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David Cruthers, *Employment & Transportation Coordinator*

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## Next Frontier: Youth Homelessness

*Preventing the Homelessness of 18-24 Year Olds*

In January of this year, Governor Malloy announced the award of a \$6.6 million federal grant in support of Connecticut's goal to end youth homelessness by 2020. Connecticut is one of only 10 recipients in the country to receive this award from the Department of Housing and Urban Development Homeless Youth Demonstration Project. The funding will be used to identify and respond to the State's growing homeless population of 18-24 year olds.

Connecticut's most recent Youth Count, a stand-alone count conducted on the same day as the Point in Time Count (see page 3), identified 4,396 unaccompanied young adults across the State who were homeless, living in a shelter or in an unstable housing situation on this single evening. Of this total, 17 percent of identified homeless and at-risk youth were from cities and towns within New London County. Clearly, something has to be done to prevent the homelessness of this young population and to ensure their safety.

Because many the region's homeless or at-risk families are headed by parents under the age of 25, MASH is a key collaborator in the State's initiative to end youth homelessness. Marlynn Benker, MASH's Social Worker, is a member of the region's Youth Engagement Team Initiative (YETI), working to develop a coordinated community response to this concerning State issue. In collaboration with youth, young adult and family service providers, MASH is working to develop a system that focuses on preventing youth homelessness through early identification and intervention and one that provides an appropriate response, including access to available resources, for the most vulnerable cases.

MASH, the region's only service provider focused exclusively on serving families with children, gives parents aged 18-24 intensive, one-on-one case management support as well as access to critical emergency services they need to establish housing stability. Many of our clients experienced homelessness as a child. At MASH, we know that the only way to break the generational cycle of homelessness is to prevent a child from ever experiencing the trauma of wondering where they are going to sleep at night.



MASH founder, Ken Carpenter, and his wife, Trudy, recently donated their 2002 Volvo wagon to MASH's Wheels to Work program. The car was gifted to a struggling family in need of transportation. As a dedicated Board member for the past twenty years, Ken holds MASH's mission of preventing family homelessness close to his heart.

## MASH IN ACTION

### Letter from MASH Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Our spring gala, "Home Field Advantage" was a huge success. We got to meet so many new friends and share our mission of Preventing Family Homelessness, One Family at a Time. The money we raised through individual contributions and corporate sponsorships truly gives us a home field advantage in preventing family homelessness.

Every day MASH encounters families who are at the edge of homelessness. We are fortunate to be able to address the needs today to keep a family in a home today and tomorrow. Every family is not in the same situation. For one family, it may be a broken car or lack of transportation that keeps them from paying the rent or going to work. For another it may be the need for a better job to afford a safe home for their children. Whatever the situation, MASH is constantly looking for all the ways we can prevent a family from becoming homeless.

I like to think that MASH is in the business of making sure our families always have a home. Thank you for being part of our home team!



Jeffrey Anderson, MASH Executive Director

### Be Homeful Award



Marlynn Benker (far left) accepts Be Homeful award on behalf of MASH from Lisa Tepper Bates (far right), Executive Director of CCEH

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) awarded the **Be Homeful** award to MASH in recognition of innovative work in preventing family homelessness. Last year, as part of the Southeastern CT Coordinated Access Network (CAN), MASH diverted from shelter 85% of families in housing crisis. Preventing family homelessness is about stopping homelessness before it happens.

### Wheels to Work – A Driving Force in Preventing Family Homelessness



There are many factors that contribute to a family's housing instability, but the most common cause is lack of transportation. When getting to work becomes a daily challenge, it's hard to earn a steady income.

Catrice is a recent MASH client and just one of many hard-working parents trying to create a stable home for their children. She has worked for the past five years as a Recovery Support Specialist, providing substance abuse counseling for those trying to beat their addictions. The high rental market has prevented Catrice from finding housing she can afford on her own. She and her four children (a 13-year old, 9-year old and 1-year old twins) share rent of a 3-bedroom apartment with a friend. They were managing until Catrice's car broke down and she learned that it was beyond repair.

Without transportation, Catrice was forced to rely on family and friends to get to and from her job. It became harder for her to work the additional shifts she needed to financially make it through each month. She turned to MASH for help.

MASH's Wheels to Work program resolves transportation crises for struggling families like Catrice's. By providing a reliable vehicle, Catrice is now able to earn the income she needs to pay the rent. Catrice expressed her thanks, saying, "Oh my! I am beyond grateful and warmed with joy. Words can't express my gratitude. I thank God for putting people like yourself and this great program in my path."

Wheels to Work is an effective homelessness prevention strategy. When families have dependable transportation, employment potential increases and family economic security advances. To support MASH's Wheels to Work program or to donate a car in good working condition, contact David Cruthers, MASH's Transportation Coordinator at [w2w@marshelter.org](mailto:w2w@marshelter.org).

# MASH Welcomes New Board Members

## Stephen Clemente



Stephen Clemente has been an avid supporter of MASH since 2011. As a valued member of the Event Committee, he has brought vitality and fun to MASH's annual galas and has served as auctioneer for the past two years. Stephen is a local entrepreneur and a self-avowed foodie, devoted to providing the best, most authentic gourmet food products. He is the founder and owner of Extra Virgin Oil Store, Semolina Pasta Shop and Sticky Situations in Olde Mistick Village. Prior to starting his own business, Stephen worked in executive level positions including President and Managing Director of Peterson's, an educational planning and preparation company located in Princeton, New Jersey. Stephen currently serves as Chairman of the Board for the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce and provides pro bono consulting services for first-time, CT business owners.

## Lian Obrey



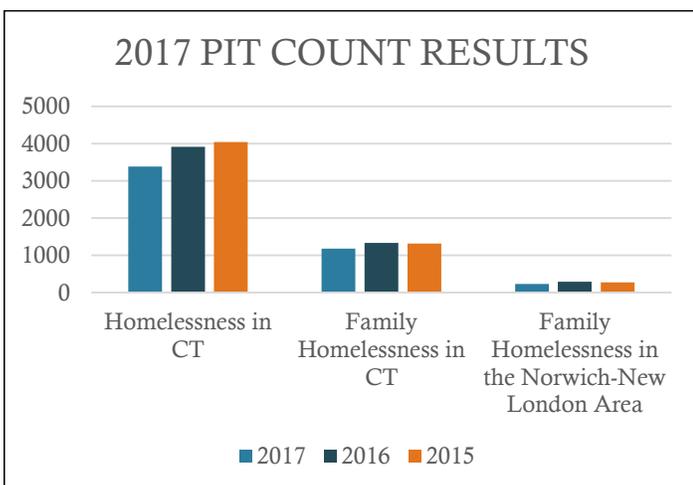
Lian Obrey is a long-time resident of Groton known for her generous community spirit. She is always ready to lend a hand to those in need, annually organizing coat drives, holding charity car washes and even serving as a celebrity bartender to benefit non-profits. Lian is also active on numerous committees. She was one of the founders of the Groton Business Association for the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce and serves on the Town of Groton Economic Development Commission as well as the City of Groton's Community and Economic Development Committee. In 2014, Lian was awarded the Jacqueline B. Nixon Community Service Award in recognition of her many years of civic service. Lian is a 30-year veteran of Real Estate and is currently an Associate with RE/MAX Home Team.

## Betty Smith



Betty Smith is passionate about giving back to her community. Since moving to CT, she has held positions on several non-profit Boards including her current position as Chair of the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Betty has led major fundraising efforts for the DPNC, The Rotary Club of Mystic (where she is incoming President) and MASH. As Chair of MASH's 2016 and 2017 annual fundraising galas, Betty oversaw year-over-year increases in the event's net profits to support MASH's mission. During her career, Betty has worked for major corporations including Johnson & Johnson and Hewlett Packard, where she held various positions in Human Resources. She has a BS in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University. On a personal note, Betty and her husband Bill travel extensively and volunteer their time to their church and many other organizations.

## A Snapshot of Homelessness



Annually, communities across the United States conduct a census of the nation's homeless population. This single day Point in Time (PIT) Count is a snapshot that reflects the average number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families on any given night. The results of the 2017 CT PIT Count, coordinated by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and released this May, showed a decline in homelessness for the third straight year and the lowest levels of homelessness in CT since starting the PIT count in 2007.

A total of 3,387 people in CT were experiencing homelessness, in 2017, 736 of them children (down from 3,911 in 2016). Family homelessness accounted for 1,180 of these individuals (down from 1,332 in 2016). On a local note, family homelessness in the Norwich-New London area declined by 21% with 227 people homeless, 60 of whom were children.

Striking out family homelessness takes a team. MASH thanks everyone who helped to make our **Home Field Advantage** Gala a home run. Go to MASH's Facebook page for more photos.



*Preventing Family Homelessness, One Family at a Time*

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