



# PATRICIA GRIFFITH

FOUNDER AND  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
• MERCY HAVEN, INC.

Since she was 17, Sister Patricia Griffith has dedicated her life to serving the poor, homeless and mentally ill.

In the early 1970s, Sr. Pat was a member of the Sisters of Mercy, assigned to run a hospitality center at St. Patrick's Parish in Bay Shore. The parish soup kitchen had become a home for people who had recently been mainstreamed back into communities from state psychiatric hospitals. Realizing the need for services to transition people from their known environments within the hospital to the outside world, Sr. Pat led a group of concerned citizens in advocating for proper treatment and safe, clean, affordable housing for those in need.

In 1985, the non-profit agency Mercy Haven, Inc., was born. Today, with an annual budget of more than \$7 million and 130 full-time, part-time and per diem employees, Mercy Haven's mission remains to acknowledge the dignity and potential of people who are homeless, living with mental illness or living in poverty by providing housing, advocacy, education and life skills development.

Over the past 30 years, under Sr. Pat's leadership, Mercy Haven has grown from humble beginnings in Bay Shore into an agency that provides housing and critical support services to more than 265 people, including 60 children throughout Long Island. After initially operating three

community residences for those with mental illness, Sr. Pat led the agency to expand its housing to include a NYS licensed Adult Home and scatter-site apartments and homes for limited income, homeless families. The agency currently owns 32 units of housing and rents an additional 39 units for a total of 101 units. Plans are underway for the construction of an additional 16 units within the next 18 to 24 months.

Over the years, Mercy Haven has created a number of support services including social/recreational program, supported employment, outreach and education for the homeless, a community garden and community education and outreach. In 1997, Sr. Pat created the Mercy Advocacy Program with attorney John Castellano to provide representation to Mercy Haven's residents and effect systematic change through class action suits that have positively impacted low-income people throughout the state.

Sr. Pat earned a bachelor's degree from Brentwood College, a master's degree in education from Fordham University and a master's in social work from Adelphi University. She holds three post-graduate certificates in moral theology, gerontology and non-profit management; most recently, she graduated with a doctorate of ministry.