



# COMMUNITY BUILDING

SPRING 2026

## Mercy's Study Reveals Important Findings about Dementia in Homeless Seniors

### CEO INSIGHTS



#### A Crisis We Can't Ignore

Just today, a new gentleman walked into our Friendship Center, his hands bright red from the cold, his feet soaked from the rain. He is 66 years old, and this is his first experience with homelessness.

Over the past year, we have been trying to understand a troubling trend: a growing number of individuals aged 55 and older are coming to our Friendship Center without stable housing. Alongside this increase, we began noticing something else: many appeared to be experiencing memory and cognitive challenges. Rather than rely on anecdotal observations, we decided to take a closer look.

We had the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) administered to older Friendship Center visitors. The findings were jarring: 82% showed cognitive impairment indicating a clear correlation between homelessness and early cognitive impairment.

So what does this mean for the people we serve? First, it gives us something we have not had before: data. We can now demonstrate that a significant portion of older adults experiencing homelessness are also navigating cognitive impairment. This opens the door for deeper conversations with healthcare professionals and allows us to seek partnerships to better meet this need.

It also challenges how we deliver services. Behaviors associated with cognitive decline, such as memory loss, confusion, or difficulty following instructions, can easily

*Continued on inside* ➔

**NEW FINDINGS REVEAL** how homelessness and poverty may accelerate cognitive decline—and how Mercy Housing is responding with compassionate, informed care.

Imagine growing older while struggling to make ends meet or without a home at all. Now add the confusion and fear of memory loss. What does that reality look like, and how can we respond?

Those questions led Mercy Housing to conduct a cognitive health screening among visitors to the Friendship Center, supported by a grant from Hartford Healthcare. The goal: better understand the challenges older adults in our community are facing and begin building a plan to address them.

Seventy-two adults aged 55 and older participated in the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, a widely used screening tool for early signs of cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's and dementia. Most of the participants are homeless, and all are living with very limited financial resources.

The findings, analyzed by Data Haven, were striking: **82% showed some level of cognitive impairment.**



SCREENING RESULT	SCORE RANGE	PERCENTAGE
Severe Cognitive Impairment	<10	4%
Moderate Cognitive Impairment	10-17	22%
Mild Cognitive Impairment	18-25	56%
Normal Range	Normal	18%

In the general population, only about 10–20% of adults over age 65 are estimated to experience mild cognitive impairment. The much higher rate seen in Mercy's study points to a troubling reality: homelessness, long-term poverty, food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, and chronic stress may contribute to accelerated cognitive decline.

In response, Mercy Housing is taking action. Staff will be receiving specialized training to better recognize and support individuals living with dementia and other cognitive challenges, ensuring that every person who walks through the Friendship Center is met with informed, compassionate care.

This study underscores a critical truth: homelessness and poverty are more than a financial hardship, they are serious health issues. And for older adults, the consequences can be profound.

be misunderstood. This research helps us recognize those signs and respond more appropriately and compassionately.

This raises a key question: does cognitive impairment lead to homelessness, or does homelessness contribute to cognitive decline? As more people become homeless later in life, and given the conditions associated with homelessness, the answer is likely both—though further research is needed.

Ultimately, increasing awareness is the first step toward meaningful change.

I am proud to lead an organization that cares deeply about the people we serve and is committed to better understanding their needs. With that understanding comes the ability—and responsibility—to serve with greater intention, compassion, and effectiveness each day.

*Kara A. Capone*  
Chief Executive Officer

## DONOR spotlight

### GOLDWELL BANKER

The realtors at Coldwell Banker's Glastonbury office do more than help families find a place to call home—they help strengthen the community they serve.

We are deeply grateful to Anmarie Fortier, Jocelyn Loukas, Emily Viccaro, and Danielle Allegro for their recent generous donation to My Sisters' Place.

This incredible foursome chose to share a portion of their commissions to support individuals and families on their journey toward stability and hope.

Their generosity is a powerful reminder that when community leaders give back, lives are changed.



### THANK YOU

to the Coldwell Banker Glastonbury Team for their compassion, commitment, and support.

# Pregnant, Homeless, and Determined to Give Her Baby More

**CARRIE ANN HAD NEVER KNOWN** what it felt like to truly belong. She grew up in foster care, moving from one group home to another — always temporary, never home.

When she became pregnant, she was asked to leave the place she had been staying. With nowhere else to turn, she moved into the only shelter she had left: a car.

“Especially being pregnant, I couldn’t move around to get comfortable,” Carrie Ann remembers. She had a high-risk pregnancy and severe sleep apnea. Without electricity, she couldn’t use her CPAP machine. She woke up gasping for air several times every hour. The nearest soup kitchen served just one meal a day. Most days, she was hungry. Every night, she was exhausted.

As her due date approached, she made her way into a crowded family shelter — safer than a car, but far from peaceful. In her third trimester, rest was nearly impossible.

Then, while she was in the hospital preparing to give birth, she received a call that changed everything: **My Sisters’ Place (MSP) had secured a home for her and her newborn daughter.** It was a moment to finally exhale.

Tiffany felt the same sense of relief after escaping a nine-year abusive relationship. Despite restraining orders, she had been forced to move from place to place, hiding for her safety. She reconnected with Carrie Ann, a longtime friend. The two built a life together — grounded in resilience, and the shared hope of something better.

One month after baby Liliana was born, this new little family moved into their own apartment at My Sisters’ Place.

That safety changed everything.

When Liliana was diagnosed with autism, Carrie Ann and Tiffany were able to focus fully on getting her the support she needed — something impossible without stable housing. With guidance from MSP staff, Liliana was enrolled in Early Head Start. Later, her parents found a specialized center focused on autism services, helping Liliana make remarkable developmental progress.

Today, three-year-old Liliana is thriving.

And so is her family.

For Carrie Ann, having her very first apartment has meant more than just four walls and a roof. It has meant dignity. Stability. Possibility.

She is now enrolled in college, studying Information Technology — building a future that once felt unimaginable. **Because when a family has a safe place to call home, everything changes.**

*This is the first time in my life that I really feel safe.*



**CARRIE ANN**  
Resident of My Sisters’ Place



*It feels peaceful here. We’ve made it our home. Now we know we are safe.*

**TIFFANY**  
Resident of My Sisters’ Place

# Trusted. Transparent. Accountable.

We are nationally recognized for excellence in stewardship and impact.

At a time when nonprofits face increased scrutiny, donors are asking important questions about accountability and stewardship. At Community Housing Advocates, we welcome those questions — because we are proud of the answers. Both Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place have earned the highest ratings for transparency and accountability from two of the sector's most respected independent evaluators: Charity Navigator and Candid (formerly GuideStar).

## A 4-STAR RATING FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR

This top distinction recognizes strong financial health, ethical governance, transparency, and measurable impact. Only a select percentage of nonprofits nationwide achieve this rating. For you, it means your gift is managed with integrity, strong oversight, and disciplined financial practices.



## PLATINUM SEAL OF TRANSPARENCY FROM CANDID

Both organizations have also earned Candid's highest level of recognition. The Platinum Seal is awarded to nonprofits that publicly share detailed financial data, strategic goals, measurable outcomes, and leadership information — demonstrating a deep commitment to openness and accountability.

Platinum  
Transparency  
2026

Candid.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

When you support Mercy Housing or My Sisters' Place, you can be confident that:

- Your gift is used efficiently and strategically
- Financial practices meet the highest national standards
- Outcomes are measured and reported transparently
- Independent third parties have verified our strength and integrity

## YOUR GENEROSITY FUELS OUR MISSION.

We honor that generosity with excellence, accountability, and unwavering commitment to the families and children we serve.

## Your Donation Matched by 15% Through Birdies for Charity



Both Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place have been invited to participate in the 2026 Travelers Championship's annual Birdies for Charity Program once again.

Birdies for Charity is a giving platform that harnesses the excitement of the Travelers Championship to help nonprofits throughout the region increase awareness and raise vital funds in support of their missions.

From now through June 28, every dollar donated to Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place through our secure Birdies for Charity donation links will receive a 15% bonus match, generously provided by Webster Bank and Aetna.

**Our goals for each organization is \$5,000.**

**Thank you for helping us to reach our goals and for your kind support.**

MERCY'S LINK: <https://bit.ly/BirdiesForMercy>

MY SISTERS' PLACE LINK: <https://bit.ly/BirdiesForMSP>

## YOU TOUCH LIVES WHEN YOU GIVE TO OUR Spring Appeal

A pregnant mother sleeping in her car finds a safe home to raise her baby. An older man chooses to turn his life around and gets the support he needs to succeed.

These are just two of the lives you will meet in this newsletter and two lives you impact when you support My Sisters' Place and Mercy Housing.

The work is challenging — and life-changing. **But it is only possible because of you.**

Your Spring Appeal gift helps ensure we end our fiscal year strong and continue providing safe housing, supportive services, and hope to those who need it most.

Please consider making a donation by June 30th using the enclosed envelope.

## THANK YOU

for standing with us and helping change lives.



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## We're Hiring

Throughout this newsletter, you'll read about the uplifting work being done every day at Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place. While the work is deeply rewarding, it takes a dedicated

team of individuals—each bringing unique skills, talent, education and professionalism—to create the meaningful impact we have in the lives of those we serve.

At My Sisters' Place, 17 committed staff members work tirelessly to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness and crisis. At Mercy Housing, a team of 103 professionals provides housing, services, and stability to individuals and families across our communities. Together, these teams turn compassion into action.

If you are seeking meaningful employment where your work truly matters, we invite you to explore opportunities with us. We are currently hiring Case Managers, Community Social Workers, Employment Specialists, Administrative Assistants, and more.



Our Human Resources Generalist, **Yessica Trujillo**, is dedicated to finding the right fit for every role and ensuring new team members feel welcomed and supported. For more information, she can be reached at [ytrujillo@mercyhousingct.org](mailto:ytrujillo@mercyhousingct.org).

"My Sisters' Place and Mercy Housing are good places to work because they are organizations where compassion meets impact," says Trujillo. "Every role contributes directly to supporting vulnerable communities, and each day is about turning homelessness into hope. I am proud to be here."

Visit our Career Center page at <https://bit.ly/40uG4Kg> or scan the QR code to view our current job openings and learn how you can join our team.



## CELEBRATING THE HEART OF OUR MISSION: Our Volunteers



We simply could not carry out our mission without the dedication and compassion of our incredible volunteers. Whether they are serving meals to guests at Mercy's Friendship Center soup kitchen or bringing smiles to formerly homeless children through arts and crafts in the Youth Program at My Sisters' Place, our volunteers are truly the heartbeat of our work. Their generosity of time and spirit makes a meaningful difference in the lives of so many in our community.

Although we are thankful for our volunteers each and every day, **April's National Volunteer Awareness Month** gives us a special opportunity to celebrate them. To show our appreciation, we will be hosting a **Volunteer Appreciation Event** on **Wednesday, April 22th**, in honor of those who have served throughout the year.

Invitations will be sent via email soon.

If you receive one, please be sure to RSVP to [aschiedecker@mercyhousingct.org](mailto:aschiedecker@mercyhousingct.org) by April 6th. We look forward to celebrating you and all that you do!

## IMPACTING LIVES *Affecting Change*

### TURNING LIFE LESSONS INTO LEADERSHIP



“Once you get in trouble, it's hard to get a job. You have to put it on your application. They say they'll call you back — but they don't call.”

- **MACK YOUNG**, former Mercy Housing client

Mack Young grew up in Hartford, moving frequently and working off and on. By his own admission, he made mistakes when he was younger—mistakes that followed him for years and made it difficult to build a stable life.

In February 2024, at age 60, Mack came to Mercy Housing ready for change. He was seeking something many take for granted: stability, safety, and a fresh start.

"When you see people coming in and out of buildings looking fresh and comfortable, you want that," Mack shared. "That's when I said, I've got to change. I've got to do something different."

Mercy's staff partnered closely with Mack to secure supportive housing—the critical first step. With a stable place to live, he was able to focus on employment. Through Mercy's programs and job resources, Mack found meaningful work supporting adults with disabilities.

The job not only provided purpose, it provided independence. Mack now earns enough that he no longer needs SNAP food assistance.

"If I'm making enough to be cut off from SNAP, that's a good thing," he said proudly. "I don't need to rely on the state or the city anymore."

In February of this year, Mack successfully completed Mercy's program—housed, employed, and thriving.

"I am proud to have been part of Mack's journey," said Marquita Ponder, Community Social Worker for Mercy Housing. **"Watching him come into our program homeless, then secure housing and employment — and maintain it — if that isn't success, I don't know what is."**

Today, Mack is committed to giving back. He volunteers his time encouraging others who face similar barriers, guiding them toward programs and employment resources that can help them rebuild their lives.

When asked what he is most proud of in turning his life around, Mack didn't hesitate: "The look in my mother's eyes. She sees her son being successful and respected in the community."

Because of your support, Mack's story is one of stability, dignity, and renewed purpose. And because of you, many more journeys like his are possible.



**MARQUITA PONDER**,  
Community Social  
Worker for Mercy  
Housing



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

- 1 My Sisters' Place was a beneficiary of the 2025 El Show de Analeh Toy Drive, providing toys and gift cards for the families served by their programs.
- 2 We were honored with a special visit by Connecticut Attorney General William Tong who served lunch in the Friendship Center along with Wethersfield Mayor Ken Lesser and Representative Henry Genga during one of the coldest days of this winter.
- 3 Wethersfield Mayor Ken Lesser and Wethersfield Town Council member Miki Duric and his daughters served lunch to the residents of St. Elizabeth House.
- 4 Volunteers from UConn School of Medicine facilitated craft activities for the My Sisters' Place Holiday Party.
- 5 Students from UConn School of Law have served breakfast to Friendship Center visitors for over a year.
- 6 HCC Tokio Marine decorated the My Sisters' Place Youth Room for their annual Holiday Party.
- 7 Employees from Selective Insurance spent a morning at St. Elizabeth House restocking the food pantry, preparing a meal for the Friendship Center, and organizing donations.
- 8 An employee, along with others from the Greater Hartford YMCA wrapping gifts for residents and clients as part of our Holiday Wish Program.
- 9-10 Employees from Travelers decorated St. Elizabeth House for the holidays and created Cozy Kits for those experiencing homelessness.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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860.808.2044

For more information visit  
[www.ctcha.org](http://www.ctcha.org)  
[www.mercyhousingct.org](http://www.mercyhousingct.org)  
[www.sistersplacect.org](http://www.sistersplacect.org)

### CONNECT WITH US!



Due to space limitations we are unable to include photos of all the great support we receive. However, we are grateful to you all nonetheless.

## EXPANDED OPEN PANTRY THANKS TO YOU!



Thanks to your generous support, Mercy Housing is able to host two special Community Food Pantry openings that provide more than just the usual canned goods and non-perishables. Your donations have allowed us to offer fresh essentials like bread, milk, eggs, and cheese — items many families struggle to afford.

These expanded pantry days will take place on **Wednesday, April 8** and **Thursday, May 14** from 10am to 1pm at St. Elizabeth House, 118 Main Street in Hartford.

Because of your kindness, neighbors in need can receive fresh foods that help nourish their families. Thank you for helping us go above and beyond for our community.

## CELEBRATE LOVE. CELEBRATE COMMUNITY.

When you attend **Disney's Beauty and the Beast** at The Bushnell from April 7–12, be sure to stop by the My Sisters' Place Roses of Love campaign table!

Write the name of someone you love on a **FREE paper rose**, and we'll proudly display it inside the theater throughout the show's run. For every rose created, the Max Cares Foundation will donate **\$1 to My Sisters' Place** — up to \$2,500!

We will also be giving out crayons and Beauty and the Beast coloring pages while supplies last.

It's a simple, meaningful way to honor someone special while helping families experiencing homelessness build brighter futures.

Enjoy this timeless Disney classic and share the love beyond the stage.



**PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS AT:**  
<https://Bushnell.org>