

FINDING INDEPENDENCE AFTER INSTITUTIONAL LIVING

For some people, psychiatric hospitalization is a temporary stop where they can find intensive, professional treatment to help them cope when the outside world overwhelms.

For Billy Dixon, it was his life. He was just 15 when he was hospitalized for what later was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia. He didn't leave Trenton Psychiatric Hospital for about 18 years.

In 1992, he began his journey toward independent living, moving into group homes managed by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. In 2012, he took a monumental step: He got his own apartment.

Now 60, Billy shares a spacious, two-bedroom apartment in Burlington County with another client in Catholic Charities' Behavioral Health residential program. Under that program, more than 160 people with persistent mental health conditions now live independently in Burlington and Mercer counties while connecting to therapy, vocational training, and other services to help them succeed in the community.

"We provide not just affordable but also nice housing for people impacted by persistent mental illness," said Shirley Patterson, supervisor of Burlington County's residential program. "They deserve to live as well and as responsibly as anyone else in the community. We want everything for them that we have for ourselves – the same rights, the same privileges, and the same responsibilities."



◀ Billy Dixon and Shirley Patterson, supervisor of Burlington County's Residential Program

HOME SWEET HOME

Billy visits Delaware House several days a week for therapy and also works in maintenance there.

He admitted he likes the maintenance work more than the therapy.

"Just give me a broom and a mop, and I'll work all day!" he said with a laugh. "I enjoy it. I feel healthier when I'm moving around."

He works hard to keep his apartment tidy too.

"He has an eye for decorating," Patterson said proudly.

"I do! I do!" Billy agreed. "I love shopping. And I love putting it together."

Native American artwork adorns most of the walls, a nod to his heritage. Feathers feature prominently into the design. When he was a child, his mother Mildred nicknamed him "Red Feather," Billy said, because "she said I was the reddest little baby!"



A Message From the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The end of summer is the start of a promising new school year for so many children and young adults in our region. And what better time to celebrate the youngest among us: In June, Bishop David M. O'Connell declared a Year of Youth in the Diocese of Trenton.

"What can happen when we hold up our young people as the great gift they are to our Church?" Bishop O'Connell asked.

What, indeed! With their energy and vigor, youth hold the keys to a vibrant future for our communities. That's why it's crucial to ensure they grow up in healthy homes, which create the foundation they will rely on their entire lives.

At Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, children represent more than half of the people we serve. You'll read, in these pages, the inspiring stories of parents overcoming adversity to improve the lives of their children and families,

as well as a teenager whose recovery journey is leading him to a bright future.

In a 2017 speech, Pope Francis said: "To see children looking us in the eye is an experience we have all had. It touches our hearts and requires us to examine our consciences. What are we doing to ensure that those children can continue smiling at us, with clear eyes and faces filled with trust and hope?"

We thank you for supporting our work to strengthen communities by helping families recover from addiction, homelessness, domestic violence, unemployment, mental illness, and other challenges.

Warmly,

Marlene Laó-Collins,
Executive Director



The Spirit is published quarterly by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, Development and Marketing Department.

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Thanks to our donors. Your support makes these success stories possible.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, inspired by our Catholic faith and shared values, restores dignity and independence to individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable; through service, advocacy and community building.

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FINDING INDEPENDENCE AFTER INSTITUTIONAL LIVING

(CONTINUED FROM COVER)

FAMILY SUPPORT KEY

He keeps a small shrine in his closet honoring his mother, who died in 2015. She was a key ingredient in his continuing progress and current stability, Billy and Patterson agreed.

"The recovery process is better when there's positive family involvement," Patterson added.

When he's not at Delaware House, Billy likes to watch birds out his back windows and visit the library, documenting his thoughts on what he reads in journals he keeps in his dresser drawer. He also plays guitar, typically strumming tunes of his own creation. He had four years

of music lessons as a child but otherwise is self-taught. He loves music and especially adores Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughn.

He has made many friends at Delaware House, where he is beloved by staff and clients alike.

"He is always pleasant, always!" Patterson said.

Billy just smiled at her and laughed.

FOR INFORMATION about Burlington County's Residential Program, contact Shirley Patterson, program supervisor at (609)386-8653 x2819.

REUNITING WITH FAMILY FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

It was during high school in Kerala, India, that the Rev. Joy Chacko decided he wanted to become a priest.

That calling sent him on the road, first to several seminaries and on missions around his native country, and finally to New Jersey, where he became a priest in the Diocese of Trenton in 1994.

But he left his sprawling family behind in India. So in 2004 – four years after obtaining U.S. citizenship under a religious visa – he applied to sponsor two of his brothers and their families, who wanted to emigrate too.

Lisha Loo-Morgan, who specializes in immigration services in her work with Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's Parish Services, helped facilitate the process.

"I was so excited to help him," said Loo-Morgan, who knew Fr. Joy when he served at St. Veronica in Howell and who shares his Indian heritage (her grandfather is from Bangalore). "I was very happy to help him bring his family here."

A LONG PROCESS

Immigration can take years, and sometimes even decades, primarily because the U.S. limits how many immigrants it allows from each country each year. For

Fr. Joy's family, it took 14 years before their visas were available then approved after their interview at the Consulate.

But their celebration was short-lived. Fr. Joy was visiting relatives in India when he learned that his oldest brother, traveling on a two-day journey home aboard a stifling train from



Bombay after he and his wife had obtained their visas, had died of heat stroke.

"It was a shock," said Fr. Joy, 58, now parochial vicar at St. Gabriel Parish in Marlboro. Besides St. Gabriel and St. Veronica, he also has served at St. Catherine in Middletown, Blessed Sacrament in Trenton, Incarnation in Ewing, Holy Name in Delran, and St. Ann in Keansburg.

FINDING COMFORT IN FAITH

But his faith in God soothed his grief. His brother never made it to the U.S., he reasoned, but instead now resides in a far more glorious home in heaven.

"Our life is a big journey. We come from God, and we return to God," Fr. Joy said. "What can you do? When the fullness of time comes, it's all a journey, passing from one state to another."

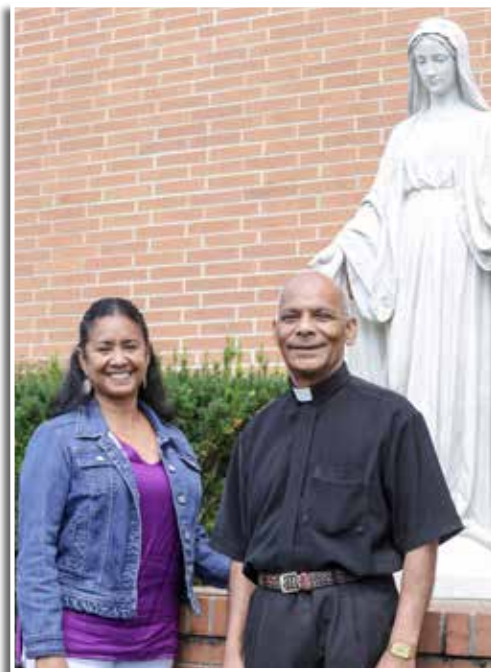
This summer, another of Fr. Joy's brothers was able to successfully immigrate to the United States. He and his son left to visit California shortly after reuniting with Fr. Joy, and Fr. Joy expects they will settle there.

But his late brother's family remains in India. U.S. law allows only immediate family of new citizens to immigrate here, so the government revoked their visas since they're not Fr. Joy's immediate kin.

Fr. Joy remains philosophical about that too.

"My worry is not about politics. Why should I worry about it? Even if I worry, I make trouble for myself," he said. "Let me be calm. Nothing will happen to you without the knowledge of God."

FOR INFORMATION about Catholic Charities Parish Services, contact Lisha Loo-Morgan, coordinator, at (856)764-6940 x6119.



▲ Lisha Loo-Morgan and Rev. Joy Chacko



Maira Dominguez and Roberto Hernandez, El Centro director

24th ANNUAL **TASTE** *of Burlington County*

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at bkatz@ctrenton.org or
(856)824-0599 x8622, or visit

CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org

Mending a Marriage **FOR A STRONGER FAMILY**

A few years ago, Maira Dominguez's marriage started to sour. But she knew it was worth saving.

So she reached out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's El Centro in Trenton, where she and her husband went for a couples educational program to learn how to better communicate.

"We were having some problems, pressures that come with any marriage," said Maira, 28, who's originally from Honduras.

A NATIONALLY NOTED MODEL

El Centro was a good place to go: The program earned national recognition in 2010 from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which awarded El Centro its Family Strengthening Award.

"We work with the nucleus of our society and that's the family. Strong families make strong communities," said Roberto Hernandez, El Centro's director.

The couple's facilitator Bertha Ramirez taught them how to defuse tensions, communicate respectfully, manage conflict in healthy ways, and better handle the work stress (both juggled multiple jobs) that tainted their relationship.

"I felt valued," Maira said. "We both learned to give and take."

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Maira also took ESL and GED classes and got her high school equivalency degree at El Centro. She plans to take a parenting class there too.

"We have more patience with each other, and the kids see that," Maira said of her marriage now. "We are a better couple, better parents, and better neighbors. We're just better people now."

FOR INFORMATION about El Centro, call (609)394-2056.

STRENGTHENING HEALTHCARE for Those with Complex Needs

A year after adopting the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) model of care, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton is strengthening healthcare services for those who most need it – vulnerable people whose complex needs have historically left them out of the system.

CCBHCs are part of a national initiative to expand Americans' access to mental health and addiction care in community-based settings. Components of care include 24-hour crisis care, use of evidence-based practices, care coordination, and integration with physical health care.

New Jersey was one of eight states federally funded in 2017 as a two-year

Overcoming Adolescent Addiction FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

J. Brooks started smoking marijuana at 14. It was something to do with friends, and he thought it sharpened his focus.

Instead, he soon found himself skipping school and missing football and basketball practices. He even got into criminal trouble and started fearing for his future.

"I was stuck in the same spot. I was behind the crowd," he said. "I needed to change my life."

J. reached out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's New Choices program, an outpatient addiction-recovery program for adolescents. At New Choices, he worked to overcome his addiction in both group meetings and one-on-one counseling sessions. He socialized with other teenagers making similar journeys to recovery. Together, they discovered how to have fun and relate to one another without alcohol or drugs.

TREATMENT INSTEAD OF PUNISHMENT

Program supervisor Aida Albino Wimbush said authorities often respond punitively to adolescents struggling with addiction, saddling them with a criminal record instead of ensuring they get clinical treatment. Teenagers at New Choices find a judgment-free haven to get back on track, she added.

"It's not a privilege to go to treatment. It's a right to go to treatment," Albino Wimbush said. "We all have to work together for kids to be successful."



▲ (from left to right) Adolescents counselor Jenna Mitchell, J. Brooks, and program supervisor Aida Albino Wimbush

At New Choices, J. rediscovered his bright future, getting a job, buying a car, and graduating from high school. Now 18, he will attend trade school this fall to become a certified heating, ventilation and air conditioning technician and has an eye on a business degree after that.

"I feel relieved. There's so much weight off my back now," J. said. "My family was so worried about me not succeeding. Now I can be the man of the house."

FOR INFORMATION about the New Choices program, please contact Aida Albino Wimbush, program supervisor, at (609)984-9042 x2448.

"demonstration site," to determine how CCBHCs affect a state's capacity to expand and improve health services.

Catholic Charities now serves nearly 600 people in several CCBHC programs targeting four populations –

people with serious mental illness, those struggling with substance abuse, veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, and children with serious emotional disturbance (SED), said Susan Loughery, director of operations.



"We're able to provide the most vulnerable in our community with much-needed, in-community treatment and social services," Loughery said. "Our goal is to fill the gaps in community health systems, so that access is available to all who need it. We are working in partnership with the state, our legislators, and federal agencies such as SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) to make that happen."

FOR INFORMATION about the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) model of care, contact Susan Loughery, director of operations, (609)394-5181 x1166.

FINDING A SAFE HOME AND A PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

Tiana Jones and Mosudi Idowu, Rapid Rehousing program director ►



Tiana Jones became homeless after a bad marriage and divorce left her and her three boys destitute.

They lived in a motel and occasionally her car before moving in with a relative.

“Even when you are with family, you don’t want to be a burden on them,” said Tiana, 38.

So Tiana reached out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton’s Rapid Rehousing program to get her family’s life back on track. The program, which started nine years ago, serves 32 families and 35 individuals in Burlington County and nearly 300 households in Mercer County, said Mosudi Idowu, its director.

SUPPORTS BEYOND HOUSING

Idowu placed the family in a two-bedroom apartment in a new complex.

“But it’s not just about getting people off the street and that’s it,” Idowu said. “It’s about changing their lifestyle. We get a house, and then we start addressing other barriers to housing stability. Most importantly, our consumers determine and develop their goals, which are then incorporated into their housing service plan.”

Idowu lined up wraparound services to help Tiana learn to budget, with the goal of transitioning off financial assistance. He linked the family to counseling to recover from the trauma of their homelessness, frequent school

transfers, and other problems.

Tiana appreciated the respect she felt as Idowu and others helped ensure her housing stability.

“There was no judgment, no one telling me: ‘You did this wrong!’” Tiana said. “It mattered to him where I stayed – and if I’d be able to afford it.”

A BETTER LIFE

Nearly two years after reaching out to Rapid Rehousing, Tiana is covering all the family’s bills with no assistance from the government or Catholic Charities. Her oldest son, 18, is working too. Tiana is teaching him to invest and save.

“This has been an oasis for us,” she said. “I can’t say I’m living the best life yet, but I feel like it’s my better life. And it can only get better. I want us to get out of poverty. I don’t want my sons going through what I went through. That cycle ended with me.”

Idowu added: “I don’t want to see anyone return (to homelessness). So I need to make sure you’re successful.”

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FOR INFORMATION about Rapid Rehousing, contact Mosudi Idowu, program director at (609)599-3923 x2527.



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For tickets and more information,
contact Jenn Leip at (609)394-5181 x1137.

CREATING A LASTING LEGACY to Help People in Crisis

Summer is the toughest time to feed families who struggle with hunger. Donations are down, but the need is up, with schools – which provide thousands of vulnerable students free meals during the school year – closed for summer break.

That's what makes Dorothy M. Rasmuson such a special guardian angel.

Dorothy died at 92 in November 2017, leaving an estate she split between her nieces and nephews and seven charities, including Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. Her nephew sent Catholic Charities a check in July with the request that her generous bequest support “the basic needs of people in crisis.”

“It was perfect timing,” said Arnold Valentin, acting service area director for Community Services. “The need is so great that we have run out of food in our food pantries some days and been forced to close early. Donations like this help us fill our shelves top to bottom now, while also saving to spend later during times of need.”

Dorothy lived modestly in Whiting until she moved in 2013 into a skilled-nursing facility in Connecticut, her nephew said. Her first husband Timothy Mahoney died in 1973, and the couple had no children. He spent his career in graphic design for the oil industry and left her shares of stock, which sat untouched in a safe deposit box for 40 years.

COMMITTED TO CATHOLIC CAUSES

Dorothy liked to watch television, and her nephew thinks that influenced where she bequeathed her money. Besides Catholic Charities, she also donated to EWTN Global Catholic Television Network, St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, her church St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Whiting, and Catholic causes like the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (which founded the Cabrini Medical Center in Manhattan, where she worked for years), and Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth.

“A large majority of Dorothy's estate was given to charities, some with which she was close for her entire adult life and some on which she relied toward the end of her life,” her nephew John Benz said. “I believe she would be pleased with how these charities are putting the gifts to use – helping people in need, making repairs to facilities, and otherwise standing up God's Kingdom on earth.”

TO LEARN how to leave a legacy gift, please contact Nancy Tompkins, director of development and marketing, (609)394-5181 x1161 or ntompkins@cctrenton.org.

Monmouth County Board Raises Nearly \$50,000 for Catholic Charities Programs

The Monmouth County Board of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton would like to thank everyone who attended Change Your Latitude on July 21st. The event generated nearly \$50,000 to provide mental health, specialized children's counseling, trauma and abuse recovery, and other treatment services in Monmouth County.

A special thank you to our sponsors who helped make the success of this event possible, Peter and Mary Ellen Griffin, The Allied Group, Circle BMW, Hugh and Mary-Ann Guyler, Ray Catena Family of Dealerships, The Sylvia Family and many more.

FOR INFORMATION about Monmouth County Board events, please contact Jenn Leip, development and marketing manager, at (609)394-5181 x1137.



▲ Monmouth County Board of Catholic Charities Chair Anthony Tamburri, pictured left, is joined by Change Your Latitude Event Co-Chairs Valarie DeFelice, center, and Barbara Willis, right.



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CALL NOW TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT!

Contact Charissa Buskirk, development events Coordinator, at (609)394-5181 x1159 or cbuskirk@cctrenton.org.

Tickets available online at: CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org

