



Written with and for individuals experiencing homelessness to break down the walls.

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Pride and Property

By Hector Stewart

One of my favorite classes during my junior year of high school was Religion because the cornerstone concept of that class was social justice. As someone with an interest in social concerns, I'd found this class to be one of the few that operated as a window for students to the greater world and not one that concealed them from it.

One day I walked into class and sunk into a daydream the second I took my seat. We had been discussing homelessness the day before. I glanced at what my teacher had written on the board--the definition of homelessness. It set off an alarm of awareness within me; it read like a familiar but forgotten story.

The story was of a woman I had known all my life but, until that moment in class, never knew was, by law, homeless.

Patricia was a hardworking, single mother. She worked as a property manager for a housing association she resided in. Her three-bedroom apartment was the gathering place for family and friends.

As the oldest of six, Patricia gladly wore the hat of Big Sister even into adulthood, and because of this, her front door was always open.

It would often seem that thirty people were living in her apartment--not three. These appeared to be some of the happiest moments of her life. But injury would change everything. In a whirlwind, Patricia found herself looking for an open door and welcoming home like the one she had just lost.

A slip and fall on the job forced her into temporary disability, and after filing a lawsuit and being fired, the 15-year employee was out of work

and without a place for her ten year old son, 5 year old granddaughter, and herself to lay their heads.

Patricia was a woman of dignity, which meant she would prefer her own place – no matter what the conditions were. So after weeks of bouncing around the living rooms and guestrooms of others, this career-oriented woman checked her family into a temporary residence hotel designed as a temporary haven for the city's penniless, aimless, and hopeless.

Ironically, as she rebuilt her career in housing management while living in such a decrepit and dangerous place, she landed a job as an assistant manager of a comfortable and clean high-rise apartment complex. It had a community center, laundry, and backyard, and it was just three blocks away from that very same decrepit and

dangerous residence. With rent due weekly, hotel policy had it that one could not stay at the hotel for longer than a three-month period. While Patricia's assistant manager position came with a respectable salary, her tuition and the living expenses for her children kept her there passed what official policy would allow.

Every morning she would walk into her office and be greeted with the shouts of residents who were months behind in their rents and too upset to have to talk with an assistant manager they believed – because of her professionalism and presentation – was of a higher socio-economic class. Little did they know that the same woman whom they believed pitied them, ate and fed her children chicken-noodle soup from a hotplate nightly. They would never know that when Patricia

left her office she would go “home” to an 8-story nightmare, riddled with roaches and rival gang members. She would work to create the best living experience for hundreds of residents, while, by state law, she herself had no legal residence. This psychological dynamic could only be weathered by one of great strength.

Patricia was promoted to manager, but her family continued to spend their nights inside a sweaty, gray two-room box of an apartment where, from the bar-covered window, Patricia could see the building she ran but could not live in, the building that the Mayor's office would annually recognize for its excellent upkeep and management. She was the award-winning manager with no legal residence of her own – secretly shattering preconceived notions of what homelessness looked like.

For two years Patricia would spend her nights, sleepless at that window, reminiscing on the roller coaster she'd been riding - not to mention the night-

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“Songbird with a Passion”
by Demond Williams

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Project Homeless Connect's Impact

"You wouldn't call somebody 'lung cancer,' so why label people as 'homeless'? It's an impermanent condition, and should be regarded as such."

— Tarry Truitt

By Tiffany Teng

Project Homeless Connect is a one-stop event for those experiencing homelessness, providing access to housing and legal services, medical care, clothing, haircuts, and food. Approximately 300 people attended the event, and were surveyed.

Downstairs in the Samaritan Baptist Church on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, patrons received services and free items. Trial sizes of Mary Kay lip balm, Palmolive hand soap, and other toiletries populated the tables while massages tables, blankets and heavy winter coats lined the perimeter of the basement. Blue tablecloths indicated housing services, red for health and green for social services. Crisis Ministries, Catholic Charities, Henry J. Austin Health Center, St. Francis Medical Center, Mercer Street Friends Food Bank, The Rescue Mission and Social Security were among the services represented.

As a volunteer surveyor, I had the rare opportunity to interview the patrons and ask questions such as, "Where will you be spending tomorrow night?" and "What happened to land you in this situation?"

A few specific cases stood out. At over 80 years old, one Vietnamese woman was pushing a metal cart doubling as a walker with a couple boxes of cardboard—in her frustration, she ripped off a piece to scribble down her name "Nguyho" as I tried helplessly to speak to her in English and Chinese, neither of which she understood. A 26-year old woman with three children was bitter about Hurricane Sandy because she was still displaced after Hurricane Irene. General assistance welfare, food stamps and Medicaid were not enough to sustain her family—she needed permanent housing and employment. Another man said he had been homeless for all of his 60 years.

Others I surveyed ranged from ages 30 to 60. Some suffered drug abuse problems, high blood pressure, mental issues, and poor physical health. Some were not actually homeless or jobless,

Volunteers helping out at Project Homeless Connect



just in need of more social services to support their families.

All of them had two things in common: compelling stories and dwindling strength. This is what they are telling us, this is what is true. Without basic human needs, these people are desperate for aid and are lucky to have access to programs such as Project Homeless Connect.

Homelessness knows no boundaries. Some are fighting to survive while others are transplanted from friends to families to shelters. It hardens them and it erases identity. One learns to discard embarrassment for a chance to become better.

During my time as Editor-in-Chief of the Wall, I finally understood the gravity of the homelessness issue in Mercer County. And this is just one sliver of the silent voices that continue to struggle for survival. 🏠

Annual Point-in-Time Count

The Point-In-Time Count, mandated by Housing and Urban Development (HUD), sent teams out starting Wednesday, January 30 at 5 P.M. for exactly 24 hours.

During the overnight time the Rescue Mission of Trenton sent teams out looking for street homeless individuals.

Starting at 6:00 A.M., there were teams at Turning Point United Methodist Church, Salvation Army Drop-In Center, and street teams across the county, in which 110 surveys were completed. In addition, each agency completed surveys for anyone in shelters or in transitional housing.

The annual results are posted on merceralliance.org and are provided to HUD as part of reports and requests for funding.

During the year additional information is collected by the shelters and agencies in the Homeless Information System which is reported to the Continuum of Care for planning purposes.

St. Francis' Mission and the Cost of Care

"We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way."
— Saint Francis of Assisi

By Gary Kehoe

In 2010, Mercer County had the eighth highest percentage of people living in poverty in New Jersey—roughly 25%, according to the New Jersey Poverty Research Institute's Poverty Benchmark report, released in May 2012. Large statistics often paint a very distant picture of what it is to be poor or in need, but today, economic struggle, often accompanied by homelessness, is no longer a concept confined to shelters and charities.

Amidst tough economic times, there remains a tight-knit, dedicated system of volunteers and professionals who make it their mission to preserve a spirit of hope and care for the most vulnerable. St. Francis Medical Center in Trenton, New Jersey is a leader in this mission, reaching out to those who find themselves struggling to meet one of their most basic needs, their health and well-being.

"The beauty of what St. Francis does is that we turn down no one," said Christine Stephenson, Vice President of St. Francis Medical Center. "Regardless of whether the patient has no address, no insurance, we will take care of them. Our doors are open."

St. Francis is one of New Jersey's leading care centers for the homeless and underprivileged. Despite the proximity of the hospital to major areas of the state, located just ten minutes from the state's capitol and fifteen minutes from one of the state's premier colleges, the individuals who pass through its doors can be very misunderstood.

In a recent interview, Ms. Stephenson and Vice President of Mission and Ministry Russ Hansel offered their perspectives. Speaking to what he saw as an inaccurate stereotype, Hansel shared, "I think there are two definitions of 'homeless' that we deal with. When some people hear we take care of the homeless, they picture the stereotype of 'druggie, alcoholic, deviant'. When you take the time to see what we are doing you realize the new definition has to be broader. It's everyday people: single parents and children that we care for."

"A lot of our patients *do* work and *are* insured," Stephenson added. She explained that addiction or behavioral health related issues were the primary causes for admittance. Many of the patients they see cannot afford their treatments or access to services. "These people are not morally corrupt or socially deviant," she shared. "They are just in a rough patch, you know? They don't have money."

Using the statistical formula developed in the publication "Estimating the Need," it is projected that over the course of a year, 2,469 adults and children are homeless in Mercer County, according to merceralliance.org, and the correlation between poor health and low income remains consistent.

According to the Legal Services of New Jersey, 13% of people reporting poor health bring in less than \$15,000. (Legal Services of NJ). Stephenson and Hansel were in agreement that the heart of the issue was economic, and explained that homelessness was not only a result of economic struggle, but could also be the cause of tremendous expense to the healthcare system as well if not handled properly.

Though a citizen might be quick to think free healthcare for the uninsured or homeless to be an unfair burden on those taxpayers who are insured, it is actually, according to Stephenson, Hansel, and many other service organizations, an essential way to prevent a more costly alternative.

Stephenson said that the majority of St. Francis' patients seen in emergency rooms at least 40 times a year were homeless. Proactive efforts are underway to lower this number through early recognition and intervention, preventing costly visits to the Emergency Room in the future.

St. Francis Medical Center adds to its traditional hospital duties an out-patient service program designed to make itself an early resource and develop meaningful relationships with those who find themselves in shelters and social service programs. Rather than waiting for an individual to arrive

at St. Francis, St. Francis places social workers, Nurse Practitioners (DNP's), and even graduate-medical students in places like Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) and Rescue Mission. These efforts saves the cost of frequent emergency room visits.

Stephenson and Hansel mentioned Peg Nasaro, DNP for St. Francis Medical Center, as one of the very important people in their care system. Once a week, Nasaro visits Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, dedicating personal time to individuals who need basic medical care on behalf of St. Francis Medical Center. Nasaro's consistent presence and dedication to those in need is part of St. Francis' long-term goal of developing meaningful relationships which, according to St. Francis medical staff, prove essential in care process.

"You *must* foster a relationship with people," Hansel emphasized.

"That personal engagement, which may take weeks or even months, helps you really understand what people's needs are. That's really where it starts."

Just last year, Peg Nasaro encountered a young man in T.A.S.K who claimed he felt ill. He had not been seen before in the St. Francis Emergency Room or hospital, but as Nasaro discovered, he was a diabetic who had gone untreated for a very long period of time and was in serious condition. The man could not afford his treatments, and in his present state, was not expected to live past 45. It was the early intervention by Peg Nasaro, and the handoff to St. Francis Medical Center, that eventually led to the man's recovery.

"We didn't just release him from the hospital and forget, either," added

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The Soup Kitchen

By Lillian Dougherty

Poetry

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, an inspiring place to be.

It's full of surprises and there's so much to see.

You'll meet all kinds of people without any strife,

Who come in and out from all walks of life.

Some of them homeless, lonely and abused.

Some of them addicts whose minds are confused.

Some are still struggling, some find their way.

But they all have been blessed to be here today.

Some just eat lunch and some share their stories

From a world full of violence they let go of their worries.

The people who work there will put a smile on your face.

They give a positive influence that affects the whole human race.

So if you'd like to meet our family, we invite you to come.

What we do is for many not just for some...

ArtSpace: Seeing the Voice of Many

By Raj Manimaran

A picture speaks a thousand words for many, but for the clients at ArtSpace, it can speak their entire lives.

“ArtSpace is not only a place to tap into one’s inner creativity,” Director Ruthann Traylor explained. “It is also a place that nurtures a safe and nonjudgmental atmosphere for those members of society who have been forgotten, pushed aside.”

ArtSpace operates as a therapeutic art program for the clients of the HomeFront organization.

While the mission of HomeFront has been to provide families, who have lost everything, a place to call home and the chance at a new life, ArtSpace strives to be a means of healing through the transition between homelessness and that fresh start.

By expressing the pains of the past in their paintings and drawings, the clients of the center find their self-confidence and self-esteem, not only revived, but gradually replenished.

“We hope that we can help our friends not only find a way to release their sorrows, but to realize that it doesn’t have to stay within and torment them from the inside,” Traylor said. “Through art, stories can be written and scars can be soothed.”

But ArtSpace does not only try to assist its clients for a better future, it attempts to advocate for the population through the pieces that they have poured their stories into.

The painting below expresses the story of a person who had experienced the very worst of homelessness, but the storyteller has since worked hard to “climb out of the hole” and come out on top. (The artist wrote an explanation to the piece, see the caption below the picture.)

The author of the piece will remain anonymous, but his/her story will not go hidden or unknown.

Thanks to the staff and volunteers at ArtSpace, these stories of missteps,



“One day I was wandering [and] exploring, like all young people do. I wasn’t watching where I was going [and] I fell. I fell into a hole, the hole was so deep that it felt like it took me forever to hit the bottom [and] when I did, I hit it hard. I started trying to climb the walls, but every time I grabbed onto something it came loose [and] I fell. I spent years in this hole trying to climb out; so many times I wanted to give up. I wondered why I even bothered to keep trying, I kept falling. But I never gave up [and] one day when I started climbing I didn’t fall [and] I made it to the top. It took a long time, but now I am free and not only am I out of the hole, but I am climbing mountains, staying high above ground!”

yet unyielding resilience and perseverance have been and will continue to be displayed to the world.

ArtSpace will not only spread awareness throughout the community, but also to voice the stories of these men, women, and children who may have otherwise been silenced.

In October, the program held its premier exhibit, ArtJam, in Princeton, to sell artwork of its clients and other local artists with the profits going back to benefit ArtSpace. The event raised over \$17,000, with an overwhelming majority going to benefit ArtSpace’s programs and clients in the future.

Traylor concluded, “Art is much more than paint streaked across a canvas, it can be a gateway into the lives of many and a brighter tomorrow for everyone.” 🏠



**PROJECT
HOMELESS
CONNECT**



**Trenton
and
Mercer County**

Thursday, June 27, 2013

Volunteering Around the World

By Caitlin Dolan

During the academic year 2011-2012, I studied abroad in Shanghai, China to improve my Mandarin language skills and immerse myself in the Chinese culture. Upon entering Shanghai, I was able to physically experience China's economic boom in its famous masterpiece, The Bund.

The Bund is Shanghai's waterfront area, which holds 52 buildings and one of the richest collections of art deco in the world. Within the last 20 years, The Communist Party has built up this area for international business, tourism and architectural expression. The Bund is China's image for the world to see how much the country has developed and thrived economically.

After I joined the Habitat for Humanity in China, I was able to witness the alarming difference between China's extravagant Shanghai city life and the Chinese countryside. Up until this point, I imagined China to be very well developed everywhere due to the country's rank as the world's second largest economy.

How bad could homelessness be in China?

In 2008, an earthquake devastated the Mayan village, located on a mountain in Qionglai city in Sichuan. With a population of 1,380 people, the citizens lived in houses made of mud, wood and bricks. The village did not have appropriate sanitation, electricity or a clean water supply.

After this earthquake, many of the houses were destroyed due to mudslides, leaving most people homeless. The Mayan people are very traditional and sheltered from the outside world, so most are uneducated and illiterate. Thus, they found it difficult to relocate and find work in the bordering city of Chengdu, another one of China's cities specifically used for international business.

Hope came to the Mayan village in 2010 when the government of Qionglai City supported the national "New



"As You Lay" by Demond Williams

Rural Construction Policy" to raise the safety level and improve the quality of life. For the first time, China allowed an outside organization to come in and restore homes that were damaged due to natural disasters. Habitat for Humanity was given funding to come in and build new houses that are able to hold up against an earthquake with 8.0 magnitude.

I was the leader of Team 2, in charge of lifting bricks and stones from the mud that was still left behind from the destroyed homes in order to construct new homes for the families. Aside from participating in the day's activities, I had the opportunity to become close with one of the elders in the village, 哩哩 (Lili). I carried the debris from her destroyed home in a basket backpack that she made for us. I also went to her temporary shack on the side of the dirt road for tea and conversation. 哩哩 (Lili) told me about her family and her business collecting and distributing Spring tea leaves to and from Chengdu.

She also told me that before Habitat for Humanity, she never saw a for-

eigner before in her life. She is thankful everyday for the organization helping her village to end the two years of suffering spent homeless, without proper food supply or sanitation. Habitat for Humanity is finishing up the Mayan village this fall with new homes for every family.

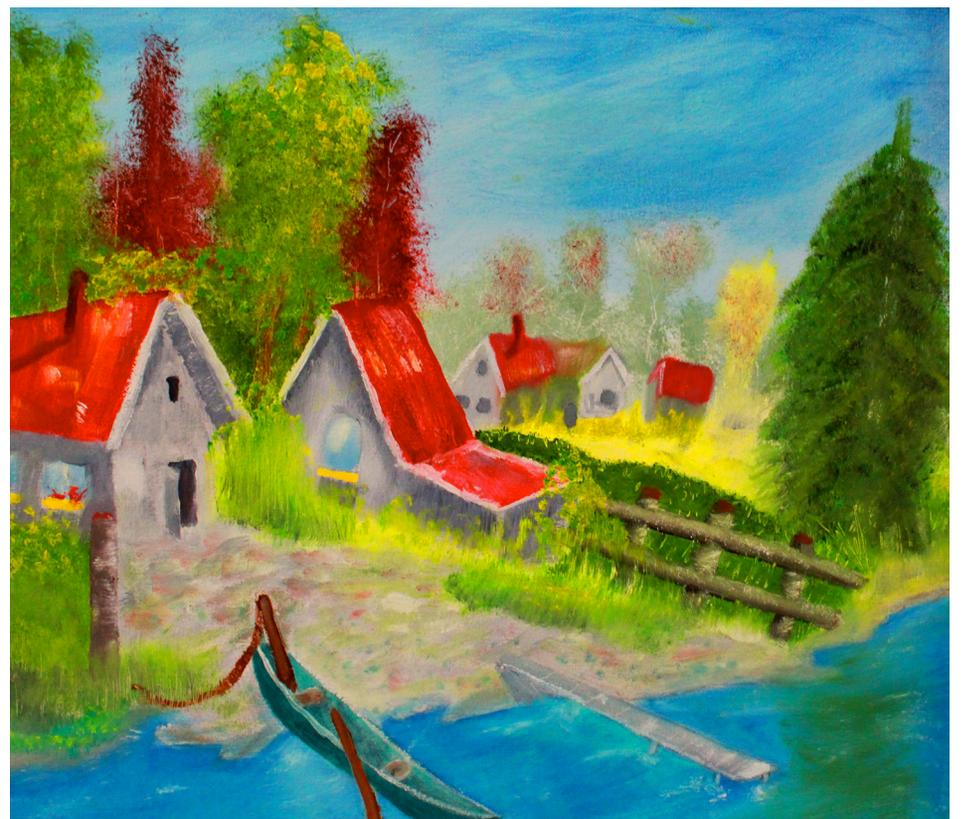
Through my volunteering, I saw different kinds of homelessness and poverty. The disaster in China created homelessness for a very rural community.

In Trenton, Habitat for Humanity also plays an important role in the lives of families that are in need of stable housing. The families are always very welcoming to volunteers. There is

never a day that goes by that I am not offered a cool drink or conversation.

The same is true in the Mayan Village, only in the Chinese way: tea and dumplings. Both communities wanted to get to know the volunteers from Habitat for Humanity. I can honestly say that my work in Trenton prepared me for overcoming the cultural boundaries that were present in the Mayan Village. The families in Trenton want a safe and stable place to call home and I knew it to be the same in Mayan, China.

In my experience in China, not only was I able to volunteer, but I was also able to leave with a better understanding of what it means to be a volunteer—adjusting to diverse situations to effectively serve with the little amount of time you have in that special place. Whether you are volunteering in a city or a rural village, homelessness comes in vastly different shapes and sizes. So, listen and learn, challenge your limits, and find yourself with a greater understanding for the world. 🏠



Haven Daniels

Where You Can Turn for Help!

All days and times are subject to change without notice. Created May 2013 and will update for each issue.

Trenton and Mercer County Homeless Shelters

Amani House

518-520 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, 25 bed facility.
Transitional housing (24 single adult males between the ages of 18-65). Call for appointment. Tel. (609)-393-3168 ext. 13.

Anchor House Inc.

740 Greenwood Avenue, Trenton, NJ
24-hour program for runaway, homeless and at-risk youth ages 10-17 in Mercer County.
Anchor House Shelter, school Outreach Program, (609) 396-8329
Anchorage Transitional Living Program, (609) 989-1625
Anchor Link Street Outreach Program, (609) 218-5630
Anchor Line, (609) 218-5630
(609) 396-8329, www.anchorhousenj.org

Community Innovations

Administration Office – 509 Perry Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 826-9480. Trenton Family Preservation House (17 Families & Single Women). Chester House 1 – 24-Single Men – ages 18 and up. Chester House-11 – 15 Single Men – ages 18 and up. Mercer County Board of Social Services Referrals

YWCA's Dunham Hall

Main Office: 140 East Hanover Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 396-8291
Dunham Hall Residence is 127 Academy Street, Trenton, NJ
Dunham Hall is a 90-bed SRO (single room occupancy) women residence that provides permanent housing to low-income and homeless. (609) 396-2413

Escher Street SRO & Transitional

50 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-4599
Single Occupancy Rooms for single men and women (Project Specific Section 8); Transitional Housing for single men (26 beds) and women (8 beds). SRO accepts transitional housing clients and walk-ins. Referred by MCBOS or Department of Corrections.

HomeFront

Administrative Offices
1880 Princeton Ave, Lawrenceville, NJ
Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing are available.
Call for appointment. (609) 989-9417

Rescue Mission of Trenton

98 Carroll St Trenton NJ (609) 695-1436
Emergency Shelter: Overnight shelter, meals and clothing for single adult men and women.
Vince's Place: Residential addiction treatment.
Permanent Housing: Room & Board House and Brimmer House rental.
Outpatient: Addiction counseling; TEACH and Work Readiness; Thrift store and courtesy store; Sunday soup kitchen.

Womanspace

Trenton, NJ (609) 394-9000; 1-800-572-SAFE (7233)
24-hour hotline services and protective shelter for domestic violence and sexual assault victims. Spanish-speaking staff is available 24-hours per day. The emergency services offered are designed to assist victims immediately following the initial crisis. Please call right away if you encounter any problem.

UPI - Trenton Treatment Center-22-Bed Transitional Housing Program

56 escher Street, Trenton, NJ, 08609 (609) 392-2822 and Fax: (609) 392-3215
Providing transitional housing service for single homeless males of Mercer County. Accepting transitional housing referrals from Mercer County Board of Social Services.

Human Services

A Better Way

1040 Pennsylvania Ave., Trenton, NJ (609) 392-1224
Specializes in mentoring, re-entry (has program) & gang reduction.

Catholic Charities

Mercer Emergency & Community Services

132 N. Warren St, Trenton, NJ 08618. Outpatient (609) 394-8847.
Provides support related to housing, food, mental health..

Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.

123 East Hanover Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 396-9355
61 Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ (609) 921-2135
Financial Services for Low Income People in Mercer County. Food Pantry; Emergency Financial Assistance. Call or walk-ins.

Greater Goods Thrift Store

114 Rogers Avenue Hightstown, NJ 08520 (609) 448-2702
Monday & Tuesday 10am - 3pm, Wednesday - Saturday 10am – 7pm.

City of Trenton – Health & Human Services

Emergency assistance for back rent, first month rent for the homeless and/or at-risk homeless and as well as assistance for Senior Citizens. (609) 815-215

Helping Arms

50 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 396-7515
Provides counseling, employment placement services, housing and other social services to low income people, and operates a prison re-entry initiative in Trenton. Referrals from Dept. of Corrections.

HomeFront

Administrative Offices
1880 Princeton Ave, Lawrenceville, NJ
Homeless prevention (rent/security); permanent service-enriched affordable housing; food pantry; FreeStore; Furnish the Future. Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Except Tuesday 12-8pm (609) 989-9417.

Opportunities For All

1701 S. Broad Street, Hamilton, NJ (609) 394-7000
Training and employment opportunities to a diverse group of job seekers. We specialize in working with applicants with disabilities.

Family Guidance Center

946 Englewood Avenue, Trenton, NJ (609) 924-1320 or (1-800) 813-0555. Credit Counseling, Financial, Financial Assistance

Community Law Project – (609) 393-5553. Discusses legal questions with those with disabilities. Will make appointments.

VA Hamilton Outpatient Clinic

3635 Quakerbridge Road, Hamilton, NJ (609) 570-6600
General Medicine for veterans.

RISE Main Office

116 North Main Street Hightstown, NJ 08520 (609) 443-4464
The Rise main office is open: Monday-Friday 9am - 4pm
(Closed for lunch from 1pm - 2pm daily)

Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS)

200 Woolverton St., Trenton, NJ (609) 989-4320.
Complaint Line: (609) 989-4400. Social Services: (609) 989-4451. assist individuals with General Assistance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Supplemental Security Income and other services.
M-F, 8:30am- 4:30 pm, T 8:30am-8:30pm. Can call or walk-in.

County Clerk's Office

209 S. Broad Street, PO Box 8068, Trenton, NJ (609) 989-6998
ID's- Voter registration forms, Mercer County photo ID, passport.
Mon-Fri. 8am-4pm; Wed. until 6:45pm. Walk-ins accepted.

County Connection

Rte 33 and Paxson Avenue, Hamilton Township, NJ
County ID card and passport services. Mon, Wed, Fri. 10am – 6pm. Tuesday & Thursday, 10 am – 8 pm. Saturday, 10 am – 3 pm.
Walk-ins accepted.

One-Stop Career Center

(NJ Dept. of Labor), 26 Yard Avenue, Trenton, NJ (877) 989-AJOB, (609) 989-6523. One Stop Center - offers workforce readiness services and career resources. Referrals from MCBOS, unemployment. Walk-ins accepted. (Monday-Friday), 8:30am- 5pm, Tuesdays, 8:30 am- 8:30pm.

Legal Services

Central Jersey Legal Services, Inc., 198 West State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 695-6249. Will discuss legal issues with individuals, landlord/tenant or issues and will make appointments. Call for appointment (9am-4:30pm).

Salvation Army - Homeless Drop-In Center

575 East State Street, Trenton. Hours 8am – 3pm, 7 days a week

Salvation Army Life Skills Program

575 East State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 599-9373
Operates a Resource Development Center to assist clients with resumes, job applications, job searches and computer skills.

Office on Aging

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ 08650
Information for Seniors (877) 222-3737, (609) 989-6661

County of Mercer - Department of Human Services

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ (609) 989-6526 and Fax: (609) 989-6032

Child Care Connection

1001 Spruce St, Suite 201, Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-7770. Resource and Referral agency assists families in their search of quality child care. Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri. 9am-5pm. Thurs. 9am-6pm

Social Security

635 South Clinton Avenue, 2nd Floor, Trenton, NJ (609) 989-2254; 1-800-772-1213. Assists clients with social security card replacement, Disability info, questions and assistance in applying for SSI and SSDI. Call or walk-in.

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen

72 1/2 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 695-5456
Soup Kitchen, Food, Food Pantry; Adult Education; Computer Classes; Job Search Assistance. Monday to Friday Lunch from 10:30am to 12:50pm; Monday to Thursday Dinner from 3:30pm to 5pm

Ujima Urban Women's Center

1001 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ (609) 882– 2098
P-roviding compassion, advocacy, and training to urban women residing in Trenton and surrounding areas. Call for Appointment.

United Progress Inc. (UPI)

162 West State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-2161 (Main Office). Provides substance abuse treatment, HIV/AIDS counseling, employment and job development counseling, emergency food, utility, housing services and homeless prevention. (609) 392-2161

Veteran Services

20 Washington Place, 3rd Floor, Newark, NJ (973) 645-1441 or at the Mercer County Department of Veterans Affairs. Assists veterans with information on services available to them, assist with forms, makes appointments. The health benefit number is (877) 222-VETS. LoHomeless Veteran in need of help? Call (1-877) 4AID VET (1-877-424-3838). Call for appointment.

VA Homeless Intervention Program

Hotline is intended to assist homeless Veterans and their families, VA Medical Centers, federal, state and local partners, community agencies, service providers and others in the community.
(1-877) 4AID VET (877-424-3838)(National)

US Veterans Center

934 Parkway Avenue, Ewing, NJ (609) 882-5744
NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs : Mercer Veterans Affairs 2280 Hamilton Ave., Hamilton NJ. (609) 989-6120. Companion program to Federal Department of Veterans Affairs. Homeless intervention.

Womanspace, Inc.

Lawrenceville, NJ (609) 394-2532
Counseling and supportive services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Both individual and group counseling offered. Spanish-speaking staff available. Services are also provided at Family Court for victims seeking a permanent restraining order.

Community Justice Center – (609)218-5120. Will discuss legal questions with veterans and disabled and will make appointments.

***Dial 211 for Community Resources.**

Health Services

Capital Health System at Fuld
750 Brunswick Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 394-6000.
Clinics, Medicaid, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care.

Capital Health System at Mercer
446 Bellevue Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 394-4000
Clinics, Medicaid, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care.

Capital Health System Crisis Center
750 Brunswick Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-6722
Mental Health Crisis Assistance. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare

Carrier Clinic
Rte 601, Belle Mead, NJ. 1-800-933-3579 Access Center (24/7).
Specializing in psychiatric and substance abuse treatment. Accepts Medicaid (mental issues only) and Medicare.

Family Guidance Center - Outpatient Care
946 Englewood Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-4357

Brighter Day Behavioral Health Services
2783 Brunswick Pike, Suite 302, Lawrenceville, NJ. Call for appointment. (609) 771-3777. Program for the mentally ill and chemically addicted. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

Mount Carmel Guild
73 North Clinton Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08609, (609) 392-5159. Limited Utility and Prescription assistance. Home Health Nursing Services: visits for medication management, vital sign checks, pre-filling syringes, pacemaker checks for economically disadvantaged, medically frail elderly. Free and do not accept third party payments.

Henry J. Austin Health Center
317 Chambers Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 278-5900. Adult Medicine and the above services. The satellite centers are open Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Appointments are encouraged.

Greater Trenton Behavioral Health Care Homeless Outreach
31 Lexington Avenue, Ewing, NJ 609-583-1901. Linkage to mental health services, medical services, entitlements and housing. Call for appointment.

Greater Trenton Behavioral HealthCare-Other Programs
See www.gtbhc.org for information on services and locations.

Princeton House Behavioral Health
741 Mount Lucas Road, Princeton, NJ. (1-800) 242-2550; (609)- 497-3347 Intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

Rescue Mission of Trenton
96 Carroll Street Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-3533. Residential and Outpatient Treatment. For addictions and co-occurring disorders.

Robert Wood Johnson Hospital at Hamilton
One Hamilton Health Place, Hamilton, NJ. (609) 586-7900
Clinics, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

St. Francis Medical Center
601 Hamilton Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 599-5000
Clinics, Medicaid, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

Trenton Division of Health
218 N. Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-3242
Health Promotions and Clinical Services; Health Incentive Program for Women (HIP4W).

Trenton Treatment Center (Part of United Progress, Inc.)
56 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-2822
Trenton Treatment Center offers residential (for men only) and outpatient programs for those addicted to drug and alcohol. Accepts referrals from MCBOSS, client walk-ins, and referrals from other service provider agencies, and uninsured Mercer County residents.

University Medical Center at Princeton
253 Witherspoon St, Princeton, NJ. (609) 497-4000
Clinics, General Acute Medical Care. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

Oxford House-Half
(301) 587-2916, Toll Free: (800) 689-6411
Way houses to transition from rehab to independent living for individuals experiencing drug and alcohol addiction.

Note that most Health Services accept Medicare and Medicaid.

Henry J. Austin Health Center (3 locations)
321 North Warren Street (Main) Trenton, NJ - (609) 278-5900
Offers fast track, pediatrics, adult medicine, OB/GYN care, social services, podiatry, eye care, behavioral health care, dental services, HIV and Hepatitis C testing and treatment. Have ID. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare. Monday through Friday 8am-5pm and Sat 9-1.

Trenton Adult Rehabilitation Center
Salvation Army: (609) 599-9801

Henry J. Austin Health Center
112 Ewing Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 278-5900. Adult Medicine and the above services and dental care. Open Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Appointments are encouraged.

New Horizons Treatment Service, Inc.
132 Perry St., Trenton, NJ. Appointment: (609) 394-8988.
Provides an array of medical, clinical and special services, i.e. substance Abuse treatment, detoxification, methadone maintenance, methadone detoxification. Mon-Fri 6am-8pm. Accepts Medicaid, WorkFirst NJ, and self-pay.

The Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.
123 East Hanover Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 396-9355
61 Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ (609) 921-2135
Food pantry and emergency rent and utilities assistance for low income people in Mercer County. Individuals can call and walk-ins accepted.

Planned Parenthood
Trenton Center - 437 E. State Street, Trenton, NJ. (609) 599-4881
Hamilton Center - 2279 State Hwy 33, Hamilton, NJ. 689-4964
2000 Pennington Road, Eickhoff Hall, Ewing, NJ (609) 771-2110
Services: Abortion Services, Birth Control Services, Emergency Contraception, General Health Care, HIV Testing, LGBT Services, and more.

Catholic Charities, Behavioral Health Services
10 Southard St Trenton. (609) 396-4557.
Integrated behavioral health and physical health services.

Food

Jerusalem Baptist Church
150 N. Clinton Avenue, Trenton, NJ (609) 394-9816 . 3rd Saturday of a five Saturday month and 1st Saturday of a four Saturday month. 11:30am-1pm. Call for details on other services.

Rescue Mission of Trenton
98 Carroll St., Trenton, NJ. 1st Saturday of a 5-Saturday month and every Sunday. 11am-12pm.

Sacred Heart Church
343 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 393-2801. Soup Kitchen, 4th Sunday
Lunch from 12:30pm to 2:00pm. Food pantry, 3rd Tuesday of the month. 2pm-6pm.

St. Mary's Cathedral (Loaves and Fishes Food & Soup Kitchen)
151 N. Warren St. (Perry and Warren), Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-8447. Last two Saturdays of the month. Lunch is 11am to 2pm

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
72 1/2 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-5456. Monday to Friday Lunch from 11am-1pm; Monday to Thursday Dinner from 4pm-5:30pm. Call for other services.

First United Methodist Church of Hightstown
187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ. Thurs Dinner, 4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Divine Mary Parish, St. Stanislaus Church
60 Randall Avenue, Trenton, NJ. Thursdays Dinner, 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

West Trenton Soup Kitchen
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. 801 W. State Street, Trenton, NJ. Thursdays Dinner, 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Soup Kitchen South
First Baptist Church, 128-140 Centre St., Trenton, NJ. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Dinner from 5pm to 6:30pm.

West Trenton Soup Kitchen at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral
801 W. State St., Trenton, NJ. Thursday from 5pm to 6:30pm

Bethel Seventh Day Adventist
207 Hillcrest Ave., Trenton, NJ (609) 393-2224. Open third Sunday of the month 8am-12pm.

Mount Carmel Guild
73 North Clinton Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08609, (609) 392-5159. Operates a food pantry Mon-Fri. 9:30am – 11:30am and 1:30am – 3:30pm

Free Community Dinner, Wed. 5-6:30pm,
Princeton United Methodist Church, Nassau & Vandeventer, Princeton, 609 924-2613

Crisis Ministry
61 Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ (609) 921-2135. Open Monday through Thursday (closed the last weekday of the month) from 1:30pm-4pm.

Pantries

Bromley Neighborhood Civic Center
1801 East State St., Hamilton, NJ (609) 587-8100. Open Tuesdays from 9am-1pm and Thursdays from 2-4pm.

Catholic Charities
132 N. Warren St., Trenton, NJ (609) 394-8847. Open Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 9am-12:30pm.

Community Action Service Center/RISE
225 Franklin St., Hightstown, NJ (609) 443-4464. Open Monday through Wednesday from 9am-12pm.

Concerned Citizens of Ewing Inc.
320 Hollowbrook Dr., Ewing, NJ (609) 882-0856. Open Monday through Friday from 9:30am-1:30pm.

Crisis Ministry (Bethany Presbyterian Church)
400 Hamilton Avenue, Trenton, NJ (609) 393-6318. Open every Friday 9am to 12pm.

Greater Donnelly Initiative
27 Fell Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 802-3287. Open second Monday of the month from 4-6pm and fourth Monday of the month from 12-2pm.

Greater Word for the World Ministries
29 West Front St., Trenton, NJ (609) 394-9094. Open Saturdays (not first Saturday of the month) from 9-11:30am.

East Trenton Center - Food Pantry
601 N. Clinton Ave. Trenton, NJ (609) 393-8009. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday - Summer 10-1 Winter 11-1. Produce distribution Friday.

Hamilton Township's J. O. Wilson Neighborhood Center
169 Wilfred Avenue, Hamilton, NJ (609) 393-6480. Open Mondays from 10am-12noon, Wednesdays 1pm-3pm.

The Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.
400 Hamilton Ave. (corner of Chestnut Ave.), Trenton, NJ (609)392-0922. Open Mon-Fri 9am – 12pm, last three weeks of each month

The Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.
123 East Hanover St., Trenton, NJ (609)396-9355. Open Monday & Tuesday 1pm – 3pm, Wednesday & Friday 9am – 12pm

The Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.
61 Nassau St. (Nassau Pres. Church), Princeton, NJ (609)921-2135. Open Monday through Thursday 1:30 – 4pm

The Haitian Center
530 South Olden Ave., Hamilton, NJ (609) 588-8808. Open Monday through Thursday from 8:30am-3:30pm.

Hamilton Township's Bromley Neighborhood Civic Center
1801 E. State Street, Hamilton, NJ (609) 587-8100. Open Tuesdays from 9:30-11:30am and Thursdays from 3-4pm.

HomeFront
1880 Princeton Ave, Lawrenceville, NJ (609) 989-9417. Open Tuesdays 12pm-8pm, Mondays and Thursdays 9am-5pm.

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
189 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 396-2411. Food Pantry. Last Thursday of month. 8am first come first serve.

Mount Carmel Guild of Trenton
73 N. Clinton Avenue, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-3402. Mon-Thurs from 9:30am-11:30am, Fridays. from 1:30pm-3:30pm.

Princeton Deliverance Center
301 Southard Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-9161. Wednesday (not 1st of month) 12:30am-1:30pm, Friday 9am-12pm.

Primera Iglesia Pentecostal (Alpha and Omega Inc.)
347 Second St., Trenton, NJ (609) 571-9135. 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. 5:30pm-7:30pm

Rise Food Pantry
225 Franklin Street Hightstown, NJ 08520 (609) 443-4464. The Rise Food Pantry is open: Monday-Wednesday 9am - 12pm

Sacred Heart Church
343 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 393-2801. Food Pantry. 3rd Tuesday of the month. 2pm-6pm

Samaritan Baptist Church
531 Dr. ML King Blvd, Trenton, NJ (609) 393-0016. Food Pantry. Saturday 9am-11:30am

Trinity Cathedral Food Pantry
801 W State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-3805. Food Pantry. Every other Saturday 9am-11am

Turning Point Methodist Church
15 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ. Dinner served and Food Pantry. 3rd Sunday 1pm-3pm.

United Progress, Inc.
162 West State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-2161. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-12pm.

***Dial 211 for Community Resources.**



HomeFront: Lighting the Darkness

By Raj Manimaran

“No one would walk by a hungry child; they just don’t see them.” The words of Connie Mercer cast a light into the shadows of homelessness.

Ms. Mercer, the founder and CEO of HomeFront, knows how hard families must fight “to break out of the cycle of poverty”. Serving the Central New Jersey area, HomeFront is a non-profit organization that operates to prevent, and ultimately, end family homelessness. To reach this goal, the staff works tirelessly to not only assist families in attaining affordable and adequate housing, but also to guide them along a path to self-sufficiency.

What started with food and clothing deliveries in 1991, has transformed into one of the largest homelessness prevention organizations in the state. Ms. Mercer not only wants her clients to be relieved of the traumatic burden of being on the edge of homelessness, but to thrive and flourish in society.

Many of HomeFront client’s seek assistance by either walking right up to the front desk at either the main office or the Family Preservation Center (FPC). There, they are greeted by the organization’s committed staff and dedicated volunteers, seeking to help out in any way.

For those who have lost it all to the burdens of low-income jobs and accumulating back rent, they could be offered temporary emergency shelter at the FPC which has housed over 1,200 homeless women, with or without children, since 2003. Even if they are not staying at the FPC, HomeFront’s clients are immediately brought into a more “structured environment” by the case workers and family care providers at HomeFront.

Knowing that a lack of education and instability can pass through generations, adults are offered high-quality classes and training right at the FPC. To make their clients eligible for many competitive and sustainable jobs, G.E.D. classes and computer literacy training are taught by trained professionals from local agencies. Once the students are ready, they are assisted in finding employment at the multitude of businesses in the area that have established partnerships with Home-



“Open ‘n’ Closed” by Derrick Branch

Front. Other services provided for adults include: housing assistance, life skills training, and a variety of counseling.

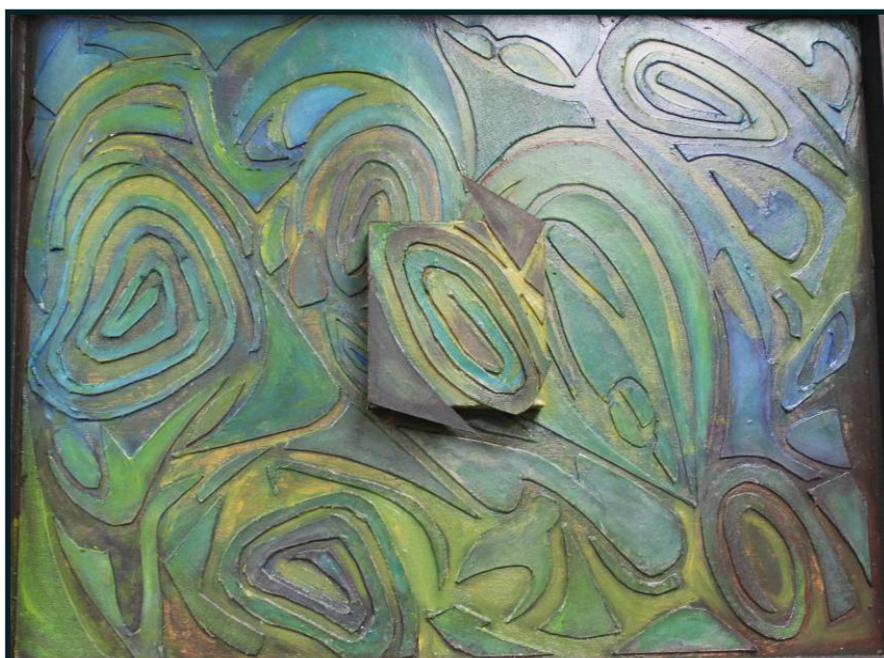
Adults are not the only ones who are affected by homelessness. According to the Census Bureau, 16 percent of children under the age of 4 in Mercer County live in conditions of poverty. From the award-winning preschool “The Cherry Tree Club,” to the always lively “Joy, Hopes, and Dreams Program,” and the critically guided “Triumphant Teens,” HomeFront’s children are not only given the skills, but also the motivation needed to break out of the cycle of poverty.

HomeFront provides a wide variety of other programs to aid its families, including: a food pantry, therapeutic art program, nursing facility, the “FreeStore,” and many more. When asked how all these programs came to be, “We listened [to the clients],” Ms. Mercer answered simply. “They are our first priority.”

Homelessness prevention is not a simple task. It is a financial struggle for many and an emotional burden for most. With property rent rates well outside the reach of families with minimum wage incomes, family homelessness is a challenge. For instance, in Mercer County 11 percent of families with children live below the poverty line and 13.3 percent of children, ages 18 and under, live in poverty.

While she wishes it was not an issue, Connie Mercer knows that homelessness just does not receive the attention, awareness, and emphasis it needs to be addressed with: “People just don’t know what they don’t know,” Ms. Mercer remarked.

But after 22 years of advocacy and major cuts in funding and donations the last several years, does Connie Mercer feel exhausted? “I love what we do here, and we will continue to do it until we don’t have to.”



“Outside the Box” by Walter Roberts Jr.

For more information about HomeFront and its services please visit:

Main Office/Food Pantry/Warehouse at 1880 Princeton Ave, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648 (609) 989-9417

Family Preservation Center at 310-320 Sullivan Way, Ewing, NJ 08628 (609) 883-7500

ReStore Grand Opening

By Shaun Field

The city of Trenton was once known for being a center of production for many different industries. However, as businesses began to move out, poverty began to rise and the city that once went by the slogan “Trenton Makes, The World Takes,” began to see an increase in violence and looting. If you drive around the city or hop on one of the various #600 bus lines you will notice the plethora of abandoned warehouses and apartment buildings lining the Route 1 corridor, many with more than one broken window.

Habitat for Humanity of Trenton is committed to serve the community of Trenton by providing affordable housing for qualifying families. Via an application process, families who qualify financially can partner with Habitat on the construction of a brand new, energy-efficient home with a zero interest mortgage.

A zero percent interest mortgage is very helpful for families with multiple children because they can save money to put towards the cost of groceries and healthcare. However, this is not the only resource Habitat for Humanity of Trenton is providing in Mercer County.

On the White House authorized National Day of Service, which also fell aptly on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Habitat for Humanity of Trenton officially opened the doors to the ReStore located at 106 Ewing Street at the cross of Ogden St. and Southard St.

The ReStore is a self-service warehouse of donated furniture, appliances, cabinetry, flooring, paint and construction supplies, which are sold at a heavily reduced rate from retail stores such as Home Depot and Lowes.

Shoppers are treated to a plethora of new and like new cabinet sets, brand new boxes of tile and carpets, and a show room of antique and modern furniture. At reduced prices, shoppers can walk away with a two piece living room set for less than the price of one piece in a retail establishment.

There is a segment of the population in Trenton that has found com-

fort in the newly established store. Landlords and construction specialists frequent the store for appliances, doors, windows and flooring. As well, homeowners have found smaller things, such as light fixtures, furniture and dishware to their liking.

As a benefactor of the community, Habitat has been operating a food pantry with fresh vegetables on Fridays and an after-school Learning Lab for children from ages 6-13. The Habitat of Trenton has now, however, expanded its sphere of influence by adding the ReStore.

The ReStore is not only a win for the community. Habitat for Humanity of Trenton also reaps the benefit of income generation that is used for operational costs and is then turned directly towards the construction of new homes.

Tom Caruso, the Executive Director at Habitat said the sale of “these donated new and used items helps Habitat fund our programs for the low income clients we serve. This additional means of raising funds is critical. The economy has decreased donor contributions significantly and the ReStore will help fill the gap.” In other words, the Habitat ReStore provides a cycling of funds that helps all shoppers, patrons, children, and partner families in different ways.

The Habitat for Humanity of Trenton ReStore is one of many affiliate-run ReStores across the country. In New Jersey alone, there are more than 13 Habitat for Humanity affiliates and 6 Restores, allowing for multiply communities to receive the added benefits the ReStore has to offer.

The Habitat for Humanity of Trenton ReStore is located at 106 Ewing Street in Trenton, New Jersey (at the cross of Ogden St. and Southard St.) and the winter hours are Wednesday-Saturday from 9:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.

Check out Habitat for Humanity online at habitat.org for information on all of Habitat’s programs. You can also follow them on Facebook at ‘Habitat of Trenton’ or Twitter at @[habitat_trenton](https://twitter.com/habitat_trenton) for various deals and promotions at the ReStore! 🏠

“St. Francis”
Continued from Pg 3

Stephenson. “We got him in touch with those who could help him find work to pay for his treatments. In the meantime, Russ even paid for those treatments out of his own pocket.”

Hansel nodded, assuring that, “After hospital treatment may be complete, we ensure a ‘warm handoff’ to the next step in their recovery and remain in contact. Hansel and Stephenson each remain in contact with their former patient, and were pleased to share that he is currently living in his own residence, employed and in good health. The man’s life and the cost of more severe emergency care in the future had he gone untreated, were saved.

This story is one of many, and those like it are not limited just to St. Francis Medical Center. As Peg Nasaro plays her role for St. Francis within T.A.S.K, so does St. Francis play its particular role in a much larger community of volunteers and professionals who share the same goal.

“We are... ‘unusually blessed,’” said Stephenson, “in that we have such a tight group of people working together with us, committed to serving the needs of the people who need help most. Sometimes we even hear from other counties and they send their needy people here to Trenton.”

St. Francis Medical Center joins Henry J. Austin Medical Center, Greater Trenton Behavioral Healthcare, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, Rescue Mission, and HomeFront, in the effort to connect and provide for the individuals who may find themselves in need of a helping hand.

St. Francis said, “Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” Today’s economy has shown many that poverty and hard times are not impossible for anyone. A community of support in the Mercer County area makes it their mission to show that recognizing the humanity beyond stereotype, and saving the cost of care, is quite possible. 🏠

St. Francis Medical Center:

Located on the corner of Hamilton and Chambers Street, Trenton, NJ 08609
(609) 599-5000

Henry J. Austin Medical Center:

Locations in Trenton, NJ:
317 Chambers St.
321 N. Warren St.
112 Ewing St.

For immediate assistance:
(609) 278-5900



Learning from Katrina

By Raj Manimaran

On Sunday, January 13, 2013, three vans stopped outside the First Street United Methodist Church in New Orleans, Louisiana. As the bleary-eyed passengers strode up to the church, residents may have been able to guess that the visitors were college students.

The 24 students were Bonner Scholars from The College of New Jersey's Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement in Ewing, NJ. They had come to volunteer for one week to help rebuild houses from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"I feel it is important for the Bonner students to continue rebuilding in New Orleans because we have been a committed group of volunteers since the storm, and while many others may have forgotten, there are still many people without homes due to the storm in 2005," remarked Brittany Aydelotte, Senior Program Coordinator at the Bonner Center. Having volunteered in the city many times herself as a former Bonner Scholar, Aydelotte understood firsthand the extent to which the storm changed the city.

Katrina was one of the most destructive natural disasters in American history. It struck southeastern Louisiana reportedly as a Category 3 hurricane on August 29, 2005.

Due to high-speed winds, intense tidal surges, massive flooding, and the controversial breach of the levees, much of New Orleans was destroyed, especially the parishes that reside below sea-level. One of the poorest areas, the Lower Ninth Ward, not only received the worst devastation at the time, but even today, only less than 20% of the population has returned.

Although Mayor Ray Nagin had issued the city's first mandatory evacuation in history, over 1,400 people were reported dead. Those who were able to return to their homes, months afterwards, were stunned and shocked by how little remained, if anything.

This catastrophe, followed by looting, contractor fraud, lack of insurance and other assistance, left few to even contemplate rebuilding their homes.

"My hope is that our commitment will remind others that there is still work to do and show our students the importance in remembering those in need even after the media coverage has died down," said Aydelotte.

Even after seven and a half years, clear signs of the hurricane's wrath were still evident throughout the city.

The Scholars volunteering with the St. Bernard's Project, one of the most successful rebuilding organizations in the Greater New Orleans Area,

worked in two separate houses during the course of the week. Patching, painting, and putting up drywall provided a unique experience for many of the scholars, but not as unique as the residents themselves.

Kayla Simpkins, 21, a junior at The College of New Jersey, has made it a point to return to "The Big Easy" multiple times throughout her 3 years as a Bonner Scholar.

"New Orleans is so unique because it captures you. The homeowners I have met are so welcoming and thankful, and you cannot help but keep coming back," reminisced Simpkins.

The service trip to New Orleans came just months after the devastating Super Storm Sandy had struck. Sandy stripped much of New Jersey's shore homes and left many to seek shelter, food, and other resources.

Individuals and organizations throughout the country immediately provided an unprecedented amount of donated goods and services for.

The College of New Jersey immediately initiated its "Here for Home" campaign, coordinated by the Bonner Center and several other organizations on campus, and provided volunteers and donations for those in need.

With all of the work that still needs to be done in New Jersey, one may wonder why students were traveling to New Orleans at a time like this.

"We are on the boards of organizations, working directly with patrons in Trenton and we are playing a vital role in the Sandy rebuilding efforts, supplying donations and eager college students every week," explained Simpkins. "All of the work we do and will continue to do in Trenton and New Jersey as Bonner Scholars is only strengthened by continuing our efforts in New Orleans."

After seeing the ruins in New Orleans, the Bonner Scholars received a premonition of what New Jersey could remain like if they do not continue towards New Jersey's recovery. The number of people who initially lost their homes due to Katrina was shocking, but the numbers who still are unable to return are just as staggering.

The Bonner Scholars have come to understand that if New Jersey wants to avoid the homelessness epidemic of Katrina, they must be proactive towards Sandy relief. With this knowledge and commitment towards the cause, shore town communities can rest assured that the Bonner Center and its scholars will continue to fuel the road to recovery in the time to come. 🏠



"Cub Love" by John Hayes



"Hidden Flower" by Carol Johnson

*“Pride and Property”
Continued from Pg 1*

ly fighting heard down the halls, that would keep any parent at attention throughout the night. Three bodies in a full sized bed was an uncomfortable experience. With uncanny wisdom and foresight, she would always say that her passion for creating the ideal living experience for her hundreds of tenants was fueled by her understanding of what it means to have the most aberrant living experience – an experience she returned to daily after a day’s work surrounded by everything she did not have.

After years of saving, Patricia and her family finally moved to a secure and modest normative apartment. Over months she furnished it with everything she had to live without.

For the first time in roughly three years, Patricia had a kitchen, a stove, a key, and a dresser. She could open her front door as well as her arms to any and all that needed a haven or a hug. But most importantly, she had a good night’s sleep.

By the end of my flashback, class was ending. The bell rang and I hurried over to my teacher and told her Patricia’s story and how, until that class, I never realized that Patricia and her family were homeless. As we finished talking I began to head toward the door.

“Wait! You never actually told me who this woman is? Did you know her family? Her son?”

I looked over my shoulder as I walked out, smiled, and replied, “I am her son. That was my family.” 🏠



“Fountain of Youth” by John Hayes

I Was Homeless

Prose Poem

By Michelle Ann Miller

I was homeless.

But now my life has improved!

My life has improved a whole lot. When I say a whole lot, this is what I mean. I now have my two-bedroom apartment that I love a lot. I don’t have to pay for PSE&G and that is a big blessing for me.

But when I still see homeless people on the street, sometimes I will stop and talk to them and tell them things can get better—but you have to make the first move before it will happen.

When I was homeless, all I could do was keep being strong; I kept my head up to the sky. That helped me a whole lot. Now I am trying very hard to get my G.E.D., so I can show my daughter Nicole, who has been in the Army for 15 years, that her mother can improve her life just like she did.

Nicole will be very proud of me. My Daughter will be 35 years old in July, and I will be 49 next year. Since we went through so much when we had no place to rest our heads, I always thank the Good Lord for looking out for Nicole and me. Without Him, we could not have made it to where we are today.

I just want to say one more thing. When I get my G.E.D., I have big plans. I am going to get into child care. I’ve done it in my life before and I want to do it again.

So now that I told you how my life improved, I am going to say goodbye and God bless all of you.

the
WALL
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The Bonner Program

Access to Education,
Opportunity to Serve

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**MERCER ALLIANCE
TO END HOMELESSNESS**

Emily Lewis: Dreaming Outside the Box

By Gary Kehoe

Emily Lewis was introduced as the focus of a feature article written by the Star Ledger in 2010: “Aspiring Artist from Ewing Homeless Shelter...” — For most, that is who Emily Lewis was.

In 2014, exactly four years since her stay at the HomeFront homeless shelter in Ewing, New Jersey, Emily Lewis will graduate on a scholarship from The New School of Design, located in the heart of New York City, with a Bachelor’s Degree in Fine Arts. She has her own studio apartment and numerous works on exhibit in New York City.

“It is all about bringing yourself to a canvas or whatever kind of art you do,” said Lewis in a recent interview. “The lessons I have learned are shown in my art, but sometimes may be hidden and only I know it’s there.”

Not long ago, Emily had not yet recognized her own talents. In fact, as a young teen struggling with addiction on the streets of Columbus, Ohio, her life seemed void of any positive outlet. The story behind the portrait of success she now presents is one that can inspire many more like it.

Since the age of 16, Emily Lewis had been admitted more than once to drug-rehabilitation and was no longer continuing her high school education. In an interview with the Star Ledger in 2010, her mother Linda recalled, “I would lie awake at night when she didn’t come home and think, she’s late, she’s late. Later, I just prayed she wasn’t lying dead somewhere.”

Amidst Emily’s struggles, the family home in Ohio was lost and Lewis, her mother, and Emily’s young daughter were now without direction or foundation. The family moved itself to Lawrenceville, New Jersey. Lewis received an assistance check earned through the Work First New Jersey welfare program, but with minimal education or sustenance, life seemed without any positive outlet for change. It was the chance encounter with Ms. Ruthann Traylor, founder of the ArtSpace program, and the discovery

of a “hidden talent” for artistic expression that opened the door to a brighter future.

In 2008, a 23 year old Emily Lewis sat down in the ArtSpace room, having never painted before. Traylor claimed to immediately notice Lewis expressing herself in ways that stood out among many other pieces being done. After receiving some acclaim for works including “How You See Me” and “Pennies,” Lewis was encouraged to pursue her talent further. With the help of her newfound support system at HomeFront, Emily took the SAT’s and eventually earned her GED. She then took a shot at a new beginning by applying to one of the most prestigious art schools, The New School of Design in New York City. In 2010, Emily was accepted.

A life that seemed to stall on the streets of Columbus, Ohio was now on its way to a new beginning in the busiest city in the world. In the fall of 2010, Lewis joined over a thousand incoming art students arriving at The New School of Design in Greenwich Village, New York. “I accepted my past and moved on” she said confidently. She arrived at The New School with her past as nothing more than special color in her palate.

The first day of college is a frightening experience for most incoming freshmen, especially for those new to life in the Big Apple. Having only been to the city as a child, the environment was entirely new to Emily. She recalled worrying if she would make it through her first year.

“I’m going to be honest, New York City is tough and I felt like it was breaking me a bit. Then I sucked it up. That is how it seems to be in the city. To live here, a person really needs to explore and find things of value. It has to be the best and worst place I have ever lived!”

The fast pace of New York City may have devoured some wide-eyed freshmen, but Lewis’s unique story has shown she is not the type to be broken. Lewis believes she has

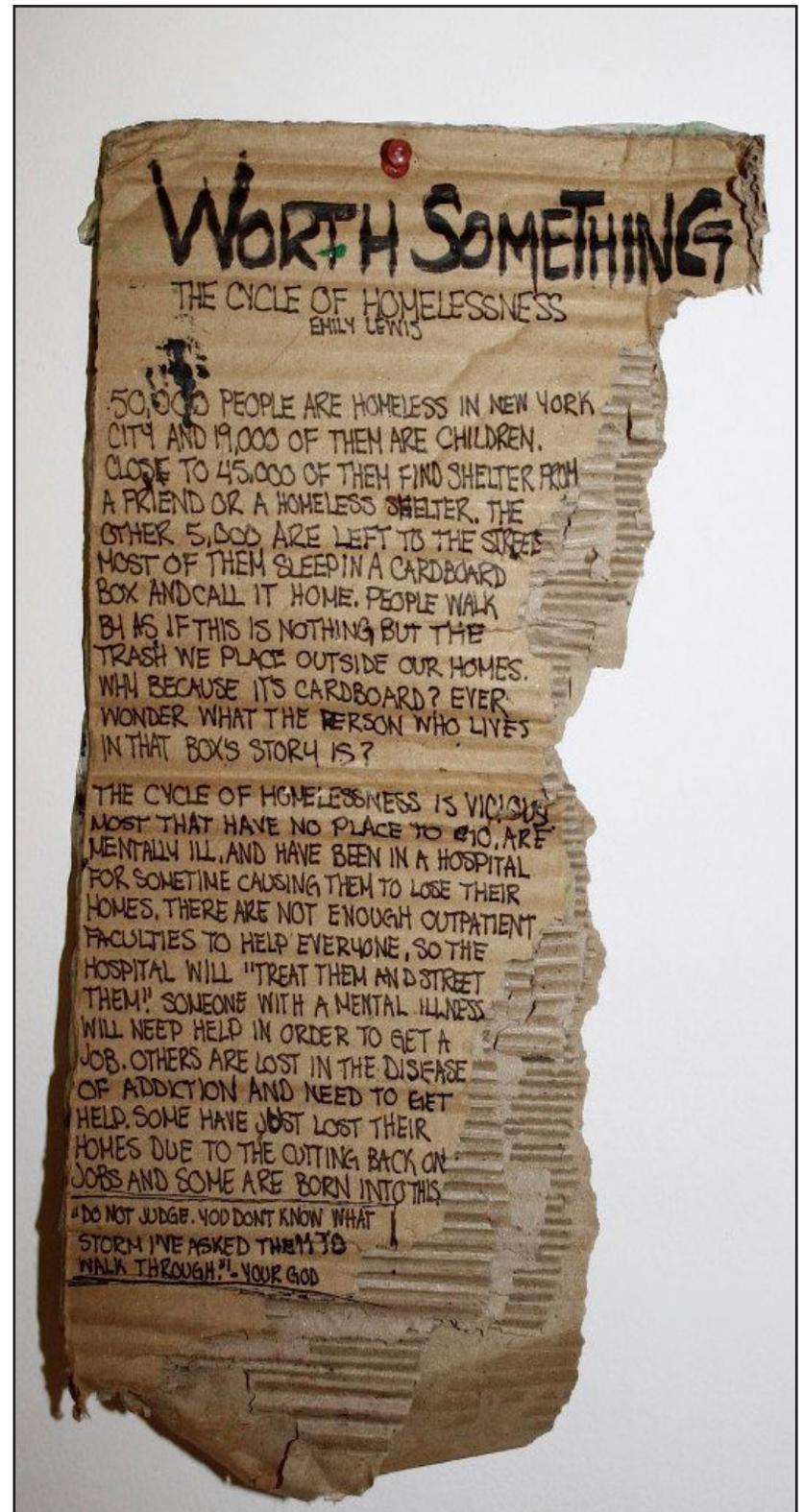
developed a unique, mature perspective: one that allows her to speak to many crowds and turn the city into her canvas.

“It’s easy for me to relate with people on the street or drug addicts, but I also can have that smart educated side and that is a plus. I think it’s nice to have both!”

Residing in her own studio apartment with her daughter, Lewis has her own space to create new work and contemplate new meaning.

Recently, Lewis brought her art to the streets in an attempt to bring

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Paris: Are We There Yet?

“Home is a notion that only nations of the homeless fully appreciate and only the uprooted comprehend.”
— Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose*

By Tiffany Teng

In the spring of 2012, I studied abroad for 4 months in the elegant, romantic city of Paris.

Paris has long been touted as a conflation of the elite and the beggars, ever since the French Revolution sparked a rebellious, Bohemian culture in Paris.

Every morning, as I walked to and from my host mom’s apartment, I passed dozens of rough sleepers. “Rough sleepers” are homeless people who sleep in the streets or metro stations because they have nowhere else to go.

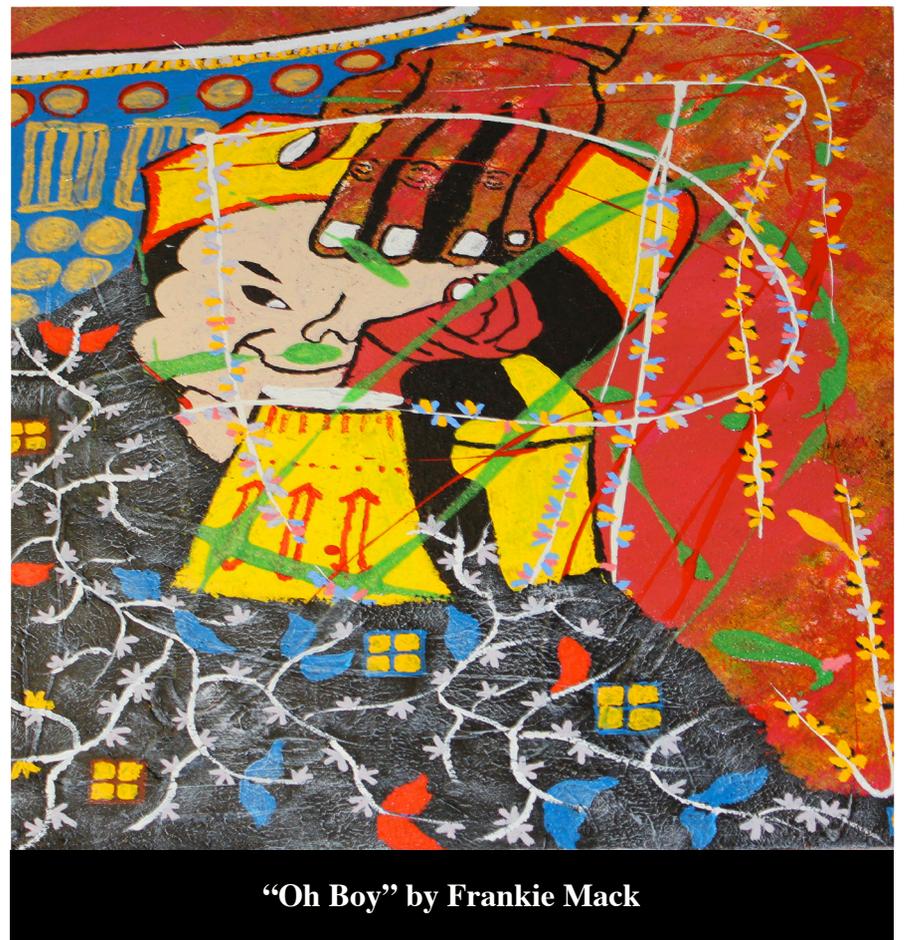
Outside of Mercer County, homelessness prevails internationally.

Researchers and policymakers created International Alliance to End Homelessness in March 2011 (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/iaeh>). In just two years, they have measured the best practices in policies revolving targeting, creating homeless systems, migration, accessing mainstream assistance and outcomes.

In recent years, the French government has begun to resolve this devastating issue. It has been one of the government’s main priorities since 2007, met with much political debate and bureaucratic red tape. However, in a city where homelessness has become a stitch in the culture, the legal actions to remove rough sleepers and create more accessible homeless shelters have not led to dramatic results.

Meanwhile, the disparity between the rich and the poor is devastating—homeless men beg for scraps right beside the most luxurious shops selling imported Spanish ham and diamond-encrusted handbags. Entire families panhandle and gypsies are ready to pickpocket the nearest tourist.

On any given night, there are between 2,000 and 15,000 homeless in Paris, according to *The Economist*. In October 2012, this number was approximately 12,000, with the youngest population of rough sleepers the city had ever seen.



“Oh Boy” by Frankie Mack

There was a young man with a large dog that I passed every day on my way to the Bastille metro station. He lived in a nook in the wall that used to be a fountain and was now a protective cave shielding him and his dog from the harsh winter winds. Each day, I would smile, give a little wave, and he would respond with “Salut!” If he were not there, I would wonder where he was and felt as though something was missing. I worried for him, and wished there was something more I could do. After all, since the first day I met him and asked to take his photograph, we had become friends—in the way that only two complete strangers can become friends from sharing one serendipitous moment.

One year later, I wonder where he is and how he is coping. I hope he found a permanent home so he can move on with his life and do all the wonderful things young people have

the potential to do.

Living on the streets on a few dollars a day without food or shelter, let alone good hygiene and health, takes a toll on physiological and safety needs, and develops psychological problems within an individual.

Unfortunately, the unemployment rate reached a 13-year high in 2012 at 10.2% and rising, according to Reuters. The French public blames bureaucracy and centralization, but the reality is that homelessness can be eliminated through a series of measured steps and thorough policy-making.

Until then, rough sleepers will continue to call Parisian streets “home.”

Even the wealthiest cities in the world suffer from homelessness—underneath the glamour and romance, Paris reveals a bitter truth and offers its streets as a default home for thousands every night. 🏠

WE CAN ALL BE A PART OF TRANSFORMING LIVES

UNITED HOUSING FIRST

ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS ONE PERMANENT HOME AT A TIME



UNITED WAY OF GREATER MERCER COUNTY TRANSFORMS LIVES.

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Lasting Impact of “Million Dollar Murray”

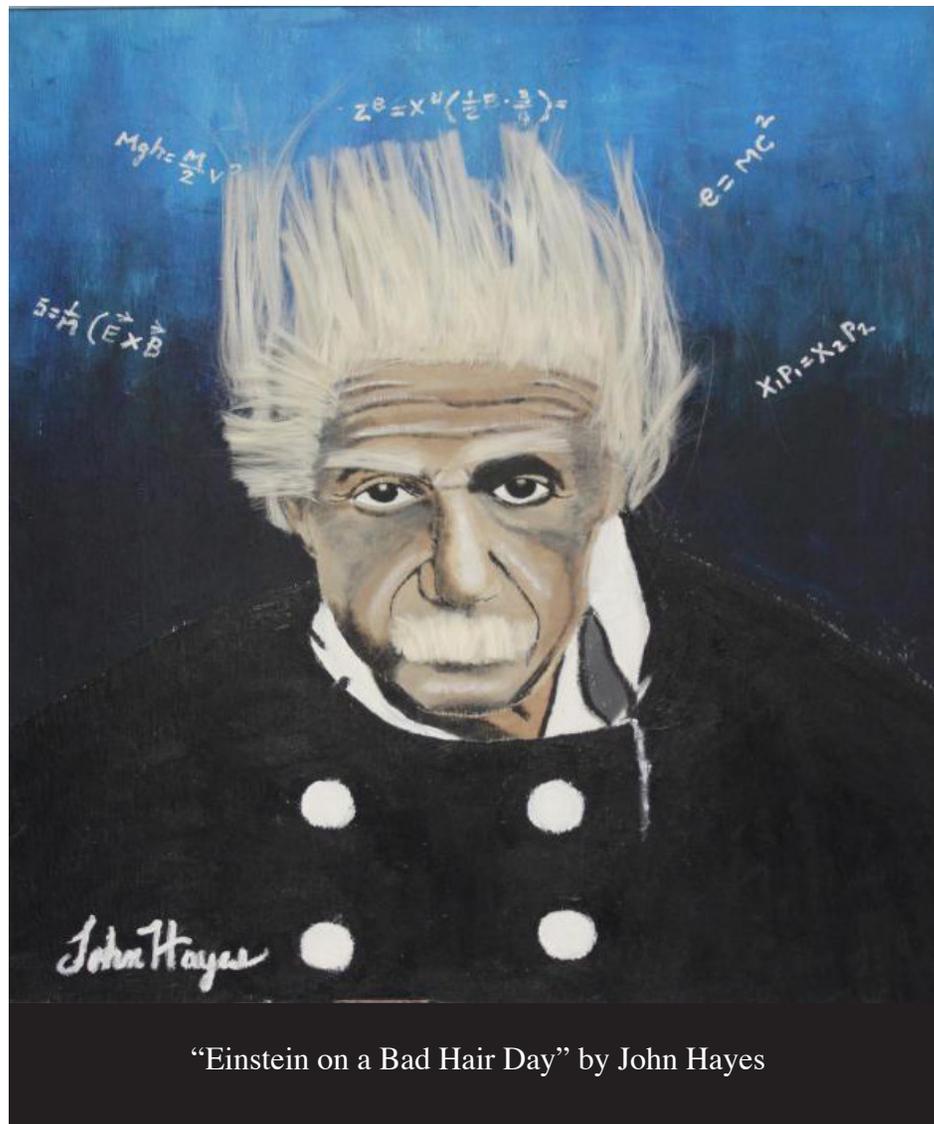
By Steven Rodriguez

For millions of homeless Americans, the concept of having a place to call home is central to escaping the vicious cycle of poverty. While the over 2.3 million homeless in this country are often thought of as one large group, there are important sub-groups, which include veterans, youths, families, as well as the chronically homeless. The National Alliance to End Homelessness defines the latter group as those suffering from “...long-term, or repeated homelessness, often coupled with a disability”.

One of the chief challenges to federal programs has been determining the best strategies to combat the widespread issue of chronic homelessness. In recent years, the approach has focused on long-term housing programs for the chronically homeless, in addition to the overnight shelters that make up the safety net. This shift was very much influenced by Malcolm Gladwell’s widely-read article “Million Dollar Murray” in *The New Yorker*, which states that the chronically homeless (the minority) are actually the most important group to focus on. These end up costing hospitals and shelters tens of thousands of dollars, while these expenses rarely have any enduring benefit to the homeless person. Plans had to shift away from maintaining people in this cycle to ending it through housing programs that provide long-term stability.

Federal: Some of the key federal programs include the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid. Despite the economic recession of 2008, additional funding for homelessness was created under President Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

Mercer County: As the Executive Director of the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness, Herb Levine has been working to find ways to end homelessness in the Trenton area. Levine says



“Einstein on a Bad Hair Day” by John Hayes

his organization is able to work with various groups and agencies within the state, county and community to identify and plan to distribute funds in an efficient and collaborative manner. This “complex web of funding sources” as he described it, is primarily a mix of federal, state and county grants. A smaller percentage is gathered from the United Way and local businesses.

While this money is distributed amongst a number of programs, including various homeless shelters, the chief focus is providing housing vouchers and service for the chronically homeless.

In this area, the Alliance has been quite successful, with Greater Trenton Behavioral Health Care moving 85 people into apartments, with plans to provide 60 more housing vouchers

to community agencies in the near future. Levine noted that homelessness has remained relatively steady in Mercer County, a positive contrast to the gradually rising national figures.

While goals to end chronic homelessness in the United States in the next decade or so may seem a bit lofty, there are signs of real progress; communities across the U.S. are engaging their citizens to do their part and help to combat the issue, government funding has remained steady, and more people are starting to understand the scope of this problem.

Ultimately, the battle against homelessness returns to the idea of having a home. A home provides a sense of identity and stability that is central to a sustainable lifestyle. It is this end goal that all federal, state, and local policy strives to achieve. 🏠

“Emily Lewis”
Continued from Pg 12

awareness to homelessness in New York City. She described a time she visited Union Square one night and was shocked at the number of people sleeping there. “It made me angry that this was happening,” she said.

She responded with a piece entitled, “Worth Something”, a box spray painted gold on the inside and furnished with a fur vest on the bottom, a nice pillow, boots, and even lighting. She covered the outside with the saying “Treat Them and Street Them”. The piece was shown at the Octagon Gallery on Roosevelt Island this past fall.

Lewis remains connected to those who helped her realize the hidden talent that released her into her new life, including Ruthann Traylor, the woman who began ArtSpace ten years ago.

Lewis recently returned to HomeFront to hold her own class in the ArtSpace. “It was a lot of fun to go back and see the people who helped me ‘Get it together!’”

Next year, The New School will join HomeFront as one of the priceless stepping stones in Lewis’ open-ended journey. As she walks as a graduate for the first time in her life, she will have the same apprehensions as any college student. She is still unsure what her future holds; a master’s degree and a larger apartment for her and her daughter are among her aspirations, and one of her greatest desires is the simplest of all.

“One thing I think that I will always want is for people to be less judgmental. Kids do it to other kids because of what they wear or look like and adults do the same. We look down on people because they are poor/rich; need help with drugs; have an illness that makes them look or act differently; like the same sex, or even just have other views. I get sick of it and seeing people down all the time. I want people to understand we all walk in different shoes!”

From Columbus, Ohio to New York City, Emily is an example of what potential can do when it is given a chance to dream outside the box. 🏠

Family Homelessness

By Steven Rodriguez

A recent statistic from the National Center on Family Homelessness reveals that one in every 50 American children is homeless--equating to roughly 1.5 million children. While the effort to confront the issue has been taken up by many organizations, annual national numbers reflect the ongoing severity of family homelessness.

Family homelessness became a serious problem in this country in the mid-1980's, due to large cutbacks in Federal investment in housing under Reagan. Prior to this, the United States last saw very high numbers of family homelessness during the Great Depression, which was remedied by the increase of employment at the start of WWII.

Since the 80's, the problem has worsened. As various natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina--which displaced 1.5 million people 16 years and older-- have left families and children without a place to call home. Worse yet, support for those affected by these disasters is often greatly diminished by the onset of each new natural

disaster.

The economic recession of 2007 also worsened the issue as more than six million families were foreclosed on, according to the Center for Responsible Lending. National data shows that family homelessness has been on the rise over the past six years. In 2006 the number was 1.5 million and as of 2010 it is 1.6 million, according to a report released by the National Center on Family Homelessness.

Why does homelessness among such a vulnerable group continue to persist? An influential report titled "America's Youngest Outcasts 2010", compiled by the National Center on Family Homelessness, concludes that the causes are structural in nature: "Poverty combined with our nation's lack of affordable housing have pushed the most vulnerable families out of stable housing onto a path towards homelessness." Psychological and emotional trauma among young mothers, natural disasters, and man-made disasters such as the economic recession of 2007, are also said to

have a very damaging effect on families. According to the report, the 2007 recession was responsible for a 38% increase in childhood homelessness.

In New Jersey and Mercer County, however, the number of homeless youths and their families has been decreasing. The "America's Youngest Outcasts" report establishes a "state report card" system which ranks the 50 states based on their success in tackling the issue of family homelessness--1 being the best, 50 the worst. This state report card system takes into account factors like the extent of childhood homelessness, child well being, risk for childhood homelessness, and policy and planning efforts. As of 2010, New Jersey was given a composite score of 7. The top 5 states tackling the issue are Vermont, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Maine.

On a more local level, the Mercer County Alliance to End Homelessness has been making significant progress in shortening the time that families spend being homeless. By working closely with The Mercer County

Board of Social Services (MCBOSS), the Alliance has seen the length of time that families spend in shelter or transitional housing decrease by 20 percent in a two-year period, and the number of families in hotels decrease by 66 percent over the course of a month.

This significant progress was achieved through a pilot rapid-rehousing program, which was in part funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Rapid Rehousing offers rental assistance and experienced case managers, who help the head of household return to full employment and overcome any barriers that stand in the way. Re-housed families were 3.5 times more likely to be employed at the end of the program, as compared to those in transitional housing.

Though the national figures for family homelessness are on the rise, great strides are being made at a local county and state level. With new approaches to alleviate the problem and the rollout of rapid housing, the future for homeless families seems far more promising. 🏠



"Sunflowers" by Dolores Frails

My Appreciation

Poetry

By Rayon

You help me when no one would show me the way,
When others try to appoint me astray.
I really do appreciate all the outings and advice from Jamie and J.
I'll never forget the times we shared,
I know I've accomplished a lot just from being here.
The vibe is always sincere.

It's a wonderful feeling to have both of you in my life
Someone encouraging me to always do right.
Realizing that I have two people other than my queen and princess,
I'm so thankful you keep me on the road to success
It wasn't me, God is the reason that I am blessed.
Through the hardships and trials I progress...
Staying determined and focused was my key
I must confess.

Steps to Self-Fulfillment: Beyond the TEACH Program

By Tiffany Teng

“The smile on her face was so worth it, I’d do it every day if I could,” Ryan described the moment he told his mother he passed the GED. After years of living on the streets, coping with his heroin drug addiction, raising his son (now 13 years old) and landing back in jail every couple of years, he is eager, yet terrified, to move on with his life. Ryan R. is a 36 year-old client at the Rescue Mission’s TEACH Program, an educational program run by Ida Malloy.

During his interview, Ryan detailed some of misconceptions about homelessness and praised programs such as TEACH. Not only is passing the GED a motivating factor to move forward, but “people like Miss Ida are the ones who motivate you, they let you know that you’re worth it whether you realize it or not...no matter how pissed off you get.”

At the Rescue Mission, he was finally motivated to make his mother (who was diagnosed

with breast cancer) and son proud and by receiving an education. Currently finishing the methadone treatment, Ryan sees such programs as opportunities, but certainly no cakewalk; “you’ve got to do the footwork, no one’s gonna do it for you.”

Throughout the years, Ryan was most bothered by the stereotype that all drug addicts are awful, violent people. He points out that before he became homeless in November, he and his son used to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for those on the streets. Ryan emphasized, “Homelessness doesn’t care whether you’re white, black, gay, or straight...”

So, what is the solution?

Successful drug treatment programs, re-entry programs and increasing the availability of housing after prison. Decreasing incarceration of drug abusers, and most of all, making people aware. Shedding light on the people living under the bridge. Having

everything taken from you. “You gotta have nothing in order to know how you’ll make out.”

Ryan is a prime example of a man who came from a good, tight-knit family who fell into the wrong crowd out of sheer curiosity. He will be the first one to admit, “I did this to myself. Now I’ve got health problems, physically and mentally.”

Education, above all, is crucial to eliminating homelessness. At the very least, educating others about the issue of homelessness unearths the real problems that remain undetected and unaddressed.

Soon Ryan hopes to detox from methadone, move on with his life, and get an education.

“A place without homelessness, no drugs.”

The Rescue Mission of Trenton’s TEACH Program is a comprehensive adult education program that offers GED preparation, along with basic life skills and technical training. It strives to create employment and life-

changing opportunities through its job placement program for residents. The TEACH Program relies on volunteers for tutoring and special classes. Questions can be directed to IdaM@rmtrenton.org. 📧



Delores Frails

What Homelessness Means to Me

By Ama Banahene

For many people, including myself, homelessness has a negative connotation. It is usually believed to be the end of result of engaging in social vices: excessive gambling, drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution and general irresponsibility.

Many will confess their conflict surrounding this issue. They are willing to help those in needs yet believe most homeless individuals are simply corrupt and have low morale. However, this could not be further from the truth.

The reality is that people with mental illness are the most vulnerable to becoming homeless. With increasing healthcare cost, high unemployment levels and with a spike in those without or with inadequate insurance, members of the society with mental disorders are at a very high risk of losing shelter.

The high level of stress caused by

the present state of the economy has led to an increase in the occurrence of mental illnesses. The hike of symptoms leads to bad health and poor performance, placing many of these individuals at a high risk of job loss. Lack of adequate insurance deprives many of proper treatment, making their disease become a source of liability. More importantly, with the increased competition for jobs even in the menial ones, the mentally disabled face a higher risk of job-based discrimination than other applicants.

The sub-group of the mentally disabled with the highest risk of becoming homeless is those with drug and alcohol related issues. The criminalization of chronic drug users, social attitude towards substance abuse problems and weak mental health care system places these individuals at a risk of not having a secure place for shelter.

Criminal laws that punish drug use and distribution leads to many chronic users being incarcerated; they are then faced with many difficulties during the process of re-introduction into society.

More often than not, societal misconception about substance abuse issues being a reflection of personal characters leads to those with abuse issues facing family and social rejection. The lack of support cripples their successful readjustment. Most ex-convicts face job and housing-based discrimination. Also because of so many substance abusers are of low socioeconomic status, there is less of a chance they will receive the rehabilitation or familial support they need to move on—particularly after years of alienation.

These problems are not going away. To be aware is the first step. Homelessness can befall anybody; this must be known. 📧



Daniel Brady