DEAR FRIENDS:

It is humbling to present to you the Third Annual Report of the M25 Initiative. It is hard to believe that the M25 Initiative has completed its third year, and even more incredible to witness the extraordinary work of ordinary individuals putting compassion into action. This annual report features the accomplishments of scores of individuals, organizations, and religious communities in meeting the needs of the poor and homeless.

It is a tremendous honor to lead the M25 Initiative, a 100% volunteer organization. It has been exciting to have a front row seat to see how God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary acts of compassion that is moving the mountains of poverty and hopelessness in the poorest county in New Jersey.

The M25 Initiative is working toward a vision that is inspired by the words of the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, from whence we derive our name: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

It is our belief that collective compassion is the path to engage, equip, empower, and mobilize individuals and groups to be the miracle in their community and, in our world.

The vision of M25 supports the efforts of the grassroots program of the Cumberland County Code Blue Coalition, which volunteers together to provide emergency warming centers in our houses of worship during extremely cold weather.

M25 has also fostered and funded the Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative. The Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative is a unique consortium of social service organizations, faith-based institutions, and government officials committed to tackling the problem of chronic homelessness in Cumberland County.

The Code Blue Coalition and Housing First Collaborative demonstrate that when we are willing to thoughtfully and compassionately work together, and appreciate our differences, amazing things can happen and mountains begin to move.

Collective compassion is the path forward for Cumberland County. It harnesses our unlimited potential to ensure that no one is left behind, and it inspires hope that we do not need to look any farther than our mirrors to find the solution to the biggest challenges we confront.

Allow me to conclude with the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has."

Thank you for your support!

ROBIN B. WEINSTEIN, ED.D.
Founder & President/CEO

FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

$224,405.75

RAISED THROUGH CONTRIBUTIONS, FUNDRAISERS, AND GRANTS

Approximately 94 cents of every dollar raised went directly to services and activities to assist the poor and homeless in our community.

For more financial information, please visit www.m25initiative.org

CUMBERLAND COUNTY CODE BLUE COALITION

The 2017-2018 Code Blue Season was our fifth season in Cumberland County. The Code Blue Program in Cumberland County began on December 10, 2013, as a community response to the tragic death of Mr. Joseph Hanshaw, who suffocated to death in a Salvation Army Clothing Bin while trying to escape the harsh winter elements. From a tragedy in our community emerged a triumph of a program that puts love into action.

Code Blue is a grassroots movement of churches and community members responding to the needs of our homeless neighbors.
Through the work of our Code Blue Coalition we supported a record-setting 45 nights of Code Blue assistance this past winter, which was an increase of 36% from the 2016-2017 season, and an increase of 80% from the 2015-2016 season. The month of January had 20 days alone! This was a tremendous task for our volunteer coalition and the coordinators, but through perseverance the job got done.

With over 300 approved volunteers, the Code Blue program provided warm shelter and food to an average census of 55 homeless individuals in our three major cities: Bridgeton, Millville, and Vineland. During one of the coldest nights this winter, we provided overnight shelter to 88 homeless individuals!

Code Blue volunteers provided over 4,300 dinners to our area homeless and poor (an increase of 43% from 2016-2017 season), and a total of 2450 overnight warming center stays for homeless individuals (an increase of 63.3% from 2016-2017 season). Code Blue Warming Centers in Bridgeton and Millville also stayed open into daytime hours during extreme weather conditions.

Each night of Code Blue requires a minimum of 42 volunteers to work shifts in the three municipalities who provide 3-5 hours of coverage, which amounts to over 5670 hours during this past season. Code Blue also requires a minimum of $500 per night to operate to cover reimbursement to churches, equipment, and other related needs.

Our Code Blue program would not be possible without the tireless efforts and commitment of our volunteer municipal coordinators. They are the wind beneath the wings of this community movement and deserve our sincerest appreciation and admiration:

- **Bridgeton:** Ms. Nina Young, Coordinator/ Mr. Nick Dobrowolski, Deputy Coordinator
- **Vineland:** Ms. Cathy Gardner, Coordinator/ Ms. Christine Marin, Deputy Coordinator
- **Millville:** Ms. Cindi Cooke, Coordinator/ Mrs. Susan Stowe, Deputy Coordinator

This was a particularly hard season on these coordinators, and they are so worthy of our appreciation.

We also want to thank the churches that open their doors to the homeless; and the many restaurants, organizations, and churches who provided food and supplies. Logistical support was provided by Inspira Health Network, Let’s Do Linens, and Gateway Community Action Partnership. For a full list of those who supported the Code Blue efforts, please see www.codeblueccnj.org.

One of the best data points that was revealed from this season is a reduction in the number of participants. In calculating the totals of the homeless in Code Blue from 2015-2018, we have seen an 11% reduction in participants! One of the main reasons for this is the Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative’s campaign to end chronic homelessness.

The **Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative** (CCHFC) is a unique consortium of social service organizations, faith-based institutions, and government officials committed to tackling the problem of chronic homelessness in Cumberland County. The guiding agency of this collaborative is the M25 Initiative, a nonprofit organization based in Bridgeton, which also facilitates the grassroots Cumberland County Code Blue Coalition. The other partners of the collaborative include Gateway Community Action Partnership, PRAC of Southern New Jersey, Resources for Independent Living, Inspira Health Network, CompleteCare Health Network, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, and the Cumberland County Jail and government.

As of June 12, 2017, the Collaborative has directly housed 46 individuals, with an additional 4 individuals housed through referrals within the Collaborative partners, for a cumulative total of 50 housed.

35 individuals were housed through a major grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs which provided housing vouchers to the Collaborative. These housing vouchers enable the Collaborative to target Cumberland County’s chronically homeless individuals and place them in quality housing.

11 individuals have been housed as a result of the M25 Initiative Phase Two Program to end chronic homelessness in Cumberland County. Phase Two of the Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative’s work to end homelessness in Cumberland County by 2020 utilizes Rapid Rehousing (RRH) designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness and return to permanent housing as quickly as possible. The Housing First Phase Two Program seeks to serve a total of 20 chronically homeless and/or unsheltered individuals in Cumberland County in 2018.

The Housing First model that is being employed throughout the state and the nation has demonstrated real results. The underlying philosophy of Housing First is that, instead of requiring people to meet certain conditions before providing them housing, the homeless are first given housing and then helped to make the changes they need to reintegrate into society successfully.

One of the primary goals of this program is to stabilize chronically homeless individuals, which reduces the amount of frequent usage of acute hospital services, the correctional system, and other service organizations. The reduction of repetitive usage substantially reduces the financial and programmatic costs that are frequently placed on these providers and taxpayers by the chronically homeless.

After one year, preliminary year to date data of those housed shows a 97% reduction in incarceration, 34% reduction in hospital usage and 69% reduction in ambulance usage (Data provided by Bridgeton, Millville, and Vineland).

The Collaborative has worked with churches, various groups, and countless volunteers who have sponsored move-ins for 35 clients. We are grateful to their support and generosity. We are looking for additional partners to help support the efforts. You can learn more about our status and get involved at www.endhomelessness2020.com.

We are grateful for the major financial support that has been received by the Inspira Health Network, Ocean First Foundation, and the TD Charitable Foundation.
M25 Initiative Mustard Seed Mini-Grant Program provides seed funding through matching grants for community programs that provide for food (pantries and meals) and showers for our neighbors who are experiencing poverty and homelessness. This year the M25 Initiative also awarded grants to Code Blue Host Churches to assist with facility upgrades to allow for future Code Blue operations.

The M25 Initiative Mustard Seed Mini-Grant Program aims to equip organizations with financial resources to address issues in Cumberland County related to the primary objectives of the organization as found in Matthew 25:35-36: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“"The M25 Initiative is a funding and facilitating volunteer organization that works through partners and collaborators to positively change our community," said Dr. Weinstein. "We are a 100% volunteer driven organization that seeks to equip, empower, and mobilize our community to be the miracle through collective compassion. The funding through these grants will assist our armies of compassion in meeting the needs of the least of these in our area.”

The M25 Board approved allocation of funding for the 2018-2019 to the following organizations: Bethany Grace Community Church (Bridgeton), Bethany Seventh Day Adventist Church (Bridgeton), Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church (Bridgeton), Ramoth Church (Vineland), Help and Hope Ministries (Millville), Vineland Salvation Army, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church (Millville), Trinity United Methodist Church (Millville), Beyond the Walls Ministry (Vineland), and Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Bridgeton.

M25 awarded approximately $6,000 in funding to 13 programs operated by local churches and nonprofits to aid in the grassroots efforts to provide safety net services to the poor and homeless. The M25 Initiative Mustard Seed Mini-Grant Program provides seed funding through matching grants for community programs that provide for food (pantries and meals) and showers for our neighbors who are experiencing poverty and homelessness. This year the M25 Initiative also awarded grants to Code Blue Host Churches to assist with facility upgrades to allow for future Code Blue operations.

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The M25 Initiative is a 501c3 non-profit in Cumberland County, NJ created for the sole purpose of engaging, equipping, empowering, and mobilizing individuals and organizations to employ innovative and cooperative solutions to alleviate suffering, feed the hungry, end poverty, reduce crime, revitalize a spirit community and transform lives!

Our vision is to transform the Cumberland County, NJ community through fostering a renewed spirit of hope by assisting the armies of compassion in helping disadvantaged and disenfranchised, and ultimately ending the economic and spiritual poverty.

The M25 Initiative is the lead facilitator of the Cumberland County Code Blue Coalition and the Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative, as well as a partner with churches and faith-based organizations on a variety of other projects that meet the needs of Cumberland County.

To support the M25 Initiative, please go to: www.m25initiatives.org. If you want to pay by check or money order, please mail your donation to: The M25 Initiative | 31 N. Pearl St., Bridgeton, NJ 08302

**TICKETS NOW ON SALE:**
Annual Strike-Out-Homelessness Baskets and Bowling Fundraiser
**September 9, 2018**
**1 PM - 5 PM**
Campani’s Legacy Lanes
**$12 per person**
Join us for our second annual Baskets and Bowling fundraiser to support the efforts of Code Blue and Housing First in Cumberland County.
Purchase Tickets at: WWW.STRIKEOUTHOMELESSNESS.COM

**SAVE THE DATE:**
Annual M25 Breakfast for the Homeless
**October 24, 2018**
**8 AM - 9:30 AM**
Menghi’s Savoy Inn
**$100 per person**
Join us for our fourth annual breakfast fundraiser to help the homeless in our community. Proceeds go toward Code Blue, Housing First, and other related projects of the M25 Initiative!
Purchase Tickets at WWW.M25EVENTS.ORG

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