

montgomery county
coalition for the homeless

2016 Annual Report

Ending Veteran Homelessness in Montgomery County



Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

Dear friends,

Ending homelessness for veterans—or for any one group of people—may sound like a noble but impossible task. Yet in January 2016, Montgomery County proved that the impossible could be made possible when we officially ended veteran homelessness in our community. In fact our County was one of four locations nationwide that achieved this ambitious goal.

This achievement is one that all Montgomery County residents can be proud of, and MCCH is honored to have co-led this effort in our community. Along with our County leadership and our Department of Health and Human Services, and with the help of many federal and local elected officials and agencies, nonprofits and community members, we demonstrated that every person who has served our country deserves the safety and the dignity of their own home.

From the commitment of government funds to create new housing opportunities for veterans (including MCCH's Operation Homecoming program); to the incredible support from community members to provide furniture and household goods for veterans moving into housing, Montgomery County proved that ending homelessness is not only possible, but sustainable when the community joins together to achieve a common goal.

We are extremely proud to be a part of such an amazing community. We look forward to applying the lessons learned from ending homelessness for veterans to help us end homelessness for other vulnerable neighbors, and we look forward to achieving those goals—together.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, MCCH staff, and most importantly the men, women, children, and veterans we serve, thank you for helping us create a community where everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.



Susie Sinclair-Smith
Executive Director



Dick Pettit
Board Chair

Mission and Vision

Working together, Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless and our affiliate Coalition Homes provide solutions to ensure that homelessness in Montgomery County is rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

Our vision is to end homelessness in Montgomery County by building a community where everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Our Programs

In FY16, MCCH served 1,645 men, women, and children in our community through our emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing programs.

MCCH provides 60% of the County's emergency shelter beds and 40% of its permanent supportive housing. Our three emergency programs provide shelter and supportive services to individuals currently experiencing homelessness, and our nine permanent supportive housing programs combine permanent, affordable housing and supportive services for individuals and families exiting homelessness.

Emergency Shelter Programs

MCCH's three emergency housing programs are the Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HBCAC), Safe Havens, and Veterans Affairs (VA) Safe Havens.

- HBCAC is Montgomery County's only year-round 24/7 men's emergency shelter, serving approximately 750 clients each year. In addition to fulfilling needs of shelter and food, HBCAC provides crisis intervention and rapid re-housing resources for the men who walk through our doors.
- Safe Havens, which is our longest running program, provides emergency shelter and supportive services to single adult men and women with severe mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders who are currently experiencing homelessness.
- VA Safe Havens was created in 2014 in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide Safe Havens housing exclusively to veterans with similar challenges.



Emergency Shelter Programs (continued)

In FY16, over 850 men and women had their urgent needs met through these programs, including emergency shelter, showers and restrooms, and food. These individuals are Montgomery County's most vulnerable residents, including those who experience significant challenges such as mental illness, physical disabilities, chronic health conditions, long-term histories of homelessness, survivors of domestic violence, and homeless youth.

Because of their significant vulnerabilities, not all men and women who seek shelter at MCCH wish to engage in services. Operating under the philosophy of Housing First and implementing the best practices of harm reduction and trauma-informed care, MCCH does not require clients to engage in supportive services in order to have their basic needs met. Read more about MCCH's philosophy here: <https://mcch.net/our-philosophy-2/>.

At HBCAC:

- 335 men chose to enroll in case management services to address their barriers to housing.
- 186 men maintained or increased their income.
- 116 men enrolled in a vocational preparation program.
- 41 men acquired and/or maintained employment.
- 91 men moved to more stable housing.

At Safe Havens:

- 62 men and women chose to enroll in case management services to address their barriers to housing.
- 57 regularly engaged in social or communal activities to build life skills.
- 45 maintained or increased their income.
- 12 moved to permanent housing.

At VA Safe Havens:

- 52 veterans chose to enroll in case management services to address their barriers to housing.
- 46 were referred to and utilized community resources.
- 51 maintained or increased their income.
- 39 moved to permanent housing.

“Soon after I was honorably discharged from the Navy, I struggled with substance use. My marriage fell apart. I lost custody of my daughter. I ended up living in local shelters. I felt so lost.

Then I was referred to MCCH's Veterans Affairs Safe Haven emergency housing program. There, I was connected to a client support specialist who connected me to the mental health services I needed to manage my bipolar disorder and paranoid schizophrenia.

I found hope. Today, I am mentally and physically healthier.

I am thriving, living in an apartment of my own.”



Permanent Supportive Housing Programs



Our nine permanent supportive housing programs combine ongoing case management and supportive services with affordable housing through rental assistance programs to help formerly homeless families and individuals maintain housing stability. These programs—Partnership for Permanent Housing, Seneca Heights Apartments, Cordell Place, Hope Housing, Home First, Keys First, Operation Homecoming, Creative Housing Initiative Program, and Vulnerability Initiative Program—are each tailored to meet the distinct needs of the populations they serve.

Some programs are located in a single facility with case management services on-site, while others are scattered-site programs where our tenants rent private apartments and receive home-based case management services. Clients in all nine programs hold a lease and pay 30% of their income toward rent. The balance of rent is paid directly by MCCH or through vouchers, based on each program’s sources of funding and structure.

In FY16, our permanent supportive housing programs served a total of 784 individuals including 149 families and 284 children and achieved the following:

- 129 families and 257 single adults paid rent on time.
- 81 family heads of household and 51 single adults acquired and/or maintained employment.
- 133 family heads of household and 234 single adults maintained or increased their income.
- 147 families and 258 single adults remained stably housed and did not return to homelessness.
- 28 households successfully exited MCCH’s programs for more independent housing.

Strategic Plan Update

FY16 saw the first year of implementation of the joint strategic plan for MCCH and our affiliate, Coalition Homes. A key outcome of our strategic plan involved updating our organization's mission and vision, as well as to strengthen our infrastructure to support the goals of the organization. Through the strategic planning process, we developed five strategies—each supported by a set of more specific objectives—that will guide our work over the next five years, strengthening our organization and enabling us to achieve our goals:

1. Meet the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness by providing emergency shelter along with the supportive services needed to return people to stable housing as quickly as possible.
2. Connect people who are experiencing homelessness to stable, permanent housing along with the services and supports they need to maintain their housing.
3. Increase the supply of affordable housing in order to provide stable, permanent homes for people exiting homelessness.
4. Advocate for the creation of a comprehensive and responsive system to prevent and end homelessness in Montgomery County.
5. Operate as a compassionate, respectful and professional organization with the people, infrastructure and resources needed to deliver on our promise to end homelessness.

Several objectives which support the above strategies were accomplished during the course of FY16, including:

- Ending veteran homelessness, which was only possible through the alignment of systems throughout the County as well as within MCCH. (Read more about this significant accomplishment on the following page.)
- Identifying and adapting an electronic assessment tool to be used in all MCCH emergency programs, which helps to quickly identify and move people into housing based on their levels of vulnerability.
- Strengthening the capacity of Coalition Homes by securing debt forgiveness and negotiating loan terms, and establishing a board structure that ensures mission alignment between MCCH and Coalition Homes.
- Strengthening our administrative capacity to better support our programs and clients.

We look forward to continued progress on these objectives in the years ahead to ensure that MCCH has the tools needed to sustain successful growth and continued service to Montgomery County's most vulnerable residents.



Ending Veteran Homelessness

In January 2016, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) officially confirmed that Montgomery County has effectively ended homelessness among veterans.

This achievement was the culmination of years of work by nonprofit agencies, government officials, and prominent leaders in the County. County Executive Isiah Leggett, a veteran himself, established the County's Commission of Veteran Affairs and provided ongoing commitment of staff and resources to ensure our community's success. The significant efforts of then-Congressman Chris Van Hollen, as well as the unanimous support of the County Council under the dedicated leadership of past Council President George Leventhal, were also essential to this successful effort.



Executive Director Susie Sinclair-Smith speaks at a December 2015 press conference announcing the end of veteran homelessness in Montgomery County.

This was truly an extraordinary milestone for our entire community. As we consider how to build on this success for other vulnerable populations in the community, we reflect on the three critical factors that led to the successful resolution of a seemingly intractable problem:

- A sense of urgency created by the deadline of December 31, 2015.
- A by-name listing of each veteran experiencing homelessness, including information that clarified the type of intervention needed to end each veteran's homelessness.
- A robust public-private partnership that guided the County's and MCCH's efforts.

This successful initiative was part of a larger national campaign known as Zero: 2016, which consisted of 75 communities working to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. Montgomery County was selected for Zero: 2016 through a competitive, national application process. Our success was made possible by our partners at Community Solutions, which supported communities like ours in optimizing local resources, tracking progress against monthly housing goals, and accelerating the spread of proven strategies.

In order to realize the campaign's goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2016, MCCH received \$300,000 in county funding to launch a new permanent supportive housing program exclusively serving veterans called Operation Homecoming. We are proud to report that Operation Homecoming has ended homelessness for 15 single veterans and 5 family veterans who are among the most vulnerable in our community, including National Guard veteran James, whose story appears in this report.

Thanks to our dedicated staff and incredible network of community supporters, James and the other veterans and veteran families served by Operation Homecoming all received Welcome Home Kits to help ease their transitions out of homelessness. These kits included furniture, household goods, cleaning supplies, linens, toiletries, 30-day supplies of food, and everything else one would need to start a new home. In many cases, the community groups responsible for assembling the kits were also there to support our clients on move-in day to help them settle into their new homes.

Community Impact

Over 58 veterans were housed in total across all local agencies in order for Montgomery County to reach functional zero, a key component to ensuring every veteran in the community has a permanent home. Functional zero is reached when, at any point in time, the number of veterans experiencing literal homelessness is no greater than the county's monthly veteran housing placement rate. As of the writing of this report, Montgomery County has continued to sustain this milestone goal.

With the goal of ending veteran homelessness achieved, MCCH and Montgomery County will embark on the county's next population goals:

1. Ending chronic homelessness in Montgomery County by the end of 2017.
2. Preventing and ending homelessness for families, youth, and children in Montgomery County by 2020.
3. Setting a path to ending all types of homelessness in Montgomery County by 2020.

Zero: 2016 Success and Reflections



Former HUD Secretary
Julián Castro

"Ensuring every person has a safe, stable place to call home takes teamwork and dedication at every level. Montgomery County and its partners stepped up to the challenge of ending veteran homelessness and today have every reason to celebrate its incredible achievement. Their progress should be an example to every community across the nation that is working to follow in Montgomery County's path."



Former Labor Secretary
Tom Perez

"Ending veteran homelessness is a remarkable achievement, and I'm proud of my home county for making it a priority. I'm also proud of our work at the Labor Department to meet the challenge of veteran homelessness in communities nationwide. By helping veterans get training and access to job opportunities, we are doing our part to serve those who have served us so admirably, helping them successfully re-integrate into civilian life. It's unacceptable that men and women who have worn the uniform are sleeping on the street or in shelters. The least we can do for those who've sacrificed so much for the nation is to ensure they have a home of their own."



Former U.S. Secretary
of Veterans Affairs
Robert A. McDonald

"President Obama has made a bold goal to end Veteran homelessness. I'm pleased that Montgomery County has responded to that challenge by helping the most vulnerable homeless Veterans find permanent housing. Americans understand and believe, as I do, that no one who has fought for this country should have to fight to keep a roof over their head. This progress would not be possible without the partnerships that have been built here in Maryland and across the nation; partnerships across the federal government, with state and local governments, with non-profit organizations and with the private sector. I'm also proud of the role VA plays to provide the necessary services to help Veterans get back on their feet. Solving Veteran homelessness is not a static challenge; it is an ongoing challenge and we will keep at it because that is what the men and women who have served our nation have earned and deserve."

National Guard Veteran James Keeps His Promise

58 veterans were housed by MCCH and our community partners through the efforts of the Zero: 2016 campaign. One of those veterans was James, who now lives in a permanent home along with his family with support from our Operation Homecoming program.

"I kept my word to her."

That's how National Guard veteran James felt in September 2016, when he moved his wife Megan and their 9 year old daughter into their new townhouse in Clarksburg with the help of MCCH and Coalition Homes.

James had promised their daughter they would be reunited one day, following their family's experience with homelessness that caused them to be separated for more than a year. His promise was based on his own traumatic childhood. He knew firsthand how important it is to raise her in a safe, loving environment.



While growing up, James witnessed domestic violence at home, as well as his father's excessive use of alcohol. With little parental guidance or support, James was expelled from school at age 16. Determined to change his life, James served in the National Guard for 6 years. Despite his steady employment afterwards, James became homeless because he couldn't find affordable housing.

James moved in and out of shelters, sleeping at friends' and even in parking garages. Though he worked hard to get back on his feet, he experienced several traumatic events that he describes as "having been to hell and back." One of these incidents left him hospitalized for months, learning to walk again.

Following years of intermittent homelessness and panhandling to survive, James' life finally took a positive turn in 2011 when he met Megan at a bus stop. The two fell in love and moved in with her mother and Megan's daughter from a prior relationship. He was working full time, and he asked Megan to marry him.

But soon afterwards, tragedy struck and changed the course of their lives.

James fell, causing a massive spinal injury. Despite 3 weeks in the hospital and 14 weeks of rehabilitation, he was unable to return to work due to a permanent disability from his injury. While James was recovering, Megan's family was displaced from their home due to the death of a relative. Megan's mother and daughter were taken in by family, but there simply was no room for James and Megan.

In early 2015, James and Megan became homeless.

Story of Transformation

James encouraged Megan to seek refuge at a local women's shelter. He then found refuge and support at MCCH's Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HBCAC), which provides emergency shelter and comprehensive support services to over 700 men each year.

Unbeknownst to James, MCCH had recently established our Operation Homecoming permanent housing program as part of our successful efforts to end veteran homelessness in Montgomery County. James was overjoyed when our staff informed him that he and Megan were eligible for permanent housing because of his service to our country.

On October 4, 2015, James and Megan ended their homelessness by moving into an apartment of their own in Silver Spring.

James describes their MCCH case manager Johanna as "an angel sent from above." With Johanna's help, James and Megan were able to reunite their family just as James promised. In September 2016, this family of three moved to a townhouse owned by MCCH's affiliate Coalition Homes, which develops affordable housing for people who are exiting homelessness.

Reflecting on their lives in recent years, James says:

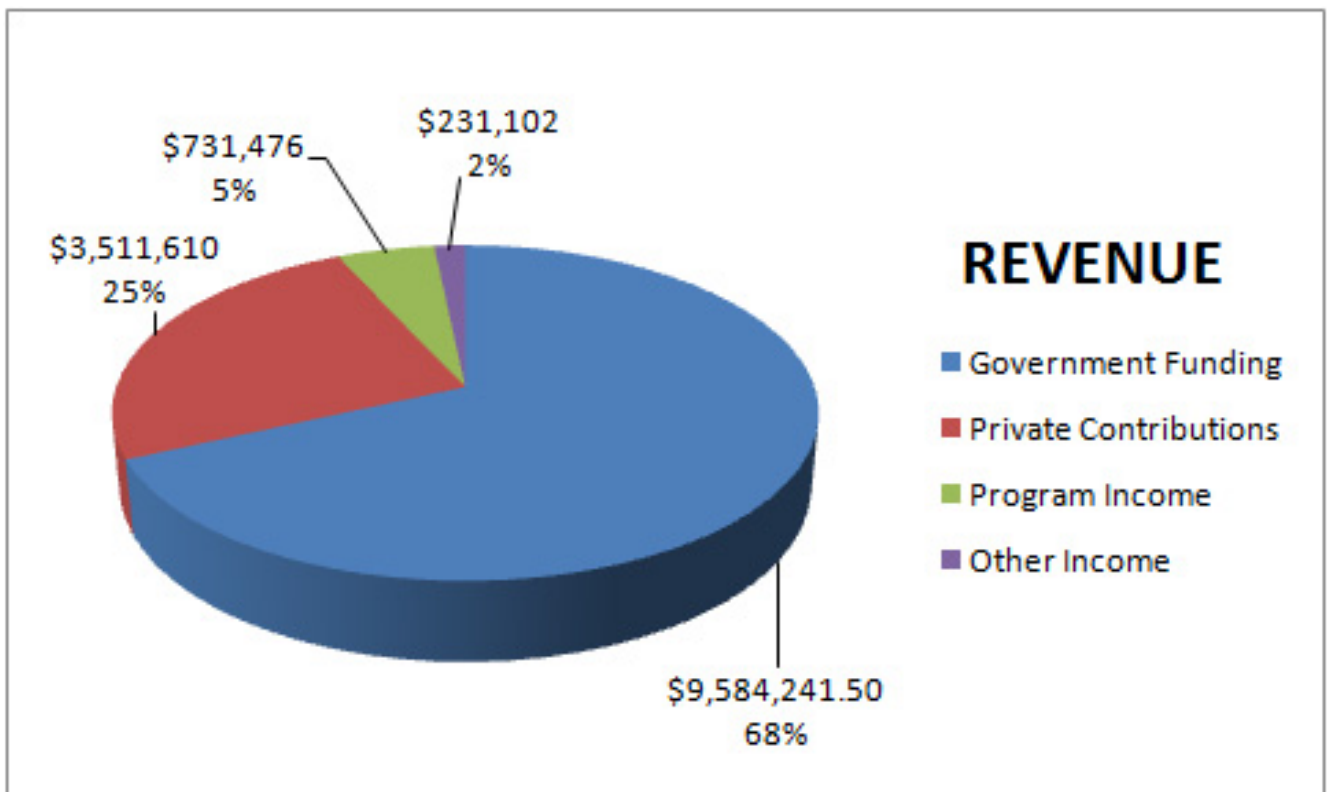
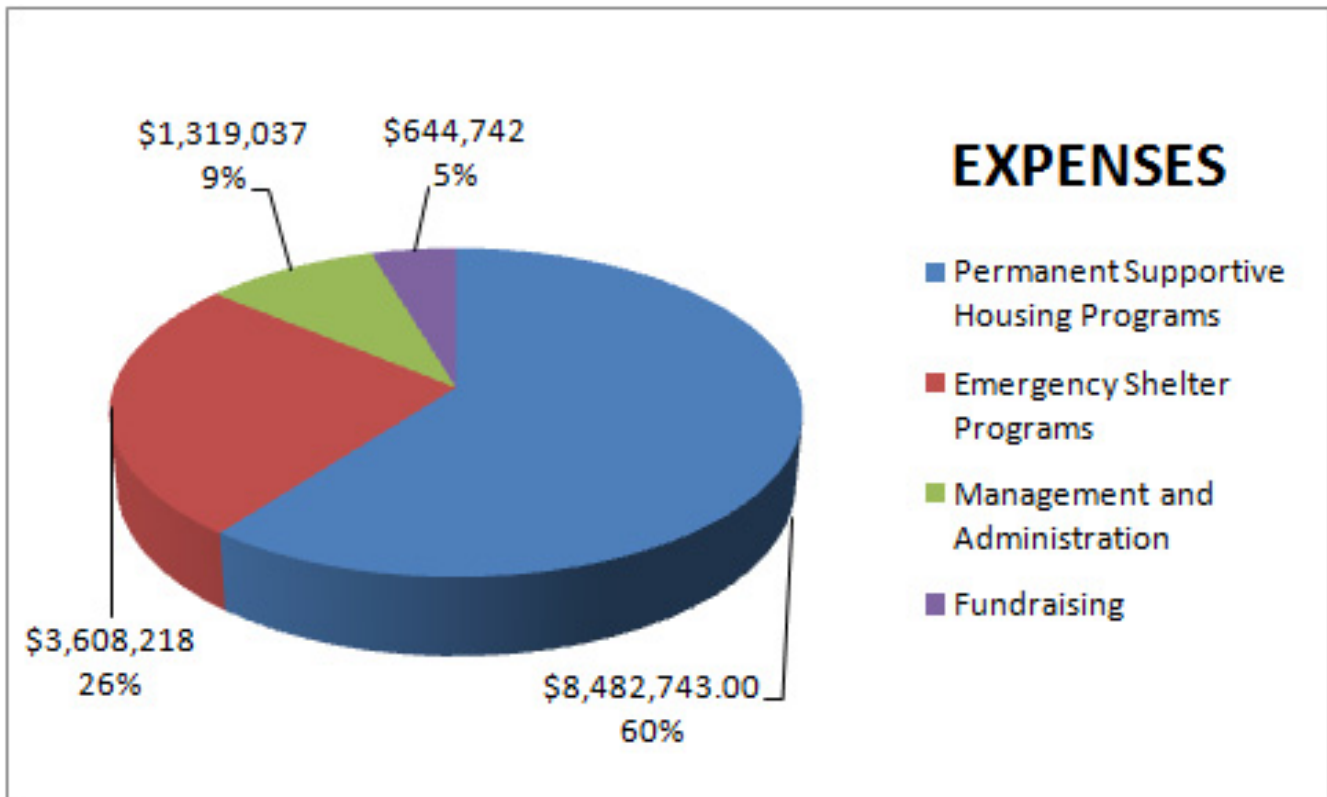
"The biggest change is being married. We're a family now, and we have stability in our lives. I know my wife and daughter are safe."

MCCH continues to provide supportive case management services to James, Megan, and their family to ensure they never return to homelessness.



You can watch James and Megan share their story at
<https://youtu.be/s8T2PopNulc>.

2016 Summary of Revenue and Expenses



The financial statements for Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless represent fiscal year 2016 from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. These statements were audited by an independent auditor and are available in their entirety by contacting MCCH.

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MCCH is grateful for the support and generosity of all donors who made gifts between July 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016.

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