



# DOORWAY

Volume 6  
Issue 2

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

December 2018



*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 Helps Youth Achieve Rank of Eagle Scout***

In previous newsletters we told you about Amir Black, a Boy Scout in Martin House Troop 257 (now Troop 431), who organized a project called 'Beautify Wilbur' with the help of funding we received from the Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF). Amir used 'Beautify Wilbur' to engage twelve householders in painting their front doors and landscaping their front yards.

For his work on 'Beautify Wilbur', Amir achieved the rank of Eagle Scout on October 11, 2018 at a ceremony held at the CYO East State Street Center, where the troop met for over 30 years. Amir is the second Eagle Scout this troop has honored.

Amir calls himself a community activist. He says he loves his community and wants to help it be better. He has been volunteering and planning events for BCHT and other community organizations since he was a young boy. For the past several summers he has worked with children in Trenton's Summer Youth Employment Program.



*Amir with family and friends*



*With Ms. Jackson*

Amir says that he has had much support over the years, from his parents and godmother; his Boy Scout Leaders Alice Matey, Jim Nash, and Dave Parrish; Robert Donaldson of the CYO; and Pearleen Waters and Linda Smythe Oliaro of Better Community Housing of Trenton.

Special certificates congratulating Amir on his Eagle Scout Project came from Senator Shirley Turner and Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman. Former Trenton Councilwoman Verlina Reynolds Jackson, who was recently elected Assemblywoman for NJ's 15<sup>th</sup> Legislative District, has worked with Amir at community events over the years and helped mentor him for his Eagle Scout award.

Ms. Jackson says, 'I have watched Amir grow from a boy into a mature and intelligent young man. The Scouts gave him a challenge. He stayed the course and achieved the highest honor! We are all extremely proud of Amir. Congratulation Amir Black, Eagle Scout!!'

Amir's 'Beautify Wilbur' project had the goal of enhancing the curb appeal of homes in his community while giving those living there encouragement and hope, and his neighbors the incentive to do the same for their houses. To motivate families to participate, each household received up to \$100 worth of materials to paint their front door and/or landscape their front yard with the help of Amir and scouts from his troop.



*Scouts Painting Door*

'Beautify Wilbur' was supported by BCHT, PACF, plants from Isles Urban Agriculture, and discounts from Home Depot in Ewing. BCHT salutes Amir's efforts to better himself and his community. He is a role model for teens living in a challenging environment. We wish him continued success in all his endeavors.



*A 'Beautified' House on E State St.*

## ***From the Heart of the Director***

*By Pearleen Waters, Executive Director*

As we move into the future we try to be true to BCHT's philosophy of social justice, as set forth by our founder Father Brian McCormick: 1) to empower the poor to become self-sufficient and productive, 2) not to forget even the poorest of the poor, those who are mainly forgotten in most housing programs for low to moderate income families, 3) not to displace the people currently living in the inner city, as well as 4) to fight the greed and extortionate profit that makes it difficult to bring jobs and projects in at a reasonable cost. We keep all of this in our hearts and minds as we make plans for our 2019 projects.



*Pearleen Waters*

December 2018 marks BCHT's 47<sup>th</sup> year. We are now looking forward to our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, when we hope to have a great celebration to burn the mortgages at 893-935 East State Street Homeowners' Association (aka Fr. Brian McCormick Court) and honor our founder by naming a section of East State Street *Fr. Brian McCormick Way*. We hope you will be a part of this celebration by becoming a BCHT monthly compassion donor – perhaps even making a Co-Creator's Pledge. (Please see our tax information on the next page to learn more about ways to donate.)

**We hope and pray that you concur with our mission and will continue to support BCHT as we move forward with exciting and worthwhile projects in the upcoming year.**

***Wishing All of You a Blessed, Healthy, and Mighty Christmas and New Year!  
Thank you for your support!***

## ***More BCHT Homeowners Satisfy Their Mortgages***

Each year we like to recognize the diligence and hard work of homeowners who are able to pay off their mortgage to BCHT. It takes sacrifices for our homeowners to keep up their payments and work their sweat equity in a timely manner. BCHT has sold the houses for \$12,500 to \$29,000, well under cost, after building or renovating them using funds from you, our donors, and various government and private charities. Homeowners must do sweat equity each month by giving one day's work on one of our projects or in our office, or pay an additional \$50-\$60 to BCHT.

This year BCHT would like to recognize two homeowners, Melinda Holliday and Sharon Love for completing their obligation to BCHT. Congratulations, Melinda and Sharon, and best wishes for a happy and blessed future in your homes!

## ***New Windows for DTH Thanks to Old Friends***



*Installing New Windows*

Our sister organization, Doorway to Hope, Inc. (DTH) was established in 1991 as a transitional housing facility where homeless single mothers (female head of household) could live in an apartment setting while learning the skills to become self-sufficient. Now that transitional housing programs are no longer funded by county or state, DTH's director, Barbara Thompson, is working to establish DTH under currently existing shelter funding programs, a difficult task because current emergency shelter funding greatly limits the amount of time a family can stay at a facility.

Mrs. Thompson says that the time limit makes it nearly impossible to provide sufficient training for meaningful and successful re-entry into the job market and permanent housing. As she explores various possibilities for re-entry housing she has learned that no matter what direction the organization takes, the apartments need new windows that meet certain specifications.

Mrs. Thompson was able to obtain help for the windows from two old friends of Martin House. The Martin House Community for Justice Foundation provided a grant to replace the windows in all 13 of DTH's apartments, while Jose Rivera, one of the contractors trained and encouraged by BCHT, is working on finishing the windows (see *In the Spotlight*). It is good to see the holistic efforts of Martin House still happening in the Wilbur section. BCHT and DTH give thanks for the legacy of our founding organization, Martin House.

*BCHT homeowners and other neighbors come together every other month (January, March, May, July, September, November) for a community meeting to share information, plan events and discuss neighborhood issues.*  
Next BCHT Community Meeting: Wednesday, January 16 at 6:30 pm at 802 East State Street. Please come!

### NEEDED WISH LIST!

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

*Help for rehabbing homes: volunteers for clean out, painting, etc.,*

*Leaders and mentors for CYO Girl Scouts to help with badges, crafts, camping, etc.*

*Doorway to Hope – new or gently used refrigerators and stoves*

Email us at [BCHTInfo@gmail.com](mailto:BCHTInfo@gmail.com) or use the mail icon on the website at [www.BCHTTrenton.org](http://www.BCHTTrenton.org)  
Office 609-989-0271. Like BCHT on Facebook now!

### *New Tax Laws, Changes to ‘Martin House’ Name, Your Last Will and Testament*

**Martin House Name:** Please be advised that ‘*Martin House*’ no longer exists as an organization. If you have named Martin House in your will, trust, bank account, or life insurance policy, we ask that you **change the name to Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc.** in order to have the funds come to BCHT/Doorway to Hope/the Thrift Store, as represented in this newsletter. If it was the Martin House Learning Center specifically that you were interested in, you can change the name to CYO of Mercer County.

**New Tax Laws:** If you are concerned about making tax-wise charitable contributions within our new tax landscape, please talk to your tax advisor. Some smart ways to use your funds are shown below, as presented by our friends at the Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF), which could be a good choice for you:

- **Bunch contributions** - Create a donor-advised fund and gift to it 2 times in one year, so you can itemize, and take the next year off, all while recommending consistent year-to-year grants from your fund;
- **Contribute highly appreciated securities** - the markets have been generous to many in the last few years, and rebalancing your portfolio, either by gifting stock directly to Better Community Housing of Trenton or into your donor-advised fund may save capital gains taxes and allow you to contribute over 20% more;
- **Charitable IRA rollovers** - if you are over age 70½, direct gifts from your IRA to Better Community Housing of Trenton (your IRA provider will have a form you can fill out to direct these gifts) or a designated fund at the Princeton Area Community Foundation may help you continue your annual giving while excluding some retirement income from federal income tax; and
- **Take advantage of new giving limitations** - for those who expect to itemize on their 2018 taxes, filers may now deduct up to 60% of their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) for cash donations, up from 50% in the past.

*To learn more about smart giving options or opening a fund at PACF, contact Elizabeth Wagner at [ewagner@pacf.org](mailto:ewagner@pacf.org) or 609.219.1800 ext. 12.*

### *BCHT Thrift Store – Helping the Needy During the Holiday Season*

Once again the dedicated team of store volunteers, headed by Gloria Phillips, is working to coordinate our annual Thanksgiving and Christmas giving project, which supplies 400 local needy families (about 1,000 children) with Thanksgiving and Christmas meals as well as Christmas gifts.

**If you would like to provide gifts or help in any way,  
please call Gloria at 609-421-5413.**

The Millstone River and Village schools in West Windsor conducted their annual coat drive for Barbara Thompson at Doorway to Hope. This year coats were distributed with the help of the Thrift Store volunteers. Thank you to the teachers and students of these schools for helping keep some Trenton families warm this year!



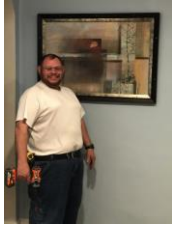
*Coat Drive at West Windsor elementary schools*

***The truck used for furniture pick-ups needs to be replaced. Would you help?***

## Skylar Project Update

Remember the “Skylar” family (II), who had to leave their house after a frozen pipe burst and flooded the entire house last December. When we last updated you they had been out of the house for seven months and were still waiting for the insurance company to review the case and act on making the repairs. The three-generation family has always been an exemplary part of our housing program, having lived in their home for over 20 years and paying off their mortgage to BCHT in a timely manner. The homeowner dealt on her own with various obstacles during her time of home ownership but was just not able to cope with this on her own (even though she made needed sacrifices). BCHT stepped in, urged the insurance company to start acting on the case, and found a contractor who would start right away to make the house livable. The insurance company finally came through, and the family is now living in the nearly completed house. We thank all of you who helped make that possible!

## In the Spotlight – Jose Rivera of JMR Construction



Jose Rivera

In 1992, when Jose Rivera joined the Youth Corp at Martin House/Better Community Housing of Trenton, he had no idea what to do with his life. He had dropped out of high school and was heading in the wrong direction. He joined the 2-year Youth Corp program that sent him to Mercer County Vocational School to learn carpentry and to get his GED, while working half days for BCHT. Jose says that he owes much to Fr. Brian McCormick, our founder and Director at that time. He says Fr. Brian taught him that all things come from God, and that he needed to stay focused on his work because “This life is not a magic show.”

After graduating, Jose continued working for BCHT. Then in 2000 he went off on his own, starting a company, JMR Construction. Now Jose still does jobs for his BCHT family, like completing the windows at Doorway to Hope. He says, “When they call, I come.”

**Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. – Please Help Us Continue Our Mission!**  
**In This Issue: Eagle Scout award, a BCHT inspirational story, New windows for Doorway to Hope**

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Donate at [BCHTrenton.org](http://BCHTrenton.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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