



A Lifeline in the Darkness: Mercy's Outreach Team on the Frontlines of Homelessness

CEO INSIGHTS



We are undeniably living in uncertain times. While the federal landscape remains unclear, what we know is alarming—proposed Medicaid cuts would impact the vulnerable people we serve. Slashed Foodshare funding will affect the Friendship Center soup kitchen. Affordable housing and homeless programs face an 85% reduction in HUD funding.

No one wants to be homeless. Many struggle with fear, addiction, mental health challenges, or lack of affordable housing. Homeless services aren't wasted resources; they're investments. Every dollar spent on ending homelessness saves taxpayers significantly in emergency healthcare, law enforcement, and public services. **A stable community benefits everyone.**

This climate of uncertainty and division has taken a toll. Those we serve—and our staff—feel devalued and invisible. It takes immense bravery to rebuild lives and for our staff to stand firm despite disheartening rhetoric.

At CHA, we believe Housing is Transformative. Our work is rooted in respect, compassion, and responsibility—values that instill hope and restore dignity. Thanks to your unwavering support, we will continue this essential work.

Now more than ever, we must stand together. Investing in people means investing in a stronger, healthier future for all.

Kara A. Capone
Chief Executive Officer

IMAGINE BEGINNING YOUR WORKDAY before the sun rises, venturing into the shadows of underpasses, the dense cover of wooded areas, and the eerie stillness of concealed spaces—never quite knowing what or who you will find. You search for the unhoused, for those whose lives hang in the balance, unsure of what dangers or desperation you may encounter.

This is the reality for Mercy's Outreach Team. Their mission? To seek out, identify, and verify individuals and families living off the grid—many of whom have never faced homelessness before.

"We are seeing a huge number of people who are new to homelessness, and they are scared," shares Rasheeda Priester, Mercy Housing's Diversion and Outreach Supervisor.



Pictured from Left to Right:
Rasheeda Priester, Outreach Program Supervisor,
Kay Ann Davis, Homeless Services Navigator,
Ciera Brown, Street Outreach Case Manager

Launched as an expansion of a previous program in June 2024, the Outreach Team consists of four dedicated staff members and one outreach van. In just a few short months, they have already located and connected with over 300 people struggling to survive outdoors in the Greater Hartford area.

Working in pairs, the team approaches encampments, calling out a simple but powerful introduction: "Mercy Outreach." And with that, the work begins—earning trust, forging relationships,

and offering immediate relief in the form of blankets, toiletries, snacks, hand warmers for the bitter cold, and sunscreen for the brutal heat.

"We try to find out what they need to be safe in the moment, how they intend to survive, what their goal for housing is, and how we can help them get there," Priester explains. "This first connection is crucial because in order to receive the best possible support within the homelessness response system, we need to verify that they are living in places not meant for human habitation."

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But not everyone is ready—or willing—to enter the system. Some resist, and at times, the team is met with antagonism.

“Our goals are not always their goals,” Priester admits. “So we meet them where they are. We offer what we can. And we don’t give up. Sometimes, after enough time and trust, they let us help.”

This work is not easy. It is cold. It is uncertain. It is, at times, heartbreaking. But the Mercy Outreach Team perseveres—unsung heroes who step into the unknown, who risk rejection and discomfort, all for the chance to change even one life.

“We don’t always get to see the final outcome,” Priester says. “Once someone enters the system and is placed with a caseworker, our job is done. But we take comfort in knowing that we were the boots on the ground—the first connection to hope.” And sometimes, that first connection is everything.

BOOST YOUR DONATION BY 15%

We’re thrilled to partner once again with the Travelers Championship Birdies for Charity—which enables your generosity to go even further! Thanks to program sponsor Webster Bank, every donation made through our Birdies for Charity portals will be increased by 15% now through June 22nd!

This is an incredible opportunity to support Mercy Housing and My Sisters’ Place, helping us provide critical resources to those in need. 100% of every donation goes directly to the participating charity of your choice, ensuring your contribution makes a real and immediate impact.

You can be a part of this incredible PGA Tour initiative that brings together tournaments, players, charities, sponsors, volunteers, and fans to create lasting change.



Don't miss this chance to make your donation go further!



MERCY



MSP

SCAN THE CODES ABOVE TO GIVE AND HAVE YOUR CONTRIBUTION BOOSTED BY 15%— AT NO EXTRA COST TO YOU!

MORE THAN A PROGRAM— *a Sense of Community*

AT MY SISTERS’ PLACE (MSP), the Youth Program is more than just academic and social support for children who have experienced homelessness—it’s about healing, rebuilding, bringing families closer together, and reminding them that they are valued and never alone.

Recently, the children put their creativity to the test for National Lego Day, celebrating with the 2nd Annual Lego Building Competition! With the encouragement and support of volunteers from the UConn School of Medicine, the kids worked together in teams, laughing, learning, and bringing their imaginative creations to life.



But one of the most beloved traditions of MSP’s Youth Program is the annual Holiday Party—a night of pure holiday magic. Families gathered for an evening of Grinchmas-themed fun, where the air buzzed with excitement as children played games, crafted festive ornaments, and sat down for a delicious meal with their loved ones. And then came the highlight of the night—a special visit from Santa Claus and the Grinch himself!

But the most touching moment? The gift-giving. Families received presents through the Holiday Wish Program, generously provided by corporate and individual donors. For many, these gifts represented more than just holiday cheer—they were a powerful reminder that someone cares.

For the families of MSP, these moments mean everything. As one mother shared, **“The events that they do here help me feel like I’m a good mom, even if I’m not able to do it by myself. We may not have a ‘mom and dad’ family, but we have our little village.”**

Because at MSP, no one walks this journey alone.

CHA WELCOMES New Board Member

Community Housing Advocates (CHA), the parent organization of Mercy Housing and My Sisters’ Place, welcomes new Board member **Jessica Hamilton**. Jessica officially joined the Board in January after a unanimous vote by the Board of Directors.



Jessica has over twenty-five years of professional expertise spanning real estate and banking. She currently leads the Glastonbury Office of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services, where she is dedicated to fostering a collaborative culture.

Jessica says she is passionate about empowering others to reach their full potential, which is just one of the many reasons she will be an asset to the CHA Board.

We look forward to working with Jessica!

Our Heartfelt Appeal to You

THROUGHOUT THIS NEWSLETTER, you'll witness the life-changing work we do and meet the incredible people whose lives have been transformed:

- Tanya, who found hope and healing through Mercy's Women's Recovery Program.
- A single mother, whose life was touched by our Youth Program—who now calls My Sisters' Place her village, her sanctuary, her safe haven.
- Our Outreach Team Supervisor, who shares about her team's passion and relentless fight to save lives.

These are just a few glimpses into the profound impact that Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place are making in our community. We stand with those who are homeless, struggling, and in desperate need—seeing them, hearing them, helping them. But we can't do it alone.

This is why we are turning to you.

As we approach the final stretch of our fiscal budget year, we ask you to stand with us by supporting our Annual Spring Appeal campaign. Your donation – **by June 30th** will not only help us keep our doors open, but will fuel our passion, affirm our mission, and remind us that we are not alone in this fight.

Your support means more than words can express. Every gift, no matter the size, is a lifeline to someone in need.

Thank you for believing in us. *Thank you* for caring. *Thank you* for giving.



DONATE
TO MERCY



DONATE
TO MSP



DONOR spotlight

CT Trial Lawyers Women's Caucus

We are incredibly grateful to the CT Trial Lawyers Women's Caucus for their generosity and dedication in raising \$7,000 for My Sisters' Place (MSP) during their holiday fundraising drive this past December.



Caucus officers Erica Pilicy-Ryan and Liz Swanson, along with CTLA CEO Joan Maloney and CLE Director Katie Marino, recently presented the donation to MSP CEO Kara Capone and Youth Program Coordinator Kristen Wieber at Sue Ann Shay Place.

These vital funds will help MSP continue its mission of providing essential supportive services, empowering individuals in need throughout Greater Hartford to achieve independence and stability.

Thank you, CT Trial Lawyers
Women's Caucus, for making a
meaningful difference
in our community!



EMPLOYERS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN May Job Fair

Employers eager to expand their talent search in Hartford are invited to join Community Housing Advocate's Spring Job Fair on **Thursday, May 8**. This bi-annual job fair is being held at the Sue Ann Shay Place community room from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. at 76 Pliny Street, Hartford.

My Sisters' Place residents from Sue Ann Shay Place and Beaumont Lofts will be invited to attend along with other job seekers in the community.

If you are looking for motivated employees, we encourage you to register your company for a table at the upcoming job fair.

To register as a **FREE** vendor, email kshaw@sistersplacect.org

Helping Women Rebuild & Thrive



At St. Elizabeth House, the Women's Recovery Program (WRP) is more than just a place to heal—it's a fresh start. Designed for women facing substance use or co-occurring disorders, this trauma-responsive program provides the tools, support, and connections

they need to rebuild their lives. Twenty-two women at a time receive guidance to help them reenter the community with confidence during their stay, which is up to ninety days.

.....
99% of our participants are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
.....



NATALIE COOKE
Director of Client Services

Support That Goes Beyond Recovery

A big part of WRP is the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), which helps women prepare for the

unexpected. "Many worry about things like 'Who will pay my rent while I'm in rehab?'" Cooke explains. "We help them create a plan so they feel secure and supported."

A Network of Care

WRP connects women with:

- Addiction treatment & mental health care
- Legal & probation support
- Housing assistance & job placement
- Gynecological & prenatal care



A Path Forward

When women leave WRP, they take different paths—some move into sober living, others secure housing, and some reunite with their children. No matter where they go next, they leave knowing they have support, strength, and a chance at a brighter future.

IMPACTING LIVES

Affecting Change



FROM BROKENNESS TO HEALING: TANYA'S JOURNEY

.....
I felt hopeless—like there was no light at the end of the tunnel, like things would never get better for me.
.....

— TANYA DANIELS

Former resident of Mercy's Women's Recovery Program

Tanya Daniels knows what it means to hit rock bottom. Before finding Mercy Housing's Women's Recovery Program, she was lost in the grip of addiction, struggling to survive on the streets of Hartford.

Her journey into addiction began in high school, experimenting with drugs in the girls' bathroom. But what started as experimentation quickly spiraled into something darker, consuming her life and choices.

"Getting high became more important to me than paying my bills... even more important than keeping my kids. That's the sad, sick part about it," Tanya admits. "Soon, I was broke, I was hungry, and I had nowhere to live."

For years, she struggled alone. But deep down, she knew she had a reason to fight—her grandchildren. "They need me, and I need them," she says. With that determination, she took a leap of faith and entered Mercy's Women's Recovery Program.



Tanya wipes away tears after receiving praise for her hard work from case manager Danelys Abreu

"Mercy gave me a chance, and I used it," Tanya says.

With the right support and resources, from the Women's Program she found the strength to rebuild her life. Her case manager, Danelys Abreu, witnessed her dedication firsthand. "Tanya followed every rule, stayed committed, and worked so hard. I am so proud of her."

Now, Tanya is moving into a sober living home, ready for the next chapter. She's not just surviving—she's thriving. Her message to others struggling with addiction: "Don't give up. Keep pushing. If you want it, go after it—because you are worth it."



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
SUPPORT

- 1** JT Connect made hundreds of pies for Hartford-area nonprofits, of which 12 were donated to Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation.
- 2** The Latin American Firefighters Association created Thanksgiving meal bags for the residents of the Sue Ann Shay and Beaumont Lofts apartments.
- 3** HCC Tokio Marine spent their Giving Tuesday decorating My Sisters' Place's youth room for the holidays.
- 4** The Junior League of Hartford held a "Pop-Up Shop" for the children of My Sisters' Place to choose and wrap a gift for their parents.
- 5** Volunteers from My Brother's Keeper, UConn School of Medicine, and the CHA Board of Directors put on a fantastic Grinchmas party for the children and families of My Sisters' Place.
- 6** Volunteers from M&T Bank, The Hartford, and Travelers wrapped gifts for this year's Holiday Wish Program.
- 7** Amazon donated 85 boxes of products to benefit the Holiday Wish Program.
- 8** Employees from The Hartford decorated St. Elizabeth House for the holidays and donated gifts for the Holiday Wish Program.
- 9** The West Hartford chapter of Rock Voices raised over \$2,000 for My Sisters' Place at their January 10th concert.
- 10** Employees from Robinson and Cole volunteer to serve breakfast in the Friendship Center each month.
- 11** Students from UConn School of Law serve meals to St. Elizabeth House residents and visitors to the Friendship Center.
- 12** Employees from The Hartford and students from Ethel Walker School organized donations and cleaned up after the holidays.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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For more information visit
www.ctcha.org
www.mercyhousingct.org
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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Gate THE Date
OCTOBER 17, 2025



Join us for the 7th Annual Hope & Home Celebration!

Mark your calendars for **Friday, October 17, 2025**, as we gather at the stunning new Bristol Event Center for an unforgettable evening benefiting Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place. Enjoy live music, an open bar, gourmet dining, exciting auctions, and the lively Necklace Challenge—all in support of ending homelessness in Greater Hartford and Middletown.

We're thrilled to welcome **Renee DiNino**, Director of Community Affairs at WFSB-3 as our emcee!



A big thank you to **HCC Global Tokio Marine** for stepping up as our first Gold Sponsor!

DON'T MISS THIS MUST-ATTEND EVENT OF THE SEASON.

Sponsorships, auction donations, and tickets are available—contact ascheidecker@mercyhousingct.org or **860.808.2044** to get involved!



OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT THE HOPE & HOME WEBSITE

