny Street in Hartford.

An avid reader and lover of books, Weiner, a former educator, says she still feels a pang in her heart when she recalls watching the Nazis loot Jewish bookstores and burn the books in large bonfires as a young Jewish girl growing up in Vienna, Austria, as World War II was about to break out.

Born in Austria in 1931, Weiner recalls having a happy life as a child filled with piano lessons, ice skating and dancing. However, that life changed drastically when the Nazis invaded and started their campaign of hatred against the Jews. Signs went up forbidding Jews from entering public places. Other signs forbade people from doing business in Jewish owned establishments. Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend public schools.



***Live your life one day at a time. That much you can handle. And assume that one day things will get better.***

-Words of encouragement from holocaust survivor  
**RUTH WEINER** to those who are struggling in life.



Holocaust Survivor and founder of *The Book Room*, Ruth Weiner, reads to children from My Sisters' Place

Life for Weiner and her family quickly became filled with fear and danger. On Kristallnacht, a day of extreme violence, just as the Gestapo was closing in on Weiner's family, a non-Jewish family friend was able to help them escape their apartment. Weiner subsequently was able to flee Austria to England with the Kindertransport, alone, afraid and unable to speak the language.

Eventually, Weiner was fortunate enough to be reunited with her parents, and the family ended up in the United States as refugees in Hartford. A Jewish social service agency helped the family to locate for a time in the small, back bedroom of another refugee family's apartment on Garden Street. That little haven was just a few doors down from what is now the Sue Ann Shay Apartments operated by My Sisters' Place.

Weiner went on to become a successful educator, wife, mother and great-grandmother. In 1989 this holocaust survivor, who was once a refugee in need of a place to call home, joined the Board of Directors of My Sisters' Place – an organization that serves those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. She is still active with the organization to this day.

Weiner is currently being featured in a 16-minute educational film, which was just released by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities in conjunction with Voices of Hope. She continues to teach children about the events of the Holocaust, and to volunteer on the Program Committee for My Sisters' Place.

*Thank you, Ruth.*



## FACEBOOK FUNDRAISERS

### AN EASY WAY TO HELP

Here is an easy way for you to not only raise funds for those in need in our community, but to also spread awareness about the good work that **Mercy Housing** and **My Sisters' Place** is doing.

Simply create a Facebook Fundraiser with your own messaging about why you support us, and then share it with friends and family asking them to support us too.

#### Just follow these easy steps:

Create a fundraiser for a nonprofit organization

- 1 > Sign in to Facebook.
- 2 > On the left, click **Fundraising**.  
*(Tip: If you don't see the **Fundraising** option on the left, click **See more**)*
- 3 > On the left, click **Raise Money**.
- 4 > Click **Nonprofit Organization**  
*You can either scroll to find the non-profit you wish to raise funds for OR type either **Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation** or **My Sisters' Place** in the Search Bar*

- 5 > Select the nonprofit organization.
- 6 > On the left, enter: The amount of money you want to raise AND select US currency for type of funds.
- 7 > Click **Create**.

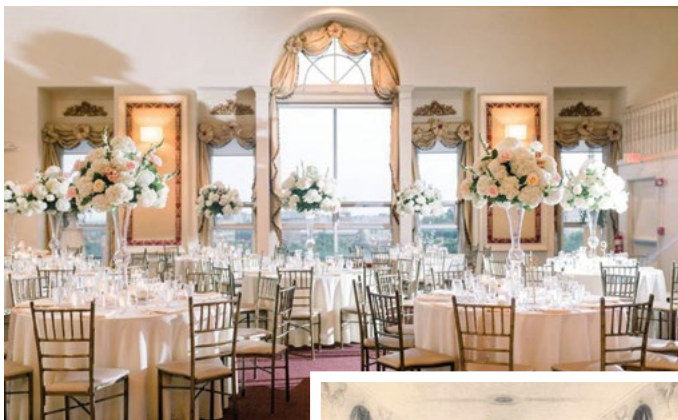
*You'll see a pop-up screen where you can invite your friends to donate, share the fundraiser on your feed, or donate to the fundraiser yourself.*

ENJOY OLD WORLD HARTFORD AT THE



## HOPE AND HOME CELEBRATION 2024

**PLANNING IS ALREADY UNDERWAY** for the 2024 Hope & Home Celebration to benefit Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place. This year's event is going to be held at the historic Bond Ballroom on **Friday, October 25, 2024.**



The Bond Ballroom is located inside the former Bond Hotel located at 338 Asylum Street in Hartford just around the corner from the XL



Center. The Bond Hotel was built in stages by Harry S. Bond in 1921, and has hosted thousands of weddings and events in the span of more than 100 years. The ballroom itself is just as exquisite today as it was back in the day. What adds to the ambiance of the space with its high vaulted ceilings and myriad of windows all around, is the incredible view of Hartford from the 11th floor – especially at night. No worries, there are three well functioning elevators.

Outreach has begun to secure sponsors as well as silent and live auction donations. Dinner this year will feature food stations including a carving station, an Italian station and more. We will also be offering an open bar this year as well.

So be sure to get this on your calendar, as you won't want to miss this wonderful event of the season!

**INTERESTED IN SPONSORSHIP  
OR DONATING AN AUCTION ITEM?**

Please contact Annette at  
[ascheidecker@mercyhousingct.org](mailto:ascheidecker@mercyhousingct.org)  
or 860.808.2044.

## IMPACTING LIVES

*Affecting Change*



*When a situation comes up, I know that I can reach out to the staff at Mercy Housing, and they will provide the support I need.*

—MIGUEL

When Miguel first enrolled in Mercy Housing's program he seemed to avoid staff at all costs including phone calls, texts and home visits. But after the tenacious efforts of Carmen McDonald, his case manager, to keep him on track, Miguel realized that Carmen and the rest of the team truly are there to help him. He opened up to them and became more engaged. Miguel is now doing exceptionally well and is attending recovery support groups to maintain his sobriety and is attending church to maintain a positive outlook on life.

Miguel's is one of countless success stories that we are able to share thanks to the dedication of a caring team of professionals and your support. Because of you we were able to provide the following in fiscal year 2023:

**MY SISTERS' PLACE**

**191**

people were helped through supportive housing programs

**54**

families/individuals were moved to areas of higher opportunity through the Housing Mobility Program

**MERCY HOUSING**

**81,029**

meals were served to those in need

**947**

people were diverted from homelessness through diversion programs

**199**

individuals with special service needs were served in one of our residential programs

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



- 1-2** Bruce Maneeley and donors from the Mike and Mary Smile Club's Thanksgiving Turkey campaign helped provide 800 pounds of Thanksgiving turkey for the individuals and families of Mercy Housing.
- 3** The annual Gabel Basket Brigade provided Turkeys and Thanksgiving side dishes for families served by My Sisters' Place.
- 4** Volunteers from Otis Elevator created "Cozy Kits" for participants in need.
- 5** Mercy and My Sisters' Place's November Job Fair attracted 30 employers from Greater Hartford.
- 6** HCC Global Financial Products spent their Giving Tuesday turning the Youth Room at My Sisters' Place into the Polar Express Train Station for their upcoming holiday party.

- 7** Brown and Brown Insurance donated Thanksgiving side dishes for families served by Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place.
- 8** Mercy Housing was a beneficiary of JT Connect's annual Mega Pumpkin Pie Bake at Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford.
- 9** The R.J. Kinsella Magnet School of the Arts Senior Student Council held a food drive to benefit Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place. Participating organizations included the Law Offices of Bruce J. Bergman, Nutmeg Bookkeeping and Accounting, and Price Rite of Windsor.
- 10** Thank you to UConn's School of Business' Office of Diversity Initiatives for their incredible gift of a van filled with toys for the children of Mercy and MSP for the Holiday Wishes campaign. The toys were donated by students as their admission to a special gala event in December.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

development@mercyhousingct.org  
860.808.2044

For more information visit  
[www.ctcha.org](http://www.ctcha.org)  
[www.mercyhousingct.org](http://www.mercyhousingct.org)  
[www.sistersplacect.org](http://www.sistersplacect.org)

#### CONNECT WITH US!



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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## MERCY TO BEGIN PILOT OUTREACH PROGRAM

THOSE LIVING ON THE STREETS IN THE HARTFORD AREA  
ABOUT TO SEE A WHOLE NEW APPROACH TO RECEIVING HELP.

Thanks to funding from the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS), Mercy is launching a new program called **Homeless to Housing** or **H2H** for short. This innovative initiative calls for outreach teams to take to the streets to find and connect with homeless individuals where they are.

The H2H Outreach team will literally be walking the streets and searching parks, underpasses and anywhere those without homes may be during the nights and early morning hours to try to provide them with intensive wrap-around services and immediate supports.

Rasheeda Priester, the program's supervisor, says the mission of this outreach team is to see the individual through to stability.

"This program is unique because unlike other programs, we will continue to work with the individual through the housing process until they are stable, able to sustain themselves and remain housed," explained Priester.

Mercy's H2H team of five is kicking off their street outreach initiative in January.



Rasheeda Priester,  
H2H Supervisor

**ANNOUNCING**  
**MERCY HOUSING HOCKEY NIGHT**



**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23**  
**7:05 P.M.**  
**MASSMUTUAL CENTER**  
**SPRINGFIELD**



Join us as the T-Birds host Mercy Housing for a night of fun and hockey! A portion of your ticket purchase is being **DONATED** to **MERCY HOUSING & SHELTER CORPORATION.**

Scan the QR code to purchase your discounted Attack Zone Tickets  
**\$23.00**

