

# COMMUNITY BUILDING

SUMMER 2024



## **NEW** Beaumont Lofts Affordable Housing Units *Now Open*

### CEO INSIGHTS



#### How to stem the rising tide of homelessness: Affordable Housing

Simply stated, we cannot stem the rising tide of homelessness, let alone end homelessness, without affordable housing. Both the creation and preservation of affordable housing is a crucial component of the housing continuum. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the inability to afford housing is the key driver to the increases in homelessness we are seeing today.

In Connecticut, for example, there is only a 2% rental vacancy rate. That means that for ALL the rentals in our state, not just affordable housing, only 2% are available to rent. Because of high mortgage interest rates and lack of supply, people who would be buying homes are staying in the rental market, thus making it harder for other renters to find a place to live. That coupled with rising rents, has driven many people to become food insecure, housing unstable, and unhoused.

#### What is affordable housing?

Unfortunately, there are a lot of misconceptions about affordable housing. Plainly put, affordable housing is housing that is affordable to you. The federal government defines it as housing that does not consume more than 30% of your income. Therefore, who can access affordable housing depends on annual household income. In the greater Hartford area, this means that a family of four can earn up to \$94,500 and still be

*Continued on inside* ▶

**AMIDST A CRITICAL HOUSING SHORTAGE** in Connecticut, My Sisters' Place (MSP) is thrilled to announce the opening of our brand-new affordable and supportive housing complex – **Beaumont Lofts**.



A tribute to the compassionate legacy of Judith Beaumont, one of our co-founders, the site is located at 102 Pliny Street in Hartford, adjacent to the Sue Ann Shay Place apartments – also owned by MSP. This strategic location will foster a sense of community and ensure continuity in the services we provide.



Dormant since 2017, the building has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving into a welcoming haven for those who may have never had the means to live in a new home. This transformation not only revitalizes a property in the Clay Arsenal neighborhood, but also opens doors to new possibilities for its future occupants.

"A fundamental aim of this project was to ensure that the quality of the work met the standards of a home that any of us would take pride in living in," explained CEO Kara Capone. "This underscores our commitment to excellence and empathy, aligning our efforts with the perspective of those we serve."

To reside at the Beaumont Lofts, individuals must qualify for affordable housing and apply. The \$8 million project received funding from various resources, with significant support from the Connecticut Department of Housing.

"When individuals and families live in safe, sanitary, and energy efficient dwellings in the neighborhood of their choice with good schools and good public safety – it makes for a better overall quality of life," explained Connecticut Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno. "We're proud to fund this project and will continue to support projects like this throughout the state." Other renovation funders include the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, Corporation for Supportive Housing, and Eversource.

"There is no question that this project would never have gotten off the ground if it were not for the incredible support of our funders. We are incredibly grateful to them all," added Capone.

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eligible for affordable housing. That does not fit the stereotype most people imagine.

At CHA, we are committed to not only helping those in need find affordable housing, but we are committed to developing it as well. We are proud to have recently opened the Beaumont Lofts, with 24 new units of affordable housing. Read more about this new complex and our mission behind it in the front-page article in this newsletter – then consider ways to support the development of affordable housing in your community. **After all, everyone needs a place to call home.**

*Kara A. Capone*  
Chief Executive Officer



## Webster Bank to Increase Your Donations by 15%!

We are so excited to be partnering with the Travelers Championship Birdies for Charity program once again!

This wonderful opportunity to raise funds to end homelessness has been made even more incredible this year thanks to the kindness of Webster Bank.

For every dollar that you donate using the links below, Webster Bank will increase your donation to us by 15% through June 25th!

*Thank you* for considering this chance to have your donation matched on behalf of our mission to end homelessness.



Mercy



MSP

## DONOR spotlight

### TD Bank Awards \$150k to My Sisters' Place

Fantastic news for My Sisters' Place! The TD Charitable Foundation chose My Sisters' Place to receive \$150,000 as part of their 2024 Housing for Everyone grant.

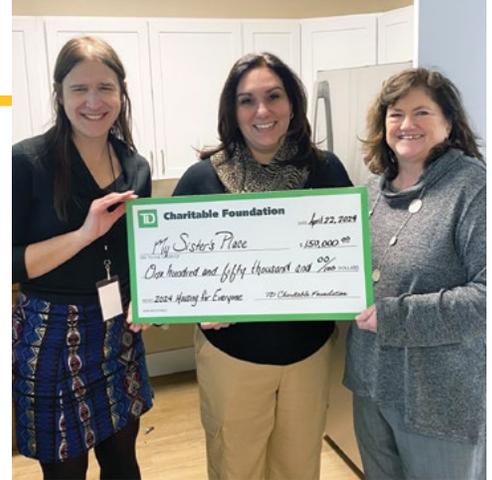
In May, TD Bank awarded \$7 million to 37 non-profits supporting housing for marginalized communities in seventeen states across the bank's Maine to Florida footprint and in Michigan.

"These organizations are making it their primary mission to help relieve some of the most vulnerable members of our community – those who are unsheltered or experiencing homelessness due to higher eviction rates as pandemic-era programs have ended or financial insecurity grows through inflation or other factors," said Paige Carlson-Heim, Director of the TD Charitable Foundation.

**My Sisters' Place was the only organization to receive funding in the state of Connecticut.** The funds will be used for support services at the new Beaumont Lofts 24-unit affordable housing complex.

"We were absolutely overjoyed when we learned that we were receiving funding from TD Bank," commented Kara Capone, CEO of My Sisters' Place. "This money will help us to pay for critical support services, which are the life blood of our organization – and have been greatly underfunded. We couldn't be more grateful to the TD Charitable Foundation for recognizing the importance of the work we do."

*Thank you,* TD Bank!



(Left to right) Grants Mgr. Lisa Pawlik, CEO Kara Capone & COO Kathy Shaw

## Items Needed for Back-to-School Event



**THE YOUTH PROGRAM** team at My Sisters' Place is gearing up for their annual Back to School Event for the children and families at Sue Ann Shay Place scheduled for August 7th.



Not only does this popular event include a delicious picnic barbecue dinner, games and prizes for the kids, but it also includes a backpack and school supplies give away.

If you would like to help us ensure that all 75 of the children receive supplies to help them start the school year strong, we ask you to kindly consider scanning the QR code below which will take you to the MSP Back to School Amazon Wish List where you can purchase any items that you would like to donate.

*Thank you for your support.*





# PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: *A Solution for Chronic Homelessness*

**WHEN SOMEONE DOES NOT HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE**, they cannot reasonably address any physical or behavioral health conditions they may experience. In fact, homelessness can make these conditions worse! Fortunately, Mercy's Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program provides those experiencing homelessness with a safe and secure home and opportunities to thrive in their community.

The PSH program serves "everyday people with an obstacle they didn't have the support to address," says Kimberly Mitchell, Director of Program Services. These individuals are considered chronically homeless; meaning they haven't had a stable home long-term and have been couch-surfing, living in their car, or living outdoors. They also live with disabling conditions such as a behavioral health challenge, a physical impairment, or a substance use disorder.

Participants are referred to Mercy's PSH program through the Greater Hartford, Middlesex-Meriden-Wallingford, or Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) Coordinated Access Networks.



**Mercy's Permanent Supportive Housing Team**

"Our program provides individuals with stability, not just through housing, but also by offering resources," notes Mitchell. "When someone starts with PSH, we focus on getting them their basic needs. They've got housing, but now they need a bed and pots and pans. Once they have those, we help them with accessing services like medical care or a behavioral health provider."

PSH provides wraparound support through a case manager, a housing specialist, and an employment specialist. Participants remain in PSH for as long as they need, allowing them to reach their personal goals. Some work on budgeting to pay their portion of their rent or save for a car. Others aspire to return to school or get a job. When they've maintained their rent for a year and their conditions have stabilized, they graduate to the "Moving On" program.

Moving On matches participants with a housing choice voucher, which ensures that the rent will remain affordable and then frees up more housing and services for someone living in a shelter in need of the PSH program.

## A RESOUNDING VOICE FOR THE HOMELESS

Teams from **Mercy Housing** and **My Sisters' Place** joined over 1,800 colleagues in urging lawmakers to support Connecticut nonprofit organizations, including those who serve the homeless.

Available staff from both organizations walked to the State Capitol the morning of April 24 to participate in a rally on the Capitol lawn held by the Connecticut Nonprofit Alliance.

The event included speakers representing area nonprofits as well as elected officials, who shared why this event was so important.

"It's about dignity – that's why we're here," stated Rep. Eleni Kavros-Degraw (D, Avon-Canton), chair of the Planning and Development committee. Rep. Kate Farrar (D, West Hartford-Newington) added, "Caring for each other goes beyond town boundaries – it's about who we are as a state."

The rally included time for organizations to meet with their representatives and for all attendees to have their voices be heard. You can help us help those we serve by contacting your elected representatives to urge their support for homelessness services in Connecticut in the next legislative session.





## EMPOWERING FUTURES THROUGH JOB FAIRS

**TWICE A YEAR**, a team from Mercy and My Sisters' Place organizes job fairs, benefiting both our clients and the broader public. These events provide valuable opportunities for individuals seeking employment, fostering connections between job seekers and potential employers.

Through these joint initiatives, we aim to empower individuals with access to meaningful employment opportunities, furthering our commitment to support our community.

Taylor Riepe, LMSW, Program Manager for My Sisters' Place, highlighted the significance of hosting these job fairs: "Our aim is to broaden job seekers' horizons by showcasing diverse career opportunities and fields. Additionally, these events enable our employment specialists to forge connections for our clients with potential employers year-round. They also serve as valuable opportunities for our team to engage with the community and collaborate with other agencies."



The next job fair is scheduled for

**Thursday, June 6th from 10 a.m. – 1p.m.**  
**76 Pliny Street, Hartford**

Some of the employers in attendance include: Accurate Personnel Services, Advancing Connecticut Together, American Job Center, Companions and Homemakers, Companions Forever, Delta T Group, FedEx, Positive Regard, Safe Pals Home Care and Entry Point Staffing.

## IMPACTING LIVES

*Affecting Change*

WHERE WOULD THEY BE WITHOUT YOU



*"In the worst time of my life you took me in and helped me to come so far. I can never thank you enough."*

—"SHAWNA"



Last year, with your invaluable support, we successfully secured homes for 151 individuals living on the streets within the Greater Hartford area. Additionally, we provided assistance to over 900 others who were on the brink of losing their homes due to challenging circumstances.

Your generosity and commitment have made a tangible difference in the lives of countless individuals, offering them stability and hope for a brighter future.

**However, our work is far from over.** Despite being one of the wealthiest states in one of the wealthiest nations, Connecticut continues to experience homelessness at an all-time high compared to recent years.

Your ongoing support is vital as we strive to meet the increasing needs of vulnerable populations, including senior citizens, children, and individuals of all ages facing housing crises. Please consider making a donation to enable us to continue our mission of providing homes and support to those in need. Your generosity makes a significant impact, offering hope and stability to countless individuals and families in our community.

*Thanks to you* for partnering with us in this important endeavor. We are deeply grateful for your support.



Mercy



MSP



- 1** St. Michael's College Mobilization of Volunteer Efforts (MOVE) service trip made its' annual visit to Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation.
- 2** Representing the University of Hartford's Drama Club, Aiden Kelly (left) and Ben Kopf, presented a donation of \$956 to My Sisters' Place, which represents funds raised from a special all-woman theatrical performance in the spring.
- 3** Volunteers from M&T Bank decorated the youth room at My Sisters' Place for their Easter celebration.
- 4** Travelers held a men's clothing drive for Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and organized the clothing pantry once the clothes were delivered.
- 5** OneDigital spent a day preparing and serving lunch at the Friendship Center, opening the food pantry to the community and beautifying the grounds at St. Elizabeth House and The Haven.
- 6** RBC Wealth Management held their annual cleaning supply drive, which will benefit the new residents of the Beaumont Lofts.
- 7** Students from the University of Connecticut coordinated a donation drive to benefit the new residents of the Beaumont Lofts as part of Leadership and Communications coursework.
- 8** CVS Aetna's SVP Customer Advocacy and Insights Group prepared bags to help families celebrate Mother's Day, Father's Day, and the beginning of summer.
- 9** CHA Board member Marie Spadorcia (middle) and Board President Diane Bengston served meals with student-athletes from Trinity College's soccer team.
- 10** Talcott Mountain Science Academy ran a hygiene product and cleaning supply drive for Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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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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## Governor Lamont Awards \$1.3 Million for Renovations at St. Elizabeth House

We are extraordinarily grateful to CT Governor Ned Lamont for allocating \$1.3 million in state grants to help cover much needed capital improvement projects at Mercy Housing’s St. Elizabeth House located at 118 Main Street.



The building, which houses our Friendship Center soup kitchen, dining rooms, showers, restrooms, and food pantry for those in need – as well as three residential programs and laundry facilities – is in dire need of a new roof, renovations to the basement as well as work on the parking area, among other things.

Originally built in 1807, 118 Main was known as the home to Henry Barnard, the first US Commissioner of Education. Since that time the building, which has only had some renovations in the past, has had a lot of wear and tear – serving more than 82-thousand meals last year alone. This funding will be a big help toward our \$6 million capital campaign to keep the building safe and sound as we continue our work of delivering hope and transforming lives of those who are homeless or on the brink of becoming homeless.

*Thank you* Governor Lamont!  
Our visitors, residents and staff are so very grateful!

*Plan ahead for the Event of the Season!*



 **HOPE AND HOME**  
CELEBRATION 2024  
To benefit Mercy Housing & My Sisters' Place  
**October 25**  
at the historic **BOND BALLROOM** in Hartford

Live Music – Open Bar – Hors d’oeuvres – Silent & Live Auctions – Dinner

 **Early Birds SAVE \$25 per ticket when you order by August 25th!**

Join our amazing early sponsors and support our mission to deliver hope and transform the lives of those struggling with homelessness.



Learn More



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