



**COMING HOME OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2020**



***MOVING  
FORWARD***





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# LET'S MOVE FORWARD



This year 2020 brought into stark relief the utter inhumanity of homelessness when all the guidance on how to keep ourselves and others safe from Covid 19 told us to stay home and wash our hands. The idea of persons without homes was initially beyond the capacity of even the imagination of those responsible for emergency response to the unprecedented public health issue of the pandemic. We kept the needs of homeless persons front and center as the County emergency management team fashioned its response to the crisis.

Our board members immediately stepped up at the beginning of the shutdown with local fundraising campaigns amongst their friends to help assist homeless persons affected by Covid 19. The County made funds available to us to shelter Covid positive homeless patients, discharged from a hospital but still needing to quarantine/isolate for a week or more. We did this using our established hospital and hotel contacts, coordinating with local acute care hospitals, and contracting with a hotel, to place and attend to such patients. Staff stepped up as well, adapting work practices to lockdown mandates and doing all they could to address the exigencies of the pandemic for all homeless persons.

Mid-year, we stood in solidarity with those protesting the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, which are only recent injustices stemming from an historic system of racism in our country. Our work is all about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live healthy, productive lives, starting with ensuring that all have a safe place to call home. Systemic racism in the housing market makes our job more difficult. We may not have caused it, but we are committed to creating housing opportunities for all.

We also received government funding to shelter homeless persons, vulnerable to the worst of COVID-19, in the non-congregate setting of a hotel and worked with them to overcome their barriers to permanent housing. A big thank you to everyone who helped us address the needs of homeless persons during this pandemic in 2020. As we overcome this virus and pandemic, however, and we see everyone is excited to "go back to normal," let us not do that. "Normal" has meant accepting the fact of homelessness, allowing people to sleep on our streets, and systemic racism, making it more difficult for us to find housing for our clients. Let us instead take this moment to MOVE FORWARD to a society where we make sure that everyone has a place to call home, a place to wash their hands, a place to stay safe.

Let us make 2021 the year of unity and singularity of purpose: to improve the well-being of as many people as we can. It will take all of us, but we can do it.

Brad Caruso  
Coming Home Chairperson

Eileen O'Donnell  
Executive Director



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Brad Caruso, Chairman**  
*Withum, Partner*



**Sharon Grice, Vice Chair**  
*Consultant*



**Sarah Clark, Vice Chair**  
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*City of New Brunswick, Mayor*



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**Elizabeth Schullstrom**  
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**Gloria Aftanski**  
*United Way of Central Jersey, Director*



**Jason Gosnell Esq.**  
*Hoagland Longo, Partner*



**Kathleen Gwozdz**  
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**Melissa Bellamy**  
*Middlesex County,  
Housing Division, Director*



**Melyssa Lewis**  
*Middlesex County,  
Human Services, Director*



**Mike Nulty, CPA**  
*Mathew & Nulty Inc.  
Principle*



**Patricia McKenna**  
*Transparent Title & Settlement, LLC  
Owner*

## COMING HOME STRATEGY

### Mission

Coming Home's mission is to create a true system to end homelessness in the County by fostering collaborative strategies and public-private partnerships among all stakeholders to rehouse individuals and families as quickly as possible, and to facilitate connections to community resources to provide them the choices and opportunities to pursue healthy lifestyles.

### Vision

We envision an environment where:

- ◆ The stigma of homelessness in Middlesex County is dispelled, encouraging anyone at risk of homelessness to know of, and to access, resources to prevent their homelessness;
- ◆ Anyone who becomes homeless knows how to efficiently access resources to regain self-sufficiency and permanent housing, and;
- ◆ Where resources are adequate to meet the need.

### Values

- ◆ A person's right to self-determination
- ◆ Personal dignity
- ◆ Diversity
- ◆ An integrated society

### Strategic Goal

Our goal is to **end homelessness** in Middlesex County by working collaboratively with all stakeholders to **provide solutions** to County residents' homelessness so no one will be without a safe, stable place to call home.

### Objectives

- ◆ To collect data and maintain our real-time, by name list of homeless persons needing help;
- ◆ To analyze this data to identify needs and gaps in system resources to meet those needs;
- ◆ To use this data for targeted investment in the development of needed programs and the creation of affordable housing to meet identified need;
- ◆ To raise enough private funds to provide temporary rental assistance to homeless persons for whom public assistances is not available;
- ◆ To provide high quality, effective case management for resource connections to persons exiting homelessness to permanent housing and for assistance in sustaining stable housing.

## MANAGEMENT TEAM



**Eileen O'Donnell**  
Executive Director



**Bobbin Paskell**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Meriam Shenoda**  
Executive Assistant /Accountant



**Frances O'Toole**  
Assistant Director, Programs



**Cassandra Jones**  
Case Manager



**Josh Iglesias**  
Case Manager



**Ciara Tamburello**  
Case Manager



**Fiorella Tejeda**  
Case Manager



**Christiana Osawe**  
Case Manager



**Courtland Cobb**  
Case Manager



**Migdalia Figueroa**  
Case Manager

## 2020 PROGRAMS

### **HOMES 4 HOMELESS (H4H)**

Recognizing the paucity of affordable housing in Middlesex County, we developed and run a program to catalyze the creation of housing specifically for persons without, working in conjunction with the County, affordable housing developers, municipalities and social service providers.

### **SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICE INTEGRATION (SHI)**

In partnership with our two area acute-care hospitals, Coming Home addresses many of the social determinants of health of the highest utilizers of the hospitals' emergency departments. With vouchers provided by the State Department of Community Affairs, we are able to provide permanent housing to persons who have long lived without, giving people the opportunity to live healthy lives.

### **COMMUNITY BASED CASE MANAGEMENT**

Coming Home assists persons who are homeless and not eligible for other homeless assistance programs safely stay in the community and address particular barriers to stable housing by providing connections to community services, budgeting instruction and locating permanent housing.

### **CENSUS**

Everyone counts and we helped make sure of that by contracting with the County to reach out to homeless persons to inform them of the Census and its importance and to provide hands-on assistance to people in submitting their census response.

### **NOI**

With funding from the State, Coming Home provides housing for homeless persons during the emergency of COVID-19. We serve clients for COVID-19 in non-congregate housing to prevent the virus. We provide services to clients, to,

# AT A GLANCE

## HOME 2 STAY (H2S)

Using the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, we developed a one-time program to address the housing and support needs of persons without homes who were stymied in their forward movement towards independence by the pandemic through events such as losing employment or not being able to gain the employment they had been pursuing. This program continues and we will be able to help 6-8 such persons with six months of rental assistance through this funding.

## NON-CONGREGATE SHELTER

Using funding from the federal government, we were able to provide non-congregate shelter for persons most vulnerable to the pandemic. We conducted outreach; screened potential persons for vulnerability and, if at risk, offered them temporary placement to help protect them from the pandemic. We also provided full case management to help them address their barriers to housing and to obtain permanent housing.

## COORDINATED ASSESSMENT & BUILT FOR ZERO

Anyone can become homeless through no fault of their own and for a myriad of reasons; therefore, no one solution fits all. We need to know who is homeless in our community and why. Through our coordinated assessment system, we uniformly assess persons who are homeless and prioritize them for resources based on severity of needs. We collect data to understand all of a person's barriers to stable housing and to regularly measure the success of initiatives designed to address those barriers.

## LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT

Homeless persons need homes and building more, while essential, can take so long. We developed an initiative to encourage our area landlords to rent to the clients of our collective by sharing information and meeting the landlords' needs as business persons. The pandemic stalled the growth of this program as many landlords themselves were struggling to keep afloat.

COORDINATED ASSESSMENT  
BUILT FOR ZERO



**Built For Zero.**  
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



## USING DATA TO MOVE FORWARD

Coming Home has been implementing the **Coordinated Assessment** model to uniformly assess, prioritize and refer individuals experiencing homelessness since 2015. From 2015 -2019, we worked collaboratively with our community partners to continually refine the process to ensure that it was responsive to the needs of the community to concertedly reduce chronic homelessness (CH). The number of chronically homeless persons fell by 36.5% from July 2018 - December 2019 due to increased ability to identify them through the use of a By Name List of homeless individuals and families. The use of the list enables us to monitor people as they move through the system and ensures that the most vulnerable persons receive referrals for housing as quickly as possible.

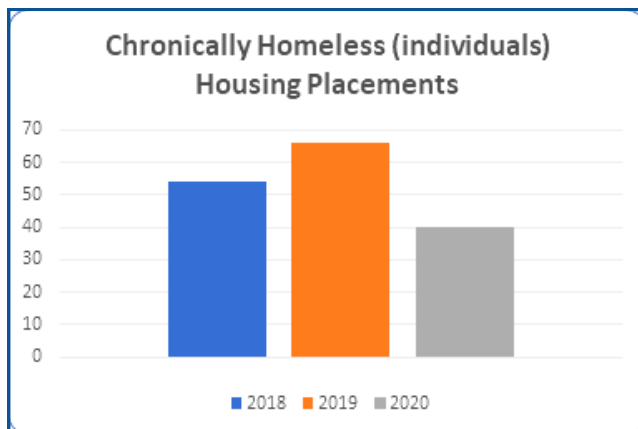
The shutdown in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic caused a swift and unprecedented shift to remote work, virtual meetings, a stagnant rental market due to eviction moratoria and the inability to engage in our now tried and true methods of assisting those most vulnerable among us.

We had to reexamine the way in which individuals were prioritized for scarce resources. Those who were once the “most vulnerable,” typically long-time homeless men residing on the street with serious mental health and addiction issues, were now still vulnerable, but perhaps not AS vulnerable as the elderly individual with COPD sleeping in a shelter, exposed to 40 other vulnerable individuals in close quarters. We revised our prioritization criteria to ensure that we were paying attention to the additional risk factors presented by COVID-19.

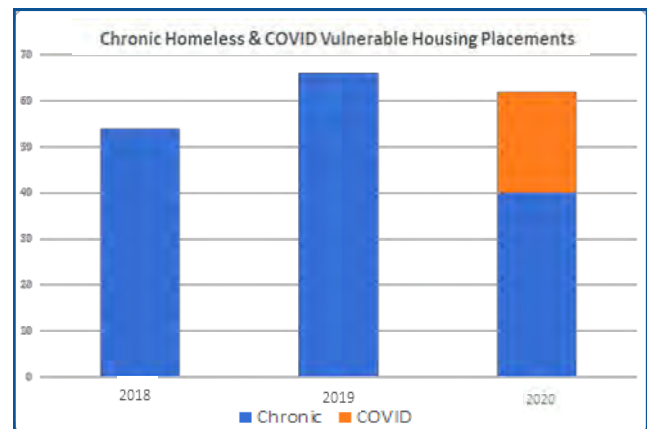
The pandemic also presented increased difficulties in locating apartments for our clients. Eviction moratoria, put in place by both federal and state governments, prevented the onslaught of newly homeless persons. However, it also reduced the availability of affordable rental units. Transportation for clients to view apartments was also limited due to Covid safety measures, and many landlords were reluctant to show apartments in person.

### During Year 2020:

- 40 Chronically homeless individuals were assisted.**
- 11 Chronically homeless families secured permanent housing.**
- 22 Other individuals and families prioritized with COVID vulnerabilities were housed.**



*Chronically Homeless Persons Housing Outcomes*



*Chronically Homeless/ COVID Vulnerable Persons Housing Outcomes*

## WHY DATA MATTERS

Homelessness can happen to anyone through no fault of their own and for a number of reasons. Therefore, there is not one solution to homelessness; no one size solution that fits all. Coming Home collects and reports data as required, but more importantly, analyzes it to assess who is homeless in the County and why, and measures the effectiveness of resources deployed and identifies those that are lacking. We administer the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and add clients served in programs that don't use the HMIS System, before analysis for a more accurate assessment of homelessness in our County.

Homeless persons who are couch-surfing at friends' and families' homes are not reported in any formal system, so we capture this population during the annual Point in Time (PIT) count, which includes all homeless individuals in the community. Its limitation is that it is but only a 1 day "snapshot" of who is homeless, but it does permit the inclusion of outreached persons who may not yet be known to us. All of these data points, individually and taken as a whole, help us, collectively, to assess particular needs, highlight services and housing creation that are working well, so they can be replicated, and identify gaps that still need to be addressed. Use of data will help us move forward in our mission to end homelessness.

## POINT IN TIME 2020

### In January, Coming Home led the PIT count in Middlesex County.

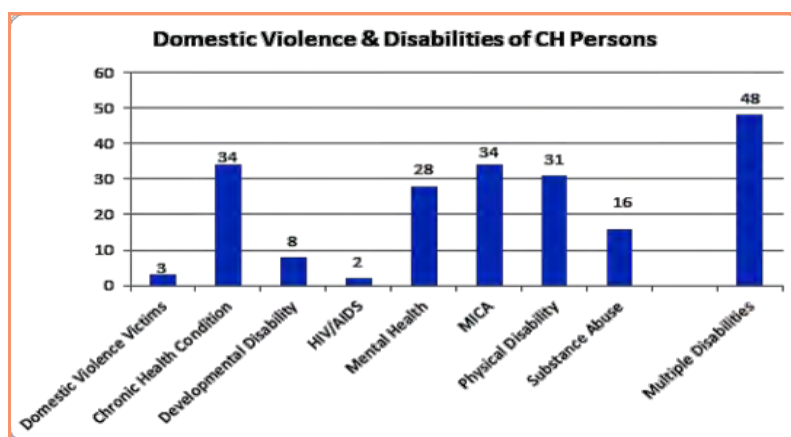
In 2020, on the night of the PIT:

- 456** Homeless households, comprising 666 individuals, including 181 children;
- 355** Of the homeless households (85%) were sheltered in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, or Hotel Placement; and
- 101** Individuals (15%) were Unsheltered.

**Middlesex County demonstrated a 7% increase in all homelessness between 2019 and 2020.**

## CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS (CH)

- 80** Homeless households (18%) were Chronically Homeless, 3 of which were Families.
- 48** (60%) of CH had multiple disabilities.
- 62** (78%) of CH have a mental health diagnosis, 34 of whom also reported a substance abuse disorder.
- 16** Adults reported a substance abuse disorder without a coinciding mental health disorder.



2020 PIT – Detail of Chronically Homeless Persons

*The system will use the data about the disabilities and other vulnerabilities of the chronically homeless in order to plan for housing and services to best meet the needs of these individuals.*

## COORDINATED ASSESSMENT PRODUCES LOCAL "REAL TIME" DATA

Middlesex County's Coordinated Assessment model allows for the creation of a By Name List, which is updated **daily** as homeless persons enter and exit the system. This "real time" maintenance and monitoring allow for the system to make decisions around funding based on the needs of those experiencing homelessness on that day, not relying on data that is a year old.

Throughout 2020, we continued to monitor our CH population through monthly reporting. As of December 2020, our data indicates that there are 91 chronically homeless single adults in our community.

### 2019 – 2020 – Coordinated Assessment Data – Real Time Data Guides Decision Making



Despite only a slight decline in housing placements, our chronically homeless number rose throughout 2020, after being reduced almost 58% between March – December 2019. In part, this is due to the longer length of time between individuals being matched to a voucher and finding housing during the pandemic. At the same time, the case conferencing team, composed of Coming Home, shelter and street outreach staff, continued to identify and engage more homeless individuals, resulting in higher inflow.

Coming Home will continue to monitor this data and analyze additional data around the length of time people remain homeless and to identify the disparities in how persons of color experiencing homelessness move through our system, as compared to white persons. We will work with our partners reviewing all data that may suggest both gaps in resources, and potential solutions, in order to inform our collective decision-making process on future funding and planning for new permanent housing.



## COMMUNITY BASED CASE MANAGEMENT





## CASE MANAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Coming Home provides community-based, case management services for homeless individuals and families who call the 211 Homeless Hotline and cannot be assisted by the Board of Social Services or placed in a shelter. In 2020, we experienced a 34% reduction in the total number of referrals for case management, in part because individuals and families were protected from eviction for non-payment of rent pursuant to federal and State eviction moratoria. Coming Home continued to “triage” referrals, as the demand nonetheless exceeded staff capacity.

With a “stay at home” order in place for about a quarter of the year, and social distancing requirements in place for the remainder, staff maintained their level of service provision through email, phone, text, and video calls to continue to engage with clients, partner agencies, and landlords. The changes did not dramatically impact the provision of services: we had only a slight increase from last year in client attrition.

Staff observed an increased number of single parents who were unable to work, due to their children’s schools operating remotely. Without the ability to increase income, these families were unable to secure permanent housing in 2020. To move forward, they will need assistance to pull themselves up.

## THE CRISIS OF AGED HOMELESSNESS

We continued to see higher numbers of elderly individuals experiencing homelessness in 2020, unrelated to the pandemic. Recent scholarly studies of the homelessness sector have identified the “emerging crisis of aged homelessness.” It is distinctly described as a crisis, and not a chronic condition, *i.e.*, the growth in the senior homeless population does not reflect an increasing risk for homelessness among aged adults. Rather it is the continuation of unprecedented levels of homelessness among the late Baby Boom cohort during an era of such things as the crack epidemic; depression of civil rights and mass incarcerations. If they stay homeless, they cost the system (mostly because of health care expenses) an average of \$26,000 per person per year compared to an average of \$7000 per year in housing intervention. The solutions need to be realized in the short term (it’s a crisis, not a chronic condition) and need to be tailored specifically for the aged homeless person.

Coming Home has experienced moderate success in finding subsidized units for these individuals, but the need far exceeds availability. In 2020, 150 individuals aged 62 and older called NJ 211, the County’s Homeless Hotline, requesting assistance with housing. Coming Home worked with 16 of those individuals to assist them in finding permanent housing. Others may have been referred for other community resources by 211.

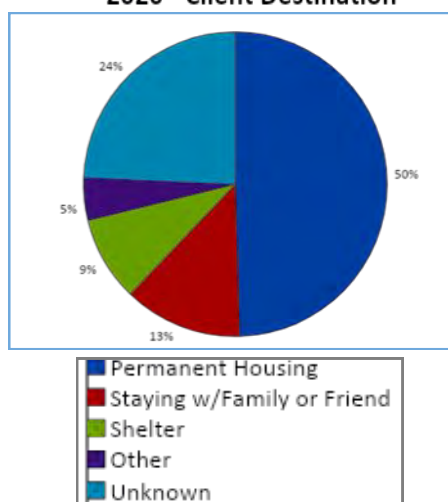


## OUTCOMES

**Coming Home served 131 clients in 2020 and 106 were closed by the end of the year.**

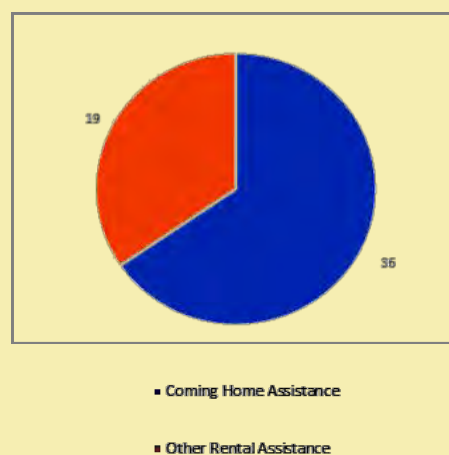
- ◆ Coming Home helped individuals or families in 50% of all cases move into their own housing. This is a 9% increase over 2019, which is an extraordinary accomplishment under the unique circumstances in 2020;
- ◆ 13% of clients left to stay with friends or family;
- ◆ 9% of Coming Home's clients referred to shelters, where they will receive ongoing case management assistance from the shelter agency;
- ◆ 24% of households voluntarily discontinued services without providing a destination; and
- ◆ 4% of clients went to other destinations.

**2020 - Client Destination**



**In addition to case management, Coming Home assists clients with 1.5 months' rental assistance for them to secure their apartments. In 2020, Coming Home was able to directly assist 36 clients who were not eligible for any other rental assistance. We were successful in helping 19 other clients secure permanent housing through other government rental assistance resources.**

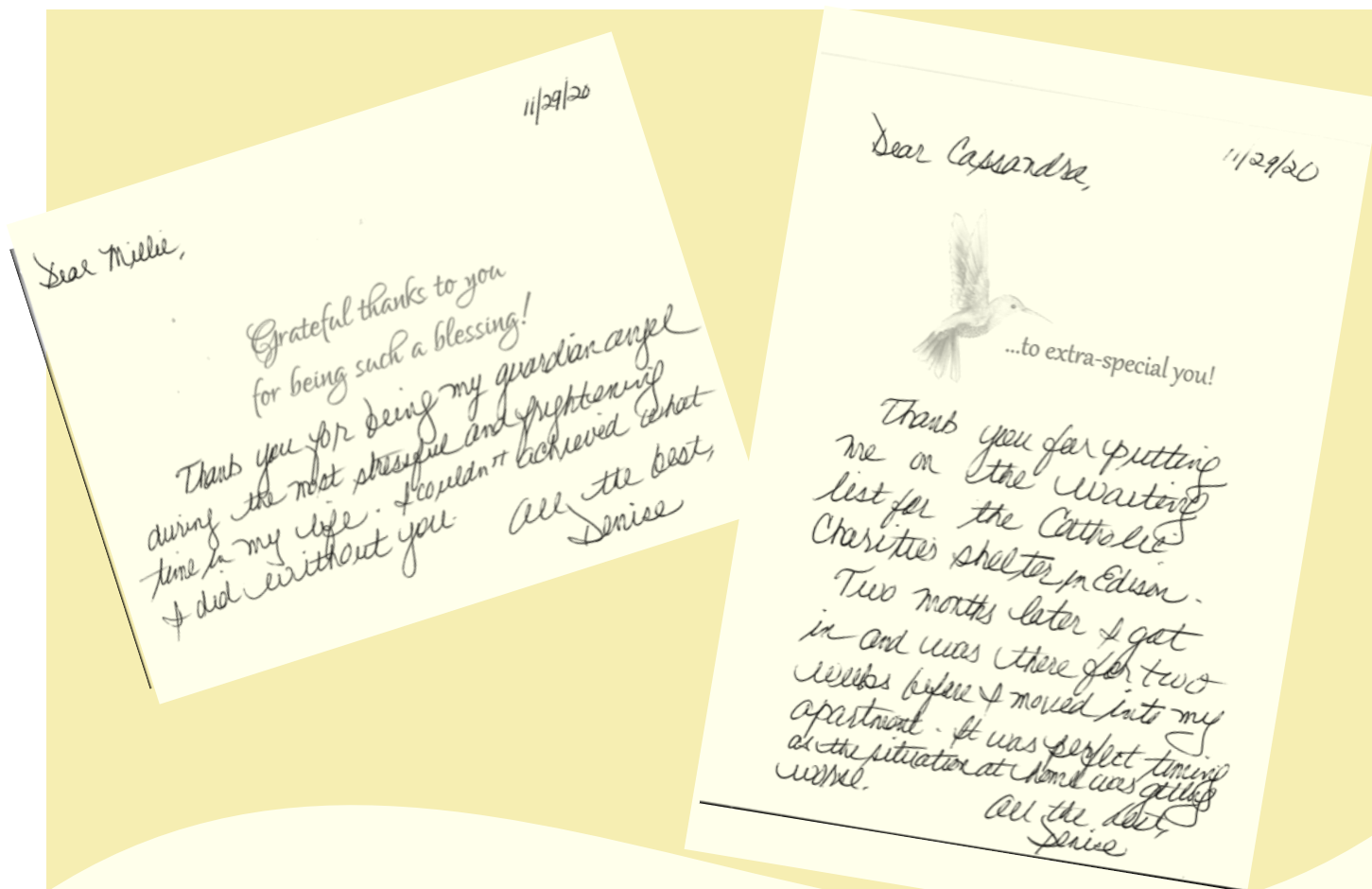
**Clients Securing Permanent Housing**



## CASE CONFERRING

In the spirit of "it takes a village," we meet twice a month with homeless social service agencies in our coalition to discuss and jointly work to solve the issues faced by our collective clients. In some ways, it is the heart of what we do as it draws on the strength of the collaborative to help our clients build upon their strengths to get unstuck, if you will, and move forward in their lives and into housing. We consider the barriers the clients are facing to be system based barriers, and work together to do as much as we can to help them overcome those barriers, and to reduce such barriers in the future. We have seen that there is more power in numbers to realize the changes we discuss. We share information and resources that could benefit the clients, understanding that in this work, there is a lot of overlap. It is Coming Home's mission to create an efficient system that is able to end homelessness, and case conferencing is an essential part of the system.

## CLIENTS' THANK YOU NOTES TO OUR CASE MANAGERS



Good day,

I just wanted to take a moment and reach out to you regarding the amazing work Millie has been doing to assist my mother-in-law (Chris). She has had a history of difficulties maintaining residency, managing health and being a responsible adult. Recently she once again became homeless due to not paying her rent and other reasons which led to her living in a park in South Plainfield. She was found by a family there who notified us and through their church was able to get her into a hotel for a couple days. From there we took over paying for additional nights but were at a loss for where to go next.

As I researched resources I came across 211.org and through that program was connected with Millie - 2 weeks later my mother in law has a residence and is applying to a number of nutrition and medical services thanks to Millie's tireless work. It goes without saying that her efforts have been invaluable to the recipient, it is also worth noting how much they have helped me and my family breathe a little easier knowing someone is working on behalf of my mother in law. Her knowledge, experience and accessibility have been the difference for all of us and she continues to not only guide Chris but me as well - she is truly an angel that I am blessed to not only have access to but know.

There is so much more I can say and would gladly take time to talk directly and tell you even more - suffice to say I am indebted to Millie and the services offered by Coming Home that are helping our family through this endeavor. Thank you for all you do and thank you for Millie!

Sincerely,  
M.Z.

# HOMES FOR HOMELESS





## CREATING MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Coming Home has been a long-time supporter of the “Housing First” and “Housing is Healthcare” philosophies. Our 2019 Annual Report was dedicated to the direct connection between housing and healthcare and contained strong data and personal accounts underscoring this connection. We even emphasized the global community’s agreement, since 1948, of the intrinsic connection between housing and healthcare, with both recognized as basic human rights in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**The pandemic of 2020 further focused attention on the housing and healthcare crisis, shining a laser focused spotlight on the incongruity of local and national authorities issuing a “shelter at home” order, at the same time a federal agency (HUD) reported 568,000 people nationally without a home.**

This past year has shown us that at no other time in modern history has it been more urgent to ensure that every person in need of a home has one. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken the lives of over 2 million people globally, including over 530,000 in the US, and revealed the weaknesses in current housing policy.

To prevent even more homelessness this past year, the Federal and State governments issued vital eviction and foreclosure prevention legislation and moratoria, and grant funding and forgivable loans to renters, homeowners, and landlords. Funding from both the private sector and the government helps tremendously, of course. Homelessness is largely a question of finances.



**The most recent reporting on housing needs from the New Jersey’s Fair Share Housing Agency stated that 155,000 units of affordable housing are needed to satisfy the current demand within the State. Other housing advocacy agencies have suggested the need is almost double at 288,000 due to overcrowding and unaffordable living expenses.**

Fortunately, there are glimmers of hope that help is on the way. In 2018, Governor Phil Murphy reallocated funds to the long-defunded State Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This allocation of \$60 million of funds was the first in over a decade, largely thanks to the tireless advocacy of affordable housing non-profit agencies, such as ours.

Coming Home has been increasingly successful in encouraging its fellow homeless service providers and low-income housing developers to build and/or renovate beautiful housing units with affordable rents for the clients we serve in Middlesex County through its Homes4Homeless Program. By bundling new and creative funding sources, such as forgivable loans along with traditional residential loans, we have been able to partner and/or assist on the creation of 25 new units within the past two years, and we are currently in the process of building 10-12 more units for persons experiencing homelessness, expected to be completed by year-end.



*To move forward, we need more funding - both public and private - to be invested into affordable housing creation, not only because housing is a basic human right, but to stop the seemingly endless volley of cause and effect of homelessness and health from spiraling ever downward.*



## SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES INTEGRATION



## SHI PROGRAM

Coming Home has long recognized the intricate relationship between housing and health care in advance of being faced with the global pandemic in 2020. In late 2018, we developed a partnership with Barnabas Health's Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and Saint Peter's University Hospital and launched a 2-year pilot program to address the social determinants of health (SDoH) of housing, food insecurity and social supports for the highest utilizers of the emergency departments (ED) of the acute-care hospitals. With hospital funding for case managers at Coming Home, we conduct extensive outreach to locate the high utilizers, screen them for the SDoH and encourage them to enroll as Participants in the SHI program. Indispensably, the NJ State Department of Community Affairs (DCA) dedicated 25 rental assistance vouchers to Program Participants who reach the goal of moving into an apartment of their own.

The Implementation Team, composed of both Coming Home and hospital personnel, faced new challenges in 2020 with the outbreak of COVID-19. The hospitals were overwhelmed with patients, and Coming Home was focused on ensuring that the unique situation of homeless persons was considered by all those fashioning an emergency response to the pandemic. In weekly pandemic response collaboration meetings for the first few months of the pandemic, we helped the

hospitals with their "housing challenged" patients who needed isolation upon discharge and to know about all emergency response measures being employed in the community. It helped us answer specific medical questions we had about the virus and to understand the local gravity of the situation through the hospitals' experiences in order to know what to expect.

We and the hospitals shared more broadly within our sectors the information we gained at these meetings. These cross-sector meetings proved immensely beneficial in this time of crisis. Specifically, Coming Home staff advocated for, and received, funding from Middlesex County to implement a Quarantine/Isolation placement setting for individuals experiencing homelessness who were also COVID+. Through this initiative, Coming Home placed and attended to the needs of 5 COVID+ homeless persons discharged from the hospitals, as well as an additional 12 homeless individuals in the community with specific health conditions that would make them more susceptible to the effects of COVID-19 if placed in a congregate setting shelter. This process became the model for Coming Home's subsequent initiative for sheltering seniors and others with chronic health conditions in hotels with the use of CARES Act funding.

As to the discrete operation of SHI, case managers were hampered- but not paralyzed- in their outreach and face to face communication with potential "Program Participants." Because of the pandemic, we used phone communication, more and socially distanced and masked face-to-face interaction when remote was not possible or effective, to provide support and encouragement to our clients during these tough times.

Frustrated by remote outreach, and not having been able to reach a potential Participant during business hours, one of our case managers was determined to reach Mr. B. At age 45, Mr. B had already spent five years living on the streets, suffering from severe trauma, paranoid disorder & drug abuse. He had been afraid to go to the shelter and primarily used the emergency room for respite when the weather got too cold. Mid-December, our case manager traveled to New Brunswick around 7:00 p.m. and successfully located Mr. B sleeping at the train station. He was enrolled in the SHI Program at 8:00 p.m. that night, despite the pandemic.

**That is dedication!**



***Despite the pandemic challenges, our case managers were able to enroll 18 new Participants in 2020, while maintaining support services for the existing clients to ensure their stability. In addition, despite the stagnant rental market, Coming Home assisted 4 homeless Participants move into permanent housing with the DCA rental vouchers.***

## COLLABORATION WITH JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Our cross-sector collaboration in SHI extends as well to the judicial system. We often work with the local Public Defender's Office to advocate for our clients who are facing charges for non-violent offenses to keep our clients out of jail so they can continue on the road to self-sufficiency and success. In 2020, when the courts suspended in-person court proceedings, we took the time to expand our collaboration with the judicial system to the judges. With the help of Judge Flynn, Criminal Presiding Judge, we held a virtual conference with all the County criminal judges to forge a path forward for more collaboration.

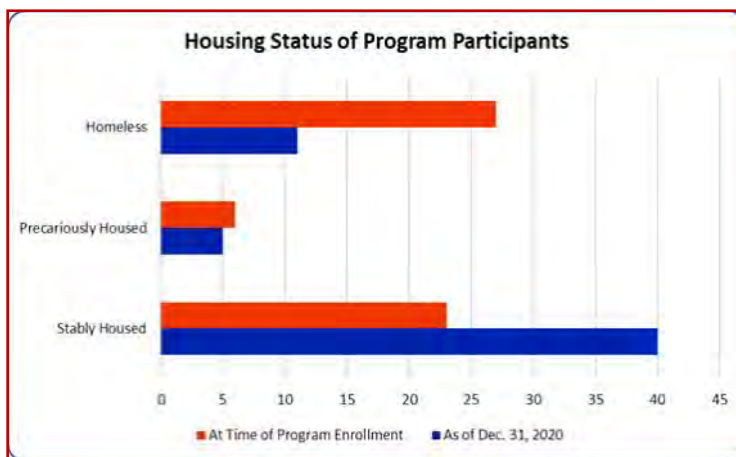
For one Participant, RG, we ensured he was receiving needed medical care while in jail, and that he successfully obtained the assistance of a public defender.

Due to our advocacy and collaboration with his public defender, RG was referred to an appropriate long-term facility to address his substance use, where he is focusing on his addiction and improving his well-being. Because of our involvement, RG is no longer facing an extensive sentence and will work with Coming Home upon his release to obtain permanent housing and services to support his long-term success.

**At the close of our 2 year pilot project, the SHI program reported :**

- 56** high utilizers were served.
- 33** were homeless or in a housing crisis.
- 14** of those were able to secure permanent housing.
- 3** were resolving their crisis and moving into a more stable situation with others.

We assisted the Participants reduce their utilization of the EDs by linking them with primary care physicians, mental health and addiction treatment, food programs and other needed services.



**During the 2 year pilot, the staff assisted 17 of the individuals experiencing homelessness or other housing crisis to secure permanent housing.**

**All parties recognized the value of the program and have extended it for another two years.**



One of SHI's first Participants was a young woman named Deborah. She enrolled with us in February 2019, but it soon became clear that she was not ready to make the changes needed to move forward. She was unable to focus on her own goals, stopped engaging in services, moved out of the area, and lost contact with case management.

Deborah re-engaged in services mid-summer 2019. She stated she was ready to participate fully in the available services, starting with engaging in mental health treatment. After a few missed appointments, we again developed a service plan with concrete goals and action steps, including linking to mental health, obtaining ID, applying for SSI and welfare, and reapplying for the housing voucher.

Throughout the fall, Deborah's commitment was inconsistent, so we linked her to the appropriate Rutgers University Behavioral HealthCare (UBHC) program. She had assistance with medication management, and Coming Home assisted her in getting her case reopened with the Middlesex County Board of Social Services, resulting in emergency housing placement.

In March 2020, as the pandemic began in NJ, Deborah was approved for a DCA housing voucher. Unfortunately, due to the stay-at-home orders, she struggled to find housing, and as the pandemic wore on, her mental health deteriorated, as her feelings of isolation increased. Deborah's housing voucher expired for a second time, but Coming Home advocated for accommodation based on her mental health disability, resulting in extension of the voucher.

In November 2020, Coming Home learned of a landlord who had experience working with Section 8 subsidies and mental health consumers. We reached out to him and were able to connect Deborah with a unit that had just become available. The landlord accepted Deborah, and she was able to move into her new apartment in the first week in December 2020! That same week, Deborah learned that she was approved for SSI financial assistance. Coming Home supplied donated household items, along with a furniture voucher from the Board, to help set up Deborah's home. Deborah has found solace in her home and has the opportunity now to reconnect with her children who reside with their father out of State.

## DEBORRAH'S STORY

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH  
HOUSING?  
FOOD?  
HEALTHCARE APPOINTMENTS?  
COURT APPEARANCES?

**LET US HELP  
YOU**



## HOME 2 STAY



At the start of the pandemic, many families found themselves in crisis. Some families lost employment or employment opportunities and others were forced to stay at home due to health concerns. Still others were forced to leave their shared residences to avoid overcrowding. Regardless of the circumstance, each had one thing in common -- COVID-19 drastically changed their economic and housing situations.

## PANDEMIC RELIEF

Coming Home applied for, and received, a grant from the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund in May to assist this population. The families did not appear to have many non-monetary barriers to housing, such as a lengthy history of eviction, criminal activity, or a fixed disability income. Yet, precisely because they do not have disabilities and may have income, they were ineligible for most government housing assistance programs. They are usually left to increase income and credit on their own to be able to compete for market rent apartments, hard to do in “normal” times, almost impossible during a pandemic shutdown.

We developed an assessment tool to identify persons in need of a home, but who also showed potential to be self-sufficient after six months of rental assistance and intensive case management. We developed a workbook for the program participants including a schedule for the completion, with the help of Coming Home case managers, of necessary milestones, like location of apartments, budgeting and employment search. Our case managers began working extensively with families in July who agreed to the terms of the new program, dubbed Home2Stay. By year’s end, we had enrolled **six** families in the program. We educate and guide them in the areas of connecting to community supports, budgeting, SMART goal planning, increasing income, saving, improving credit scores, managing debt, and creating a feasible, ongoing financial and lifestyle plan. By the time participants or families graduate from the program, they will be equipped with the resources and tools they need to become active, contributing members to society.

The amount of the current grant may permit us to enroll 2-3 more families in this novel program to assist the homeless in our communities. To move forward, we need more funding to assist more families in similar circumstances, and to preclude the worsening of their situations, which may be harder and more expensive to ameliorate.

### Russell’s Testimonial

**Life gets tough. It’s never a straight path to get where you need to be.  
Along the way you might feel lost or even want to give up. Those are the points you need to  
remember and stay focused on your goal.**

“My name is **Russell** and I never thought I’d get to where I am today. I grew up poor and barely had 2 pennies to rub together. I had a daughter when I was young and had to keep working ever since. I’ve fallen on hard times but started getting used to it. I got too comfortable with the bare minimum and failures that it was normal to me. I was left homeless living on my sister’s couch and in friends’ houses until I ended up being homeless in my car. When I was left in the cold and my car was full of mine and my daughters stuff I realized I needed to act and take control now. I got connected with **Coming Home** and ever since they’ve been with me every step of the way. I was living in a motel and then a homeless shelter. I wanted to give up so bad but when times get hard you have to push through. During that time **I worked with my case worker and with her help I was able to strategize a real plan.** I worked hard and was dedicated. I applied for apartments when I wasn’t working. I made sure I was properly saving money towards this goal. Finally after a little while I got an email from an apartment complex willing to rent to me. It was in that moment I realized that it’s all possible and you just have to believe. One year ago I was sleeping on my sisters couch with a bag of dirty clothes. Now I have my own apartment and somewhere I can call home. It doesn’t happen over night but we all have to start somewhere. It’s ok if you go through hard times because it’s not about the failures in life, it’s how you come back from them.”

## NON-CONGREGATE SHELTER





## DOUBLE DUTY SHELTERING

Using its authority and resources, and in the face of COVID-19, the federal government provided the homeless service community with some financial aid to address the instability of the marketplace and the needs of homeless persons. Coming Home was granted funds to help provide non-congregate housing for homeless persons most vulnerable to the treachery of COVID-19. These funds, called ESG-CV, helped to expand upon current case management services of Comin Home. We conducted outreach and screened potential clients for COVID-19 vulnerability via Coordinated Assessment.

Once a client was deemed to be at risk, we offered them non-congregate hotel placement to help protect them from the virus, and full case management services to help them address their barriers to obtaining permanent housing.

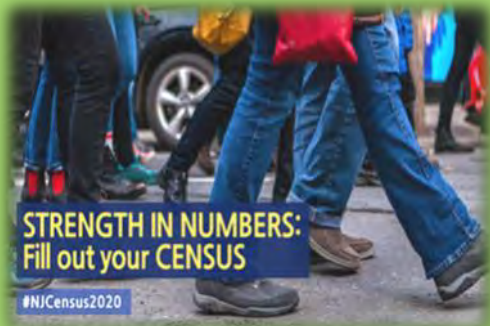
This work helped to shelter persons on the streets, decongest existing shelters, build trust with disenchanted people, and reduce County homelessness at the same time.

### Roy B.

We have placed 16 individuals into non-congregate housing through this program thus far with every client receiving case management. With the help of our community partners, **we have been able to permanently house three clients**, such as Roy B., in their own respective subsidized units. Prior to accepting our help, Roy, at 60, had been homeless for over a year and was sleeping in his 1987 Toyota Camry in the parking lot of the building where he once lived. Through this program, we temporarily placed Roy in a hotel, helped him acquire important documents, and guided him through the process of finding a permanent place to live, all-the-while keeping him safe from the virus.

Using our same network, we are working with seven more persons to procure and complete all necessary documentation for affordable or subsidized apartments available through our coalition's various programs and units. We are working to bring as many eligible persons as possible through the temporary hotel shelter to permanent housing. Being provided with the dignity of a warm, safe place to sleep seems to have helped us gain people's trust and to motivate many to address their barriers to a permanent home. Moving forward, continued funding of this program could ensure more successful housing placements, and prevent the return to homelessness of persons temporarily sheltered in hotels with the ESG-CV funds after the state of COVID emergency is lifted.

## 2020 CENSUS



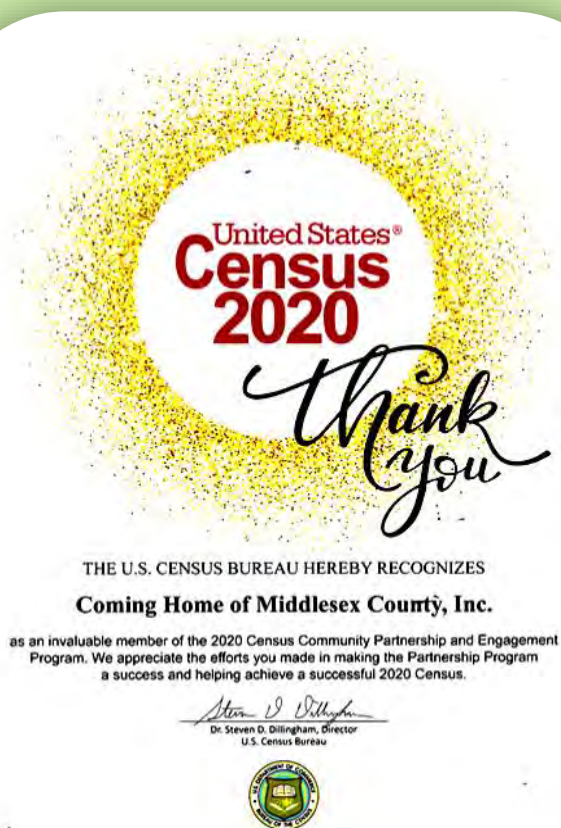
**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS:**  
Fill out your CENSUS

#NJ Census2020

## EVERY ONE COUNTS

The importance of an accurate census count cannot be overstated since over 300 federal spending programs rely on data derived from the Decennial Census to guide the geographic distribution of funds to states, counties, cities, and households. Therefore, Coming Home was eager to play a small, but important, role in assisting with the 2020 Census count in Middlesex County.

Historically the homeless population, along with other “hard-to-count” populations, has been significantly under-counted, and therefore further disadvantaged for the receipt of necessary resources and life-improving opportunities. This year, the State created the NJ Complete Count Commission and tasked counties with creating a plan to count all residents within their jurisdiction.



Coming Home responded to a call for assistance by the County and promptly began raising awareness among our coalition members seeking their cooperation. With a small grant of financial assistance, Coming Home was able to hire two interns for the community outreach.

Taking all necessary pandemic precautions, our team, either by phone or in person, spoke with over 1,000 people to determine whether or not they had completed this year's census and provided hands-on assistance to 210 people in submitting their census response. Our census outreach workers were also supervised and educated by staff on the homeless system in Middlesex County, permitting them to provide vital resource information to our at-risk community members, and to refer persons, if desired, for more general, hands-on case management.

This year's count in New Jersey, was an overwhelming success with participation at 69.5%: Middlesex County was above the State average at 70.4%. This participation rate is higher than in the past two decades (66.5% in 2010, down from 67.4% in 2000).

While we are satisfied with the results we were able to achieve for Middlesex County's Census Commission, our ability to connect and assist many vulnerable community members was also gratifying and demonstrates the need for, and value of, community outreach workers.



## FINANCIAL REPORTING



## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Both the public and the private sectors stepped up this year to provide financial assistance to organizations like Coming Home to be able to retain employees and to attend to the heightened need to house persons without. We received a forgivable loan through the CARES Act, and donations through the efforts of our Board members, to be able to maintain and even enhance our operations. We received a grant from the NJ Pandemic Relief Fund, a federal government grant and dollars from the County to help us both temporarily and permanently house persons in need. Our challenge is to maintain this level of funding to make the upcoming year one where we collectively move forward, ending homelessness and striving for an equitable society.

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2020/2019

	Unaudited 2020	Audited 2019
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash	\$ 695,629	\$ 410,801
Grants receivable	620,125	506,688
Other Current Assets	1,087	2,287
Other assets	0	4,513
Total Current Assets	1,315,754	924,289
Investment in JV-Zebra	179,297	179,297
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 1,495,051</b>	<b>\$ 1,103,586</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
Current Liabilities	36,078	15,598
Long-Term Liabilities: PPP Loan	110,900	0
Total Liabilities	146,978	15,598
Net Assets	1,348,073	1,087,988
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 1,495,051	\$ 1,103,586

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020/2019

	Unaudited 2020	Audited 2019
<b>Revenues and Support</b>		
Grants, Government	\$ 565,947	\$ 555,794
Corporate & Foundation	274,995	197,771
Individual Contribution	29,912	16,770
In-kind Support	73,543	54,823
Special Event	17,066	75,390
Program Income	155,225	16,325
Other Income	7,876	37,764
Total Revenue and Support	1,124,564	954,637
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program Services	576,607	547,270
Management and General	217,849	206,631
Fundraising	70,023	66,322
Total Expenses	864,479	820,223
Net Operating Income	260,085	134,414
Investment in joint venture		(9,606)
Change in net assets	260,085	124,808
Net Assets Beginning of the Year	1,087,988	963,180
Net Assets End of the Year	\$ 1,348,073	\$ 1,087,988

## GET INVOLVED

### Support our Mission

Visit our website, [www.cominghomemiddlesex.org](http://www.cominghomemiddlesex.org); Email us, [mshenoda@cominghomemiddlesex.org](mailto:mshenoda@cominghomemiddlesex.org); or Call us, 732-296-7954

### Participate as a volunteer or join our Board

Connect with us directly through the website or by email.

### Join the conversation!

[facebook.com/ComingHomeMC](https://facebook.com/ComingHomeMC) & [Twitter.com/cominghomemc](https://Twitter.com/cominghomemc)





## SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS



## FUN-RAISING

Covid didn't completely fella the efforts of our Fundraising committee. We made our spring golf outing an early fall outing with only outdoor gatherings, and we all (mistakenly) understood the virus to be waning at that time. It was a successful outing – all around, I believe. It was good to be active, and social outside with supporters, and raise some money for the cause. Thank you.



### THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS



- \* Barnabas Health, Inc.
- \* Bergen County United Way/Madeline Partners
- \* Central Jersey Legal Services
- \* Community Solutions
- \* Middlesex County Government
- \* Middlesex County Housing Continuum of Care Committee
- \* Middlesex County Office of the Public Defender
- \* Monarch Housing Associates
- \* NJ 211
- \* NJ Department of Community Affairs
- \* Puerto Rican Action Board
- \* Raritan Bay Area YMCA
- \* Reformed Church of Highland Park Affordable Housing Corp.

- \* ReVireo, Inc.
- \* Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital
- \* Rutgers Eric B. Chandler Health Center
- \* Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts
- \* Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care
- \* Rutgers University RWJ Medical School
- \* St. Peter's University Hospital
- \* Town Clock Community Development Corp.
- \* United Way of Central Jersey
- \* WellCare Health Plans of NJ
- \* WellCare Innovations
- \* Windels Marx Lane & Mittendorf, LLP



**COMING HOME OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2020**

***MOVING  
FORWARD***



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