



DOORWAY

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

November 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 Receives “Lasting Achievement Award”



On October 20, 2017, Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. (BCHT) was honored with the **Lasting Achievement Award** by the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ). The award was presented at their annual Community Development “Under One Roof” conference at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick. The award celebrates BCHT’s success and honors its tireless efforts to improve the lives of the people we serve as we reach our 45th anniversary.

Our founder, Father Brian McCormick was there to accept the award along with BCHT’s Executive Director, Pearleen Waters (shown at left with Staci Berger, President of HCDNNJ). The conference was attended by hundreds of community development organizations, housing advocates, and public officials from throughout the state of NJ.

Ground Broken on NRCS Pilot Project

BCHT has donated land on Hillcrest Avenue to a new nonprofit organization with exciting potential for Trenton and other struggling urban communities. Neighborhood Redevelopment Cooperative Solutions (NRCS) is headed by Born Understanding Allah of Born Builders, along with Anthony Ruffin and Brother Chris Green. The mission of NRCS is to create hope and change in the community by bringing together sub-contractors in a partnership to support the production and rehab of affordable homes, while hiring and training unemployed and under-employed members of the community in the trades. This project in Trenton is NRCS’s first venture.



Working with architect Russell DiNardo of ThinkForm Architects, NRCS developed a plan for an efficient home with three bedrooms, 2 ½ baths, a garage, and built-in WI FI and security. They have found a family with a young son who will purchase the house. Shown above are Born, Mr. Ruffin, Mr. DiNardo, the future homeowners, contributing contractors Rashawn Harmon of Code-Rite Electric, Andy Mims of Mims Mechanical Contractors, as well as other members of NRCS and Better Community Housing of Trenton.

National Night Out



The fifth annual National Night Out at Greg Grant Park on August 1 again brought families and neighbors together to celebrate their community with games, food and fun. Children particularly enjoyed the Bounce House, fire truck, and movies.



Where Do We Go From Here?

By Linda Smythe Oliaro, BCHT Advisory Board

It has been five years since Martin House was dismantled and Better Community Housing and Doorway To Hope decided to continue their missions on their own. BCHT's fledgling CEO, Pearleen Waters, now a seasoned director, and Barbara Thompson, Director of Doorway to Hope (the transitional housing arm of the former Martin House), have experienced many of the vagaries of leadership that they were cautioned about by the founder, Father Brian McCormick. Through this, Pearleen and Barbara have persevered and overcome many obstacles in their effort to continue the Martin House legacy of caring and serving the poor in Trenton.



Linda S. Oliaro

But they have found that persevering is not easy. Even Habitat for Humanity has moved out of Trenton – although continuing its projects here through Habitat of Burlington. Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc. is also facing decisions on how to fulfill its mission of helping the poor find truly affordable housing and succeed at owning a home and becoming productive members of a thriving and socially inclusive society.

So, how do we move forward? BCHT wants to continue to rehab and build homes and offer services to our Wilbur community. Looking back, we were blessed to have people (architects, lawyers, planners, builders, and suppliers) who dedicated themselves and their work to our mission, often at their own expense, as well as community members who brought leadership and created businesses, jobs and opportunities.

Where is the new generation that will provide the passion and impetus to keep our mission alive – or maybe even re-write the mission for the 21st century? There are some people who have stepped forward, but there must be others, others to nurture the spirit of giving, others with passion and faith, others who have the resources and connections that will make BCHT's endeavors successful.

Trenton is on the cusp of a new era, which can be anything imaginable, depending on the vision and guidance it receives. There are organizations throughout the city and state that are working to bring about a bright new future for Trenton, but that future needs to be properly envisioned and shaped. BCHT has joined several of these organizations and continues to network for coordination of goals and solutions between organizations and the government. We are part of The Trenton Civic Trust (thecitizenscampaign.org/civic-challenge/trenton-civic-trust), The Trenton Neighborhood Restoration Campaign (RestoringTrenton.org), the Capital City Community Coalition, and the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ (hcdnnj.org), all of which are working for a renewed Trenton.

So let's be part of creating the new era, in a way that will make the poor an active, working part of the vision and solution. BCHT wants to be instrumental in deciding what path Trenton will take. And we need YOU to help us. As we enter the hopeful and joyful seasons of Advent and Christmas, let us consider our own roles in bringing hope and joy to those less fortunate. If you are someone with skills, passion, or just the desire to contribute to change in Trenton that matches BCHT's vision for the poor and sub-poor, please contact us. We need you!

You can contact Linda Oliaro at BCHTInfo@gmail.com

In the Spotlight – Tamika Young



Tamika Young

Tamika Young graduated from Rutgers in 1998 and realized she had to make her way in the wide world. As a single mom she needed not just a job but a stable home. She heard about BCHT's program for affordable housing and attended the required meetings and classes to learn about maintaining a home; she did sweat equity, and finally bought a rehabbed home on Locust Street. Tamika says that BCHT provided the support she needed in so many ways – faith, finances, and homeownership. Having this stability enabled her to be able to focus on her family and education. She was able to grow in her job and obtain a Masters Degree in Social Work. After Tamika paid off her mortgage, Pearleen asked her to be a member of the BCHT Board of Trustees, where she serves as a community liaison at bi-monthly community meetings and organizes many community events. She is now married, with two children and continues to work as a social worker. Congratulations, Tamika!!

Next BCHT Community Meeting: Wednesday, November 15 at 6:30 pm at 802 East State Street. Please come!



In Memoriam

We mourn the passing of Kenneth Dean Torres. Kenny was a part of Martin House/BCHT since his childhood. He went from being a Martin House kid in our Youth Corp to becoming an electrician and a BCHT homeowner. Kenny used his talent and skill for BCHT as an employee, volunteer, and friend. He will be greatly missed.

Kenny Torres is shown front and center with the first construction crew of the Martin House Youth Corp c1990. Behind him is another Youth Corp veteran who also created a business in our neighborhood, Jimmy Lee Youngblood.

Thanksgiving Service for Our Continued Blessings in This Community

On October 13 BCHT founder, Fr. Brian McCormick, took the occasion of the recent 100-year anniversary of the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima to hold a special Thanksgiving Rosary service in the open area at our most recent homes at 893-935 E. State Street. Father Brian spoke to the group of homeowners and volunteers about the trials and blessings that we experienced in building these 20 homes and the park across the street.

Father reminded the homeowners that they need to accept the challenge to be even more, to keep their lives together as they seek to do God's will and be stewards of the homes and all they have been given.



Some attendees at Fr. Brian's Rosary Service



The homes at 893-935 East State Street

New Board Member Joins BCHT's Trustees



Mr. John Sterbinsky joined BCHT's Board of Trustees at our September 2017 meeting. John lives in Delaware Township, NJ and has been a Martin House/Better Community Housing of Trenton supporter since the 1980's. Now that he has retired from his career at Johnson & Johnson and related companies, he runs a tax preparation business and devotes his time to volunteering and his grandchildren. John has great enthusiasm and brings visions for the future of BCHT. We look forward to working with him.

BCHT Thrift Store News

Gloria Phillips and her dedicated team of volunteers are once again coordinating an extensive Thanksgiving and Christmas project to supply holiday meals and gifts for needy families in the Wilbur area. **We still need sponsors for 50+ families for Christmas gifts.** (Call Gloria at 609-421-5413 if you want to help.)

This fall the Thrift Store also responded to the needs of hurricane victims in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Clothing and bottled water were gathered and donated through the Trenton Police Chaplains and the CYO East State Street Center.



V. Werts gathering hurricane relief

NEEDED WISH LIST!

Doorway to Hope – urgently needs refrigerators and stoves (new or used)

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

Thrift Store - our truck is on its last legs so we need repairs or a new truck. Also drivers for pick-ups and **Christmas gifts** as noted in above article.

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

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

Email us at BCHTInfo@gmail.com or use the mail icon on the website at www.BCHTrenton.org

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

BCHT Supports CYO's Summer Camp and Winning Basketball Team

Summer Camp

BCHT Advisory Board members once again organized volunteers from St. David the King parish in West Windsor to provide enrichment two afternoons a week to the 120 children at the CYO East State Street's Summer Camp. Among the 30 volunteers were two Girl Scouts, Bhargavi Sahu and Ayushi Palandukar, who planned and taught lessons and activities to earn their Gold Awards, and two high school students, Max Wiener and Tyler Lane, who belong to *Boys Charity Group*.



Max & Tyler (rear) with children and learning supplies

The boys sponsored a book drive and a fundraiser for the camp children. They gave at least one book to each child and used the \$350 they raised to buy camp supplies and make bags of learning supplies and workbooks for the children to take home. Max has volunteered at the camp for the past three summers and says he feels lucky to be part of the program and especially appreciates the personal relationships he develops with the campers. "Seeing the happiness on the children's faces when they realized they could keep the books [and supplies] made my work very fulfilling," he said.

Basketball Team



Teamwork, personal pride, and persistence are what its all about. Each year BCHT sponsors a team in the CYO basketball league, giving boys the opportunity to work on these attributes while having fun at the same time.

BCHT's 2016-2017 team won the championship trophy this year. Shown with the team are Pearleen Waters and Advisory Board member Kieanna Childs Alexander.

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 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.