



Burned homes torn down



Volunteers & workers on the job



Rehabbed home

JMJ

+

Christmas 2015

Dear Friend,

Once again, I am blessed to share with you what is happening with the works of the former Martin House, that is, *Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc., Doorway to Hope, Inc.* Emergency Family Shelter, and the *Thrift Store*.

All of these works stem from our firm belief in God's call for all to address poverty and racism in a personal way. With your help we have been very effective. We have been blessed.

Most of our families fall below the 40% median income level and need targeted and creative assistance in order to set and fulfill disciplined financial goals. We recognize that the accepted practices of those in the business of making money in building houses or as fiduciary institutions are not workable with this group. So, how do we address this issue?

Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. (BCHT) is able to build and rehab houses using grants and donations, with discounted work and materials from tradesmen and volunteers - all because of you, our committed supporters. This combined effort allows us to sell the houses for \$25,000, much lower than other "low-income" housing, with no-interest monthly payments that the needy can actually afford to pay. The "family" relationship we have with our people extends to supporting them in homeownership skills and community action and development projects.



Prospective homeowners

We are continually seeking the best ways to support our community within our mission and our means. Our emergency family shelter, *Doorway to Hope* (DTH) is expanding its reach to include not only homeless women with children but homeless ex-offenders and homeless Veterans and their families. The specific needs of each client must be addressed in order to facilitate successful re-entry into society. All 17 housing units are designed for family living, with a kitchen, living room, bathroom, and 1-3 bedrooms. The design is a call and an encouragement to family living. We need to keep 13 units occupied at all times to meet overhead bills. This is very difficult due to the mobility of families and damage to the apartments. At times we need volunteers for maintenance and repairs, and fundraising for upgrading, maintenance, and damage repair.



Doorway to Hope apartments

Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. (BCHT) www.BCHTrenton.org 609-989-0271 BCHTinfo@gmail.com

BCHT's mission: to create safe, quality housing in Trenton that local people can afford to buy or rent and to support community action and development in at-risk urban neighborhoods

Our *Thrift Store* accepts donations of gently used clothing, appliances, and furniture that is then offered to needy people (e.g. \$8.00 a bag for clothing, or free in certain circumstances and to Doorway to Hope). In order to keep this service available to the community, the Thrift Store is staffed completely by volunteers. Gloria Phillips coordinates all our Thrift Store efforts, with the help of Annie Hodges, Vera Werts, and other community volunteers.



Sidewalk sale at the Thrift Store

Our faithful workers, Pearleen Waters (BCHT), Barbara Thompson (DTH), and volunteer Gloria Phillips (Thrift Store) each have a vested commitment to helping the people of the neighborhood, where they also live. They work for a nominal salary, or volunteer in Gloria's case, because they understand that to help and build up your community, someone **MUST** make the commitment to stay, influence, encourage, edify, and serve the community, through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you can sense, to be effective in the inner city where the real poor, below 40% median income, are consigned, one needs to be even more than helpful. We need to be effective and to challenge others in the culture in which we live, to understand and do good for the poor.

Things have changed greatly since 2012 when the Diocese of Trenton removed its support and disbanded Martin House due to liability issues. I will summarize the impact of these changes by saying that we lost \$120,000 a year from the Diocese, as well as low-cost insurance, my services, and the strong relationship we had with parishes that provided us with donations and volunteers. The Martin House Community for Justice Foundation's annual fundraising efforts were terminated, which yearly provided \$72,000 to BCHT and \$24,000 to DTH.

All these losses have meant that we are working with a minimal budget and a bare-bones staff as we strive to fulfill our mission as best we can. It has been difficult, but we believe that we are regaining our stride. For the upcoming year BCHT is blessed to have a grant from *Santander Bank* to help with rehabbing homes, as well as a grant from the *Princeton Area Community Foundation* for community development and action.

With your support, who knows how far these projects will go? So, as we move into the ever-changing environment of 2016, we keep in mind a favorite saying of mine: ***Involve, Rethink, and Reorganize!***

We thank you for supporting us through our changes. It is my sincere prayer that you will continue to support us, or join our efforts for the first time, in 2016.

Yours in the Lord,

Fr. Brian McCormick, Founder and Advisor



Homes built by BCHT in 2012 win 2015 Phoenix Award for exemplary brownfield revitalization