

# COMMUNITY BUILDING

SPRING 2024

## Monthly Health Clinics Now Available at the *Friendship Center*

### CEO INSIGHTS



I was reminded recently, when leading a learning collaborative about supportive housing for formerly homeless, elderly individuals, that housing is indeed healthcare. When I started working in the human services field in the 90's, we saw a lot of people come into shelter with full-blown AIDS. Now, when you have a compromised immune system, the last place you want to be is in a shelter. Back then, we thought it would be a good idea to place people back into housing for them to die with dignity. Instead, what we found was that they got better. You see, when a person is housed, they no longer need to solely focus on trying to figure out how to get basic needs for that day – food, shower, warmth, safety, etc. In housing, they have that. When they were housed, they could focus on their health, attending medical appointments, and taking a very complicated regiment of medications. And they didn't die; they got better. And then they did better.

Insurance companies have known that housing is healthcare for years. They have been able to estimate the lifespan of someone solely by their zip code. Well, what happens when you have no zip code? The average lifespan for an American is 80 years old. For a person who is chronically homeless and living on the streets, it is 65. So, when we talk about housing the elderly homeless we are really focusing on people who are 55 and

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Conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and tuberculosis are sometimes **3 to 6 times HIGHER** among homeless individuals than that of the general population.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

To address the deep need for health care for the impoverished, what started out as offering simple blood sugar and blood pressure screenings periodically has developed into a much broader health clinic now being offered monthly by the Hartford HealthCare Neighborhood Health team to those in need at Mercy Housing's Friendship Center.

"Neighborhood Health came to be as a result of lessons learned throughout the COVID-19 pandemic," says Kelly Toth, APRN, Director Neighborhood Healthcare. "After opening mass testing and vaccine sites during the pandemic, we became acutely aware that there were cohorts within our communities that were left behind. Due to various social barriers these vulnerable populations could not access necessary testing and vaccines so the concept of mobile testing and vaccine was operationalized."

The free clinics cover a multitude of patient services including visits with an Advanced Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant to address urgent needs such as the flu, stomach aches, infections, family planning, minor burns, lacerations, sprains, rashes and medication questions. They also offer medical screenings, lab tests, immunizations, referrals and follow-up care.

According to David Mingoelli, PA-C, with Hartford HealthCare Neighborhood Health, the team typically consists 6 or 7 team members – utilizing 1 or 2 registrars, a provider, nurse, medical assistant, a community care manager and sometimes a Public Safety Officer.

"One of the things we enjoy most about providing services for Mercy Housing is the opportunity to develop relationships with people who stay around the area and who come to the Friendship Center regularly," Mingoelli explained. "We can't do our job to treat people if they don't trust us. Connecting and building a level of trust is the first step in helping people get the care they need."

**Mercy Housing's clinics provided by Hartford HealthCare are offered the 4th Tuesday of every month from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Friendship Center, 118 Main Street, Hartford.**

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older, because biologically they are really around 65-70.

The co-occurring illnesses we help manage for the people we serve have changed over the years, but our dedication to serving them remains the same. With older adults, we not only have to focus on behavioral health issues, but also memory impairment, frailty, medication administration, nutrition, isolation, diminishing social networks, and death and dying. However, with housing and supports, people without homes can live longer, fuller lives. We as service providers see that there is a widening gap in the field for this kind and amount of elderly housing needed in our community. And we are dedicated to continuing to fill those gaps and meet the needs of the people we serve.

*Kara A. Capone*  
Chief Executive Officer

## CHA Board Welcomes Two New Members

We are pleased to announce that during their January meeting the Community Housing Advocates Board of Directors voted unanimously to accept two new Board members.



**MARK TUREK** has been the Manager of University Relations at The Hartford since 2021, leading recruitment and early talent program efforts. He has an extensive background in Human Resources, working in the field of Talent Acquisition. Mark has a BA in Economics from the University of Connecticut.



**LEAH CHAPMAN** has been the Associate Director, Value Stream Leader at Collins Aerospace since 2022. She has a diverse background in project and program management, business strategy and continued improvement. Leah has a BA in English from the University of Connecticut and an MBA from Albertus Magnus College.

We welcome Mark and Leah as they join in our mission to end homelessness through the services provided by Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place.



## What We Do For The Love of *Children*

**CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED** homelessness often suffer trauma and have other unique needs, something Kristen Wieber, Coordinator of the For the Love of Children Youth Program at My Sisters' Place (MSP), knows all too well.

"They haven't had a lot of consistency," Kristen explains. "Their life experiences often include worrying about their home life instead of focusing on school, and not having a stable friend group due to frequent moves."

There are currently 75 children (ages 0 - 18) who are being served by this program along with their families living in the Sue Ann Shay Place apartments as well as those living in MSP's Permanent Supportive Housing program.

The youth program remediates the impact the many stressors homelessness causes by providing holistic forms of support. Kristen works with new families to ensure they have access to basic needs and the children successfully adjust to new routines. The program offers one-to-one tutoring to improve academics, and arts and physical activities to encourage creativity and socialization. Finally, activities are planned that allow families to spend time together and for their children to experience being a kid again.

Structure is another important component of the youth program. Because all of the children are from My Sisters' Place, participants have a core peer group with whom to build friendships.

The structure and support provided by the youth program allows children to build emotional intelligence along with their academic and social skills. Recently, a child built a "house for the homeless" out of Legos for a youth program activity, saying it was in gratitude for her home and in empathy for those without a place to live.

Kristen heads up this important program, assisted by part-time youth worker, Lakawun Boyd, as well as groups of regular volunteers that the children become familiar with and trust over time.



**75 CHILDREN**

**(AGES 0 - 18)  
ARE BEING  
SERVED BY THIS  
PROGRAM**

### HOW YOU CAN HELP THE YOUTH PROGRAM

**TO VOLUNTEER EMAIL:**  
[volunteer@mercyhousingct.org](mailto:volunteer@mercyhousingct.org)

**TO DONATE A NEEDED ITEM GO TO:**  
<https://amzn.to/3SZrGXC>



# Max Cares Foundation and The Bushnell Warm Hearts for *My Sisters' Place*



**THANKS TO THE MAX CARES FOUNDATION,** The Bushnell, our volunteers, and those who attended Disney's Frozen performances, My Sisters' Place received a wonderful \$5,000 donation and a chance to promote the work we do!

Over the course of fifteen performances of this Broadway hit at The Bushnell, ticketholders were encouraged to stop by the My Sisters' Place table to write the name of a loved one on a paper snowflake to be displayed on the walls at the theater. Each snowflake represented a \$1 donation from the Max Cares Foundation to My Sisters' Place.

Dubbed the Snowflakes of Love, this campaign was the brainchild of Charlie Myers, Director of Events & Patron Services for The Bushnell, who wanted to create an event that would help teach children attending the show the importance of helping others.

Once Myers contacted the Max Cares Foundation, they were quick to come on board and offered to fund the promotion on behalf of My Sisters' Place for up to \$5,000.

"Max Cares Foundation is happy to support My Sister's Place as the Foundation's mission aligns well with My Sister's Place and its commitment to end homelessness and provide critical support for women and families in need in the Greater Hartford community through their housing programs and other support services," commented Maura Horan, Board member and Secretary, Max Cares Foundation. We are also very grateful to a wonderful group of volunteers who were determined to get 5,000 snowflakes on the wall, ensuring that we qualified for the maximum donation amount! Averaging about 400 – 500 snowflakes per show, the Snowflakes of Love campaign was a huge success.

*Thank you* to our amazing volunteers who used their evenings and weekends to help us reach our goal: Jessica Burns, Steve McNulty, Kelly Britt, Wilma Barbosa, Ali Musumeci, Leslie Thompson, Diane Bengston, Fatima Vilar, Laura Rankin, Linda LaVallee, Cheryl Bermami-McCann, Michele Sexton, Kara Obermeier, Dave Nastrie and Kasha Nastrie.

**Max Cares Foundation Board Members Tim Buckley (Vice Chair) and Jenn McKenna added their snowflakes to the wall of thousands.**



## DONOR spotlight

# Mary Jean Kilfoil Leaves a Legacy of Love



She cared about the lives of others throughout her lifetime, and even after her passing former West Hartford resident Mary Jean Kilfoil made

sure to leave a legacy that will impact the lives of countless individuals at Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation as well as at My Sisters' Place.

In January of this year, we were saddened to hear that this long-time supporter had passed away. We were also astonished and exceedingly grateful to receive the news that Mary Jean included both Mercy Housing and My Sisters' place in her estate plans. We were notified by her executor that she had left \$798,000 to Mercy and another \$57,000 to My Sisters' Place.

In 1991 Mary Jean began donating to Mercy Housing twice annually, giving hundreds of dollars at a time. In her thirty-two years of giving to our organizations, Mary Jean Kilfoil donated more than \$865,000 to make a difference in the lives of those in need.

Mary Jean's recent bequest to Mercy has been earmarked for a much-needed five-million-dollar capital campaign that is currently in the planning stages. Her gift to My Sisters' Place will be used for ongoing programs and support services.

"We were already incredibly thankful to Ms. Kilfoil for her kindness and generosity throughout the years, but the fact that she planned ahead to make sure that we were included in her final estate giving, just overwhelms us all," explained Kara Capone, Community Housing Advocates CEO. "Her legacy of caring will live on in the people we serve."

*Thank you,* Mary Jean. We will remember your kindness.

### IF YOU WOULD LIKE INFORMATION ON PLANNED GIVING,

please contact  
Annette Scheidecker at  
Development@MercyHousingCT.org  
or call 860.808.2044.

# BE IN-THE-KNOW

## The Issues

### Has The Call for Help Been Heard?

**HOMELESSNESS IS AT A CRISIS LEVEL** and an all-time high in recent years in Connecticut, and something needs to change.

That was the cry of homeless advocates and state legislators during the CT CAN End Homelessness news conference at the State Capitol in February.

The CT CAN End Homelessness initiative is asking the legislature to invest \$20 million to stabilize and strengthen Connecticut's Homeless Response System. This includes:

#### **Annualize Cold Weather Emergency Response Program Funding**

As of January, over 800 people were sleeping outside - many turned away from shelters and warming centers due to lack of capacity. Consistent funding is needed to keep people from freezing outside in the winter.

#### **Strengthen Shelter and Outreach Capacity**

82% of employees crucial to the Homeless Response System are just one pay-check away from being homeless themselves. Homeless and housing service organizations need funding for necessary staff and operational costs.



**Kara Capone, Community Housing Advocates CEO, speaking at the CT CAN End Homelessness news conference at the State Capitol.**

#### **Increase and Annualize Funding for the Coordinated Access Network (CAN) Backbone Agencies**

CANs - the critical agencies that lead the emergency Homeless Response System are primarily funded with one-time or temporary resources. Consistent funding is needed to prevent system interruptions and maximize performance.

#### **Increase and Annualize Funding for Diversion and CAN Hubs**

Considered one of the most cost-effective methods to preventing homelessness - the Diversion system lost 57 full-time positions due to funding cuts in 2023. Current funding is only temporary. Additional ongoing funding is needed to increase diversion rates and to connect people to critical support and resources to resolve their housing crisis through the CAN Hubs.

#### **Annualize Flexible Funding Subsidy Pool**

Regular funding is needed to subsidize housing and provide flexible assistance to tailor solutions to help individuals navigate their unique paths to stable housing with dignity.



TO CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVES SCAN THE CODE - WHILE THERE IS TIME TO HAVE A VOICE IN THE BUDGET PROCESS.

## IMPACTING LIVES *Affecting Change*



### A SAFE PLACE FOR A FRESH START



*I am still looking over my shoulder at all times. I don't think I'm ever not going to do that, but Mercy is one of the first places that I feel safe.*

-"ABBY"

Imagine not sleeping for days and trying desperately to find a dumpster to sleep in that no one else knows about, which doesn't reek of urine - a place that you can set up a booby trap so that you can hear if someone is coming for you while you try to sleep?

That was Abby's reality as a woman living on the streets - trying to survive not only the elements, but also would-be attackers.

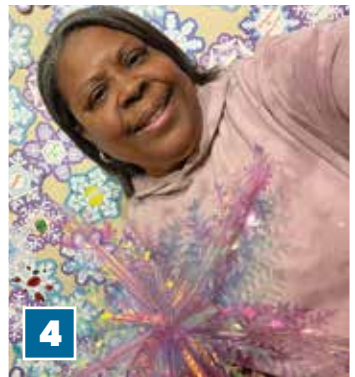
Abby's life as a married housewife and caregiver took an insidious turn when her husband's addiction spiraled out of control, and soon she followed suit.

"I was sick and was trying to do whatever I could. Then came eviction after eviction after eviction," she describes. "The next thing I knew I was homeless - no family, no vehicle, no cat, no dog - no anything."

Fortunately, Abby found the help that she needed on her road to stability. Our community partners sent her to Mercy Housing's Women's Program at St. Elizabeth House at 118 Main Street in Hartford. This important program which is funded by the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, offers short-term 90-day housing and support services for women in recovery, works to transition them from treatment to living and thriving in the community. Up to 22 women are served here at any given time.

*Thanks to you - our wonderful supporters - and our incredible staff, Mercy served 103 women through the Women's Program in 2023.*

*Together we are impacting lives.*



- 1-2** Trinity College Athletics gave back to the city of Hartford during their spring semester by serving lunch to residents of St. Elizabeth House and visitors to the Friendship Center, and opening our food pantry to the community.
- 3-4** Volunteers from Otis Elevator, Robinson + Cole, Andersen Financial and the CHA Board of Directors tabled at The Bushnell for My Sisters' Place's "Snowflakes of Love" campaign.
- 5** Mrs. Musumano and Mrs. Reynolds' first grade classes at Renbrook School held a winter coat and accessories drive for children and families in need.

- 6** Lux's Restaurant honored a family member by bringing its annual "Feed the World" event to St. Elizabeth House.
- 7-8** Eversource volunteers helped organize and sort donations in the food and clothing pantries at St. Elizabeth House.
- 9-10** Volunteers from the Women Advancement Initiative at the University of Hartford organized the food and clothing pantries at Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and cleaned the Youth Room at My Sisters' Place.

**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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Early Bird **DISCOUNT** Tickets Now on Sale!




**HOPE AND HOME**  
 CELEBRATION 2024  
 To Benefit My Sisters' Place and Mercy Housing

**OCTOBER 25**  
 Bond Ballroom

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*The Event of the Season!*



Enjoy a Night of  
**HOCKEY**  
 to benefit My Sisters' Place!


 VS
 

**FRIDAY, MARCH 29**  
 at the XL Center in Hartford

Tickets \$23.36 | Game starts at 7 PM

A portion of tickets sold using this QR Code goes to My Sisters' Place

Must order tickets by  
 Friday, March 15 by 5pm  
 Tickets will be sent to your email

