

The Streetlight

Shining a light on homelessness in and around Trenton, New Jersey

thestreetlight.pages.tcnj.edu

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New Program Offers Care to Pregnant Woman Experiencing Homelessness

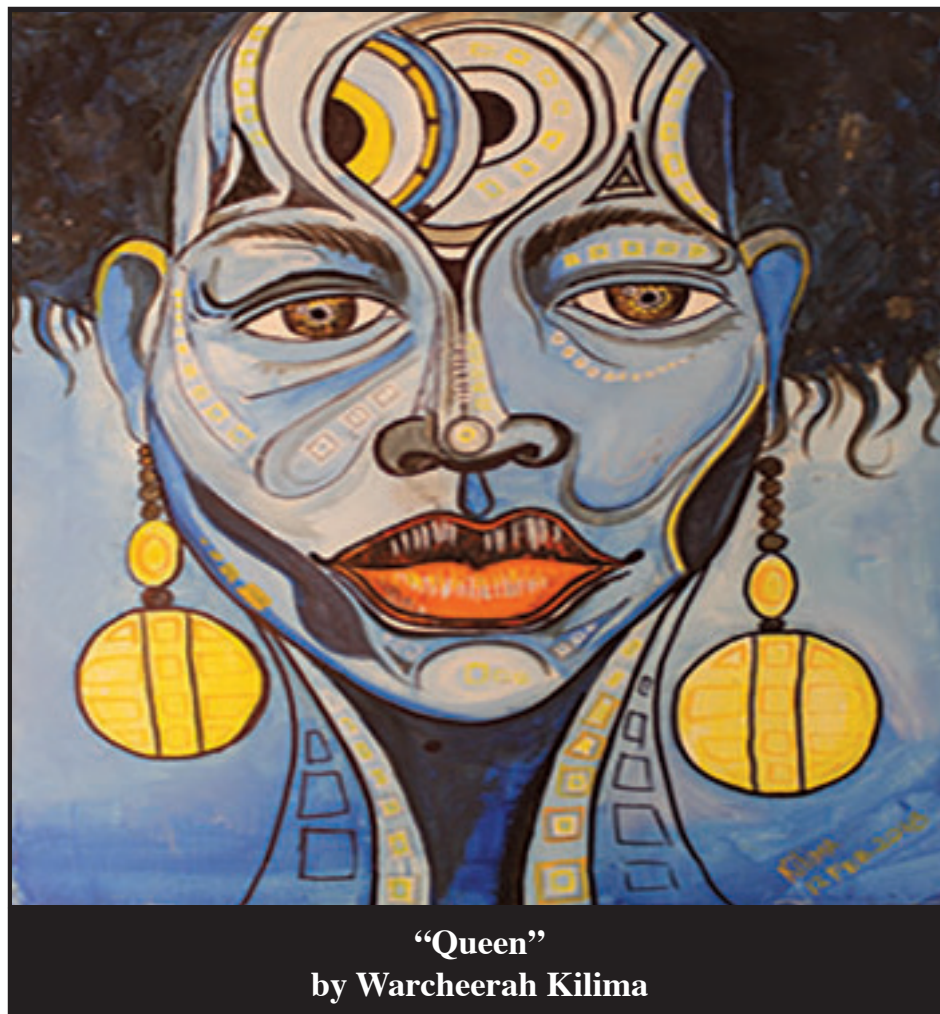
By Hannah Keyes

The opioid epidemic has been reaching astronomical levels, as it has been categorized as one of the worst drug crises in the United States to date. According to the Trenton Health Team, a collaborative program that addresses health care in Trenton, “New Jersey continues to be a national leader when it comes to opioid addiction – both in the scope of the impact on the state, and in the public and private response to the disease. More than 1,600 state residents died of opioid related issues in 2016.”

Within this population of drug addicted individuals, pregnant women have not received much attention or care due to a lack of coordination between maternal health and addiction medicine. However, there are now programs that are desperately trying to fight this.

In January 2018, Capital Health, Catholic Charities Diocese of Trenton (CCDoT), the Trenton Health Team, the Rescue Mission of Trenton, Henry J. Austin Health Center, and HomeFront introduced a new program called For My Baby and Me (FMBM) that focuses on addressing the needs of addicted pregnant women who are homeless or at risk for homelessness.

The women who are enrolled in



“Queen”
by Warcheerah Kilima

FMBM receive plenty of care throughout their stay. Clients receive medical care through all stages of pregnancy, birth and postpartum, medication-assisted

addiction treatment, peer recovery and relapse prevention counseling and support, mental health services, housing assistance, transportation, employment

services, basic needs such as food and clothing, and child care for dependents. Susan Lougherty, the Director of Operations for CCDoT, mentioned that the program is open to anyone, regardless of their insurance status and operates all twenty-four hours of the day.

After receiving a two-year \$4 million grant, CCDoT was able to expand its Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program in underrepresented areas of Mercer and Burlington Counties. With this significant funding, the agency plans to extend its outreach to those who need it the most, specifically certain populations of people who have repeatedly been denied the help that they need. Not enough recovery programs accept pregnant women due to the complex and specialized care that they require, which can lead to women becoming fearful and unwilling to seek help.

While there are similar programs such as Mother Child in Camden County that assists pregnant women experiencing homelessness, FMBM is unique in its

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For My Baby and Me
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approach since it explicitly aims to help pregnant women overcome their drug addiction in order to become healthy for both themselves and their babies.

FMBM uses a holistic partner approach that allows pregnant women to get the best treatment possible. For example, HomeFront provides shelter and housing, CCDoT provides substance abuse treatment and has the lead on case management, and Rescue Mission answers the 24/7 hotline and provides peer support. Different services are provided by different partners, which makes it a collective effort for a common cause.

“The program [FMBM] is able to achieve results through the holistic partner approach. Each community partner brings strength to this model through their expertise in their specific area and their ability to rapidly scale to meet the individualized needs of all of those we are serving through this system,” Lougherty stated.

FMBM began as a collaboration of healthcare and social service providers in the Trenton area. Doctors at Capital Health recognized that the attention and treatment of the population of pregnant women was being lost. FMBM was able to provide support to Capital Health in their initiative to reduce instances of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). The efforts on both ends have produced positive impacts on many pregnant women’s lives.

To date, there have been nearly 40 pregnant women who have gone through the program, including Sabrina who was able to quit her addictive drug habits and give birth to a healthy child.

“I totally hit rock bottom before I came

here. I was really scared once I found out I was pregnant again, especially since I found out so late,” Sabrina explained.

She discovered that she was having a baby 23 weeks into her pregnancy. Before coming to FMBM, she stated that she experienced a lot of judgment from nurses and doctors at some hospitals. However, Sabrina was referred to FMBM and although she was at first skeptical due to it being so different from a generic rehab center, she believes it has saved her life.

“My quality of life has improved tremendously. The program is just great. The nurses here are awesome and very supportive. Without everyone’s support here and my family, I couldn’t have done all of this,” stated Sabrina.

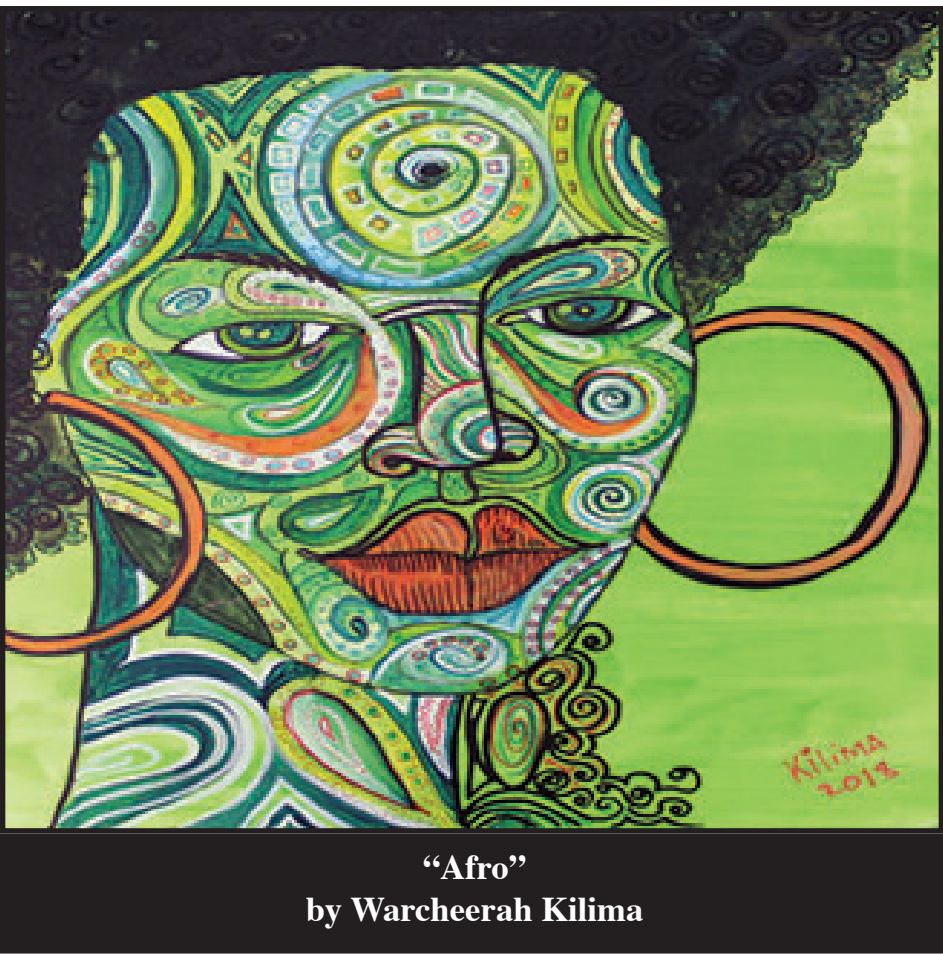
The women who go through the program have to work extremely hard to recover. At FMBM they receive a tremendous amount of support to help get them to a healthy state of mind and being.

In regards to the women who have successfully completed the program, nursing supervisor at CCDoT for FMBM, Lisa Merritt mentioned that “it’s definitely really rewarding for all of the treatment team because we want to set them up for success so that they can sustain the home that we put them in, or the job that they get at the end of the treatment here. You see them slowly grow, even in their appearance one month later, three months later, six months later. Everything improves: appearance, health, and motivation.”

For My Baby and Me
(609) 256-7801
Staff Available 24/7

Artwork in this issue is available for purchase

Trenton Community A-TEAM
51 North Stockon Street
Trenton, NJ 08618
Info@trentoncommunityateam.org
(609) 421- 0793



“Afro”
by Warcheerah Kilima

Poetry

Man in Mind
Derrick Branch

Within my mind I see a room
Its walls are blind, but made of glass
Within these walls there sits a man
And that man he wears a mask

He hopes and prays and sits and waits
For the day he could reveal his face
And what he wants, and what he needs
Are on the opposite side of the glass.
But he doesn’t attempt to break through the glass

Because he fears he may get cut
And if he’s cut then he will bleed
And if he bleeds then he may die
So this man waits for someone else
To break through the glass from the opposite side.

I know this man I know him well
The mask he wears is made of gold
For this gold he pays a price
The price he pays, his mortal soul

Long must he wait or will he try
To break through the glass or simply die.

Poetry

Library
Nour

I want to cry
Tears fill my eyes
When I look back.
All this quiet
Here and in imagination

Close to me.
I would cry
My years of
The street-suffering noise,
Children, children
In the middle of the night.
I try to get myself
My power.
I’m weak

My head between my hands
My fingers confused
How I can get
My mind quiet.
All this quiet here
Yes, I’ve tried to get myself

I put my head between my hands
The noise follows me
Around the beauty,
The color traditional.
Life teaches me
How I breathe the quiet
Inside me
To make art.



“Botanical Garden”
by Sharon Jackson

Campuses Across NJ Begin Addressing Food Insecurity

By Marriana Asavero, Jared Kofsky, and Joshua Trifari

A recent report in NPR stated that 36 percent of college students nationwide say they are food insecure while nine percent identify as homeless. The report cited a survey published by Temple University and Wisconsin HOPE Labs that found that in addition, 36 percent of students face housing insecurity. In the fall of 2016, Rutgers University-New Brunswick took the initiative to lighten the burden for students struggling to put food on their dorm room tables.

For a university like Rutgers in nearby Middlesex County, the largest college in New Jersey, it is not surprising that there is a need for the school to provide aid for a population of students facing these crises. The Rutgers Student Food Pantry (RSFP) is a new operation that is centrally located for students, who are not required to make an appointment to take advantage of the facility’s services. The food pantry offers filling options, such as pasta and rice, with important supplements like protein included. Rutgers students only need to bring their campus ID upon arrival and fill out a brief identification form before being able to take advantage of the food pantry’s services.

“People have an image of what they think a college student is,” Kelli Wilson, Rutgers’ Director of Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships, told Rutgers Today. “Many college students are working multiple jobs to pay their way while taking classes. A dining plan is probably the easiest thing for them to cut out or cut short on if they are paying their tuition.”

Rising tuition combined with declining financial aid and

lingering effects of the recession all increase students’ vulnerability to food insecurity, Wilson said to Rutgers Today.

The Daily Targum reported in September 2018 that \$2 million would be donated to extend the services that Rutgers already provides for its students in need, such as food pantries.

In order to increase the accessibility of the pantry, improvements have been suggested to the program, including an extension of hours, particularly on the weekends, for student who spend most of their week in class or at work.

Rutgers University is not the only Garden State institution that has a food pantry. Locally, in Mercer County, Rider University also has a similar resource. According to Rider’s website, the food pantry opened in February of last year.

“The pantry responds to the unmet needs of Rider students, with special consideration for homeless and low-income students and those with food insecurity,” said Ida Tyson, the associate Director of Rider’s Educational Opportunity Program and co-chair for the pantry’s steering committee.

In addition to providing food essentials to students, the pantry also provides toiletries and winter coats. The other three colleges in the greater Trenton area, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), Princeton University, and Mercer County Community College, do not yet have a food pantry for students.

However, at TCNJ’s Ewing campus, Associate Dean of Students Elizabeth Gallus told *The Streetlight* that a food pantry is expected to open in the spring of 2019.

Trenton Soup Kitchen Expands

By Joshua Trifari

An air of excitement looms over the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK). The many noises that accompany construction provide a backdrop to the daily business of the soup kitchen and oftentimes interrupts tutoring and meal service. The 3,400 square foot expansion was expected to be completed by the beginning of the winter.

There are some disappointments, as some eager staff harp lightly about their parking spaces being displaced. Overall, however, patrons and employees alike are excited for these new changes, just in time for the festivity of the holiday season.

“I am very excited,” said Phyllis Blasingame, a longtime patron of the soup kitchen. She participates in the adult GED program and also volunteers, helping with meal service. “I am looking forward to having a classroom where we can learn.”

Dennis, another patron who is friends with Blasingame, expressed a similar sentiment. “I am just looking forward to having more space,” he told *The Streetlight*.

However, the path to expansion wasn’t necessarily easy. “We thought we were going to renovate before we expanded,” said Melissa Rivera, TASK’s Manager of Internal Operations.

Now, renovations will take place after expansion. According to Rivera, most of the operations will be transferred into the new building while renovations will be

taking place in the original building.

The expansion will help improve many of the programs that the soup kitchen already offers. Classrooms will be added, along with a computer lab and a testing center, all of which are expected to greatly improve the adult education program, though no new programs are currently slated to be added, according to Rivera.

Reed Gusciora, Trenton’s new mayor, toured the construction site in November. “They’ll have the capacity to serve more of the homeless population in the near future,” Gusciora told *The Streetlight*.

The expansion comes at a time when the latest Point-In-Time Count of people experiencing homelessness in New Jersey concluded that homelessness increased between 2017 and 2018.

TASK has been at its Escher Street location since 1991. Since then, it has served over a million meals, whilst simultaneously offering programs that are designed to improve the quality of life of its patrons.

“I’m optimistic that the expansion will increase our capacity to serve the community,” Rivera said.

A grand opening celebration has been scheduled for May 3, 2019.

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
72 1/2 Escher Street
Trenton, NJ
(609) 695-5456



“Meadow Lake”
by Sharon Jackson

The Highlight

By Jared Kofsky

Trenton Mayor W. Reed Gusciora

For the last several months, New Jersey’s capital has been under new leadership. W. Reed Gusciora, a former state assemblyman and adjunct professor at The College of New Jersey, was sworn into office as Trenton’s 56th mayor in July. With the 2018 Point-in-Time Count finding that overall homelessness has increased in New Jersey, *The Streetlight* wanted to know how Gusciora plans to address the issue on the local level. Here is a preview of Managing Editor Jared Kofsky’s Q+A with the mayor from November.

***The Streetlight:* Why do you think Trenton has such a significant population of people experiencing homelessness? What do you think the cause [of homelessness] might be on the local level?**

Gusciora: On the local level, a lot of it is mental health and addiction services are needed. The other thing is that we’re such a transient town. We have four train lines, people can walk across the bridge from Morrisville, and because it’s the capital, they feel that they can get the most assistance here. We have a lot of churches that offer food assistance [and] we have the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, so there are a lot of outlets that the homeless population can take advantage of.

***The Streetlight:* The Rescue Mission is the only general population emergency shelter in Mercer County. With Newark adding seven shelters, are there plans to open a city-run shelter in the Trenton?**

Gusciora: We can look at that but we’re focusing on transitioning to more permanent housing. I don’t think just offering more temporary shelters is necessarily the answer.

***The Streetlight:* What projects are you envisioning as part of an increase in transitional housing?**

Gusciora: The Rescue Mission has a good model where they have rooms for temporary shelter but then they have a long-term temporary shelter where [people experiencing homelessness] have actual rooms assigned to them and they actually have apartments that they can stabilize long term until [clients experiencing homelessness] are able to get off on their feet. The Rescue Mission is not strictly temporary overnight housing and that’s something that we have to look for rather than just offering

temporary shelters. The other thing is that we are the state capital so we need the state and the county to be very much a partner because if you look at the other communities that surround us, they offer very few homelessness services and they really need to step up to the plate so that everyone doesn’t just get funneled into the capital city.

***The Streetlight:* If you could have it your way as mayor, what would that look like to have other communities step up to the plate?**

Gusciora: I think that they should have an obligation to offer some kind of temporary housing and bring the services to them directly, whether it be mental health or addiction services, rather than just give somebody bus fare to the capital city. I don’t think that really is responsive.

***The Streetlight:* Is there any plan specifically for increasing services addressing youth homelessness such as or in addition to Anchor House?**

Gusciora: Well there’s other organizations such as LifeTies. A big consequence of homelessness are LGBT youth that seem to be tossed out of their family’s structure and as society gets more tolerant, that will be less of a problem but nonetheless, it’s critical to offer those services as well but there are other organizations that are willing to step up to the plate such as LifeTies.

***The Streetlight:* Do you think then that homelessness should be addressed by non-profits or should the city government play more of a role?**

Gusciora: Well the problem is that the City doesn’t have the resources to handle the problem itself so it does have to rely on faith-based initiatives as well as general non-profits. If the State of New Jersey paid dollar-for-dollar in their property taxes because of all the tax-exempt properties that they occupy, they would give the City \$45 million, but yet last year, we got \$9 million in transitional aid, so we can’t keep going back to our own tax base to pay for such programs so we really need for the state and the county and even the feds to step up to the plate.

Q+A has been slightly condensed for spacing purposes. Visit our website, thestreetlight.pages.tcnj.edu, to read more of Mayor Gusciora’s Q+A with The Streetlight.

Heroes

Pervis Upshur

Poetry

Heroes never give up.
Heroes never give up; they always make the right decisions.
A hero can be anyone who has the right vision.
Growing up, I didn’t know the life I wanted to live in,
but the life that I got was what boys that like
getting in trouble lead.

I used to be one of those boys that wanted to be in big crowds.
Now I know that when I’m around, they are going to look at me
because they feel like I don’t belong.
When the police roll up, I stand out because I don’t belong.
I stand out like a target because I’m not one of them. I’m standing out in front of the crowd.

I’m thinking about all of the ways to get away from that crowd,
and I am finding that sometimes people can’t get away all the time.

Newspaper Serves Italians Experiencing Homelessness

By Jahnvi Upreti

Editor’s Note: TCNJ Bonner Community Scholar Jahnvi Upreti is studying abroad in Italy and filed this report that gives an international perspective on media for individuals experiencing homelessness.

While *The Streetlight* has been serving local communities for nearly a decade, this publication is far from the world’s only media outlet published for and with people experiencing homelessness. In Bologna, Italy, another outlet not only serves as a newspaper for the city’s population experiencing homelessness, but has become an institution for local residents.

Within the heart of Bologna’s town center, at the corner of Via Antonio di Vincenzo and Via Francesco Albani, lies a small storefront with a brightly decorated chalkboard reading “Happy Place.” A social space provided by the municipality of Bologna, Happy Center is managed by the Piazza Grande cooperative. Piazza Grande is an incredibly respected organization in the city of Bologna that actively provides social spaces and services for Bologna’s homeless population.

However, not many today realize that the expansive and well-known organization was once only words written on paper.

In 1993, the first publication of the original *Piazza Grande* newspaper was released in Bologna. The paper’s intention was threefold: to allow marginalized individuals within Bologna to express themselves through art and writing, to provide them with a means of financial self sustainability, and to battle social exclusion and affirm the rights of the homeless population. Those who contribute to the newsletter include individuals experiencing homelessness, volunteer journalists, and professionals from the social services field.

Since 1993, the grassroots newspaer has evolved from a platform for individual self expression and sustainability to the established organization recognized today. Though these chronicles were a step towards greater autonomy, they were not enough to allow for greater agency within society. These individuals decided to pursue the resources needed to create a space where they could not only share ideas and stories through a paper,



“Untitled”
by Derrick Branch

but where they could find solidarity through common experiences like socialization and art. With help from the Municipality of Bologna, Piazza Grande was created by those who needed it most.

Piazza Grande provides a number of services to people in the margins of Bologna, such as housing, social services, vocational support, counseling, and more. Its sub-organization, Happy Place, was designed as a community laboratory for individuals experiencing homelessness, but open to anyone. Happy Place provides a space where people can participate in group activities, such as English-Italian language exchanges on Wednesdays and musical sessions on Fridays. Happy Center also allows individuals to simply utilize the space, no participation in specific group activities are required.

Salvatore, a frequent visitor at the Hapy Center, elaborated further on the importance of spaces such as those provided by Piazza Grande for marginalized populations. As an individual who has experienced homelessness, Salvatore delineated how Happy Place allows him to

“work” by providing him with a space to create his art: specifically jewelry and mirror designs.

“I find copper on the streets, and I make it into rings and bracelets... from something thrown away, I create life.”

Since the start of the Piazza Grande publications in Bologna, the newspaper has slowly shifted from a platform designed solely by the homeless communities of Bologna to one co-opted by greater newspaper organizations, such as the Bologna Press. In order to revamp the publication and focus on the voiceless once more, experts in social journalism will be working with members of Piazza Grande to recommit to the initial goals of tackling social exclusion. They will be placing the voices of marginalized individuals at the forefront of the newspaper.

The publications have also adapted to include a new goal: to fight racism, specifically in regards to migrants. Leonardo Tancredi, editor of the Piazza Grande publications, states that “...*Piazza Grande* could be the first newspaper in the world [that is] the result of a participatory process.”

MERCERCounty ResourceGUIDE

Where You Can Turn For Help

All information is subject to change without notice. Call before visiting each location. Check thestreetlight.pages.tcnj.edu for more listings and a map of all resources.

Emergency Shelters & Transitional Housing

Amani House

518-520 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Trenton, NJ.
Transitional housing (24 single adult males between the ages of 18-65). Call for appointment. Tel. (609)-393-3168 ext. 13.

Anchor House, Inc.

482 Center St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-8329
24-hour program for runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth ages 10-17
Anchor House Shelter, school Outreach Program, (609) 396-8329
Anchorage Transitional Living Program, (609) 989-1625
Anchor Link Street Outreach Program, (609) 218-5630
Anchor Line, (609) 218-5630

Better Community Housing Trenton – Doorway to Hope

827 East State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-5579
Emergency shelter for homeless families in an apartment setting for up to 90 days.

Escher Street SRO & Transitional Housing

50 Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-4599
Single Occupancy Rooms for single men and women (Project Specific Section 8);
Transitional Housing for single men (26 beds) and women (8 beds). SRO accepts transitional housing clients and walk-ins. Referred by Mercer County Board of Social Services or New Jersey Department of Corrections.

HomeFront New Jersey Family Campus

101 Celia Way, Ewing, NJ. (609) 989-9417
Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing are available.

LifeTies

Triad House & Administrative Offices: 2205 Pennnington Rd., Ewing, NJ (609) 771-1600
Mary's Place/T.L.I.T.: 1901 North Olden Ave., Ewing, NJ. (609) 671-0040
Providing 24/7 shelter for homeless LGBTQ youth ages 12 to 21 at four houses in Mercer County

Rescue Mission of Trenton

98 Carroll St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-1436
Emergency overnight shelter: day center, meals and clothing for single adults
Housing: Transitional Housing; Rooming and Boarding House; Permanent Supportive Housing
Other Services: Adult education, job training, thrift store, and courtesy store.

United Progress Inc. – Emergency Shelter

56 Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-2822 and Fax: (609) 392-3215
Providing 22-bed transitional housing service for single homeless males of Mercer County. Accepting transitional housing referrals from Mercer County Board of Social Services.

Holy Apostles’ Episcopal Church

1040 Yardvillve Allentown Rd., Yardville, NJ. (609) 208-0228. Dinner Tuesday, 5 pm – 6:30 pm

HomeFront Pantry

1880 Princeton Ave., Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 989-9417. Open Tuesdays 12 pm – 8pm, Mondays and Thursdays 9 am – 5 pm.

Holy Trinity Catholic Church Food Pantry

201 North Pennsylvania Ave., Morrisville, PA (215) 295-3045

Jerusalem Baptist Church

150 N. Clinton Ave., Trenton, NJ (609) 394-9816. Third Saturday of a five Saturday month and the first Saturday of a four Saturday month. 11:30 am – 1 pm. Call for details on other services.

Lawrence Community Center

295 Eggerts Crossing Rd., Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 883-3379
HomeFront-managed food pantry provides food bags on the first and third Thursday of the month. Various programs for all ages and computer access for visitors.

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Food Pantry

189 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-2411
Last Thursday of month. Opens at 8 am on a first come first serve basis.

Meals on Wheels of Mercer County

320 Hollowbrook Dr., Ewing, NJ. (609) 695-3483
Provides nutritious meals to homebound individuals throughout Mercer County.

Medallion Care Behavioral Health

1 Electronics Dr., Suite 105, Hamilton, NJ. (609) 586-0766. Lunch Monday - Friday from 12 pm – 1 pm

Mercer Street Friends

824 Silvia St., Ewing, NJ. General inquiries (609) 396-1506. Food Bank inquiries (609) 406-0503

Mount Carmel Guild

73 North Clinton Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-3402. Operates a food pantry Mon-Fri 9:30 am – 11:30 am and 1:30 am – 3:30 pm

New Covenant United Methodist Church

1965 South Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-4725

New Hope Church of God

400 Hamilton Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-3293

NJ Conference Adventist Community Services Center

2160 Brunswick Cir., Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 392-7131

Primera Iglesia Pentecostal (Alpha and Omega Inc.)

347 Second St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 571-9135. 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Princeton Deliverance Center

301 Southard St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-9161. Wednesday (not 1st of month) 12:30 am – 1:30 pm, Friday 9 am – 12 pm

Princeton United Methodist Church

7 Vandeventer Ave., Princeton, NJ. (609) 924-2613. Free community dinner, Wednesdays 5 pm – 6:30 pm

Resurrection Lutheran Church Food Pantry

4315 Nottingham Way, Hamilton, NJ. (609) 586-3355
531 Dr. ML King Blvd., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-0016. Saturday 9 am – 11:30 am

Rise Food Pantry

225 Franklin St., Hightstown, NJ. (609) 443-4464.
Open for limited food distribution on Monday through Wednesday from 9 am – 12 pm Please call the office for requirements and information.

Sacred Heart Church

343 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-2801. Soup Kitchen: 4th Sunday Lunch from 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm. Food Pantry: 3rd Tuesday of the month. 2 pm – 6 pm

Samaritan Baptist Church

531 Dr. ML King Blvd., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-0016. Saturday 9 am – 11:30 am

South Trenton Area Soup Kitchen

First Baptist Church, 128-140 Centre St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-8810. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Dinner from 4 pm – 5:30 pm.

St. James AME Church

413 Summit St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 448-7855
Community dinner, Wednesdays 5 pm - 6:30 pm

St. Mary’s Cathedral (Loaves and Fishes Food & Soup Kitchen)

151 N. Warren St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-8447. Last two Saturdays of the month. Lunch is 11 am – 2 pm

The Food Center at Morrisville Presbyterian Church

771 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Morrisville, PA (215) 295-4191

The Salvation Army Citadel Corps of Trenton

575 E. State St. Trenton, NJ 08609
Food pantry and social service department. helping individuals with payment relating to eviction notices and utility shut offs. This Salvation Army gives out vouchers for furniture which can be used at any Salvation Army Store.

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral Food Pantry

801 W. State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-3805. Food Pantry. Every other Saturday 9 am – 11 am. Services via the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen are also available.

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen

72^{1/2} Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-5456. Mon. – Fri. Lunch from 11 am – 1 pm; Monday – Thursday Dinner from 4pm-5:30pm. Call for other services.

Turning Point United Methodist Church

15 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ. Dinner served / Food Pantry. 3rd Sun. 1 pm – 3 pm.

Trinity United Methodist Church of Bordentown City

339 Farnsworth Ave., Bordentown, NJ. (609) 298-0158
Dinner is served Tuesdays from 5 pm – 6:30 pm

United Progress, Inc.

62 West State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-2161. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9 am – 12 pm.

West Trenton Soup Kitchen

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. 801 W. State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 902-042. Thursday Dinner, 5 pm – 6:30 pm

Catholic Charities, Behavioral Health Services

10 Southard St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-4557.
Integrated behavioral health and physical health services.

Capital Health Medical System at Hopewell

1 Capital Way, Hopewell Township, NJ. (800) 637-2374.
Clinics, Medicaid, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care.

Capital Health Regional Medical Center

750 Brunswick Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-6722
Mental Health Crisis Assistance. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare

For My Baby and Me

609-256-7801
Hotline that will provide services to drug addicted pregnant women who may be experiencing homelessness

Henry J. Austin Health Center (Main)

321 North Warren St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 278-5900
Offers fast track, pediatrics, adult medicine, OB/GYN care, social services, podiatry, eye care, behavioral health care, dental services, HIV and Hepatitis C testing and treatment. Have ID. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare. Monday through Friday 8 am – 5 pm and Saturday 9 – 1.

Henry J. Austin Health Center (Chambers)

317 Chambers St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 278-5900.
Adult Medicine and other services. The satellite centers are open Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Appointments are encouraged.

Henry J. Austin Health Center (Ewing Street)

112 Ewing St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 278-5900.
Adult Medicine and the above services and dental care. Open Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. Appointments are encouraged.

A Better Way

65 Prospect St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-1224
Specializes in mentoring, re-entry & gang reduction.

Arm in Arm

123 East Hanover St., Trenton, NJ
48 Hudson St., Trenton, NJ
61 Nassau St., Princeton, NJ
(609) 396-9355
Food pantries; emergency financial assistance (rent, utilities, security deposit, mortgage); workforce development, and driver's license restoration assistance.

Catholic Charities – Emergency & Community Services

132 N. Warren St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 394-8847.
Provides support related to housing, food and mental health.

CEAS (Coordinated Entry and Assessment Services) Center

509 Perry St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-3722
Monday-Friday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Operated by the City of Trenton, this center strives to provide services like housing, identification, and information about benefits eligibility.

Central Jersey Legal Services, Inc.

198 West State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-6249.
Will discuss legal issues with individuals, landlord/tenant or issues and will make appointments. Call for appointment (9 am – 4:30 pm).

Child Care Connection

1001 Spruce St., Suite 201, Ewing, NJ. (609) 989-7770.
Resource and Referral agency assists families in their search for quality child care and provides access to child care subsidy funds. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9 am – 5 pm., Thursday 9 am – 6 pm

City of Trenton – Health & Human Services

319 E. State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 815-2160
Can provide emergency assistance for back rent, first month rent for the homeless and/or at-risk homeless, assistance for Senior Citizens, and other services from its City Hall office.

Community Health Law Project

225 East State St., Suite 5, Trenton NJ (609) 392-5553.
Discusses legal questions with those with disabilities. Offers a low-cost fee-for-service legal service program. Will make appointments.

Community Justice Center

310 West State St., Trenton, NJ (609) 218-5120.
Encouraging the empowerment, resiliency and rights of those struggling with disabilities by providing the essential ingredients of legal education, outreach, advocacy and representation. Will discuss legal questions with veterans and disabled and will make appointments.

Community Options, Inc.

16 Farber Rd., Princeton, NJ (609) 951-9000
Provides housing and employment services for individuals with disabilities.

Emergency, Health, & Addiction Services

Mount Carmel Guild

73 North Clinton Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-5159. Limited Utility and Prescription assistance. Home Health Nursing Services: visits for medication management, vital sign checks, pre-filling syringes, administer injections for economically disadvantaged, medically frail elderly. Free and do not accept third party payments.

New Horizons Treatment Service, Inc.

132 Perry St., Trenton, NJ. Appointment: (609) 394-8988.
Provides an array of medical, clinical and special services, i.e. substance Abuse treatment, detoxification, methadone maintenance, methadone detoxification. Mon-Fri 6am-8pm. Accepts Medicaid, WorkFirst NJ, and self-pay.

Oaks Integrated Care

31 Lexington Ave., Ewing, NJ. 609-583-1900.
1001 Spruce St. Suite 205, Trenton, NJ. 609-396-6788
1320 New Willow St., Trenton, NJ. 609-396-8877
314 East State St., Trenton, NJ. 609-396-4258
2550 Brunswick Pk., Lawrenceville, NJ. 609-396-8877
Linkage to mental health services, medical services, entitlements and housing. Call for appointment.

Oxford House

1065 River Rd., Ewing, NJ. (301) 587-2916, Toll Free: (800) 689-6411
Halfway houses to transition from rehab to independent living for individuals

Princeton House Behavioral Health

171 Mount Lucas Rd., Princeton, NJ. (1-800) 242-2550; (609)- 497-3347
Intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

Planned Parenthood

Trenton Center - 437 E. State St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 599-4881
Hamilton Center - 2279 State Hwy 33, Hamilton, NJ. 689-4964
Services: Abortion Services, Birth Control Services, Emergency Contraception, General Health Care, HIV Testing, LGBT Services, and more.

Rescue Mission of Trenton

96 Carroll St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 393-3533. Residential and Outpatient Treatment for addictions and co-occurring disorders.

Helping Arms

50 Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 396-7500
Offers counseling, employment placement services, housing and other social services to low income people, and operates a prison re-entry initiative in Trenton. Referrals from Dept. of Corrections.

HomeFront

Administrative Offices
1880 Princeton Ave., Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 989-9417
Homelessness prevention (rent/security); permanent service-enriched affordable housing; food pantry; FreeStore; Furnish the Future. Monday – Friday 9am-5pm. Except Tuesday 12 pm – 8 pm

Housing Initiatives of Princeton

33 Mercer St., Princeton, NJ. (609) 252-1572
Serves individuals experiencing homelessness or in danger of experiencing homelessness in order to assist with finding affordable housing and resources.

Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness

1001 Spruce St., Ewing Township, NJ. (609) 599-9762
Not a direct service provider, but works alongside other Mercer County agencies and organizations to aid people experiencing homelessness.

Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS)

200 Woolvorton St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-4320.
Complaint Line: (609) 989-4400. Social Services: (609) 989-4451. Assist individuals with General Assistance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Supplemental Security Income and other services.
M-F, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm, T 8:30 am – 8:30 pm. Can call or walk-in.

Mercer County Clerk’s Office

240 W. State St., Floors 6 and 7, Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-6494
ID's- Voter registration forms, Mercer County photo ID, passport.
Monday – Friday 8 am – 4 pm; Wednesday until 6:45 pm. Walk-ins accepted.

Mercer County Connection

957 Route 33, Hamilton, NJ
County ID card and passport services. Mon, Wed, Fri. 10am – 6pm. Tuesday & Thursday, 10 am – 8 pm. Saturday, 10 am – 3 pm.
Walk-ins accepted.

Mercer County Department of Housing and Community Development

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-6858
Provides heating/cooling assistance, first-time homebuyer assistance, residential rehabilitation assistance, and affordable housing.
M-F 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Mercer County Department of Human Services

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 468-8296

Mercer County Office on Aging

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ
Information for Seniors (877) 222-3737, (609) 989-6661

Mercer County Office for the Disabled

640 S. Broad St., Trenton, NJ (609) 989-6663

Mercer County Veterans Residence

2280 Hamilton Ave., Hamilton NJ. (609) 989-6120. (Must apply in advance)

Robert Wood Johnson Hospital at Hamilton

One Hamilton Health Pl., Hamilton, NJ. (609) 586-7900
Clinics, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

St. Francis Medical Center

601 Hamilton Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 599-5000
Clinics, Medical Care, General Acute Medical Care. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.
The Salvation Army’s Trenton Adult Rehabilitation Center
436 Mulberry St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 503-5124

Trenton Department of Health and Human Services - Clinical Services

218 N. Broad St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-3242
Health Promotions and Clinical Services; Health Incentive Program for Women (HIP4W), Children’s Health Services.

Trenton Treatment Center (Part of United Progress, Inc.)

56 Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 392-2822
Trenton Treatment Center offers residential (for men only) and outpatient programs for those addicted to drug and alcohol. Accepts referrals, client walk-ins, and uninsured Mercer County residents.

University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro

1 Plainsboro Rd., Plainsboro, NJ. (609) 853-7000
Clinics, General Acute Medical Care. Accepts Medicaid, Medicare.

United Progress Inc. Trenton Treatment Center

56 Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-2161.
Provides substance abuse treatment, HIV/AIDS counseling, employment and job development counseling, emergency food, utility, housing services and homeless prevention.

Womanspace

1530 Brunswick Ave., Lawrenceville, NJ. (609) 394-9000; (800)-572-SAFE
Emergency services designed to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault immediately following the initial crisis. Spanish-speaking staff available.

New Jersey Department of Labor One-Stop Career Center

26 Yard Ave., Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-6200.
Offers workforce readiness services and career resources. Referrals from MCBOSs, unemployment. Walk-ins accepted. (Monday-Friday), 8:30 am – 5 pm, Tuesdays, 8:30 am – 8:30pm.

Opportunities for All

1701 S. Broad St., Hamilton, NJ. (609) 394-7013
Training and employment opportunities to a diverse group of job seekers. We specialize in working with applicants with disabilities.

Rise – A Community Service Partnership

Main Office, 116 N. Main St., 2nd Floor, Hightstown, NJ. (609) 443-4464.
Providing case management to individuals in the East Windsor/Hightstown area. Main office is open: Monday through Friday 9 am – 4 pm
(Closed for lunch from 1 pm – 2 pm daily)

Social Security Administration

635 S. Clinton Ave., 2nd Floor, Trenton, NJ. (609) 989-2254; 1-800-772-1213.
Assists clients with social security card replacement. Disability info, questions and assistance in applying for SSI and SSDI. Call or walk-in.

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen

72 1/2 Escher St., Trenton, NJ. (609) 695-5456
Hot lunch and dinner; adult education; computer classes; job search assistance.
Monday to Friday Lunch from 10:30 am – 12:50 pm; Monday to Thursday Dinner from 3:30 pm – 5 pm

Ujima Urban Women’s Center

1001 Pennington Rd., Ewing, NJ. (609) 882– 2098
Providing compassion, advocacy, and training to urban women residing in Trenton and surrounding areas. Call for Appointment.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Trenton Vet Center

934 Parkway Ave. Suite 201, Ewing, NJ. (609) 882-5744

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Hamilton Outpatient Clinic

3635 Quakerbridge Rd., Hamilton, NJ. (609) 570-6600
General Medicine for veterans.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Intervention Program

Hotline is intended to assist homeless Veterans and their families, VA Medical Centers, federal, state and local partners, community agencies, service providers and others in the community.
(1-877) 4AID VET (87

Newark’s Government Joins Fight Against Homelessness

By Jared Kofsky

When it comes to homelessness in the United States, it has long been debated whether the crisis should be addressed by government agencies or societal groups.

In the Trenton area, both categories have long played a crucial role in homelessness prevention, though non-profit organizations and religious institutions continue to operate nearly every food pantry, soup kitchen, and shelter.

Although assistance is provided to these groups through county, state, and federal dollars, often for specific contracted services, a look at our Mercer County Resource Guide will reveal that many of the region’s vital resources for individuals and families experiencing homelessness are not run by government agencies themselves.

For instance, while the City of Trenton does operate the CEAS Center in order to assist people experiencing homelessness, the capital region’s only emergency shelter for single adults is operated by the non-profit Rescue Mission of Trenton with the assistance of government funding for services such as shelter stays and case management.

Across town, several facilities for young adults experiencing homelessness are all operated by the non-profit Anchor House, Inc. Other major Mercer County organizations like Rise and HomeFront are non-profit groups as well.

Societal organizations playing such a key role in homelessness prevention is common throughout the state and the country. This makes the recent moves by the municipal government in the Garden State’s largest city quite unique and raises questions about whether other New Jersey cities could follow suit. Last

December, officials cut the ribbon on the Homeless Emergency Living Partnership (HELP) Center in Newark, a temporary government-run shelter.

“As long as they’re in our community, we’re going to service them,” Newark Mayor Ras Baraka told *The Streetlight*, referring to people experiencing homelessness.

The facility, which was operated with the assistance of Emergency Housing Services, Inc., took over a former halfway house. While the building was not in pristine condition when it opened, it allowed people to have a place to sleep during the coldest months of the year.

However, the shelter closed its doors in September, forcing its 194 residents to end up back on the streets, according to NJ Advance

Media. Then, in November, Newark officials announced that seven year-round shelters for people experiencing homelessness throughout the city would open, receiving funding from both City Hall and local organizations.

Now, Newark is looking to address the homelessness crisis within city limits by creating a homelessness commission. The board will be made up of between 15 and 30 members, at least one of which must have experienced homelessness.

City records obtained by *The Streetlight* show that all members will be tasked with providing “a framework and strategy” for bringing an end to homelessness in Newark. Specifically, the group will not only lead the Point-in-Time Count

for the city, but they will recommend services, evaluate funding opportunities, coordinate resources, and conduct advocacy efforts.

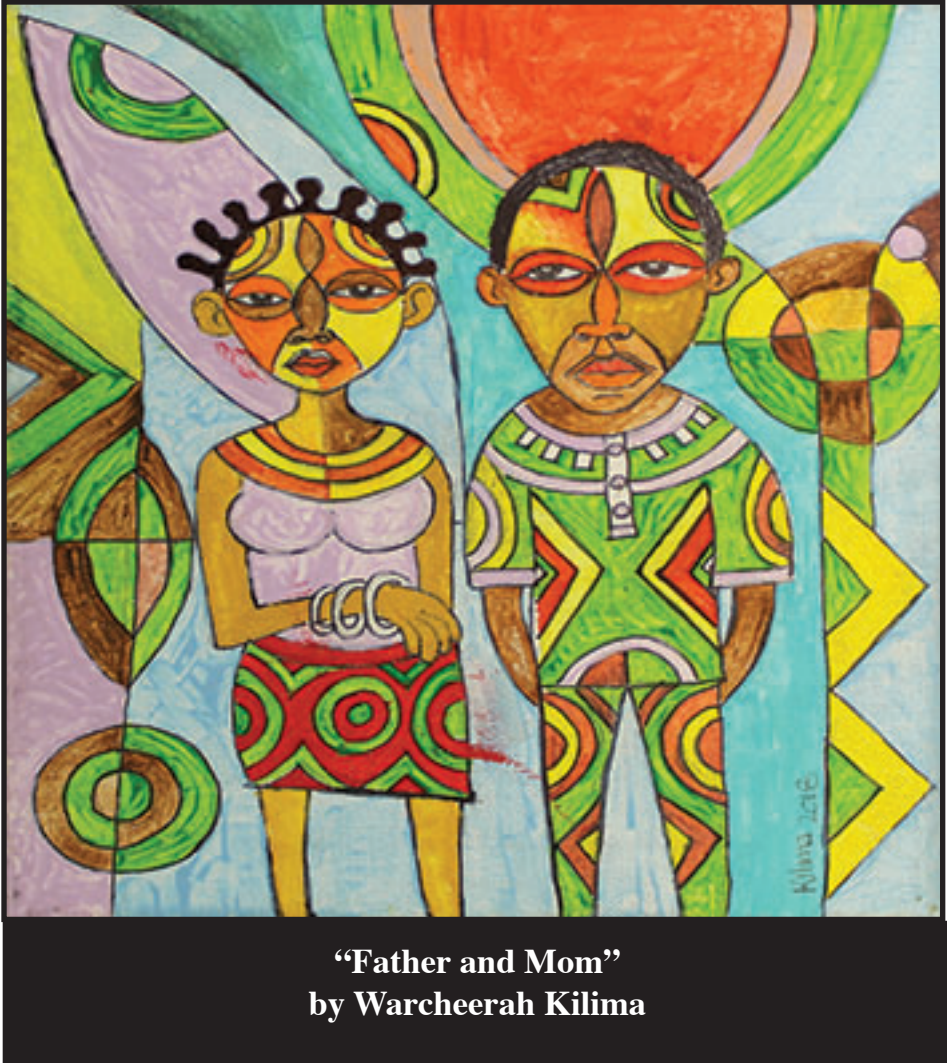
Locally, the Trenton/Mercer Continuum of Care Program operates the Point-in-Time Count and connects government, non-profit, and religious partners, though the capital region does not have a homelessness commission run directly by a municipality.

Cities in particular continue to battle the homelessness crisis more than other regions. Essex County, one of New Jersey’s densest, is believed to be home of 24 percent of New Jersey’s population experiencing homelessness, according to the 2018 Point-in-Time Count results. In New Jersey, non-profit resources and major public spaces such as train terminals tend to be concentrated in cities.

“You’re not going to get help standing on a corner in Millburn,” Newark Mayor Ras Baraka told *The Streetlight*, referring to one of his city’s wealthiest suburban enclaves. “You might go to jail.”

It remains to be seen what Newark’s new commission will recommend and if other New Jersey municipalities like Trenton will open up shelters of their own.

Former Governor Chris Christie told *The Streetlight* that he would have supported such a move on the municipal level during his administration, though NJ Spotlight has reported that current Governor Phil Murphy’s new economic plan calls for having the state government partner with hospitals to construct housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. The future of government’s role in homelessness in the Garden State still remains unclear.



“Father and Mom”
by Warcheerah Kilima



“A Day At The Farm”
by Dolores Frails

At The End of The Day Robert Eaton

Poetry

At the end of the day you want a place to stay
A place to sleep that isn’t a train station or a sidewalk
A place of your own where you can cook food for yourself, take a
Shower, read, hang out, watch TV, entertain friends, and call your own.

But first, it has to be affordable
You can’t live in a house or an apartment if it is out of your price range
If you can’t pay your rent, you won’t have a place to live for long
It feels good to have a place to live. You have a roof over your
Head, shelter from the elements, and there aren’t any cops around
to tell you to move along.

Affordable housing seems to be disappearing from the scene these
days, and that’s a shame.
How can you have a place to stay if you can’t afford it?
If there’s no place like home, what if you don’t have one?

Community Opinion

‘Tis the Season for Unity

By Essence B. Scott

Every year, usually around October or November, there is a flurry of activity in the air. Adults of all stripes are looking to do something for the children they oversee. For some, this is easy. For others, not so much. There might not be enough money to go around to buy gifts and pay rent and other expenses. Some families struggle to find a job or, in some cases, work two jobs to make ends meet.

HomeFront does a lot for these struggling families. I know. I was in one of those families. Every year, there is a call for donations to build Thanksgiving food baskets for these families. No one should be hungry at any time during the year. I remember when my family was at the Pine Motel in Bordentown. We hadn’t had any food in a few days, when we heard a knock at the door. Food! Someone had delivered food! My mom thanked the kind volunteers profusely. So did my siblings and I. We fully embraced our simple, daily Grace that day. Our prayers had definitely been answered. Emotions were running high. The food made us happy.

At around Christmastime, there are a lot of gifts given out and games played. Every year, we went to see A Christmas Carol at McCarter Theatre in Princeton. At dinner and during the show, there is a sense of community that made the space hum with excitement. Some years, we actually met some of the cast of the play and they would sit and talk with us about it. A teaching artist from McCarter would come to our art class in the

month or so leading up to the play and do acting exercises with us.

Another fond memory that stands out for me is the big Christmas party at The Pennington School. It was a time for everyone to get together and enjoy the holiday, even if a family was low on food or money for gifts. There were games and toys and I think Karaoke too. Kids could play outside. Parents could talk, and rest assured everyone got a good meal—usually turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, and vegetables. For dessert: ice cream. Student volunteers, our hosts, made sure we were full and content. They worked very hard to engage both kids and parents alike in conversation and making sure all was well. HomeFront staff would be there to celebrate with the families they helped over the course of the year or several years. It really was a fun time, and I know it takes plenty of effort from them to send invitations out, manage RSVPs, and to just make it a good time. It shows beautifully.

Another tradition that HomeFront has is giving out gifts to the children. Every year, families fill out a wishlist with a couple items that volunteers go out and buy for the kids. It is a wonderful feeling to receive gifts, especially when a child might not get any due to lack of family finances.

There are other things that HomeFront does for the families they serve, perhaps another article’s worth. I am beyond grateful to HomeFront and what they have done for my family. I hope one day that I could pay it forward somehow.

Preventing Poverty in Princeton

By Joyce Vilson, Alyssa Sedacca, and Joshua Trifari

Housing Initiatives of Princeton (HIP) is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2004 to target homelessness and offer low-income housing in the Princeton area. The group, run entirely by volunteers, provides low-income families a second chance to establish a permanent home in the community.

According to Carol Golden, chair of the Board of Trustees of HIP, Princeton is a very expensive town to live in, making homelessness deceptively easy to fall into.

“People fall on hard times, and often, there is no one to turn to to prevent them from falling into homelessness,” Golden told *The Streetlight*.

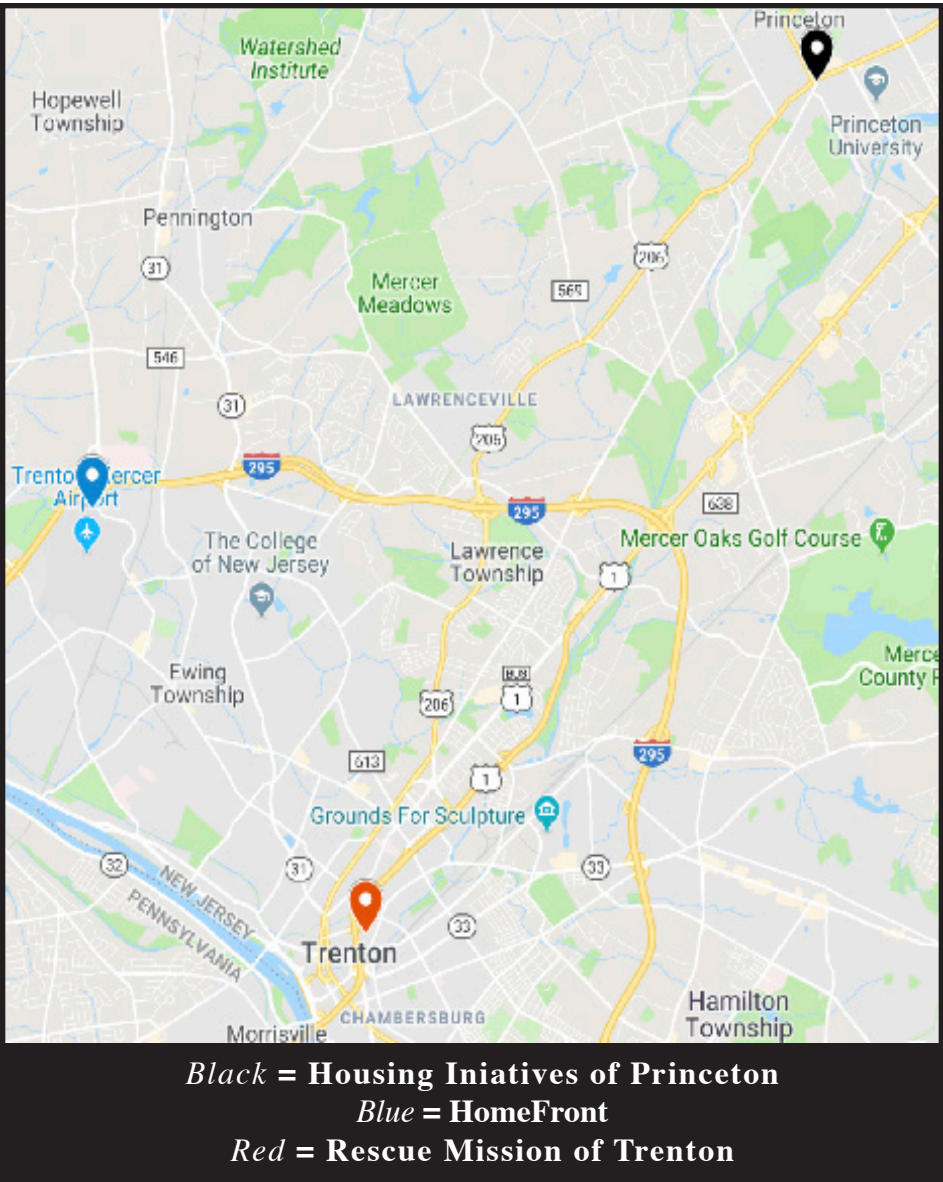
HIP’s transitional housing helps families who are struggling financially and those who are experiencing homelessness by receiving temporary shelter. This

supportive service is available for up to 24 months, coupled with other job search programs. The organization also offers rental assistance through the form of a security deposit or first month’s rent.

HIP works with local institutions such as Princeton University and Princeton Medical Center in order to assist clients. There is a plan in the works for HIP to collaborate with the center in order to establish a healthy living program for the families served by the non-profit.

Aside from rental assistance and transitional housing, families may also seek assistance from HIP in regards to permanent housing solutions as well as other supportive services.

To contact HIP, call (609) 497-4535 or email them at info@housinginitiativesofprinceton.org.



The Spotlight

PIT Count: Homelessness Rises

By Jared Kofsky and Joshua Trifari

Homelessness appears to be on the rise again in the Garden State. The federally mandated Point-in-Time Count, held on January 23 and 24, 2018, found that the number of people experiencing homelessness in New Jersey has increased by nine percent since 2017, according to the NJCounts report released by Monarch Housing Associates.

The Streetlight participated in the 2018 Mercer County Point-in-Time Count. Volunteers from organizations like Oaks Integrated Care and the Rescue Mission of Trenton traveled throughout the capital city and surrounding suburbs in order to count the number of people believed to be experiencing homelessness and find out how they ended up without permanent housing. Places visited ranged from the Delaware and Raritan Canal to employment agencies to public libraries.

The 2018 Point-in-Time Count shows that there are at least 479 people experiencing homelessness in Mercer County. One of the top causes of homelessness locally was found to be the transition from incarceration to reintegration into society. The City of Trenton, where the volunteers were based, was found to be home to 75 percent of the county’s population experiencing homelessness, with 21 percent living in Ewing Township. 63 people were unsheltered at the time while 46 percent of those surveyed were classified as “chronically homeless.” 54 people surveyed who were experiencing homelessness were domestic violence victims, and an additional 18 people surveyed were veterans. Slightly more than one tenth of the people surveyed had been experiencing homelessness for more than three years.

Contando la Población sin Hogar

Traducido por Annette Espinoza

La falta de vivienda parece estar aumentando nuevamente en el New Jersey. Según el informe de NJCounts publicado por Monarch Housing, el número de personas que viven sin hogar en New Jersey ha aumentado en un nueve por ciento desde 2017, según el informe de NJCounts, que se realizó el 23 de enero y el 24 de enero de 2018.

The Streetlight participó en el 2018 Mercer County Point-in-Time Count. Voluntarios de organizaciones como Oaks Integrated Care y Rescue Mission of Trenton viajaron por toda la ciudad capital y los suburbios circundantes para contar el número de personas que se cree que viven sin hogar y descubrir cómo terminaron sin vivienda permanente. Los lugares visitados van desde Delaware y Raritan Canal hasta agencias de empleo y bibliotecas públicas.

El Point-in-Time Count de 2018

muestra que hay al menos 479 personas sin hogar en el condado de Mercer. Una de las principales causas de la falta de vivienda a nivel local fue la transición del encarcelamiento a la reintegración en la sociedad.

Se descubrió que la ciudad de Trenton, donde se basaban los voluntarios, era el hogar de 75 por ciento de la población del condado sin hogar, con un 21 por ciento viviendo en el municipio de Ewing. En ese momento, 63 personas no estaban cubiertas, mientras que el 46 por ciento de las personas encuestadas se clasificaron como “personas sin hogar crónicas”. 54 personas encuestadas que se encontraban sin hogar eran víctimas de violencia doméstica, y otras 18 personas encuestadas eran veteranos. Un poco más de una décima parte de las personas encuestadas habían estado sin hogar durante más de tres años.

THE STREETLIGHT INVESTIGATES

Extreme Weather Continues to Plague Trenton Library

By Jared Kofsky

With temperatures in the capital region this summer reaching as high as 96 degrees, Mercer County residents sought shelter indoors during the day from the excruciating heat. In local suburbs, if residents lacked air conditioning on some of the warmest days of the year, local libraries were places to spend the day indoors. In fact, the New Jersey 2-1-1 Partnership recommends that “libraries...and other public air-conditioned spaces are good alternatives in every county if you are looking for a place to cool down.”

However, for residents of Trenton, particularly those experiencing homelessness, such an option did not exist on days when temperatures were at their highest. The Trenton Free Public Library (TFPL) on Academy Street, part of which was built in 1902, was shut down frequently, with closures coinciding with high temperatures.

An analysis by *The Streetlight* of online announcements by the TFPL found that the library was closed on 12 days during this summer alone due to concerns over heat in the building. On 12 additional days, the TFPL closed early, meaning that for nearly an entire month’s worth of days, the municipal library in New Jersey’s capital was either shut down for all or part of its usual hours of operation.

Patrons who sought the library’s services during the day were often greeted with a sign reading “the library is subject to close at any time during the day due to the temperature within the building.” On Facebook, there were regular posts this summer warning potential visitors that the library will be shut down for the day “due to the excessive heat and humidity in the building.” Although posts on July 25 and 26 and on August 1, 3, 4, 6, and 9 mentioned that “HVAC engineers are on-site working on this issue,” there were closures on excessively hot days throughout the summer, from the end of



June until the beginning of September.

Following these shutdowns, it appeared as though an end to the weather-related closures was near, with the TFPL posting online at the end of the summer that a new HVAC system was installed, replacing a previous system that was set up over four decades earlier. The library also thanked the Trenton City Council for assisting with funding the new system.

Yet, just a few months later, extreme weather impacted the TFPL again. On three frigid days before this winter even began, the building was closed to the public due to concerns over the climate control system on the premises.

The Streetlight took the concerns over the closures to Trenton Mayor Reed

Gusciora, who stated in an exclusive interview in late November that the problem was being addressed.

“We’ve actually been working on the HVAC system and we are making facility upgrades to the library,” said Gusciora. When asked what was causing the delay, the mayor cited “contractor challenges” and added that secondary fixes are on the way.

“We hope to correct any problems with the library facility in the very near future,” he explained.

The capital is far from the only city in the United States where residents experiencing homelessness rely on libraries for services and shelter during the day. A *Washington Post* investigation described libraries as the

“front line of America’s homelessness crisis,” highlighting San Francisco, Denver, and Philadelphia as examples of municipal libraries that are hiring their own social workers for individuals experiencing homelessness.

In Trenton, while there are a handful of other resources that are open to Trentonians experiencing homelessness, such as the Rescue Mission of Trenton’s Day Center. This facility, which is open daily, serves lunch and offers case management services. However, the TFPL remains a common place for individuals to spend the day safely indoors when it is open.

Unlike other similarly-sized cities in New Jersey, Trenton currently has only one municipal library branch. Although the TFPL used to operate the Briggs, Cadwalader, East Trenton, and Skelton Branches in four of the city’s outer neighborhoods, all four were closed in 2010.

According to Mayor Gusciora, City Hall is figuring out how those libraries can be reopened. When asked for additional details, the mayor stated that the City would require non-profit partners to operate each of the old library branches, such as how Howard’s Healthy Choices is operating in the former Briggs Branch Library.

Facility upgrades are needed, Gusciora explained, mentioning that the City is in discussions with Mercer County officials about possibly having Trenton become involved with the Mercer County Library System.

Still, nearly a decade after the branches were shuttered, when it comes to the TFPL, finances remain a concern.

“The library budget used to be \$8 million. It’s down to \$2 million so you can readily understand why the branches had to close,” Gusciora told *The Streetlight*. “The City can’t afford to do it all.”

Beyond Anyone's Expectations

By McKenna Samson

Designed with the purpose of assisting all students across the state, especially those who have grown up in and aged out of the foster care system, Beyond Expectations is a New Jersey community multimedia organization for these students. The group's goal is to teach students marketable skills in film, media, and science—through hands-on film projects—which will enable them to use such skills to obtain a career.

For youth aging out of the foster care system, the possibility of continuing onto a secondary education or finding a profitable career is slim. Children in the foster care system do not always have a stable education or living environment. In fact, “40-63% [of youth in foster care] did not finish high school,” according to Children's Rights.

This lack of a steady education can hinder the ability of youth to obtain a steady job and income. It is believed that between 25-55% of youth that have aged out of foster care are unemployed, according to Children's Rights, and those who have found employment have average earnings below the poverty level. Due to circumstances beyond their control, at-risk adolescents in and aging out of foster care are set on a path for disadvantage.

Leontyne Anglin, the Executive Director of Beyond Expectations, started as a parent volunteer at the birth of the organization. Seeing the lack of college preparation resources at her teenage daughter's school events, in 1999, she gathered a group of parents and set out to make opportunities for middle and high school students.

“50 people showing up to the event would make it a big deal. 200 people showed,” Anglin reminisces. As the organization continued, Anglin began to realize that teaching students skills to properly market themselves in professional and secondary education settings would best benefit them.

“One of my favorite aspects of the program is the amount of engagement with the students. The skills they're

taught are hands-on. The staff lets the students make all of the decisions in their projects and fully produce them,” Anglin told *The Streetlight*.

While Beyond Expectations is open to all students in Burlington and Mercer Counties, foster students are able to find a support system within the organization.

“Foster students are an invisible group,” Anglin explained.

One of the first projects produced by Beyond Expectations, 18 and Out, highlights the stories of youth aging out of foster care. Anglin cites this film as one that has resonated with her for years, even convincing her to take a media approach for students in Beyond Expectations. Even ten years after the short film was made, Anglin references it when providing examples for newer films.

Beyond Expectations is working to reach students all over the Garden State. The organization currently has two office locations—one in Bordentown and one in Trenton. The program works to support students emotionally, socially, and educationally. Beyond Expectations has five key areas for students to explore; media production, service leadership, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and sports media. These areas allow students to diversify their options and find their key area of expertise. Students are encouraged and guided to create their own film projects, edit, and screen at film festivals.

The success of this media-oriented program can be seen in its results, according to Beyond Expectations, with students from the program being accepted to over two dozen colleges and universities. The organization's Young Professionals Leadership Initiative helps to build resumes for students, teaching them about job opportunities and ways to market themselves for careers.

Beyond Expectations
<https://beyondexp.net/>

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“Wine Grapes”
by Carol Johnson