



# DOORWAY

Volume 5  
Issue 1

**BCHT: Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc.**  
(Formerly Martin House)

May 2017

*BCHT is a doorway to hope and opportunity, whose mission is 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.*

## ***BCHT Attacks the Blight of Abandoned Homes***

**Abandoned houses** = blight, crime, lowered property values, and a feeling of hopelessness. Trenton has an abandoned property rate of 23%! BCHT is addressing this by transforming abandoned houses into desirable homes that low-income families can afford.

**Rehabbed homes** = increased property values, renewed hope, and community action and pride.



*BCHT is transforming houses from THIS*



*To THIS*

Better Community Housing of Trenton

(BCHT) is happy to say that we are about to begin work on our latest rehab at 9 Thompson Street, a 3-bedroom, 1 ½ bath home with a full basement. Thomas Parham, our new construction manager, will lead the work.

**Want to help us transform 9 Thompson into a home?** See our Wish List on page 3.



## ***Thank You for Responding***

In December we told you about the Skylar family, who need help to get out of a one-room apartment and back into their home in Trenton. The home was their pride and joy, and both parents worked steady jobs to pay their mortgage. Then disaster struck when the house was severely damaged by a run-away car that crashed into the foundation causing breakage of the gas and water mains, flooding, mold and structural issues. The Skylars have spent the past 5 years dealing with bank, lawyers, the insurance company, and various advocacy groups trying to get back into their home. BCHT is still working with them and advocacy agencies trying to get their foreclosure reversed. Many of you sent in donations, and for this the family and BCHT are very grateful. We are hopeful that the mortgage will come through soon so we can start making the home livable for this family of five.

## ***Interfaith Thanksgiving Luncheon Celebrates Mercy and Oneness***

BCHT attended the Institute of Islamic Studies' 11<sup>th</sup> annual interfaith Thanksgiving luncheon at St. David the King Church in West Windsor on Sunday, November 20, 2016. Keynote speaker, Tarik El-Messidi, spoke of the need for more and better understanding and interaction between Muslims and people of other faiths in our area and around the world. Like Pope Francis, who declared 2016 the Year of Mercy, Mr. El-Messidi emphasized that mercy is a key tenant of his faith. He wondered aloud at how Isis could dare to promote its ideology of hate and violence in the name of a merciful God. People of all faiths joined together in companionship and prayed for a peaceful world. All left the luncheon with a renewed desire to come together.



*Jews, Christians, and Muslims share food and conversation*

## ***Confronting Greed in Our Society***

### ***A Message from Father Brian***

*Father Brian McCormick is the retired founder of Martin House/Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. (BCHT)*

I believe that **we, ourselves, create a culture of materialism that debilitates the demands of the spirit.** This is a very grave problem.



*Fr. Brian McCormick*

Consider what holds our attention, what we are interested in, what excites us in our communication, readings and reflective thinking. **If we are older**, aren't we more attentive to **our insurance policy, interest rates, investment and retirement plans** than we are to building a community that will give us the security we need in later life?

**If we are younger**, aren't we more attentive to **qualifying with the right credentials to the arbitrary standards of upward mobility** than we are to developing the skills and creating organizations that will give us the ability to direct the free gift of the world and its resources so that all our brothers and sisters can live well? Or maybe we have given up and direct our attention to no more than getting the right home and being secure in our comfort. And even for us for whom this desire for splendid temporal livelihood is not available, don't we secretly want it? So much so, we are jealous of those who have it? And so our spirits are also debilitated.

Can I take this thought to the next step – to what it would mean to create social structures that do not worship money and possessions?

***Giving from Abundance vs. Subsistence – The Buy-Off*** In our culture we are trained to distance ourselves from the poor, to give in a unified way from our abundance and thereby create the illusion and the image that we are effective and successful with the poor. I believe that even our contributions at our worship services are a mutual buy-off between clergy and congregation, so that we never have to ask anything significant of each other, to get to the in-depth places of spirit and truth.

I discovered this conviction while sharing my beliefs with inner city adolescent girls who came to my religion class. In dealing with Acts 2:42, being called to be a worthy servant to the Lord, I imagined this situation with the class:

*Naomi is a very nice girl, likes this boy in high school, and after graduation they marry. He is a construction worker. They have eight children in 11 years. On the other hand, Terry is blessed by God with a lot of smarts. She graduates with honors, gets a scholarship to college, goes to law school. There she meets a young man and after graduation they marry. They get involved in a large class action suit involving discrimination. They win the suit and the fee is substantial. They buy a summer home, then the fancy red sports car Terry has always dreamed of.*

*As the story continues, both Terry and Naomi come to my church to worship God. As God would have it in his mysterious design, Naomi's husband contracts cancer. Our church has been deeply involved with and responding to the many calls of service in our community. We gifted Naomi with \$10,000. Now her husband dies and the family is in a terrible state. We as a church have totally exhausted our finances. As a community we face this problem. A solution comes from Terry, who has recently bought the car of her dreams. She offers to sell her car for \$30,000 and share the money with Naomi.*

I am convinced this type of activity ought to be going on in our communities – both secular and religious. What kind of congregation, what kind of people, would accept the implications of the above story? Even if you are not a believer, does the spiritual part of you relate to this?

If we would only face the overwhelming pressure in our society to be concerned exclusively with the acquisition of material possessions, we could see the new spiritual power an attentive person must bring to his society. For Christians, the redemptive message of Jesus that is needed in our society was captured by Pope John Paul II. He said in Yankee Stadium that we are called upon “to give to the poor not from our abundance but from our subsistence.”

To give of our subsistence and to make personal friends with the poor, to know the poor and poor in spirit, are words that echo the master. We should give this our total attention.

Because our culture and the ease by which, through pleasure and business, we go along with and conform to the structures of our society, I believe we “despise” to the point of intolerance and apathy the deeper truths that Jesus calls us to. He has indeed said, “Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides.” (Matt. 6:33)

## *In the Spotlight*

### **Thomas Parham – BCHT’s New Construction Manager**



*Thomas Parham*

Thomas Parham was born in Trenton, and although he didn’t grow up here, he often came to Trenton to visit his grandmother. He has always felt drawn to the city and has now made a commitment to Trenton, as BCHT’s new construction manager. Thomas lives in Lakewood and is married with four children age 16-25.

Having worked in science and medicine, Thomas came back in 2013 to the construction trade, which he learned from his father. When he was four years old he began accompanying his father on construction jobs and learned the names of all the tools in the toolbox. Now he has a vision of helping BCHT build the Trenton community, in terms of both houses and lives. He is very active at his church, Restoration Family Worship Center, in Howell, whose motto, “Restoring our community one family at a time,” parallels BCHT’s, “Building community one family at a time, one house at a time.”

As construction and rehab become busier at BCHT Thomas has a plan for bringing in the un- and under-employed to learn the construction trades and help build the community. He has great empathy for those in trouble. He says, “Broken people do broken things. Somebody’s got to help them.”

We are excited about Thomas and his commitment to BCHT and the community. We look forward to working with him and will keep you posted as to the progress of our projects with Thomas.

### ***Thank God for Provisions***

Since Fr. Brian retired nearly five years ago, BCHT’s Executive Director, Pearleen Waters, has been operating BCHT as best she can, with the help of some dedicated volunteers, dedicated homeowners fulfilling their sweat equity, and dedicated trustees and advisors. However, the fact is, operating BCHT is too much for one person to handle! So, while the volunteers will still be needed, there will now be a new person in the office two afternoons per week to help Pearleen.

Please help us welcome Patricia “Patti” Weaver of St. David the King parish in West Windsor. Patti is a tax and accounting professional with a specialization in taxes who runs her own consulting business. She has worked with many charities and non-profit organizations over the years in accounting. She holds a Master’s Degree from American University in taxation and a Bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University in accounting. Patti will be working two half-days at the BCHT office to help Pearleen update the fund raising processes and maintain the daily bookkeeping. We look forward to working with Patti.

***In Memoriam*** – One of BCHT’s original homeowners has gone on to her eternal reward. Hermene Sanders passed away on March 13 and will be missed by many. She was in the first group of people to buy and pay off their homes.

#### **NEEDED WISH LIST!**

*Help for rehabbing homes:* volunteers for clean out, painting, etc., refrigerators & gas stoves (new or used)

*Thrift Store Warehouse* – Vera Werts needs help to operate the warehouse on Saturdays

*Leaders and mentors for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts* to help with badges, fishing, camping, etc.

*Coaching help* for homeowners in financial literacy, gambling and borrowing addiction, life skills, etc.

*We are looking for board members* to help us creatively and innovatively continue the mission of BCHT.

**Email us at [BCHTInfo@gmail.com](mailto:BCHTInfo@gmail.com) or use the mail icon on the website at [www.BCHTrenton.org](http://www.BCHTrenton.org).**

**Office 609-989-0271. Like BCHT on facebook now!**



**Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc.**

**In This Issue: the blight of abandoned homes, an essay by Fr. Brian, and interfaith hope and cooperation.**

***BCHT Thrift Store News***

Blessings!!! Gloria Phillips and her dedicated team of volunteers were able to coordinate Thanksgiving meals for 400 families and Christmas gifts for 350 families (1,000 children). We thank all of you who donated the food and gifts, including Our Lady Queen of Peace in Hainesport, Our Lady of Sorrows – St. Anthony, St. Charles Borromeo, St. David’s, St. Greg’s, St. Luke Toms River, St. Mary’s, St. Vincent de Paul, Knights of Columbus, Incarnation St. James, Aetna Roofing, Electric Motor Co., Roberts Engineering, inVentiv Health, John McCullen, Jean Shadow, Karen Stark and family, Martin Wilnar, et al.



*Thanksgiving Abundance*

***Resurrection Egg Hunt Draws Families Together***



*The race to find eggs*

The annual Resurrection Egg Hunt in Greg Grant Park is becoming an anticipated tradition for families in our area of East State Street. On April 15, 2017 young and old alike hunted eggs, heard scripture stories, played games, and won prizes. All this was done thanks to the work of BCHT and the Fr. Brian McCormick Homeowners Association, as well as funding from St. Matthias Church in Somerset. Thank you to all who helped bring happiness to many.

**Next BCHT Community Meeting: Wednesday, May 17 at 6:30 pm at 802 East State Street. Please come!**

**YOU CAN HELP! WE NEED YOUR MONETARY, SPIRITUAL, AND VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**

*I UNDERSTAND THE NEED AND WANT TO JOIN THE EFFORT:*

A **CO-CREATOR’S Pledge** of \$10,000 to support housing for the poor and community action in the inner-city

I/We pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ over  1 year  3 years... in monthly payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Starting on: \_\_\_\_\_ (DATE)

I/We want to support **BCH of Trenton/Doorway to Hope/the Thrift Store**. Enclosed is a gift of:

\$1,000  \$500  \$250  \$100  Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (OPTIONAL:) Designated for: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PRINT :

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_ (Enclose matching gift form)

**Donate at BCTrenton.org or mail to: BCH of Trenton, PO Box 298, Trenton, NJ 08602 (Make all checks payable to BCH of Trenton, Inc.)\***

\*BCH of Trenton, Inc. is qualified by the IRS to receive contributions that are deductible for federal income tax purposes. This charitable organization is registered with the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey. Information may be obtained by calling: (973) 504-6215. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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