

DOORWAY

Volume 9
Issue 1

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

Nov/Dec
2020



BCHT is a doorway to hope and opportunity, whose mission is to create safe, quality housing in Trenton that low-income people can afford to buy or rent and to support community action and development in at-risk urban neighborhoods.



City of Trenton Designates BCHT as a Redeveloper for Tyrell Ave

On August 5, following a long application process, the Trenton City Council approved Better Community Housing of Trenton's plan to redevelop a portion of Tyrell Avenue. This project, with other initiatives, will transform an entire block with new and rehabbed homes, and at the same time provide low-income families with programs and events that widen their horizons and teach a mindset of personal and community responsibility and awareness. (See events articles on ***Planters...*** and ***Open Streets...***)



42 1/2 Tyrell Ave

Tyrell Avenue is a blighted block where nearly half of the properties are abandoned. BCHT's plan is to address the blight in stages, starting in December 2020 on the north side of the street with a renovation at 42 1/2 Tyrell. In 2021 we expect to build two new duplexes at 60-70 Tyrell, and more homes will follow as funding is secured. We also hope to inspire homeowners and developers to work on other houses on the street.

The vision is that Tyrell Avenue will provide a welcome gateway to the future Assunpink Creek Park (including a skate park), a long-anticipated improvement that will give new life to the area.

Collaboration is an important part of the Tyrell Avenue plan. We have been working with the East Trenton Collaborative (ETC) in bringing community awareness and activities to the area for many years. We also hope to involve Isles Healthy Homes and Isles Youth Corps in the project. (Please pray for our final approval and closing in December.)

You Can Help Us Launch This Project!

See appeal on page 4

Thrift Store and Holiday Sharing Continue During COVID

Even during the COVID pandemic the dedicated team of thrift store volunteers, led by Gloria Phillips, works to coordinate our annual Thanksgiving and Christmas giving projects, which supply local needy families with Thanksgiving and Christmas meals, as well as Christmas gifts for hundreds of children. We thank you for your help over the years and hope you will help **during this COVID year** when so many more families are needy.

New Hours:

Thrift Store (clothing and household items): Friday 2pm-5pm, Saturday 9am-2pm

Warehouse (furniture and appliances): Saturday 10am-3pm

Please note that we do not make furniture pick-ups during the holiday season



Thanksgiving 2019

THANK YOU for your donation to us. It is a blessing!

It helps us to bless others.

And we are grateful that you help us make a difference and remain faithful to our mission

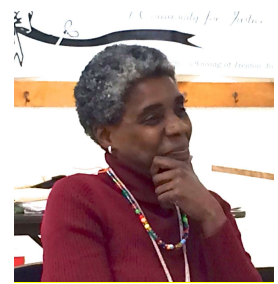
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Executive Director: Pearleen Waters; **Board of Trustees:** Dorothy Holmes, President; Jacqueline Meyers, Secretary; John Sterbinsky, Treasurer; Kellie Malloy Foerter; Christopher Mazauskas; Tamika Young, LSW; Bruce M. Sattin, Esq.; **Founder:** Fr. Brian McCormick; **Editor:** Linda S. Oliaro

From the Heart of the Director – To God Be the Glory

By Pearleen Waters, Executive Director

Thank you, Lord, for 48 years of giving families who are economically and spiritually poor the opportunity to become homeowners! BCHT has been providing affordable housing to low-income residents since 1972. As we celebrate our anniversary this December 2020, I pause to reflect on our blessings and accomplishments.



We close this year with three more faithfully paid-in-full mortgages and sweat equity accounts. Yes!!! 921 East State Street and 18 and 20 Grant Avenue are now the owners of their properties. BCHT's count is now 74 cancelled/satisfied mortgages over the course of its 48 years.

In 2021 we hope to begin a new relationship with 5 homeowners on Tyrell Avenue as we rehab 42 ½ Tyrell and close on two duplexes there, for a total of 5 new homeowners with installment sale agreements. And we expect to have 5 more of the East State Street mortgages satisfied in 2023. We are also happy to share the generous spirit of our founder with the homeowners of 16-26 Grant Avenue and 45-49 Sheridan Avenue by helping to beautify the rear of their properties by removing weeds and some tree branches. Now the hart and its Bambi's will have to feed in another area, but not in the backyards of these homes.

We are constantly grateful for the faithfulness and generosity of the individual donors, foundations, tradesmen, and volunteers who allow us to continue working in the spirit of our founder, Fr. Brian McCormick. So, to give homage to Fr. Brian, in the spirit of his legacy to our Wilbur and East Trenton communities, we celebrate his 80th birthday this November 2020, by submitting an application to have the 700-1200 blocks of East State Street named *Fr. Brian McCormick Way* in our founder's honor. As a BCHT homeowner, I know he would ask and encourage us to follow his generous example, which means to do as he has done and take care of our neighborhoods. So, Fr. Brian, we say Blessed Happy Birthday to you! We love you. Jesus loves you. And I love you as well.

Wishing you all a blessed, healthy, and mighty Christmas and New Year

Fr. Brian Celebrates 80th Birthday

Our Founder, Fr. Brian McCormick, celebrated his 80th birthday on November 18. Although we had planned a large celebration, we had to settle for a small outdoor lunch, due to COVID.



Fr. Brian came to Martin House in 1970 and established Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc (BCHT) in 1972. Although the Diocese of Trenton closed Martin House in 2012, BCHT continues on in its mission to provide truly affordable housing and community development activities for those of low-income. Father now lives at the priests' retirement center at Villa Vianney in Lawrenceville and offers his wisdom to BCHT as needed.

Besides building or renovating 168 homes, Father is well-known for his strong faith and determined pursuit of social justice. He is beloved in the community. Over the years he has filled hearts with hope, spread God's love through example, and worked to reduce racial prejudice. He has always sought to remind us that we are "co-creators" with God of the society in which we live. We have an obligation to fight the greed that forms our society of *Haves and Have Nots* - that those who *Have* must seek to be aware of the needs of the poor and to "tax" themselves by contributing significantly to causes they believe in. Father says he hopes that the situation our world is facing now with COVID will make people recognize that we are all really one. He sends this birthday message, "A big thanks to all of you and to the many thousands we have worked with and have sought to serve." ***May Father Brian and his spirit of love continue on for many years!***

In the Spotlight –Tyrell Resident Welcomes New BCHT Project



It's not just prospective homeowners who are excited about the upcoming new homes BCHT will be renovating and building on Tyrell Avenue. Kathy Bellamy has been living on Tyrell Avenue since 1989 when she bought a renovated house in the BCHT housing program.

Kathy quickly became a leader in her community. She was president of the BCHT Volunteer Worker Development Committee for several years and continues to be a community activist for East Trenton, working with ETC and other organizations in the area. She is currently an advocate of the new skate park that is proposed for Assunpink Park at the east end of Tyrell Avenue.

← Ms. Bellamy and Mayor Gusciora introducing the new skate park

Kathy's early story was first spotlighted in an article in a local newspaper in December 1990, when she was doing the sweat equity which was required every month while paying off her mortgage. The picture showed her wearing a belt of construction tools and smiling broadly. She said she enjoyed assisting with the construction of a "dream house" for another family who would reap the benefits that she was experiencing.

As for the 2020 Tyrell project, Kathy says she is happy to know that people will finally be moving into the vacant homes that have been attracting unwanted activities. She has been "hanging in there", waiting for a long time for this next phase. She looks forward to living on a street she can be proud of.

Check out friend Bob Krech's new book, *A Little Faith*, at www.beliefbooks.com. He wrote the book about his daughter and will be donating all proceeds to charities, one of which is Better Community Housing.

Planters Brighten Stoops and Hearts Amid COVID Crisis

As part of the Tyrell Ave Project, BCHT organized a community event to bring some brightness and hope to the neighborhood.

Neighbors gathered on June 20th - socially distanced of course - to make planters for their front stoops. Supplies and instructions were provided by Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc.. The Planter Day event was such a success that people asked that another be offered to include more people in the area. So three weeks later BCHT partnered with the East Trenton Collaborative to do a Planter Day at George Page Park. Twelve planters were made at each event, after which people walked from house to house to admire each others' work.



Tyrell Preparations

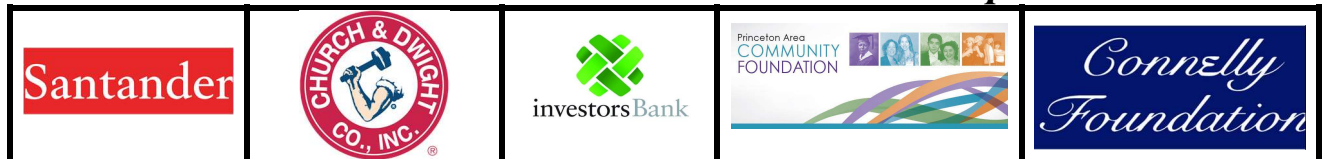


Results at George Page Park



Results on Tyrell Ave

Thank You to Our Committed Donors and Sponsors



Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. – Please Help Us Continue Our Mission!

In This Issue: New Tyrell Ave Redevelopment Project, Making the Best of COVID, Christmas Giving

“Open Streets” Brings Community Together During COVID

BCHT worked with the East Trenton Collaborative (ETC) on August 8 for one of the *Open Streets* events ETC held on Saturdays in August. With COVID 19 keeping families from normal summer activities, ETC (a community organizing and development initiative) instituted this program to provide adults and children with focused and interesting ways to spend their Saturday afternoons and gather safely with neighbors.

Activities included a pop-up skate park by Freedom Skate Park, a bike repair station with Trenton Cycling Revolution, senior Bingo, and other activities and projects for all ages.



Family Activity Kits

BCHT provided 50 family activity kits put together by the BCHT Advisory Board, so that families could work together at home on reading, coloring, school prep, and puzzles.

← Assembling kits

Some kids couldn't wait to start →



BCHT's bi-monthly community meetings are suspended during the COVID pandemic. Virtual meeting will be convened as needed.

PLEASE HELP US LAUNCH THE TYRELL AVENUE PROJECT!

Try donating using our **DONATE** button on our website at www.BCHTrenton.org/Contact

Or mail donations to our return address below

Call 609-989-0271 or Email us at BCHTInfo@gmail.com for more information

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

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

I UNDERSTAND THE NEED AND WANT TO JOIN THE EFFORT:

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

I/We want to support **BCH of Trenton**: 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 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.