



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

ISSUE 11 • SPRING 2016

## Finding Positivity And Perspective In Fantasy

By Melissa Lindley

Derrick Branch sits at a wooden table in a small room in the back of the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) cafeteria. The table is lightly stained with ink and paint and covered with craft supplies and half eaten snacks.

He's going on 51, and his grey skullcap and faded Mets hoodie enhance the specks of white that have peppered his black hair and beard. Even with his signs of age, he flashes a boyish grin and proudly clutches a portrait of a brown and yellow lion that was just painted the day before on that very same table.

"I didn't look at no picture or nothin'," he said. "I just remember how a lion looks. My hands was guided by an inner source."

Branch is one of many artists that have benefitted from the soup kitchen's Trenton Community A-TEAM (TCAT), an arts program that was founded in 2009. Open to the public, the program offers the local community a chance to compose their own music, poetry, screenplays and writing. The program also offers the opportunity to create original artwork, such as paintings and drawings, in order to provide a creative outlet for those living in poverty or low-income



**"I Give Myself To You"**  
By Demond Williams

neighborhoods. He participates heavily in the latter, writing poetry, rapping and painting.

Branch was born in 1963 and raised in North Trenton, just a block short of the soup kitchen's current

location. The youngest of ten children, he often struggled to stay afloat amongst his many siblings and the lack of attention from his parents. The lack of stability at home left him grappling with the ability to find an

identity, especially during the racial tension he experienced as an African American male. He felt a need to categorize himself in some way.

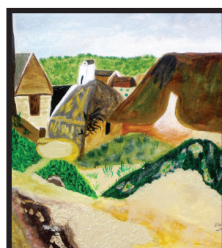
"I knew I was called a colored boy. I even found out they called me mixed black," said Branch. "A colored boy had ancestors from Africa, maybe some Native American. Up until I was about nine years old, someone decided to call us black. I'm black and I'm proud. I was like a beatnik from birth. I ain't goin' along with the establishment. I got my own thoughts."

He also struggled with severe acne during his adolescent years, leaving his face scarred and making him self-conscious. He soon withdrew from others, becoming antisocial and disassociating himself from both romantic and platonic relationships.

During this time, however, he began to show the signs of early childhood schizophrenia and began to suffer from delusions. Unable to be properly treated and uneducated about mental illness, he was not aware that his delusions were unusual or harmful, and attributed them to an overactive imagination. He began to use his budding artistic skills to try

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### "Someone Unknown"



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Ethel Mack embarks on a journey of self-discovery.

### Resource Guide



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Information on shelters, human and health services, and food pantries.

### Connecticut Avenue



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Venture into a personal story by Essence B. Scott.

### Healthy Eating In Trenton



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Unearth Trenton's battle with food insecurity.



# “Strike Out Hunger” Combats Summertime Food Insecurity

By Aphrael Boltas

Summertime means a lot of things: warm weather, longer days, trips to the beach, vacations and lying poolside. And for many students, it means a break from school. However, for a growing number of people, the absence from school leads to something else: food insecurity. The number of children eligible for free and reduced meals has been steadily rising.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2012, more than half of the nation’s children attending public schools were eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.

This means that during the eight weeks of summer when children are no longer going to school and receiving free breakfast and lunch, parents must determine how to fill the gap.

While there are several year-round options for families and individuals to receive food assistance, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC), and food banks across the country, it is important to understand how the gap is bridged during the summer.

As someone who personally received free or reduced lunch for my four years at a Trenton public high school, with three siblings ranging from ages five to 12 who were also in the Trenton school system, I was entirely unaware that summer food assistance programs existed. Had I known, this could have made a major difference when it came time for my parents to decide to devote more money to the food budget and where to take it from.

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), a major summer assistance program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides free meals and snacks during the



**“Sunflowers In The Wind”**  
By Jo Ann Abdelwahabe

summer months to children across the United States. The program includes three different sites: an open site, which operates in low income areas (areas where half of children come from families at or below 85 percent of the poverty

level) and is able to provide free meals to all children. The second site, an enrolled site, provides free meals to any child enrolled in an activity at the program (at least half of children must be eligible for free or reduced lunch for the

program to be eligible). Campsites, the third type of site, receive reimbursement for meals provided to children who are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

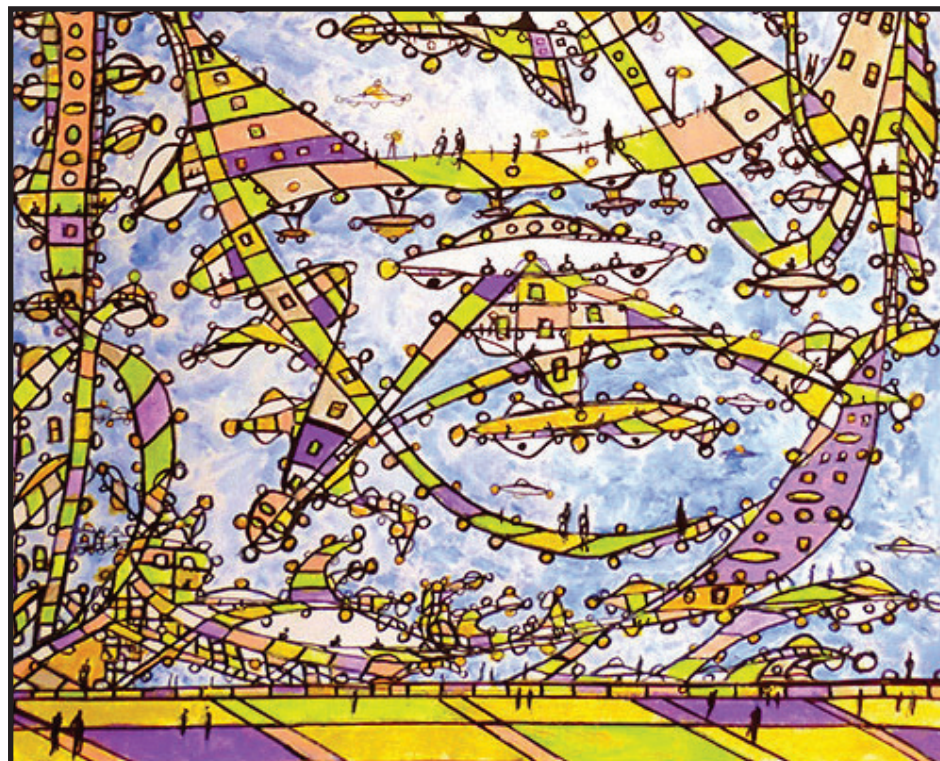
Anyone can search for a food service site in their area by using the Summer Food Rocks website, operated by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The website lists local sites and specifies their type and their times of operation.

In June, 2015 United Way of Greater Mercer County held an event called “Strike Out Hunger” where participants packaged oatmeal to distribute to food banks across New Jersey.

Denise Daniels, who coordinated the event, said that “Strike Out Hunger” was a “way to bring awareness to the issue as well as supply food banks with much needed breakfast at the end of June when kids no longer have free lunch or breakfast.”

Daniels also spoke about the fact that during the summer months, in particular, families rely on food banks. And in comparison to Thanksgiving and Christmas time, there are far fewer donations.

Participants at the event made 9,000 packages of oatmeal (75,000 servings), with three different food banks receiving 3,000 packages each. When United Way followed up with these food banks, they were told that all 9,000 packages were gone within two to three weeks. 🏠



**“Untangled”**  
By Charles Smith

**United Way of Greater  
Mercer County**

“Strike Out Hunger”  
June 2016

Phone: (609) 896-1912

[www.uwgmc.org](http://www.uwgmc.org)



***“Finding Positivity”***  
***Continued From Page 1***

to purge his delusions.

Art had always played a significant role in Branch’s life. As he struggled with his identity and his mental illness, drawing became a way for Branch to escape and also bond with his large family. He and his brothers would sketch together and read comic books, and Branch looked to his siblings and mother for inspiration. His mother was also an avid storyteller, which enamored Branch and encouraged him to write stories of his own and to portray them in his drawings.

“We always worked as a team,” said Branch. “Nowadays, kids don’t get together with their brothers and sisters. We would have a certain time of day when we were bored, and the next thing we’d know, we’d be sitting around the table and drawing.”

Branch’s favorite artists growing up were cartoonists like Charles Schultz and Stan Lee. As he got older, Branch was inspired by photographs in *Playboy* magazine. He appreciated the simplicity in cartoons and the explicit detail that he could learn to draw from the photographs.

His efforts, however, went largely unnoticed. He did not receive any outside support or praise for his work, and felt that he was overlooked and rejected. Even though he spent time with his family, much of the attention went to his siblings.

“Nobody believed nothin’,” said Branch. “If I didn’t have my name on the picture, they said, ‘Oh, you didn’t draw that.’ Everyone had done it already, so they focused on them. I thought I was just as good as anybody. But I just couldn’t fit in.”

His problems at home, along with his insecurities and mental illness, led to poor academic performance and eventually an expulsion from high school. Depressed, suicidal and unsure of his future, Branch enlisted in the Army National Guard with hopes of turning his life around. During his service, Branch was exposed to the



**“Judah Lion”**  
**By Derrick Branch**

drug culture amongst his fellow soldiers. After being discharged, he began using drugs heavily.

He became a heavy user of Phencyclidine (PCP), a dissociative drug and hallucinogen that can trigger psychosis and mental illness in individuals who are

predisposed. Branch’s underlying schizophrenia was exacerbated by the drug use, and he experienced constant hallucinations and disturbing thoughts that led him to numerous hospitalizations, and lost relationships and jobs.

As Branch wrestled with his mental



**“West”**  
**By James Tex Mentis**

illness, he created an invisible friend named Lizair. He began drawing her around the age of 13, and she became a replacement for his friendships and real life romantic relationships with women. This also became a defining moment of his artistry.

She went from being a figment of his delusions to a muse for all of his drawings and paintings, appearing in images and being the subject for many of his portraits. His thoughts, fantasies and desires became colors on a canvas as he fought to draw the line between the illusion and reality. At one point, Branch burned one of his portraits with the hopes that Lizair would come to life and marry him.

“I wanted that affection even though it was misplaced and misguided. I needed that. It was much deeper, but that was my biggest battle,” said Branch. “I had a whole scenario of how she came to be. I used to go to that fantasy a lot.”

He returned to Trenton and was hospitalized after a particularly bad episode while living in Detroit, Michigan, where he became convinced that Lizair was following him and wanting to cause him harm.

During his hospitalization, Branch had trouble connecting with his art and did not draw or write for four years. He entered a behavioral and rehabilitation program after his release, and resumed his artwork, performing spoken word and participating in local poetry slams as a way to share his experiences. His poetry elicited a positive response from the audiences he performed for, and he chose to look for other places where he could continue performing and recovering.

Branch was drawn to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) while he was trying to maintain sobriety. At the time, he had not necessarily needed to use the program’s services, and would show up periodically out of curiosity. Branch returned one day during a period of relapse to get a

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## Isles Promotes Self-Reliance

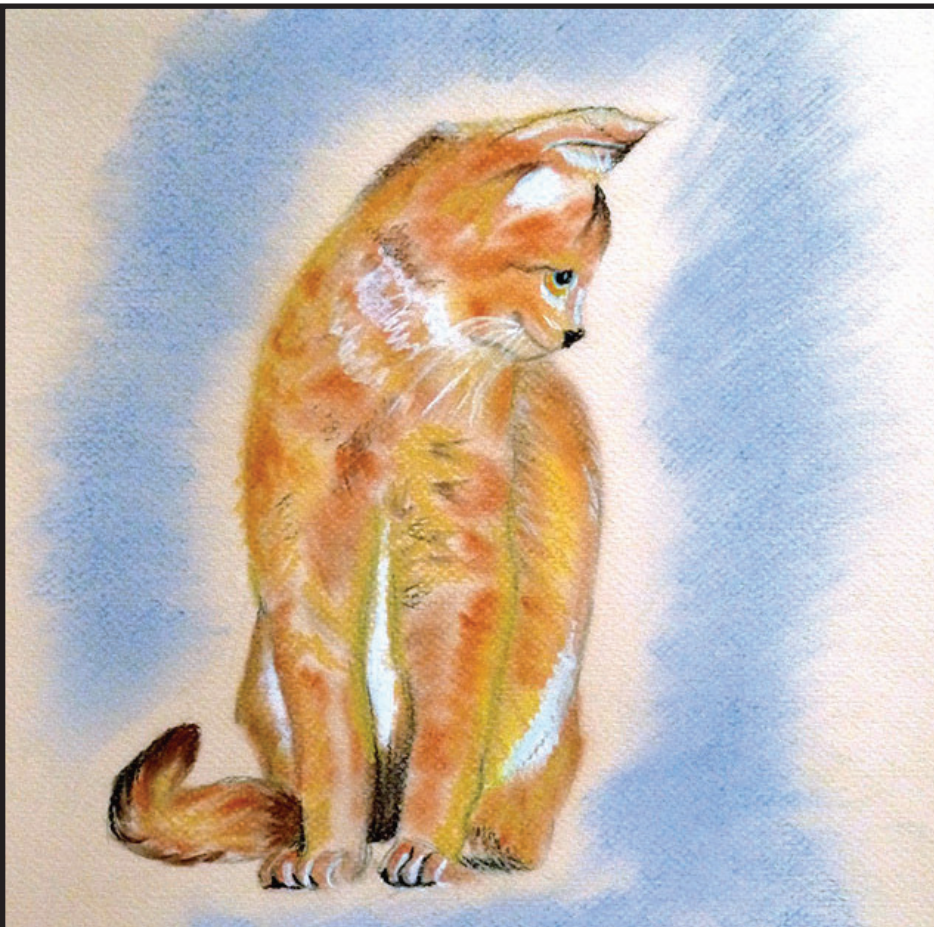
Sprouting from Wood Street in Central Trenton, Isles is an organization focused on supporting families and communities in the area. The program's ideals have not changed since it was first established by a group of enthusiastic students from Princeton University in 1981.

Hoping to rebuild what was damaged while upholding the vibrant and persistent spirit of the Trenton community, these students came in with big ideas that are now the basis for the organization's efforts and work. Working alongside other local organizations and groups, Isles focuses on four elements in their plight to build thriving, stable communities: educating communities and training individuals, revitalizing the community, building community wealth and promoting healthy living. As the pillars to their organizations, these four focal

points have already mobilized hundreds of eager volunteers. Together, this group of individuals creates and implements projects that facilitate community progress. Such projects include rescuing families who face foreclosure, restoring and establishing an art house, planting community gardens, among many others. These initiatives address many of Trenton's biggest challenges.

"From [the] beginning Isles kept asking and testing a basic question: What are the most effective ways to promote self-reliance and healthy communities while building on the assets that are already there?" reads its brochure. "It's an effort to support the Trenton area but, also, an effort that considers the bigger picture," John Korp, Isles' director of community planning and development, said. 🏠

— Annette Espinoza



**"Orange Cat"**  
By John Hayes

## Mercer Is First NJ County To End Veteran Homelessness

By Jared Wolf

As of December 2015, Mercer County accomplished its mission to provide shelter for every homeless veteran seeking assistance. This makes it the latest community to respond to the nationwide challenge to end veteran homelessness that had been issued in 2010 by First Lady Michelle Obama.

The city of Trenton, in conjunction with Mercer County, first addressed the issue in early 2015, with a joint effort from other veteran and non-profit organizations, which included Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness.

The collaborators worked closely together to seek out each of the veterans in need. Many of these patrons came through the Rescue Mission of Trenton, as well as other organizations across Mercer County.

The county and city has achieved what is being called "functional zero." This is defined as having the processes and resources in place to immediately house a veteran.

When the movement first began last year, there were 79 homeless veterans in the area.

Through a systematic screening process and partnerships with Soldier On, Community Hope and other veteran programs and housing providers, the veterans were promptly afforded the services they required most.

According to Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness, of the 79 veterans who were offered assistance, only two remain without permanent housing. Housing is available to them, but they have declined for undisclosed reasons.

Kevin Bryson, a sophomore at The College of New Jersey and a yearly recipient of the ROTC scholarship, reflected on the recent feat, stating "I think that as a nation, our veterans can often be overlooked and underappreciated, and to see our county act so proactively for these people is truly something to be proud of."

Mercer County has long utilized a "housing first" strategy, which prioritizes putting those people in need into permanent housing, subsequently providing them with the resources to combat substance abuse, and offering them mental health counseling.

Ultimately, the goal for these veterans is to be able to use their new housing as a tool for a better future.

While Mercer County should be proud of this accomplishment, it is important to understand the plight of homeless veterans remains problematic nationwide.

Someone who is not homeless today might be homeless tomorrow — homelessness is a fluid issue and must be treated as such.

"We as a community owe it to these struggling veterans to provide the necessary care and aid so that they can transition back into society as smoothly as possible," Bryson said.

This is a great first step for Mercer County and for the state of New Jersey as a whole. Veterans should remain high-priority, as it is the only way to ensure that we, as a community, do not walk away from the goal that the First Lady set out for us to achieve. 🏠

***"We as a community owe it to these struggling veterans to provide the necessary care and aid so that they can transition back into society as smoothly as possible."***



## “Someone Unknown”

By Ethel Mack

Once I lived a life as someone I didn't know.  
When in others company, it started to show  
I had become another person, another in my body,  
who I couldn't ignore, I became ugly, said  
things I didn't mean, people around me,  
became very bored of me.

So I went off to be by myself and relieve some  
of this pain that was in my chest,  
Trying to figure out how I got in this mess.  
This pain has clouded my heart  
and needs something, someone to help pull the stress apart.  
I need a fresh start.

I'm kicking, punching, screaming for someone  
to hear my shout. I'm lost within myself, and I  
want to be freed.  
I need your help, please help me.  
I realized that this person I've become isn't made  
of stick and stones.  
I no longer want to live in here all alone.  
I no longer want to live in here all alone.

Poetry

## “Finding Positivity” Continued From Page 3

meal, and noticed various paintings on the walls that had been drawn by other patrons. He then learned about the budding community of writers and artists that had formed.

“A white haired lady came out and was hanging pictures on the wall,” explained Branch. “I asked her who drew the pictures, and she said one of the people that comes here. She said, ‘We have a thing called the A-Team. Would you like to come and see?’”

One day, Branch encountered a few friends of his who were writing in a back room, and asked a staff member if it could become a regular place for them to write and meet. He was unaware that he was about to be the start of something that would become a huge part of the community.

Shortly thereafter, he formed a band called The Vast I Am, which consisted of several others that he met through the program. They performed locally in Trenton and other parts of central New Jersey.

Branch credits his schizophrenia for giving him a unique and creative ability to draw and write effortlessly. He channels his past and the lingering effects of his illness into his paintings, recalling the detail he would put into drawing Lizair.

“If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have the technique that I have today,” explained Branch. “I always wanted to perfect her. It gave me the desire to have perspective on my work. I have seen drawings that have perspective and they're more attractive and appealing. I wanted her to be all that.”

Along with his writing and music, Branch has rekindled his love of drawing and painting, and has made up for the lapse of creativity that he encountered while hospitalized. Much of his former art was destroyed during a psychotic episode, and he now works to create pieces that contain positive

themes and imagery. He comes to the soup kitchen every week to work on his projects, practice, perform and socialize.

Branch has also made for himself many loving and supportive friendships through his work at the soup kitchen. After spending most of his life seeking out the love and affection he longed for as a child, it appears that Branch has finally found that through TCAT. He has received endless encouragement from the community there, and has been inspired by the people he has met from all walks of life.

“The support was awesome,” said Branch. “Why couldn't I get this from my family or people around me?”

Branch has also made his artistry a small career, making him less reliant on others for money. His band has received exposure from performing in local bars, and he has turned a profit from selling his paintings. For the first time, Branch feels like he has finally found his place through the program's opportunities. He wants to give back and inspire others, just as they had done for him.

“I value the experience I have with people, and if I can help someone out with my experiences, the greater the value,” Branch said.

Branch compares himself and his life experiences to how the rest of New Jersey views Trenton negatively, neglecting its rich history and culture. He once found it difficult to view his own hometown and history in a positive light, but soon began to seek out its positive attributes by overlooking the stigmas of the city and his illness. He wants others to shift their negative perceptions and find beauty wherever they can, just as he did through TCAT and his art.

“Life is bigger than it seems. If you focus on negative things, it can drain your mind completely and you can't see nothin' but negativity,” Branch stressed. “But if you think positively, you train your mind to focus on the positive side and you see wondrous things.”



“My Quiet Place”  
By Elaine Jones

# Where You Can Turn For Help

All days and times are subject to change without notice. Created May 2016 and will update for each issue.

## Trenton And Mercer County Homeless Shelters

<b>Amani House</b> 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.	<b>Single Occupancy Rooms</b> for single men and women (Project Specific Section 8); <b>Transitional Housing</b> for single men (26 beds) and women (8 beds). SRO accepts transitional housing clients and walk-ins. Referred by MCBOS or Department of Corrections.	<b>Triad House (LifeTies)</b> 1301 W. State Street, Trenton, NJ, 08618 (609) 394-6747 Providing 24/7 shelter for homeless LGBTQ youth ages 14 to 18.
<b>Anchor House Inc.</b> 482 Center Street, 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	<b>HomeFront</b> Administrative Offices 1880 Princeton Ave, Lawrenceville, NJ Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing are available. Call for appointment. (609) 989-9417	<b>UPI - Trenton Treatment Center-22-Bed Transtional Housing Program</b> 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.
<b>Community Innovations</b> 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	<b>Rescue Mission of Trenton</b> 98 Carroll St, Trenton NJ, (609) 695-1436  Emergency Shelter: Overnight shelter, meals and clothing for single adult men and women.  Soup Kitchen: Every Sunday and 1st Saturday in 5-Saturday month Addictions Treatment: Outpatient, Intensive Outpatient Program, Long-Term Residential, Halfway House  Housing: Transitional Housing; Rooming and Boarding House; Permanent Supportive Housing  Other Services: Adult education, job training, thrift store, courtesy store and Day Center services for homeless patrons	<b>Womanspace</b> Mercer County, NJ (609) 394-9000; 1-800-572-SAFE (7233) Emergency services designed to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault immediately following the initial crisis. 24-hour hotlines and Spanish-speaking staff available. Short-term emergency housing in a confidential location for victims of domestic violence.
<b>Escher Street SRO &amp; Transitional</b> 50 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-4599		

## Food Banks And Meal Services

<b>Abundant Life Christian Fellowship</b> 1440 Pennington Rd., Ewing, NJ. (609) 883-9780	12noon, Wednesdays 1pm-3pm.	<b>Resurrection Lutheran Church</b> 4315 Nottingham Way, Hamilton, NJ. (609) 586-3355
<b>Bethel Seventh Day Adventist</b> 203 Hillcrest Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-2224. Open third Sunday of the month 8am-12pm.	<b>Holy Apostles’ Episcopal Church</b> 1040 Yardville Allentown Road, Yardville, NJ. (609) 208-0228. Dinner Tuesday, 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.	<b>Rise-A Community Service Partnership</b> Main Office, 116 North Main Street 2nd Floor Hightstown, NJ. (609) 443-4464. The Rise Food Pantry serves low-income individuals in the East Windsor/Hightstown area. The pantry is open for limited food distribution on Monday-Wednesday from 9am-12pm at 225 Franklin Street Hightstown. Please call the office for requirements and information.
<b>Bromley Neighborhood Civic Center</b> 1801 East State St., Hamilton, NJ (609) 587-8100. Open Tuesdays from 9am-1pm and Thursdays from 2-4pm.	<b>HomeFront Pantry</b> 1880 Princeton Ave, Lawrenceville, NJ (609) 989-9417. Open Tuesdays 12pm-8pm, Mondays and Thursdays 9am-5pm.	<b>Sacred Heart Church</b> 343 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 393-2801. Soup Kitchen: 4th Sunday Lunch from 12:30pm - 2:00pm. Food Pantry: 3rd Tuesday of the month. 2pm-6pm
<b>Cadwalader Asbury United Methodist Church</b> 900 Stuyvesant Ave, Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-1037	<b>Jerusalem Baptist Church</b> 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.	<b>Salvation Army - Homeless Drop-In Center</b> 575 East State Street, Trenton. Hours 8am – 3pm, 7 days a week Limited food. Please call for an appointment. (609) 599-9373
<b>Catholic Charities</b> 132 N. Warren St., Trenton, NJ (609) 394-8847 EXT 2504. Open Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 9am-12:30pm.	<b>Jewish Family &amp; Children’s Services Food Pantry</b> 707 Alexander Rd., Suite 102, Princeton, NJ 08540 — (609) 987-8100	<b>Samaritan Baptist Church</b> 531 Dr. ML King Blvd, Trenton, NJ (609) 393-0016. Sat. 9am-11:30am
<b>Celestial Church of Christ</b> 46 Weber Ave., Ewing, NJ. (609) 771-9227.	<b>Lawrence Community Center</b> 295 Eggerts Crossing Rd., Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 883-3379	<b>South Trenton Area Soup Kitchen</b> First Baptist Church, 128-140 Centre St., Trenton, NJ (609) 393-8810. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Dinner from 4:30pm — 5pm.
<b>Christ Presbyterian Church</b> 726 Klockner Rd., Hamilton, NJ. (609) 587-0751	<b>Lutheran Church of the Redeemer</b> 189 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 396-2411. Food Pantry. Last Thursday of month. 8am first come first serve.	<b>St. Mary’s Cathedral (Loaves and Fishes Food &amp; Soup Kitchen)</b> 151 N. Warren St. (Perry and Warren), Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-8447. Last two Saturdays of the month. Lunch is 11am to 2pm
<b>Community Action Service Center/RISE</b> 116 North Main St., Hightstown, NJ (609) 443-4464. Open Monday through Wednesday from 9am-12pm.	<b>Meals on Wheels of Trenton/Ewing</b> 801 New York Ave., Trenton, NJ 08618	<b>The Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.</b> 123 East Hanover St., Trenton, NJ. Open Monday – Thursday 9:30 am – 12pm. 714 S. Clinton Ave., Trenton, NJ. Open Monday – Thursday 9:30 am – 12pm. 61 Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ. Open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 1:30 pm – 4pm and Tuesday 1:30 pm – 7pm. (609) 396-9355. Food pantry, emergency financial assistance (rent, utilities, security deposit, mortgage) for low income families and individuals in Mercer County. Pantry visits require photo Id and proof of Mercer County address.
<b>Concerned Citizens of Ewing Inc.</b> 320 Hollowbrook Dr., Ewing, NJ (609) 882-0856. Open Monday through Friday from 9:30am-1:30pm.	<b>Medallion Care Behavioral Health</b> 1 Electronics Drive, Suite 105, Hamilton, NJ. (609) 586-0766. Lunch Monday - Friday from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.	<b>The Haitian Center</b> 530 South Olden Ave., Hamilton, NJ (609) 588-8808. Open Monday through Thursday from 8:30am-3:30pm.
<b>Divine Mercy Parish, St. Stanislaus Church</b> 60 Randall Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-4826. Thursday dinner, 4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. Services via the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen are also available.	<b>Mercer Street Friends</b> 824 Silvia Street, Ewing, NJ. General inquiries (609) 396-1506. Food Bank inquiries (609) 406-0503.	<b>Trinity Episcopal Cathedral Food Pantry</b> 801 W State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-3805. Food Pantry. Every other Saturday 9am-11am. Services via the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen are also available.
<b>Faith Deliverance Cathedral</b> 15 Keswick Ave., Ewing, NJ. (609) 637-9604	<b>Mount Carmel Guild</b> 73 North Clinton Avenue, Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-3402. Operates a food pantry Mon-Fri. 9:30am – 11:30am and 1:30am – 3:30pm	<b>Trenton Area Soup Kitchen</b> 72 Escher Street, Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-5456. Mon. – Fri. Lunch from 11am-1pm; Mon. – Thurs. Dinner from 4pm-5:30pm. Call for other services.
<b>First Baptist Church of Princeton</b> John Street & Paul Robeson Place, Princeton, NJ. (609) 924-0877. Dinner Tuesday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.	<b>New Covenant United Methodist Church</b> 1965 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ.(609) 393-4725	<b>Turning Point United Methodist Church</b> 15 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ. Dinner served / Food Pantry. 3rd Sun. 1pm-3pm.
<b>First Haitian Church of God</b> 1501 Greenwood Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-3708	<b>New Hope Church of God</b> 400 Hamilton Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-3293	<b>United Progress, Inc.</b> 62 West State Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-2161. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-12pm.
<b>First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury</b> 22 South Main St., Cranbury, NJ. (609) 395-0897	<b>NJ Conference Adventist Community Services Center</b> 2160 Brunswick Circle, Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 392-7131	<b>West Trenton Soup Kitchen</b> Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. 801 W. State Street, Trenton, NJ. Thursday Dinner, 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
<b>First Presbyterian Church of Hightstown</b> 320 North Main Street, Hightstown, NJ (609) 448-0055 Rise to the TASK Community Supper on Mondays from 4 pm – 5:30pm	<b>Primera Iglesia Pentecostal</b> (Alpha and Omega Inc.) 347 Second St., Trenton, NJ (609) 571-9135. 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. 5:30pm-7:30pm	
<b>First United Methodist Church of Hightstown</b> 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ (609) 448-0041. Rise to the TASK Community Supper on thursdays from 4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.	<b>Princeton Deliverance Center</b> 301 Southard Street, Trenton, NJ (609) 392-9161. Wednesday (not 1st of month) 12:30am-1:30pm, Friday 9am-12pm.	
<b>Hamilton Township’s Bromley Neighborhood Civic Center</b> 1801 E. State Street, Hamilton, NJ (609) 587-8100. Open Tuesdays from 9:30-11:30am and Thursdays from 3-4pm.	<b>Princeton United Methodist Church</b> 7 Vandeventer Ave., Princeton, NJ. (609) 924-2613. Free community dinner, Wednesdays 5pm - 6pm.	
<b>Hamilton Township’s J. O. Wilson Neighborhood Center</b> 169 Wilfred Avenue, Hamilton, NJ (609) 393-6480. Open Mondays from 10am-	<b>Rescue Mission of Trenton</b> 98 Carroll St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-2183. 1st Saturday of a 5-Saturday month and every Sunday. 11am-12pm.	

Dial 211 for Community Resources.





# Health Services

## Catholic Charities, Behavioral Health Services

10 Southard St Trenton. (609) 396-4557.  
Integrated behavioral health and physical 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

Behavioral Healthcare Services and Primary Health Care:  
2210 Hamilton Avenue, Hamilton, NJ 08619. (609) 587-7044  
Substance Abuse Recovery Programs / Family Preservation & Recovery Programs:  
946 Edgewood Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08618. (609) 393-1626

Consumer Credit / Counseling Service:  
1931 Nottingham Way, Hamilton, NJ 08619. (609) 586-2574

Children’s Day School / Children’s Day Treatment Program  
1925 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ 08618. (609) 882-2288

Services include: outpatient mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, family preservation services, a school for children with emotional difficulties, housing counseling, financial counseling and education.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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. Ap-  
pointments are encouraged.

## 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, administer injections for economically disadvantaged, medically frail elderly. Free and do not accept third party payments.

## 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.

## Oaks Integrated Care

31 Lexington Avenue, Ewing, NJ 609-583-1901. Linkage to mental health services, medical services, entitlements and housing. Call for appointment.

## Oaks Integrated Care

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 Inten-  
sive outpatient, partial hospitalization. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

## 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.

## Oxford House-Half

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

## Rescue Mission of Trenton

96 Carroll St., 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 Adult Rehabilitation Center

Salvation Army: (609) 599-9801

## 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 pro-  
grams 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.

**Note that most Health Services accept Medicare and Medicaid.**

# Human Services

## A Better Way

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

## Child Care Connection

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

## City of Trenton – Health & Human Services

(609) 815-2160  
Emergency assistance for back rent, first month rent for the homeless and/or at-risk homeless and as well as assistance for Senior Citizens.

## 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.

## Community Health Law Project

225 East State Street, Suit 5, Trenton NJ (609) 392-5553.  
Discusses legal questions with those with disabilities. Will make appointments.

## Community Justice Center

(609)218-5120. Encouraging the empowerment, resiliency and rights of those struggling with disabilities by providing the essential ingredients of legal educa-  
tion, outreach, advocacy and representation. Will discuss legal questions with veterans and disabled and will make appointments.

## County of Mercer - Department of Human Services

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ (609) 468-8296 and Fax: (609) 989-6032

## Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, Inc.

123 East Hanover Street, Trenton, NJ  
714 S. Clinton Ave., Trenton, NJ  
61 Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ  
(609) 396-9355  
Food pantries; emergency financial assistance (rent, utilities, security deposit, mortgage); workforce development, and driver’s license restoration assistance.

## Division of Disability Services

1-8880-2850-3036  
An information and referral line that helps with all disabilities.

## Family Guidance Center - Outpatient Care

Behavioral Healthcare Services and Primary Health Care:  
2210 Hamilton Avenue, Hamilton, NJ 08619. (609) 587-7044  
Substance Abuse Recovery Programs / Family Preservation & Recovery Programs:  
946 Edgewood Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08618. (609) 393-1626

Consumer Credit / Counseling Service:  
1931 Nottingham Way, Hamilton, NJ 08619. (609) 586-2574

Children’s Day School / Children’s Day Treatment Program  
1925 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ 08618. (609) 882-2288

Services include: outpatient mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, family preservation services, a school for children with emotional difficulties, housing counseling, financial counseling and education.

## 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.

## 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).

## 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.

## Mercer Emergency & Community Services

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

## Office on Aging

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

## 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 MCBOSS, unemployment. Walk-ins accepted. (Mon-  
day-Friday), 8:30am- 5pm, Tuesdays, 8:30 am- 8:30pm.

## 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.

## Rise-A Community Service Partnership

Main Office, 116 North Main Street 2nd Floor Hightstown, NJ. (609) 443-4464.  
Providing case management to low-income individuals in the East Windsor/Hight-  
stown area.  
The Rise main office is open: Monday-Friday 9am - 4pm  
(Closed for lunch from 1pm - 2pm daily)

## Salvation Army - Homeless Drop-In Center

575 East State Street, Trenton. Hours 8am – 3pm, 5 days a week

## 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, ques-  
tions 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 Tren-  
ton and surrounding areas. Call for Appointment.

## United Progress Inc. (UPI)

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

## 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.

## VA Hamilton Outpatient Clinic

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

## 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)

## 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.

## Womanspace

Mercer County, NJ (609) 394-9000; 1-800-572-SAFE (7233)  
Emergency services designed to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual  
assault immediately following the initial crisis. 24-hour hotlines and Spanish-  
speaking staff available. Short-term emergency housing in a confidential location  
for victims of domestic violence.

**Dial 211 for Community Resources.**





# Congress Allocates Increased Funds For New Jersey Housing

By Sarah Kayaten

Congress has passed the final fiscal year 2016 (FY 2016) budget allocated to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

According to their official website, HUD is “focused on helping to secure quality housing for Americans, ending homelessness, making our communities more resilient from natural disasters, protecting people from housing discrimination and providing rental housing assistance for millions of extremely poor Americans.”

For 2016, HUD’s budget, approved by Congress, is about \$47.2 billion — about 2.3 billion less than President Obama’s proposal, but two million more than the previous year’s budget.

In a hearing on the “FY 2016 Budget Request for the Department of Housing and Urban Development,” the secretary of HUD, Julian Castro, notes in written testimony that “[increases in HUD funding] are provided to protect vulnerable families, reverse the

effects of sequestration (cuts in HUD funding), [and] make significant progress toward the goal of ending homelessness.”

Secretary Castro also stressed HUD’s initiative to support community-centered investments, including “funding to revitalize neighborhoods with distressed HUD-assisted housing and concentrated poverty.”

Such goals and principles are illustrated in the budget’s summary, found on HUD’s website. The budget ensures there are sufficient monetary resources to support community improvements, including a \$170 million expansion of Choice Neighborhoods. The Choice Neighborhoods program supports locally driven strategies to address struggling neighborhoods.

In response to the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods, Choice Neighborhoods allocates money to help replace distressed public housing with “mixed income housing,” which is often represented as building apartment



**“Breaking The Flow”**

By Randy Harms

complexes that would provide a stable “mixed” income to the area.

HUD also aims to expand housing mobility through its increased funding for voucher programs. About two billion dollars are set aside for the Housing Choice Voucher Program to help approximately 2.4 million low-income families afford decent housing in neighborhoods of their choice.

In addition to supporting all existing vouchers, the budget provides funding to restore approximately 67,000, many of which were lost in 2013 due to sequestration — \$3 billion cuts from HUD’s FY2013 budget.

Secretary Castro also emphasized that HUD’s mission is not to provide temporary relief and housing, but to provide opportunity and a platform of positive economic growth going forward. The \$100 million request for Jobs-Plus seeks to increase employment opportunities and earnings of public housing residents.

According to HUD, this “welfare-to-work demonstration” is marketed toward “able-bodied,

working-age resident at a public housing development in each of the following five cities: Baltimore, Chattanooga, Dayton, Los Angeles and St. Paul.” The program aims to combine employment services, rent-based work incentives and community support for work.

The budget also provides for many other services, including a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project with the goal of ending and preventing homelessness for youth and young adults, as well as other grants targeting community and agricultural development in rural areas to improve economic growth.

To insure that HUD has the resources to study the effectiveness of such programs, \$35 million is allotted to HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), which HUD states is “responsible for maintaining current information on housing needs, market conditions and existing programs, as well as conducting



**“Sailing My Way”**

By Jo Ann Abdelwahabe

*Continued On Page 12*



# Connecticut Avenue: First Month In A Bigger Place

By *Essence B. Scott*

Being in a small space is something that no one should ever go through. Small spaces are not conducive to work, play, or relaxation.

Living in a motel as a teenager, I was always on edge. There wasn't any space for me to be by myself, unless I went outside. And that's exactly what I did — I went outside. Being outside by myself with my CD player and books meant I could just unwind for a few minutes. Being in that small space was tortuous.

When my family moved from the Red Roof Inn on Route 1 South to our apartment on Connecticut Avenue in Hamilton, N.J., everything was perfect. There was so much more room to move around, I couldn't believe it.

After spending years in small rooms that could barely hold everything we owned (stored in large coolers and bags), moving to Connecticut Avenue was an oasis filled with cool, refreshing water that I could drink from and swim in.

The first night there was beautiful. There was so much more space. All of us didn't have to sleep in the same room like we had done for years. The first night, we all slept in the same room because we didn't have any beds, just a couch.

I remember the smell of my mom attacking the place with Lysol cleaning supplies. My brother had gone to the HomeFront teen program that first night, and so it was just my mom, my sister and I hanging out and talking.

We made a pallet on the floor. We didn't have a television that first night, but the fact that we would be a little more comfortable from now on made things much more tolerable.

Later on, we got beds. My sister and I marveled at all the room we had and how great we felt. Finally, a whole bed to sleep in! At the Red Roof, there was one bed that I

shared with my mom and sister. My brother slept in a sleeping bag on the floor.

We had more options for food. When you're homeless, you can only eat and drink so much because you might not have a refrigerator to keep food cool or a microwave to warm things up.

At the Red Roof, we had both, but not all the rooms were like that. We didn't have home-cooked meals like pork chops or meat loaf. We ordered pizza or went to McDonald's if things were going well, but that was very rare. We couldn't keep ice cream cold in the mini-fridge, so

that was never an option.

The first month living on Connecticut Avenue was surreal. I was enrolled in the local high school and reconnected with some old friends. I made a few new ones, as well. I had a neighborhood where I could wander about, and I began walking everywhere. I got to sit outside when the weather was nice and I had friends who lived near me who visited often.

Generally, I was much happier. I finally had space to myself to do the things I wanted to do.

I kept in touch with HomeFront (I met them when I was at the Pine

Motel in Bordentown in 2004) and still went to different activities that were offered over the course of the week.

Being in a bigger space made me feel safer. It made me feel safer because I had a little more privacy. And even when my sister was in the room we shared, listening to her music out loud, I didn't mind. Sometimes we talked about different things, but mostly we were in our own heads in the same space. I had my headphones and notebook, and she had her music and books; or we watched television. Things were OK.

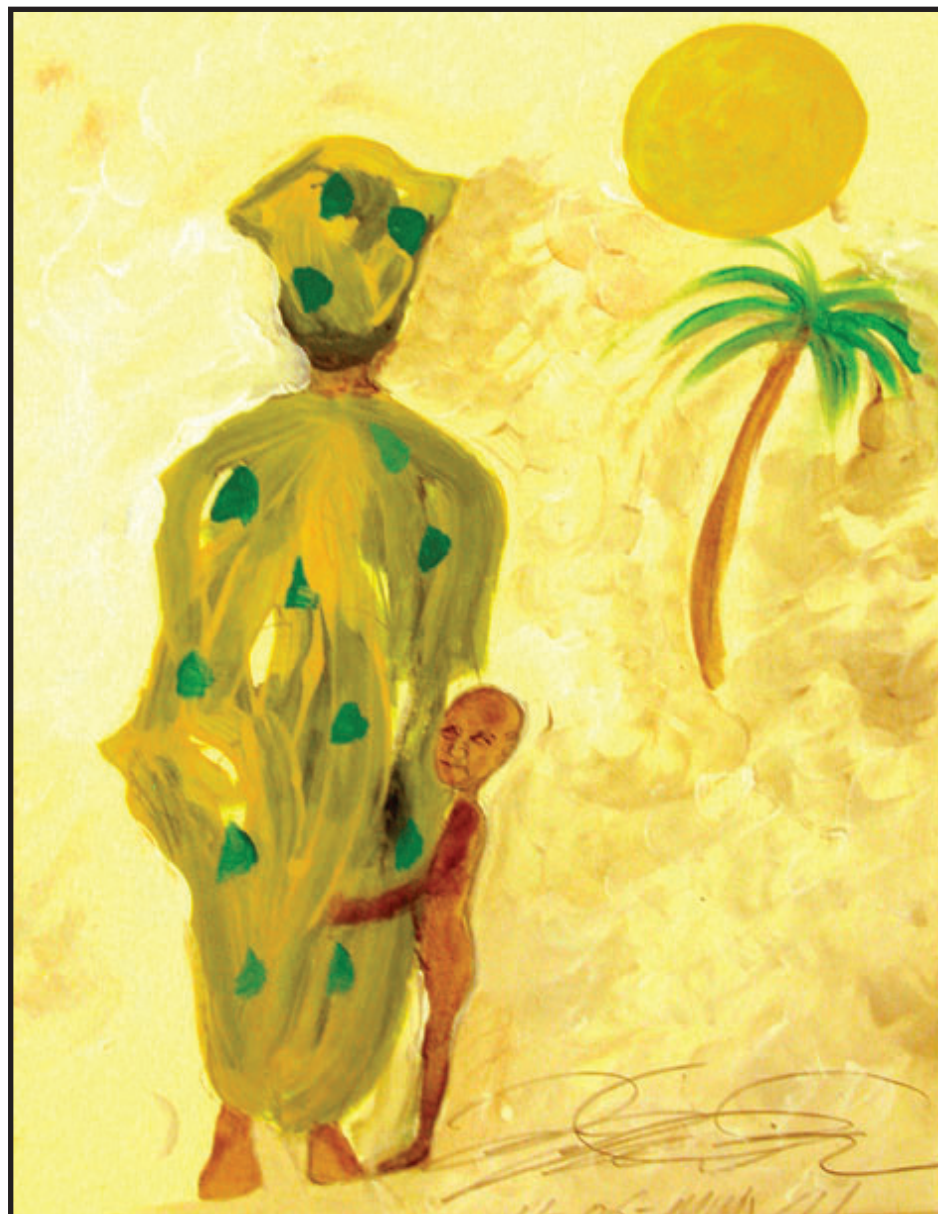
We got our first computers on Connecticut Avenue. I remember being really happy to get my computer, a MacBook, and learning how to get it up and running.

My mom got a PC for the family, and I helped her, but with my limited computer knowledge, I received a lot of guidance from technical support. It was fun working the computers.

The first month in a new place was equal parts exciting and terrifying. Sometimes I wondered if we would end up in a place like the Red Roof again. Other times I thought about other things.

I don't live on Connecticut Avenue anymore, but I won't ever be able to forget the time I spent there, particularly the first month.

An apartment has more space to move around and store things. There are opportunities for privacy in the apartment — these opportunities are not available in a small, crowded motel room. Depending on how much stuff you have when you're in the motel room, the space there will automatically go to holding your items. There is no room for a child to play, for a teenager to carve a space of her own from. It is a sad place to live for an extended period of time. ♡



**"Alone Together"**  
By William Hodges



# CEASe: Housing Made Easy

By Khadijah Yasin

Communities across the nation have been affected by homelessness for years, with people living in shelters and others in the streets. The Trenton area is no exception to this reality, where a large percentage of its people living without a place to call home, many for long periods at a time.

Fortunately, Trenton and Mercer County have developed programs and initiatives to provide support for those living through the struggles and hardships of homelessness. One of these initiatives is the Coordinated Entry and Assessment System for Homeless Individuals, CEASe, which focuses its efforts on helping those in the Trenton community, in particular.

The CEASe system is currently being run through the CEAS Center. This center assesses the status of individuals experiencing homelessness and acts as the point of entry into housing and permanent residency.

"We've targeted the most vulnerable people in the [homeless] community," says Janet Porter, the supervisor of the CEAS Center. Those who fit the criteria that CEASe has in place are granted housing.

Individuals under assessment must be chronically homeless — meaning they have been homeless for an extended period of time and/or disabled. These mandates are set so that those who need the support urgently receive it quickly.

Currently the CEAS Center receives patrons from agencies throughout Mercer County such as the Rescue Mission of Trenton, where hundreds of individuals experiencing homelessness are sheltered and cared for.

The CEAS Center also partners with the Mercer County Department of Human Services, the Mercer County Board of Social Services, The City of Trenton Department of Health and Human

Services, and Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness.

The main priority of CEASe is to filter through potential clients, and to provide housing to those with the most need.

An important aspect of the process ensures that the housing is varied for every patron and that it meets his or her individual needs. This housing is founded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Many of the patrons coming from these shelters are accustomed to the community-based settings that they promote. And for this reason, the CEAS Center and its partner organizations work to make the transition into housing an easy and comforting process for the client. To ensure a smooth transition, clients are provided with support housing.

"Many of these people have to have support and it is important that we meet the client's needs," said Porter.

Additionally, Porter explained that the homeless community has a large majority of disabled individuals — some mentally disabled and others physically disabled — who need help feeling safe and healthy. The CEAS Center works to provide support housing and services that cater to the individual needs of its clients.

As of now, the CEASe initiative is still developing and taking steps to expand its efforts across the Mercer County area.

According to Porter, the CEAS Center only accepts patrons who are referred to it from shelters like Rescue Mission; it also hopes to expand and help those living on the streets, as well. The organization is making strides and to ensure it continues to progress, it is being evaluated by the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). 🏠



**"Barbershop"**  
By Herman Shorty Rose

## "Adrift"

By Paul Norris

Poetry

Wind tossed waves that set me adrift.

Churning my insides like the foam tossed sea, bashing against the rocks.

Not willingly ceding ground, but reluctantly having it taken away.

Adrift on the winds,

adrift on the seas,

adrift on the sands of time.

Adrift even in the passages of my mind.

Desiring to be anchored...

even as I drift away.



# “Garden State” Capital: Lacking Accessibility To Healthy Food

By Alana Magro

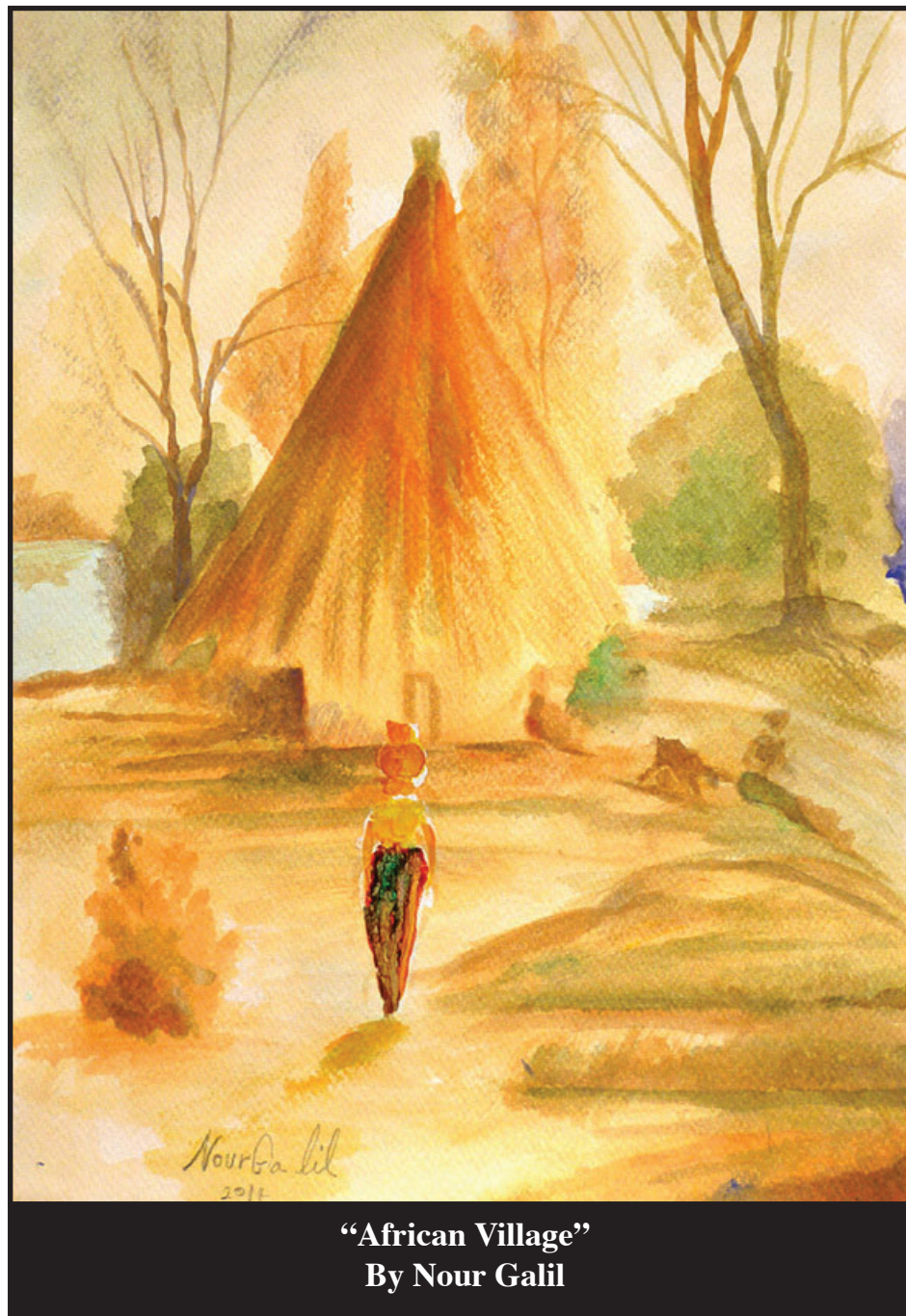
Obesity means much more than simply being overweight. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) confirms that more than two in three adults are considered overweight or obese. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 12.7 million children between two and nineteen years old are obese. The NIH states that obesity in children has tripled over the past thirty years. The national average for childhood obesity (between the ages of two and five) is 21 percent. The average of childhood obesity in Trenton is 49 percent.

The gravity of the issue is growing, as food deserts in communities like Trenton work to exacerbate the issue. And while food deserts put all residents at risk, they can be extremely harmful for children in particular. They play a large role in the rising rates of obesity in the United States.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) found that when compared to Camden, New Brunswick, Newark, and Vineland, Trenton consistently showed the highest obesity rates. Researchers discovered that the majority of children in this city do not comply with daily recommended serving sizes (for fruits and vegetables); instead they resort to fast food. The issue is aggravated by the limited number of existing grocery stores (in comparison to small convenience stores); this leaves very few options for healthy eating.

The New Jersey Childhood Obesity Study supports this idea and explains that in areas with limited access to retail grocery stores and supermarket chains, the majority of children's purchases are unhealthy meals and snacks from smaller stores. At these stores, the few healthy foods that are available are extremely over-priced.

According to RWJF, low-income families, which make up 40 percent of Trenton's population, lack



**“African Village”**  
By Nour Galil

transportation to grocery stores. The Trenton Health Team found that the city would have to triple the number of grocery stores in the city in order to properly provide its residents with nutritional food. Not only are these supermarkets out of reach, but the healthy food is simply too expensive for families in the area to purchase. And while we are beginning to understand how widespread the issue is and whom it is affecting, the gravity of the health risks it poses is much more complex.

Although there is a long list of risks associated with obesity, the

following are only a few. The NIH warns the public that obesity leads to coronary heart disease (CHD), but that it also leads to heart failure. When someone has a high BMI, their chances of having a stroke increase significantly. Type 2 diabetes is another health risk connected to obesity; according to the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), the disease is three to seven times more likely to appear in those who are obese. Living in a food desert limits accessibility to healthier foods dramatically, which in turn jeopardizes the health and well-being of children and adults.

The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) is one of many organizations working to combat this issue in the Trenton community.

Jaime Parker, manager of programs at TASK, commented on the support and services that TASK provides its patrons, “There are folks who come here for Christmas, they come here for Thanksgiving...we try to offer wrap around services that feed the body as well as the mind and the spirit.”

The issue of food deserts has only grown over the years. The main obstacle for a lot of families living in these areas is transportation.

“A majority of the individuals who come to TASK do not have cars that can easily take them to shop for groceries,” said Parker. “Not having adequate transportation is a big problem.”

When talking more specifically about foods that are hard to access, Parker explained: “A lot of time, cheaper food is canned. It's high in sodium, preservatives, and it's not as healthy as the fresh food, which usually costs more money. If you go to McDonald's you can get fries off the dollar menu but what healthy food can you buy for a dollar?”

No individual, let alone child, should have to think about where their next meal will come from, or whether it will exist at all. They should not have to spend their lives battling serious illnesses that result from an unbalanced diet. Luckily, TASK is one of the hundreds of organizations working to make sure this isn't the case. 🍎

## **Trenton Area Soup Kitchen**

72 Escher Street, Trenton NJ

Phone: (609) 695-5456

[www.trentonareasoupkitchen.org](http://www.trentonareasoupkitchen.org)



***“New Jersey Housing”***  
***Continued From Page 8***

research on priority housing and community development issues.”

With the exception of Jobs Plus, these programs are available to the 50 states. New Jersey, however, is one of 13 states that received additional aid from HUD. A part of HUD’s 2016 Budget, \$1 billion was allotted for storm resiliency projects in the wake of the 2013 Super Storm Hurricane Sandy.

According to POLITICO New Jersey, funds were allotted to 13 states based on a rigorous, multi-phase application process. New York State received the most at \$35.8 million, not including the \$176 million that was already allotted to NYC. New Jersey came in last, with a mere \$15 million in federal funding. Secretary Castro cites the lack of diligence by Governor Christie’s administration in completing the proper documentation as the reason for New Jersey’s meager funds.

But things are still looking up for New Jersey. As the deadline to request hurricane relief aid for 2017 approaches in September, New Jersey has another chance of securing the relief aid it needs

As of now, New Jersey’s statistics suggest a positive trend. According to a report released by Monarch Housing Associates, the total homeless population in New Jersey has been decreasing over the last five years at an average rate of 7.6 percent.

Hopefully, with HUDs’ budget greater than ever, 2016 has the potential to see even greater drops in homelessness. 🏠

**Housing and Urban Development**

For general questions about HUD, please contact the State office located in Newark.

Phone: (973) 776-7200



**“Pop Up Poppies”**  
**By Jo Ann Abdelwahabe**

## Rescue Mission Tackles Technology On The Job

*By Miranda Chrono*

Hungry, cold, alone, afraid, and sick; these are just a few words that come to our minds when we hear the term homelessness. And yet, homelessness is more than just this stereotypical image; and its impact is much more complex and widespread.

In addition to food and financial insecurity, homelessness also affects one’s accessibility to technology and its advances.

The digital divide is the “socioeconomic and other disparities between those people who have opportunities and skills enabling them to benefit from digital resources, especially the Internet, and those who do not have these opportunities or skills.” Not having accessibility to the Internet or social media leaves these individuals at a disadvantage in a technology-driven world.

In response to this issue, the Rescue Mission of Trenton has created the TEACH program, which provides tutoring, GED preparation and most importantly, computer skills.

Sheila Scott, a former coordinator of TEACH, explained that the program thrives on the great quality

of their volunteers.

“The program would not be viable without our volunteers, they are a major part of the program,” said Scott. “The results of the program are fantastic and I only see more success stories to come.”

Technology has been consuming our lives for years now and it is becoming nearly impossible to live without. Everyday things such as checking email, surfing the internet or even applying for a job, all rely heavily on access to technology and being able to use it. Without the help of organizations in cities that experience the most homelessness, the digital divide would keep growing further and further apart.

The TEACH program is great because it does not just focus on one thing; whatever the individual in need is interested in, they have volunteers waiting to help.

The program also provides individuals with access to a number of other valuable life skills. It has even recruited volunteers who work with patrons on job placement and interview preparation. This sort of training

prepares them for real life experiences that involve the use of technology.

Zane Gaines, a resident at Rescue Mission stated, “The program’s mock interview prepared me extremely well for my successful interview with Dick’s Sporting Goods. The practice questions were just like the ones I was asked in my interview.”

Since there is a such an interest in learning how to use the different types of technology, Ida Malloy, the life skills counselor at Rescue Mission, explained that they need volunteers with computer expertise, in particular.

Our lives center around computers, iPhones and tablets more and more everyday. And while many of us have access to this technology and can easily put it to use, others need our help and support to overcome the technological barriers of the digital divide. 🏠

**Rescue Mission of Trenton**

98 Carroll Street  
Trenton, NJ 08609

Phone: (609) 695-1436

[www.rescuemissionoftrenton.org](http://www.rescuemissionoftrenton.org)



# Mercer Street Friends: Trenton Digital Initiative Gets Tech Savvy

By Anna Mucciarone

While walking down a bustling city street in the morning, you might pass some people who are talking loudly into their phone and others with headphones plugged into both ears, listening to music. As you're walking, you might even take out your own phone to send a few quick text messages before arriving at your destination. What you might not notice while walking down the street is the number of people you pass that aren't using a phone, possibly because they can't afford one.

In today's society, most people tend to focus more on the growing technology addiction than the reality of the digital divide. While Internet access is a rite of passage for many people, there is a portion of the population that can't afford to buy the latest iPhone or Internet connection.

For those that live in Mercer County, evidence of the digital divide is apparent right in their backyards. Of the 85,000 citizens that call Trenton home, a significant

number do not own a computer. With the Internet becoming more of a staple in our society every year, these families are being limited to what they can participate in with regards to school and their careers.

For the families of Trenton and surrounding areas that find themselves in this situation, a section of the non-profit organization Mercer Street Friends may be able to help. This program, called the Trenton Digital Initiative (TDI), is working to slowly end the digital divide in the local community by distributing free computers to families that are in need of one.

At its start, the Trenton Digital Initiative was a small idea being launched by tech-savvy founders, Dave Zboray and Glenn Paul.

"We were just talking about how we could use our computer skills to help others," said Zboray, who is now an IT specialist at Mercer Street Friends. "We came up with the idea we called '100 Computers for 100

Families,' which we would later rename the 'Trenton Digital Initiative.'"

Since it began in 2012, TDI has established a partnership with Mercer Street Friends and distributed 350 computers to families in need.

In addition, TDI works to educate both youth and adults on basic computer skills.


"We didn't want to just hand out computers," said Zboray, emphasizing the importance of offering these classes. "So we have included training with each computer we distribute."

The computer education classes are offered through the Youth Services Program and Parenting Program at Mercer Street Friends. By signing up for either set of classes, families gain the opportunity to expand their knowledge of computers and technology.

Another major concern for families that are struggling to make ends meet is being able to afford a stable Internet connection. With help from

TDI, those families can connect to a special plan offered by Comcast. For just \$9.95 per month, they can put their computers to use.

The mission Statement for Mercer Street Friends is, "Bridging opportunity gaps...helping families and communities make the journey out of poverty." TDI exemplifies this statement by providing local families with the opportunity to take home a computer of their own and support their Internet connection with an affordable plan.

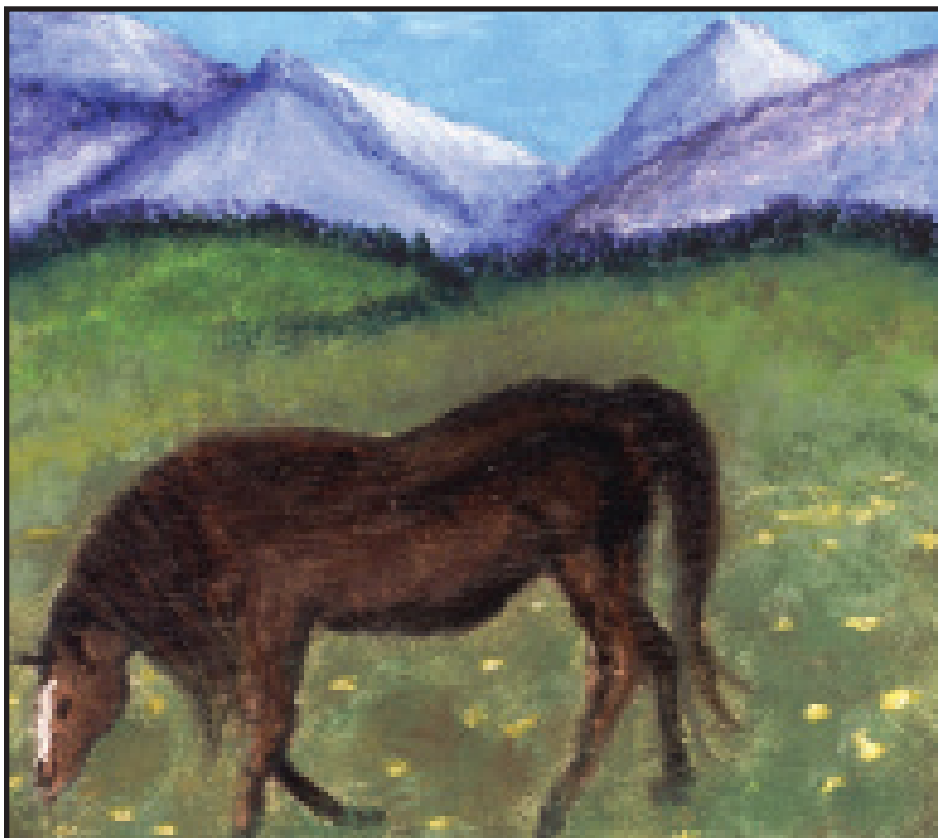
With each computer they distribute, the Trenton Digital Initiative is helping to end the digital divide within the Trenton community. 

## Mercer Street Friends

151 Mercer Street,  
Trenton, NJ 08611

Phone: (609) 396-1506

[www.mercerstreetfriends.org](http://www.mercerstreetfriends.org)



**"Calming Pastures"**  
By KC

## "Remade"

By Paul Norris

Poetry

A breath I take, a sigh revealed.  
Old wounds that never healed.

An empty glass, that is me.  
Yet shattered not, oh, destiny.

Once filled with hate and bitterness,  
reached for more but found less.

Jesus called, with Him I rise up.  
Once an empty glass, now an honored cup.

This new wine I now hold,  
this honored cup remade to gold.



# School Lunches: Do The Portions Satisfy A Child's Hunger?

By Ashbel Soto & Jon Hall

Food insecurity has become a major issue in Trenton, affecting the lives of families and children. Many children rely on school lunches for much of their dietary needs. The government has enacted a federal program to ensure that students in public schools do not go hungry.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, free or low cost lunches to children every day. Its main objective is to provide a well balanced meal to students in an attempt to better their health and academic achievement. Many students who come from low-income families qualify for free or reduced lunch if they meet the criteria on the application provided by the Trenton Board of Education. The Trenton Central High Chambers released that about 58 percent of the student body population in the Trenton school district get free or reduced lunch.

The NSLP requires that students meet a certain income bracket to qualify for free or reduced lunch. That income bracket ranges depending on the number of people per household.

If there are two members in your household, then your average income should be \$21,257. There are students who do not meet the income bracket, but they still cannot afford to pay the \$2.57 daily for lunch meals in the Trenton Public Schools.

Kadelta Sykes, the supervisor of Eickhoff Dining Hall and the supervisor of Food Services for Parker Elementary in Trenton, stated that the number of applicants for the free or reduced lunch program is increasing.

"If most parents qualify for food stamps, then they are able to get free or reduced lunch," said



**"Heart Chair"**  
By Kathy Bird

Sykes. "Most kids are ashamed to say they are on food stamps or free or reduced lunch, but it's okay when you need the meal. Most parents fight for their kids to be accepted into the free or reduced lunch program because it lessens the burden of them having to pay for it."

Although every child receives a meal, are the portions adequate to satisfy a child's hunger?

"The portions are adequate because we provide fresh vegetables, hot vegetables, canned fruit, fresh fruit, juice and milk," Sykes said. "We give children enough

food for a lunch meal and fresh food to give them the nutrients they need."

There are also students who pay for lunch, but may sometimes not be able to afford it.

"Most students do not pay for lunch, but those who do and cannot pay for lunch that day, we give them a cheese sandwich and fresh vegetables," said Sykes. "Parker elementary has a program that requires students to have fresh fruits and vegetables with their meals. Often times, students ask for cheese sandwiches instead of a regular meal, so we prepare

enough cheese sandwiches for the day to make sure there is enough for everyone. Our goal is to ensure that no student is left behind or hungry."

According to the Trenton School Board, there are approximately 200 students in the Trenton Public School system who are experiencing homelessness and often worry about when their next meal will be. Most students depend on school meals to feed them since they do not have cooked meals at home on a daily basis.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture stated that one of the objectives of the national school lunch program is to provide one-third of the recommended dietary allowances for lunch. However, there are students within the Trenton Public Schools who say the quality of the food is not appetizing enough for them.

"I didn't really eat school lunch. I would skip lunch most of the time and would wait till I got home to eat," said a current junior biology major here at The College of New Jersey, who is a former student from Trenton West High School. "However, when I did eat the school lunch, the portions were okay to meet my needs."

She believes that the Trenton Board of Education should attempt to improve the quality of the lunches.

Sykes has a different opinion on the quality of the food in Trenton Public Schools.

"Every year the quality of the food gets better," Sykes said. "At first, fresh fruits and vegetables were only delivered two times a week. Now, delivery with fresh produce comes in four times a week. The cafeteria cannot sell snacks that are not state approved."

*Continued On Page 16*



# I Am Trenton Bridges Tech Gap

By Tyler McKoy

Poverty is defined as not having enough money to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. According to the 2011 U.S. census report, roughly 50 percent of Trenton residents are living in poverty. Of the 50 percent of Trenton residents living in poverty, 25 percent of them are children under 18. This causes a major problem in Mercer County community, especially within the school systems. These children growing up in poverty are living without access to technology while their classmates are excelling in every facet of their schoolwork because they have been afforded access to technology.

This is called the digital divide, and it is becoming an impending issue in cities across America. As a result, we can see the difference in technology fluidity and aptitude in children as early as grade school. Luckily, there are good people in the world, people who began and are beginning organizations to not only help the community of Trenton but bridge the digital divide children in the community are facing simultaneously.

The I Am Trenton Community Foundation was formed in 2007 by a group of individuals united in their passion for the city. The organization has formed a board of trustees who are committed to the mission of making Trenton even better through community engagement, building pride in the city and community-focused giving.

Currently, the I Am Trenton Community Foundation is working on closing the digital divide within the community, not wanting any underprivileged children to have to struggle to keep up with classmates.

The President of the foundation, Kelly Ingram said, "We connect youth with technology by providing grants to those committed to guiding youth in varying

capacities, and by actively working to create collaborations and connecting identified needs with available resources."

The foundation does all it can for the youth of Trenton in terms of helping them gain access to the technology necessary to help them succeed. This was only further reiterated by Ingram, who elaborated on the foundation's impact on the community.

"A volunteer with the Trenton Digital Initiative attended an I Am Trenton fund and friend raiser in October and was connected with eight different community groups which have since provided over 30 computers to Trenton youth," explained Ingram.

Given that the foundation was formed in response to Trenton's specific needs, the foundation is able to more effectively aid the community by focusing all of its energy and attention on Trenton and the issues that may come up. Longevity within the community and tireless efforts to better the community is what essentially defines the I Am Trenton Organization. In addition, the connection between the I Am Trenton Community Foundation and the city of Trenton will be that much more deepened due to the fact the organization will not be going anywhere anytime soon.

"I Am Trenton plans to be a lasting resource that will grow over time, making immediate and lasting contributions to the Trenton community," Ingram said. 🏠

## I Am Trenton Community Foundation

122 W State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08608

Phone: (515) 674-2127

[www.iamtrenton.org](http://www.iamtrenton.org)



"Web"  
By Charles Smith

## "My Mind"

By Rose Browne

My mind is playing tricks on me  
Confused about days and nights  
Wrongs from rights.  
So I channel my energy to The Universe,  
hoping and praying for a better outcome,  
realizing that I have more choices,  
I pray that the decisions I have made will not distract my focus on what  
seems like my future, which I thought I had already planned.  
So I turn my antenna to a different direction,  
hoping to get a more transparent response.

My mind is playing tricks on me  
For a minute I thought I was free  
to make a choice instead of making  
an educated guess, so I dot all my i's and cross all my t's .  
all this time I thought that I was focused  
With a mindset of what I wanted and the means and ways  
I was going to get it.

My mind is playing tricks on me and now it got me tripping,  
trying to figure out if I'm going crazy or if it's just my illusion.  
I've had horrible nights  
and too many restless days.  
My body has lost its coordination.  
My mind has taken over my lifeless body,  
leaving me paralyzed.

Poetry



**“School Lunches”**  
**Continued From Page 14**

As of right now, we also sell baked chips to students with their lunches, which is healthier.”

Food insecurity in Trenton has become an issue affecting the student body population.

Trenton does not have many local or nearby grocery stores for many Mercer County residents, which makes it impossible for families without vehicles to go grocery shopping.

Studies have shown that Trenton only has about three local supermarkets, which forces residents to reside on local fast food chains or bodegas (corner stores). This food desert problem in Trenton affects students academically because students find themselves skipping breakfast at home, giving them little room to focus on their school work and more on their hunger.

The NSLP also provides breakfast for students, which satisfies their nutritional needs, enhances their attention span, allowing them to succeed academically. When a student’s hunger is satisfied, it gives them more room to

concentrate on what is occurring in class and encourages them to participate more.

However, Trenton Public Schools serve breakfast during a certain time frame, which many students have a hard time meeting. Students who take the bus are not liable for their late arrival to school. The school kitchen does not serve breakfast after the time is up — leaving students hungry.

Sykes said that although students arrive late to school, most of the time, there are extra snacks left from breakfast that students are able to have.

She added that if a child walks into the cafeteria after breakfast has been served, they’re allowed to get juice and a snack to take with them.

Although there are many different views on the Trenton Public Schools food distribution, schools are ensuring that the children’s hunger needs are met. With an 11.9 percent poverty rate in the Mercer County area, it is probable that the number of children on free or reduced lunch will increase. The Trenton school district is doing everything to ensure that their children have the proper healthy meals each day. 🍽️



**“Red Moon”**  
**By KC**



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**Mission Statement**

*The Wall* is dedicated to giving a voice to and empowering individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as raising public awareness of the various issues facing the homeless population.

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**Aphrael Boltas**, TCNJ Bonner - Social Media Editor  
**Kerrin McLaughlin**, TCNJ Student - Website Designer  
**Ryan Dawson**, TCNJ Bonner - Staff Manager

**Contributing Writers:**

Anna Mucciarone, Annette Espinoza, Alama Magro, Aphrael Boltas, Ashbel Soto, Essence B. Scott, Jared Wolf, Jon Hall, Khadijah Yasin, Melissa Lindley, Miranda Chrono, Sarah Kayaten and Tyler McKoy.

**Editorial Review Board:**

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Michael Nordquist, Interim Executive Director, CELR

**Contact:**

<http://thewall.pages.tcnj.edu>  
[shaabae1@tcnj.edu](mailto:shaabae1@tcnj.edu)  
(609) 771-2548

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