

# NETWORK NEWS

winter/spring 2019

## Transforming Lives

### *There's No Place Like Home*

Alyssa Bellmore was wondering how she and her three children would be able to spend Christmas together when her phone rang.

She was sitting on someone else's couch at the time. For the past two years, Alyssa's family had been homeless, moving between sleeping in the car or staying with family and friends.

Then, on the evening on December 19th, came the call that changed everything. Her application for a home in our brand-new Jefferson Oaks community had been approved, and the lease signing was set for the morning of December 21st.

Unknown to Alyssa, and with only 48 hours to pull off a holiday miracle, CHN team members and community partners sprang into action.

Welcome Home Baskets were assembled for Alyssa's family, filled with cleaning supplies, hygiene items, and items needed for daily living. Sheets, bedding, towels, warm clothes, and gifts were put together from our Adopt A Family program. Even furniture was taken care of thanks to our community partner, the Furniture Bank of Southeastern Michigan, who provided special holiday pricing and the delivery of a dining room table with chairs, a dresser, and beds.



**Alyssa Bellmore receiving keys to her new home**

When Alyssa and her children walked through the door, what they found was not just a place to live, but a home.

"There's no better present I could have given them," said Alyssa, who was so happy she cried. "Our Christmas wasn't about gifts. It was about waking up in our own home, so happy to be together."

This winter has been cold and long, she said. Her daughter and sons are looking forward to the warmer months ahead. "They know there are a lot of children here, and are just waiting to meet new playmates."

She said her children love their new home and school, but what they love most of all is their time together in their own home at last.

## Ways you can help...

### Welcome Home Baskets

Want to help make someone's new living space feel like home? Every family moving into their new home receives a basket full of cleaning supplies and personal care items.

Help organize a Welcome Home Basket drive or purchase supplies to help us welcome new families home.

More information is available on our website under the "Support Us" tab or contact:

**Lisa Fuhr**  
lfuhr@chninc.net  
248-824-7313

### Critical Needs Fund

Many people we help face challenges that prevent them from getting a roof over their head, and staying under that roof once they move into their new home.

There is limited funding for expenses such as security deposits or obtaining proof of identity, both of which are required to sign a lease.

Our Critical Needs Fund helps fill the gaps that can't be met through other funding.

**Donate Online:**  
communityhousingnetwork.org

### Volunteer

CHN welcomes groups of all sizes to help with projects at our multifamily housing locations.

Volunteers are needed to help plant community gardens, paint gathering spaces, host fun family-friendly activities, spring clean-up and more!

To learn more about how you can get involved, contact:

**Emma Mucci**  
emucci@chninc.net  
248-824-7314

# A Message from our President

*Dear Friends,*

With every New Year, comes new opportunities. I'm happy to share that one of our biggest opportunities this year is new homes for 60 families residing in our new Oak Park development, Jefferson Oaks. At the end of this past December, we finished leasing all the units just in time for the holidays. Alyssa, featured on the cover, was our last family to get housed and we couldn't be happier for her and her family as they begin a new chapter.

The addition of Jefferson Oaks means that we can house a total of 199 families at our multifamily tax-credit affordable housing developments throughout SE Michigan. This is a remarkable feat considering our first tax-credit housing development launched back in 2011.

**But our work won't stop there...we will continue to:**

- **Receive an average of 1,654 calls per month through our Housing Resource Center – the HRC is a one-stop-shop to help people facing a housing challenge.**
- **Help over 650 families through our Rapid ReHousing and Permanent Supportive Housing programs - providing housing to formerly homeless families and individuals, support services and case management.**
- **Provide tailored homebuyer and financial education**

**programs to an average of 2,000 individuals; most of whom are prepping to purchase a home for the first time.**

- **Provide outreach to connect 150 of our community's most vulnerable people who are literally on the street homeless (not in shelters) with access to resources and housing.**

This year will also bring a big move for CHN as we pack up our current office and move into our new space at 5505 Corporate Drive in Troy. This move will help accommodate our expanding programs with 15,000 square feet to provide greater accessibility to those we serve. We will be sure to bring you along for the journey!

Of course, none of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors, our community partners, and our hardworking staff and volunteers. I look forward to sharing more in the months ahead.

**Happy Spring!**



**Marc Craig**  
President

## Notable Women in Real Estate

*Kirsten Elliott honored by Crain's Detroit Business*

Kirsten Elliott, CHN's Vice President of Development, joins 25 honorees who "have brokered some of the region's biggest deals, financed major projects, grown portfolios and changed the face of neighborhoods and communities across metro Detroit. They are unquestionably leaders in what has historically been a male-dominated field," Crain's stated.

In her 17 years here, Kirsten has grown the development department into one of Michigan's leading developers of affordable housing. She manages all aspects of real estate development, analyzes proposed legislation and ensures the voices of people in need are heard.

"Kirsten promotes building inclusive communities and is a champion for those that might not have a strong voice. No matter how many opportunities are met with challenges or funding that is

not approved, she continues to seek out ways to promote new affordable developments," said Carrie Mendoza, Vice President and CFO at CHN.

In recent years, Kirsten has closed over \$22 million in transactions, including the \$18 million adaptive reuse of the former Jefferson School in Oak Park into 60 units of affordable housing. She also led an effort to revive vacant, blighted lots in a Pontiac neighborhood through lease-to-purchase housing. Kirsten also leads the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan's annual Real Estate Boot Camp, where she trains future leaders in affordable real estate development.

Congratulations Kirsten on receiving such a well-deserved and wonderful recognition, and thank you for all of the work that you do!



*Congratulations*

# State IDs will be free for those who are homeless

## *Local advocacy effort evolves into state ID law*

People who are homeless in Michigan will soon be able to get free state IDs, thanks to nearly five years of advocacy by Debra Hendren, our director of Community Programs and Outreach, and Elizabeth Kelly, executive director of HOPE, Inc., in Pontiac.

ID's are necessary to receive services, apply for benefits, pursue employment, sign a lease and move toward independence. For someone who has nothing, \$10 can be the difference between remaining stuck, and finally moving forward.

The law goes into effect March 28, following what Dawn Calnen, our Vice President of Programs and Operations, said was a "dogged determination on the part of Debra, Elizabeth, and others they collaborated with, keeping the individuals we serve at the forefront. They persevered through obstacles and barriers knowing sustainable statewide change takes time."

Debra and Elizabeth started their efforts here in Oakland County by forming the Oakland County ID Task Force. Over nearly five years, the task force evolved into a statewide effort, capturing the attention and enthusiasm of community partners across the state.

Representatives of the Secretary of State, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Jason Weller of the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, and other homeless service providers all came together to form the State ID Task Force.

"It was nice to see this finally come to fruition," said Debra. "Folks on both sides of the aisle saw the value of this minimal investment to allow someone to access housing and services to resolve homelessness."



**Debra Hendren**



**Elizabeth Kelly**

## Point-in-Time Homeless Street Count



**CHN Staff braving the cold for the PIT Count**

Dozens of CHN staffers joined community partners to participate in the annual Point-in-Time homeless street count in Oakland and Macomb counties. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires the count, critical in determining funding allocations for homeless prevention and services.

This year the count in Oakland County, coordinated by the Alliance for Housing, fell during the polar vortex on January, 31st. CHN staff, along with those at the north Oakland site, not only conducted the count, but saved lives by coordinating transportation to shelters offering warmth, meals and resources.



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**CHN Management Team**

Marc Craig, President

Dawn Calnen, J.D.,

Vice President of Programs and Operations

Kirsten Elliot,

Vice President of Development

Carrie Mendoza, Vice President/CFO



**SAVE THE DATE!**

JOIN US FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING NETWORK'S ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT

**BRING IT HOME**

HELP US CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

THURSDAY, MAY 9  
6-9:30 P.M.

PETRUZZELLO'S  
6950 Rochester Rd.  
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[www.communityhousingnetwork.org/bring-it-home](http://www.communityhousingnetwork.org/bring-it-home)

**WE'RE MOVING!**  
CHN is moving locations!



**COMING SOON!**  
**NOVEMBER 2019**