



# *The Heart of Mercy*



# The Heart of Mercy



*By*  
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*Celebrating 25 years  
of memories*



*This memoir is dedicated to Len Saltzman,  
a man who was a true mensch, our dear friend and  
supporter of Mercy Haven for the past 20 years.*

*We will continue your legacy Len in always asking the  
'heart' questions and living as you did - by acting justly,  
loving tenderly and walking humbly with our God.*



I begin this memoir trying to find the words to express what these 25 years have been like. I pray that I might be open to the gift of remembering, of articulating the joys and struggles and ultimately the hand of God in the creation of what we have experienced as Mercy Haven.

I am deeply grateful to S. Kathy Nolan for saying “yes” to my invitation to be part of this journey.

I don’t know where Mercy Haven would be had she not said that first yes.



*Artwork by Thomas K.*

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*Artwork by Beatrice M.*



Never doubt  
that a small  
group of  
thoughtful,  
committed  
citizens can  
change the  
world; indeed  
it's the only  
thing that  
ever has.

-Margaret Mead

# *The Poor need our help today, not next week.*

I was just an ordinary Sister of Mercy busy about my ministry of Hospitality with the poor and very happy in helping myself, and others like me, to reflect on the mystery of our oneness with those who might have had less possessions and access than we, but who might also be richer than we were. Our church community had also become somewhat comfortable with some of the folks who had been deinstitutionalized. Children in the school had created nick-names for some and adults in church grew to accept, and include, the behaviors of others. Some of them, like Ed, moved us by his daily presence at mass and his consistent prayer for the 'Prisoners of War' during the Vietnam era. His own life had taught him not to give up.



These were people who were mainstreamed back into our communities from the State Psychiatric Hospitals when the state deemed it "time". That was around 1972. Communities weren't ready. Additional, or at least sufficient, services did not precede the move to meet the needs of those who were now placed outside the life they knew for years. Leaders in places where people would seek help were highly inexperienced in understanding the needs of people living with mental illness. I was one of these leaders.



In 1974 I was blessed to be able to 'cross the street' from my wonderful experience of teaching at St. Patrick's School in Bay Shore and to find myself in a new experience of ministry. I continued my work with children through music that invited all of us to see the wide world of service to which we are called. Week after week we sang 'Beautiful City' which challenged and confirmed in us the belief that we could dream of a beautiful place for all people and how we could create it. Many of these children have stayed faithful

supporters of Mercy Haven to this day. These kids, these songs, would keep me steady in living the words I sang. Each day the rectory would have visitor after visitor who sought some help from our community. Many times it was the same people asking mostly for food. I remember wondering what it was that was really being sought. I knew some were truly physically hungry. Once the parish team decided that our visitors would see the same person, me, it was clear their need was also to connect with someone, perhaps anyone.



Like so many others, I never knew a person who was ‘mentally ill,’ so there were many layers of hesitation: worry of saying and doing the right thing, concern about what risks there would be if I hung out with them, or integrating ‘them’ in the same space as ‘us’ and other programs. I also knew nothing about how to work through the mire of social services and the world of entitlements. But I did know this was a new group of persons in need, within a community that had a wonderful, long history of taking care of the poor. It was clear something had to be done. Maybe because I was at home in a kitchen, I thought of simply opening a room where they could come for coffee and friendship. I remember going to the Parish Team, Msgr. Jim Coffey was Pastor then, and suggesting the idea. Of course, like many other ideas to follow in my life, I had no idea how we would fund the program, but I was confident that if it was the right time, God’s time, it would take care of itself. It was Jim Coffey, with his experience with the social activism of the Grail and Dorothy Day, who suggested that we call it the Hospitality Center. I didn’t even know at that time in my life who Dorothy Day was or the meaning of social activism! It was the right name for the graces that would be received and given for the remainder of my time at St. Pat’s.

In the first few months of 1976, as we sat waiting for guests, I remember the coordinator, Betty Kirkup, stopping people on the street and inviting them down for coffee and cake. Mr. M. was one of our first guests, a gentle man who had been institutionalized and lobotomized to the point of removing all affect from his being except kindness and appreciation. Some others came and were so guarded and hidden as well from our view, until after days of building trust, we heard the voice hidden inside. It was the great gifts of the volunteers who did not allow their own hesitations to stop them from reaching out and into the lives of our guests. It was Judy Jaisle's art work that would lead us through many symbols of what this journey meant.



Our place of hospitality grew in numbers and volunteers. We were no longer content with serving just coffee and cake. We were able to gather volunteers who were ready to prepare the most delicious soups to satisfy our guests' physical hunger. More space was also needed and provided for us in the parish hall. Through the conversations that were now growing, we heard so many similar stories of hopes for jobs, clothing for kids, need for public assistance, abusive landlords, need for safe housing, and great confusion in approaching the governmental systems of care.



These days were extremely life giving for me because of the personal transformation that would happen. The group of volunteers, each dedicated to a particular day, met each morning for prayer. And all of the volunteers would have opportunities for seasonal days of prayer that gave us the footing for the disposition of heart we wished to share with our guests. We used that word, guest, on purpose. We were only the hosts. Our reflection time helped us realize when we were keeping ourselves apart from, better than, or in a stance of judgment about the stories and circumstances they shared. Each of us had these moments. We knew that when we choose to return to prayer, that which isn't finished in our own hearts is revealed and we can live larger. And so we continuously returned to prayer.

I remember days we invited one of the guests to speak to us, to share in our prayer time. What a moment of seeing ourselves as God's children. Together. No difference. Loved the same. God was surely taking our clay pots and reshaping us! I think that happened so often because of who we welcomed into the Hospitality Center. I still miss those days.



Not everyone who came to the Center was a person who was living with mental illness. Many were people the St. Vincent de Paul Society members had been taking care of for years. What the Center offered for all was a place for conversation. A break from the 'outside' world. A community that would notice if you hadn't visited in a while.



It didn't take long, around 1978, until we again needed more space for privacy to interview people so that we could learn how to be their advocates. This was another invitation for volunteers to step into the unknown, to walk more closely with the other. That might have been the easier part of the advocates' job, for certainly breaking into the so called 'systems of care,' would take education, persistence, and solidarity with the rights of others. Without abandoning the need for companionship in the Hospitality Room, volunteers now rotated responsibilities on site. We also widened our connection to other churches and other providers of services within Islip Town. We met persons from the New York State Office of Mental Health who not only would later walk the beginning days of Mercy Haven's advocacy with us, but one great man, George Schultz, in his retirement came to work for us for many years. Besides our growth in space and within our own hearts we would also eventually grow to hire three of the most wonderful, dedicated and persistent women, Barbara Chadwick, Janice Mayott and Dee Ryan, to be the steady keel in leading the ministry of Hospitality for many more years to come.

In addition to the volunteers at the Center there was a group of people throughout my sixteen years at St. Pat's who were always searching to find our place in the Gospel and in the content of Catholic Social Teachings which mandated that justice and mercy be our life. As the group grew spiritually, our name changed and so did our composition. We were no longer all from the Catholic faith but everyone who gathered knew we needed each other for the courage to be public about the immediate need, and mandate, to care for our brothers and sisters. Our mantra was the prophet Micah's words "to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God." It seemed like all we kept doing was praying, opting to be with the needs of the people we met and taking a next step. So in 1984 when we read about the county and town intending to close the Baybright hotel, a place in which many of the people we had grown to love lived, we stood up and interrupted the plan. God had prepared our hearts for this burst of compassion through all our reflective days and nights together. It was this response that was the catalyst for what we had no idea would birth into Mercy Haven.



There was a 'mighty woman' among us, S. Brigid Penney, OP, who was tireless in her efforts to get the people of the Baybright hotel all of the services they needed to make their lives whole. She was doing this in the early 1980's before we even knew we should too. We had a companion and a leader in standing up to the elected officials both in the town and county. It wasn't S. Brigid's first appearance before these groups for she was well known in this arena (and arenas they were!), but it was ours. I had good organizational skills so there wasn't a problem with creating a plan. The Social Justice Board, which originated with St. Patrick's parishioners and then expanded to be an ecumenical group, took this cause as their own. Most of us who were willing to be advocates had no experience of the different levels of local government. We knew we had to learn where the power of influence was and we had to access it. Members from the Hospitality Center, guests and volunteers, learned how to be public advocates and gave more of their time to attending very lengthy County Legislative meetings. When our item came up on the agenda, each speaker was given a specific amount of time, maybe

two minutes, to speak. I wish I didn't remember how many officials found reasons to leave the meeting when it was our turn to speak. We were at least deterring their decision and, hopefully, changing their hearts.



Another concretized moment in my heart's memory is coming home so frustrated by one of these county meetings. Over and over again elected officials tried to placate us by saying that it was the 'slum landlord' that they were trying to remove from this community, not the people. Again my practical self that moved my heart to cross the street for a new ministry surfaced and I heard myself say "So let's buy the hotel and become the landlord."



*Artwork by D. Rowan*



*Artwork by M. Bosche*



*Great spirits  
have always  
encountered  
violent  
opposition  
from  
mediocre  
minds.*

*- Albert Einstein*

# *It was just the right place to be... the right thing to do.*

I called my friend, S. Kathy Nolan RSM, who had much more experience in being a social worker than I through her service in our child care agencies and her present job within a parish. I asked her if she would be willing to leave her job and run the Baybright hotel. Typical of her open spirit she was very willing to consider it. Now we had an idea and a possible 'on sight landlord!' How could any of the governmental officials refuse that solution?



Our next challenge was how to purchase this place. Again we went into the great unknown, this time real estate. There were many articles in Newsday and the local papers that articulated the tensions between community groups. Impressed by the work of our group, an anonymous donor offered to give us a large amount of money towards the purchase of the hotel. (It was for \$150,000, a very large amount of money to us at the time.) That began our negotiations with the landlord, who by the way was willing to hold the mortgage for us long term or until we could fully purchase the hotel. We very quickly formed an advisory group who were willing to be known for their public support and connected to the issue. We met regularly at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Again the group crossed religious and economic bounds. Since this was a very controversial issue within families and among neighbors each individual's commitment was a very courageous act. How would we ever get the rest of the money needed?

As life happens, I came across an advertisement for a conference in California on how to restore hotels such as the Baybright. I once again called Kathy and together we found the money to travel to California. Again, by God's grace, we met the Director of the Homeless Housing and Assistance Corporation (HHAC) Program from NYC, Nancy Travers, and learned about a New York State program for our very purposes. Even if we received this grant, we knew we would still need other ways to fundraise. So when we met a gentleman crossing a street in L.A., we almost took him up on his offer to make us call girls! After the conference, as we were greeted at the airport by my parents, they told us that there was a 'suspicious' fire at "our" hotel. All the residents were being cared for at the Hospitality Center.



Plans for finding funding were halted as once again the community in Bay Shore cared for the needs of our friends, day in and day out, until all of them were placed throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties by the Department of Social Services. People who had lived together in Bay Shore for ten to sixteen years, along with others discharged into the community by the state because it was financially beneficial, were now ripped apart and placed in boarding houses or in emergency housing until something else could be found. Some had to give up their pets. Those who were too disoriented by the experience of losing their home returned to the streets or were hospitalized. Little consideration was given to friends remaining together. For months after, news would come of persons' deaths caused by the trauma of relocation.



You'll notice I said 'suspicious fire' not because one of the residents started it, but because one has to wonder what other, or whose, purpose it served. There was smoke damage to a number of rooms, but no structural damage that would justify relocation of all 100+ residents. This event only made us stronger and our group of advocates larger. The advisory group met more frequently and Kathy and I busily prepared applications for acquisition money from the NYS funder we had met in California. Kathy left her job

and worked, at first, from my office at St. Patrick's. When that was no longer welcomed because of the public controversy, a friend, Beverly Ogrodnik, gave us the use of her mom's vacant home in Brightwaters. We had accountants working on the finance part and direct care professionals helping with program parts of the grant application. Then another obstacle arose. We were not an incorporated charitable organization. In order to receive public funds we needed that standing. The parish however was, but was not willing to take that responsibility. We approached the Interfaith Nutritional Network to sponsor us until we got our own standing and, to the credit of a Board of Directors who were risk takers, they gave us the wings to fly.



At this same time, we asked the Sisters of Mercy of Brooklyn if they would lend us one million dollars to purchase the hotel. Our strength in convincing them to do so came from the fact that we had the anonymous donor's support. We will never forget the openness of our leadership team at that time who invited us in for a conversation about our request. We were asked how/when we would repay the loan (\$1m) and in all our financial simplicity and heartfelt conviction we gave our projected plan of ten years. When asked if we were willing to commit ourselves to the project for the same period of time I had to answer "no," since I envisioned myself staying put in the Hospitality Center while Kathy would maintain the hotel. I also thought ten years was an awfully long commitment! It is amazing that anyone would take us seriously with the lack of experience we brought to our dream. But the Sisters engaged us in a very respectful dialogue. It was that conversation that further confirmed for us that the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, was pushing us along all the while. We didn't receive the loan but we did receive a substantial commitment for the application from the Brooklyn Community of the Sisters of Mercy and financial support for one of us for the next two years. Our sisters continued throughout the 25 years to offer emotional, financial and concrete support. Many Sisters including Francene Horan, Pat Gimblett, Assumpta, Mary McGrory, Eleanor Dobson, Mona Gunkel, Pat Hartigan, Margaret Clacherty and Maureen Gregory volunteered in our programs and on our board.

The travail continued. Time after time, meeting after different meeting, supporters attended critical gatherings repeating our same pleas. My role was to keep hope alive and to find the money we needed. The combinations of financial support, including letters from religious and political leaders and the media attention to the issue brought a positive response from NYS Homeless Housing Corporation and NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). We were awarded a total of \$1.6m towards the purchase and rehab of this, now empty, hotel. As part of our application, we secured a commitment from both the Leviticus Fund and McAuley Institute which were non-profit agencies that made low interest loans to groups like ours. We thought the dream of bringing home our friends was finally within reach.



This was probably the most traumatic part of our journey. We had the money. We had the place. We knew the need. Despite the letters of support for non-profit ownership from the elected and church leaders, the political will was a hoax. Charles Adams, Esq. helped us as we spent months negotiating with aides to the town supervisor whose purpose, in hindsight, was to keep us busy. It was his office that would gift us with filing for our incorporation and tax exempt status and over the 25 years provide us with legal counsel through Fr. John Rowan. Our architect, Joan Byron, who did all her work pro bono, transformed the interior and exterior space over and over again as the town would lessen the numbers or suggest another site. And so we spent not only our energy but the time and talent of our architect changing the plans to meet the next non-negotiable idea of the municipality. The amount of times Joan had to alter our building plans are too numerous to count. As the town insisted on continual downsizing of the number of residents, the financial viability of the project also waivered. Kathy and I won't forget the insistence of the town supervisor's aide for doing away with the cook and food plan. The town would connect us with Chef-Aire who could deliver meals each day to the residents. Imagine the joy of eating the meals we experience on planes three times a day for the rest of your life. Oh my!

Maybe that wasn't the *most* traumatic. We were learning more than we'd ever want to know about how the 'body politic' worked. That can be applied not only to government but to all hierarchical structures. One Assemblyman, frustrated by the possible loss of this much money in his district, called the town and us together to get this to work. After a few meetings something changed in him and I was the one counseled by him to play nice, be less direct and to laugh at the jokes of the representatives of the town officials. It was around this time that we were informed by the NYS HHAC director that one of our religious leaders called to explain how they, the state, had awarded the grant to inexperienced, very well meaning people, "the equivalent of three housewives." Imagine our disappointment. Our learnings were as deep. A government that we thought was "of the people and for the people" was true but for only some of the people. Naïve or not, we thought democracy was a process that could be influenced. It turned out to be a complex structure of favoritism. And some religious leaders, whom we expected to be honest with us, were playing both sides and making deals and promises behind closed doors.



The grantors and lenders however stayed the course. Through what would become two years after the grant approval, they saw in our effort enough encouragement not to change their commitment to us. We were now a 501(c)3, a non profit corporation, seeking our tax exemption and needing to establish a business account. Well, we didn't have enough money to open a business account. Kathy, in telling the story in a group of friends, found a generous response from Marianne Mocarsky who gave us what was her life's savings to open the account. She only asked us to return it when we could. And so, the first MHI bank account was opened at LI Savings Bank thanks to her.

On December 4, 1985 there was a public meeting called by the Bay Shore Clergy Association about the plans we had for the hotel. It was held in the gym of the Bay Shore High School. We encouraged people who were supportive to participate. We knew those who opposed it would be there for sure. This meeting still remains paramount in many hearts for all kinds of reasons. The trauma of walking in and, because it was a gym, thinking one side was for, and the other against, beckoned folks to believe they had a decision to make and it was now going public. One of our friends, Tony McNulty, still speaks about the radical conversion it was for him, who in the past saw both sides of everything. This night he knew he had to get off the fence. Twenty five years later he still talks about how this moment has changed his life. The officials running the meeting had cards out for those who had something to say. Pink was “for” and blue “against.” Fifteen minutes before the meeting began, the sign up cards were no longer available. We choose to believe they were stunned by the number of cards in our favor.



This was also a night that challenged many of our hearts to demythologize our leaders. Not one religious (ordained) minister from the Clergy Association stood with us. In fact our advocacy was disclaimed by our own pastor, (Jim Coffey had retired by then), who had been part of our planning meetings. Others, who claimed support in private, were mute at this prophetic moment. The local town supervisor not only mocked our presentation but disrespected another elected official who publically acknowledged his understanding for such housing based on the special needs of his own family member. The town supervisor also announced that he was prepared to take legal action to stop our plans. This rejection and escalation towards a law suit occurred after we had received notice of our receiving grants totaling \$1.6m to purchase the hotel. Prior to receiving the grant the supervisor wrote a letter in support of a non-profit management. This was the first time we were threatened with these new plans of the town supervisor. Once again we were in shock. By God's grace, we remained peaceful while others chose violence in attitude and behavior.

A few things resulted from this meeting and I don't claim these are in chronological order. As you can imagine this meeting was the talk of the town for a long time to come. To our sorrow, not the talk from our pulpits. The tensions about this practical and immediate invitation to put faith in action grew within families, among friends and in faith communities. The invitation to see government in a new way was taken seriously by many more who were called to new realizations and stronger resolve. The town supervisor who was so disrespectful was not re-elected that next November. Evidently, we were not the only ones he left bruised. And I decided to leave the parish to work full time in getting this specific hotel purchased and our friends back to their home.



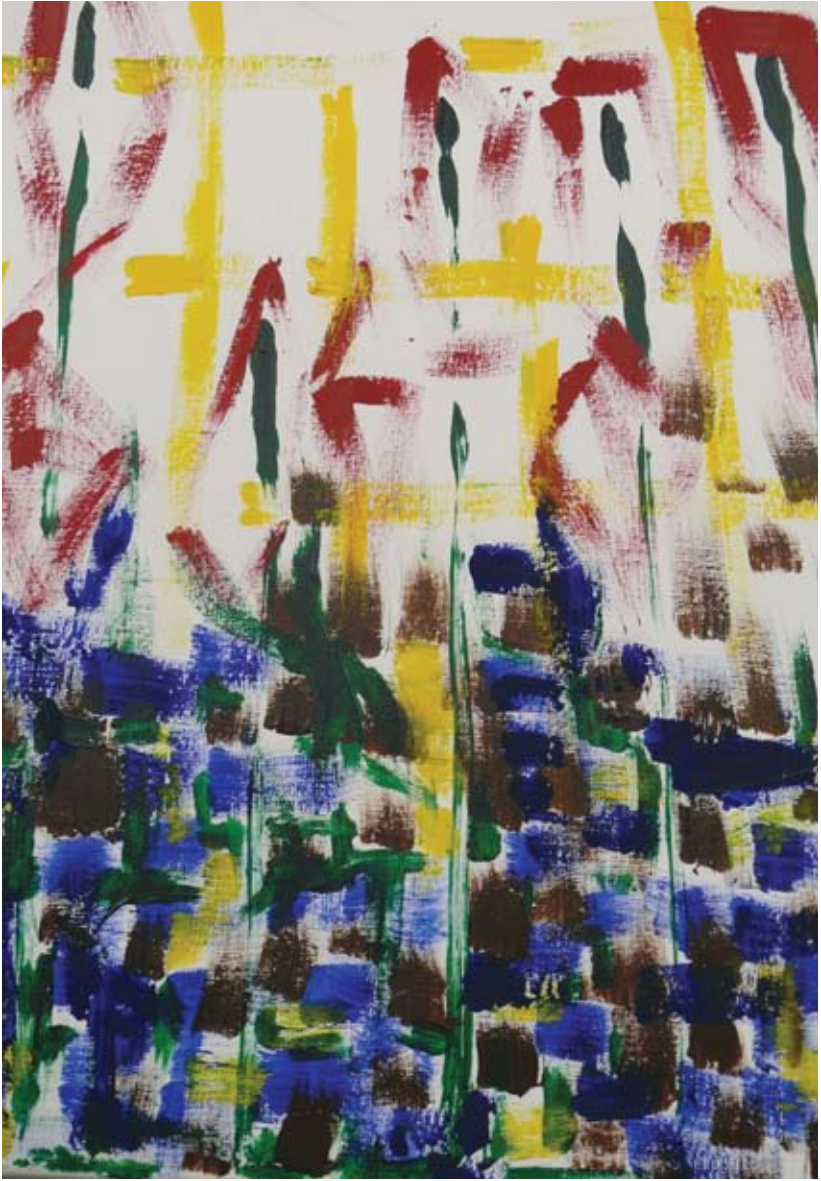
In my last day of prayer with the volunteers, June 1986, as part of our reflection I invited them “to bathe in God’s presence, a presence that is so consumed with love that it forgets fear, fear of who will take my place, fear of the unknown, the what if’s, the fear of mistakes and stumbling. A presence that calls us, uniquely, but similarly, to take new risks to reach out to places and people that we never before reached for, confident in God’s fidelity which is expressed in love. In our Hospitality Center we see it in the eyes of Heather and her children, in Billy’s elusive eyes, in Roger’s returning whenever he is in the neighborhood, in Joe and Florence’s love, and yes indeed in our love for one another. Each of us in this present experience of struggling to make the needs of the residents of the Baybright our own, has found it necessary to expand our own understanding of power and authority and to accept our own. We have also had to deal with our own lack of faith when things waivered; a lack of faith in God and ourselves. But our faithful God waits, beckoning us to let go of all that we cling to. Even in my leaving here to go forward with an idea that hasn’t, in the eyes of the world, succeeded, I’m being asked to leave what I am secure with, and a place I deeply love, a place where I know who I am, know how to function, and to now reach beyond what I’ve never reached for and to trust the life that is yet to be born. We’ve done a wonderful job at being present to ‘God’s favored.’ I urge you to continue to let them lead you. Listen and they will speak the Word of God in a way that you’ve never heard it before.”



Truth be told, it broke my heart to leave the parish and this particular ministry. I was so at home and content in the way I was growing. My heart really wasn't broken, it broke open. No longer would I be in a setting that was familiar. Every place and most groups we were meeting brought us further from where we were at home. No longer a parish minister, I was now a person of the pews experiencing what my friends had been experiencing all their lives. From that day forward to today I had to find a way to have my religious needs rooted in a growing community that was open to the needs of the poor. Without the security of all the 'jargon' that I knew, and the relationships that were opened because of my title, there was lots of personal loss and growth awaiting me.



*Artwork by John F.*



*Artwork by Keith L.*

You must give  
birth to your  
images. They are  
the future waiting  
to be born. Fear  
not the strangeness  
you feel. The future  
must enter you long  
before it happens.  
Just wait for the  
birth, for the hour  
of new clarity.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

# *R*ound and Round We Go

Eileen Hickey, a dear friend, who was a long time volunteer at the Hospitality Center and now advocate for this dream, became our only other staff person. She worked as we needed her for whatever we needed. Over these next four years we, Eileen, Kathy, and I, spent our time meeting with elected officials and writing letters for financial support. We needed just enough to keep us around to use the grants we received. After the Baybright hotel was a finished dream for us, the New York State Office of Mental Health, through Terry Segovia, invited us to be the first community group to open a Residential Care Center for Adults. This would be a residence for sixty-four persons who needed more guidance and supervision upon being returned to their communities. This was a grant for \$5m. We worked diligently with the state for at least two years to find land, to do all the community organizing and ground work for the integration and acceptance of, not only the idea, but of our people into the community. It wasn't the specific hotel we wanted but it would service the people we had hoped to house. Once again, after all our efforts and bruises from community opposition, the state pulled back its support because of a change in federal legislation that would make housing of this size the full financial responsibility of the state rather than shared by the federal government through Medicaid dollars. Again, money would be the highest value in making decisions about the right care for people. That was about 1988.

We often joked about being the only millionaires who could never spend their money. I think it was our sense of humor that carried us as well through hard times. At times, with deep concern about whether we should go on pursuing the idea of Mercy Haven, encouragement came from Nick, a guest of the Hospitality Center, who would write to see how I was doing. Enclosed was a dollar or two to help us get the hotel. We prayed often that it wasn't our need to succeed that gave us energy everyday but rather a deep response to what was right. It was also the constancy of our supporters, like Maria and Ed Sconzo, who gathered each year to raise money that went towards supporting us while we went round and round!



After spending about two years in an office created for us in the basement of St. Joseph's rectory in Babylon, thanks to Father John Gorman the pastor there, we moved to a 'real' office in a medical arts building in W. Babylon. It was there that our first Board of Directors would gather for their meetings. We were blessed with each member's dedication and the added strength and credibility that people like Anne Mead and Fred Fagelson brought to us. Each meeting told the good news and bad news and like cheerleaders when the score was 6-0, (we were the 0), we left renewed and more determined in our mission thanks to this cornerstone group. It was from this office that we would finally open our first home in West Babylon in 1989 with our other two Community Residences to follow within six months. We would also be blessed to work with Marty Goodman as our architect whose standard of design was filled with understanding and compassion for those who would be finding their home with us. I remember how intentionally he planned for the beauty of creation to be included in how, from the inside of each room, a resident might behold the outdoors. The Long Island Community Foundation, in the person of Suzy Dalton Sonenberg, would be a wonderful source of support in helping us develop a strong organizational structure. Her guidance and the foundation's support continues to give us great insight and strength.

In 1991 we were asked by the Town of Islip to use newly received grant money to renovate two blighted buildings in Bay Shore. The town agreed that if we did so that they would actively pursue the adjoining land for development by Mercy Haven. This would ensure for us a safer environment for our residents than that neighborhood would then have offered. We did use our grants to purchase and renovate these rundown buildings. It took us until 1994 for the town to have the property transferred from Suffolk County and for us to receive the \$600,000 we needed to build. Once again the money and the plans were ready. Then a local community group formed in January '95 taking a stand against any further development of special needs housing in all of Bay Shore. Elected officials then chose to renege on their previous commitment to Mercy Haven. Again we found ourselves in a similar position within the same community with some of the same players. We were caught in the quagmire of politics threatening, and eventually, causing the loss of grant monies for a third time.



After we opened the first three community residences (1989-1990) it didn't take us long to listen to some of the hopes and dreams of the residents. Surely, we thought we knew some of them but it was one of our resident's, Maureen, hope to be reunited with her child that woke us up to the need for supportive family housing. That was a new road not only for us but for the State. Any funding we sought became more complicated. Some funders would support adults and children and others only the person living with mental illness. We literally had to present our budget based on the square footage allocated to each person's use so that the funders could support our proposal. Once again, we were the first agency asking a new question. Probably because we understood these words taken from Margaret Wheatley's book Turning to One Another:

“When we're brave enough to risk a conversation, we have the chance to rediscover what it means to be human. In conversation, we practice good human behaviors. We think, we laugh, we cry, we tell stories...we become visible to one another. We gain insights and new understanding.”

It is because of Maureen's articulation of her desire that we now have 92 units of housing that we own, and 34 more that we rent, that allow for a diversity of needs and dreams of our friends through our HEARTH program. This is an acronym for Healed, Encouraged And Renewed Through Housing. Encouraged by the Board to continue to take our lead from the needs of the residents, we opened Pleasant Gardens Adult Home which assists the many individuals who are not able to live well independently. Recognizing the need for more rental assistance, we became the conduit for bringing 75 Section 8 certificates to the elderly and disabled in our counties. In these 25 years, more than 650 individuals have lived with us and an additional 550 received other services.



As I meandered in our archives another circuitous theme appeared: our state officials' inability to pass the budget! The consistent themes were repeated year after year: not meeting deadlines, acting as if this is the first time some knew we had a state deficit, spewing acceptable positions to win favor with supporters, etc. Have we ever seen an explanation of the whole picture, the whole budget? The full picture never seems to be presented to the public in one report so we can understand the benefits and the programs cut, the broken promises of development, the repeated unavailability of funds to match the increase in costs of operations of programs, let alone provision for an increase in the salaries of our committed and competent staff.



Advocacy was the skill that would take us cruising around these circles. I grew comfortable with being a spokeswoman locally (though I don't think it was something I aspired to) but within a few years of Mercy Haven's birth I became active on the state level representing other agencies like ours. Eventually I was elected to the New York State Board of the Association for Community Living (NYSACL), and to the presidency of this statewide association representing 130+ agencies with hired lobbyists. I enjoyed my experience on other local and national boards as well. I continued to be floored by the simple fact that many of our elected officials

are employed people unable to work together for the common good and increasingly unable to pass a budget in a responsible time as any one of us running businesses must. It couldn't be that they have found a way to discourage participation with those 'week' budget extensions, can it?



This is not meant to be cynical in any way. It has been my experience that with each new round of pre-budget times it becomes more difficult, not only to access the persons in power and their aides, but to access the facts. Remember, I'm speaking from past experiences of access and negotiations. Closed doors, lack of information and media 'black outs' don't seem to be consistent with our founders' ideas of participative government and democracy 'of, by and for the people'.



But you know what? People like us don't go away. We might take time out to regroup and to be refueled but we come back with more conviction, more facts about the local impact, sometimes devastating, of budget decisions that whittle away at necessary programs for our children, our parents, our special populations, Yahweh's Anawim.



What is also true is that towns have grown to respect us and to work cooperatively with us. It just seems so logical. If we acknowledge the presence of the poor and persons with special needs in our town and county plans, we lessen the probability of creating exclusive communities who believe they have a right to 'keep out some and keep in others.'



We are now invited to be part of the conversations with local planners and elected officials in creating long term plans. We've been blessed to experience projects that have had the support, even to the chagrin of their communities, from the Town of Islip and the Village of Patchogue. These have been wonderful moments when it is clear that we weren't just going around in circles but we were redrafting the circles of inclusion for our friends and our Agency.



*Some of the seeds of hope planted tentatively in  
the fall have not come up. They lie stillborn and  
unrealized somewhere in the spring soil, decaying...*

*It's always that way with growing things  
Never knowing at the start which will make it  
and which will fail*

*But the thing to hold fast to ...  
Never to lose faith in ... Is simply Sowing.*

“Gardener,” Ann North



Artwork by Dennis K.



*Our Peace Garden*

When you  
act on behalf  
of something  
greater than  
yourself, you  
begin to feel it  
acting through  
you with a  
power that is  
greater than  
your own.

-Joanna Macy

# *T*ransforming Fear

I'm not sure I will ever get over the feelings of fear that we experienced at different stages of Mercy Haven's development. I think we did well at not showing it, but it was there. Whether it was in the moments of disrespect that we witnessed that could trigger a brawl between people of opposite positions or the times we were literally told to evacuate a site where we were working because of 'bomb threats', a new dimension of humanity was being revealed for my transformation. Anyone who attended our community meetings knows what I'm talking about. It didn't matter what side you were on, fear is universal. Its power is overwhelming. I remember an elected official coming into a high school auditorium that was filled to capacity because we were going to open a 'group home' in the neighborhood. We had once again worked with this town supervisor's aides and had only reassurances of his support up to an hour prior to the meeting. We didn't expect an easy meeting but we sure didn't expect what we got. Something changed in that "time between" for the supervisor; even his aides were surprised. It might have been the large numbers who showed up at the meeting, it might have been his own fear of losing an election. Something changed. He didn't stay long, just long enough to side with those in opposition and tell them they had his understanding since they already had a 'garbage dump' in their community. A garbage dump? People with special needs? The connection would be? I wish I could say that would be the end of experiences like this, but it wasn't. Once we had someone so threatening at a public hearing that a member in the audience called the police herself. Another time, we were cautioned by the police inspector not to travel alone.

And then there were the gifts of conversion after such outrage. This is a letter I received after we had moved into our home in Westbury and neighbors had time to get to know us.

“I was just the ‘average Joe’ with a primal instinct to protect my family and my home from a perceived threat. The prospect of mental patients moving in on my block was so frightening that I became obsessed with the most irrational of thoughts. Would “they” be walking up and down the streets in some sort of macabre parade? Would we have to put bars on our windows? Would we have to live in fear? I’m sure that others have felt the same, but probably not with the same fervor. Well, here we are a year later and none of what I had imagined came to pass. There are no Norman Bates or Ted Bundys here, nor is there a house reminiscent of the Munster’s. In fact, Mercy Haven is a good neighbor, and if I or anyone had any misgivings as the furniture van was unloading last spring, they were quickly abated when I visited there myself. The house, the staff, and the residents, were to be admired in a way that I never realized when I was so apprehensive. That might not be a revelation to your faithful supporters but to me it meant peace of mind and reassuredness. I now can be counted among your supporters.”



I remember an occasion in which staff invited the neighbors to ‘come and see.’ The staff and residents had met with some rudeness and inhospitable exchanges since we moved in, and so the residents were given the option of joining the group in this gesture of hospitality. Not many did, but who could blame them? After a tour was given and we sat with a bit of a strain in conversation one of the residents, named Eileen, looked around the table and asked if she could say something. “I just want to say this is great. I feel like I’m sitting around with my family.” Talk about disarming, and from one who was feared. Thank you Eileen for transforming our hearts.



As a new agency, and as its leaders, Kathy and I often had to face new fears. First of all, although we were both social workers, neither of us had any ‘expertise’ working with persons who were chronically

mentally ill except in our gestures of care as pastoral workers in parishes. We didn't know anything about building or restoring homes, never owned one and never needed to repair one. As far as budgets and financial management we were once again out of our league. I remember when we met with two bankers in Manhattan asking them to review our financial situation so they could evaluate our ability to access bank loans. They were kind but a bit incredulous at our naïve boldness!



What I am trying to say is that we never let the fear of what we didn't know stop us. Maybe we were too naïve to know the ramifications, maybe we just believed that fear can be transformed into a dynamic and creative energy. We would continue to choose the latter, over and over again. Thanks to great Boards of Directors who throughout the years confirmed this belief encouraging us as an agency in risking new ventures, in the wisdom of knowing when to stop growth or to cease providing a service.



In August 2007 another invitation for creating new relationships was proposed and the Board again affirmed the risk of another new program. This time we introduced a program for persons not necessarily living with us who had experienced homelessness or were actually, or at risk of being, homeless. We call the program Breakthrough because of the possibilities for all the participants. This is an education program that requires the support of about forty volunteers for each twelve week session. To date we have nearly one hundred persons who have graduated the program. Graduation requires attendance at twenty two of the twenty four meetings which includes meeting 'the stranger' in the mentors and teachers S. Kathy gathers. They also have to be willing to participate in telling their own stories. Beginning with a meal prepared by volunteers, confidence and acceptance is found and community is built. Each time volunteers are needed the response is so encouraging. Besides members of the community hosting the class, our staff have taken time from their own personal life to volunteer and residents have joined this group to provide meals. The support has been palpable (and delicious)!

Breakthrough has been one of the most transformative programs for our volunteers. One volunteer Roy Puntervold, in reflecting on his experience, remembers meeting S. Kathy after just reading Matthew 25 vs. 34: "...for I was hungry, and you fed me, I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home...Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing?...I assure you, when you do this for one of these least of my brothers or sisters, you were doing it for me." "How could I not sign up to help? If I could have afforded it I would have just written a check but I would have cheated myself out of the reward of now calling participants of this program my friends."

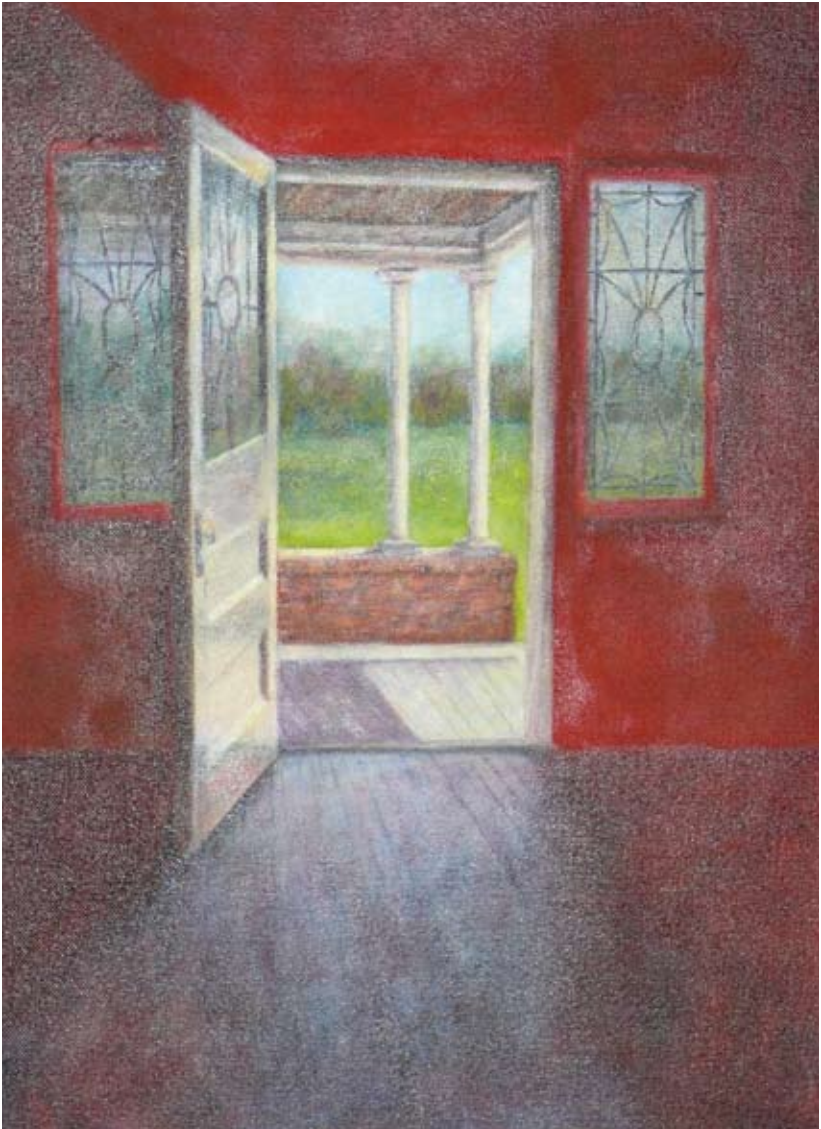


Margaret Wheatley in Turning to One Another says:

"It is impossible to create a healthy culture if we refuse to meet, and if we refuse to listen. But if we meet, and when we listen, we re-weave the world into wholeness and Holiness."



*Artwork by J. Jaisle*



*Artwork by M. Bosche*



*Faith is  
taking the  
first step  
even when  
you do not  
see the whole  
staircase*

*-Martin Luther King Jr.*

# *New Ways of Seeing*

For our tenth anniversary we engaged the creative energy of Midge Miles, a professional story teller, who visited each of our programs, met with staff and residents and listened to stories of their experience and dreams for Mercy Haven. She also met with some of our founders and supporters who traveled the ten years with us. On December 4, 1995, the actual tenth anniversary of that infamous meeting in the school gym in Bay Shore, we returned to St. Patrick's parish, the place of our conception, for Midge to perform a one person play based on the story of Mercy Haven. All who attended were invited to share their memories as well. I remember how quickly our residents stood in line to take the microphone to thank everyone for their homes. Many can recall Tony McNulty speaking of his personal conversion from the experience of that public meeting. He also thanked us for helping him to see the people on the streets and not pass them by. Another friend Ann O'Leary spoke of her realizing that "no" never meant no, just not yet, for those involved in Mercy Haven. This was a great opportunity to step aside from all the doing, all the ups and downs, to appreciate, and to see, the miracle of what was being created day in and day out.



Sometimes we think of creativity as something that is only available to the artist, the writer, the choreographer. But I truly have seen creativity in action as I have witnessed the lives, the risks, the openness of our residents. I don't know what it is like to live with mental illness but I do know how much energy it can take to meet new people, try new things, and be invited to share my story yet one more time. Through our REAP program the residents can coordinate and participate in activities of interest to them; find

employment opportunities through the agency; meet for reading, discussions on current affairs; learn new skills like painting and ceramics, cooking and gardening or find ways to be active members in the neighborhoods within which they live. Most of the artwork in this book has been done by our residents.



One summer day, one of our residents, Debbie, brought flowers she had grown in her own garden to the staff. It was the first time she had ever experienced the joy of feeling the warmth of the sun in the soil and the joy of tending the seed and nurturing its growth. It was a moment we won't forget. The joy in Debbie's eyes, the lift in her self-esteem was wonder-filled for us to see.



Another initiative taken by the residents was the introduction of an agency wide food collection for the poor of the Bay Shore Community. Beverly told us "I felt so good during our food drive at Thanksgiving. It made my heart feel light and yet heavy to see people struggling just to get the basic foods for a good meal. I'm sure I speak for everyone as we shared our good fortune with persons needier than we. We are looking forward to doing this again. We truly believe we don't have to wait just for the holidays, as the health of everyone should be a consideration of ours every day. May God bless St. Patrick's Hospitality Center and continue to bless us all as we find a greater path to help see all those in need."



The gifts staff gives in helping persons to see their worth and abilities are endless. Mary Kay wrote this to us upon moving. "Living at Mercy Haven was a great experience for me. I met different people whom I've become very close to and it's because of S. Pat, S. Kathy and Mercy Haven that I have found my faith in people again. Two years ago, I moved into Mercy Haven with only two outfits and a dream. Today, I'm preparing to move on with my life and I'm looking at fifteen boxes full of clothes and a heart full

of memories to take with me. The staff became family to me. They taught me how to clean, how to believe in myself, that I could take care of myself and, I have. The staff helped me to enroll in a vocational program so that I would start working and earn a living for myself. Since I've been with Mercy Haven, I've held two jobs. Looking back, it's hard for me to believe that I've gone from Angelos, Texas to New York feeling I was lost and alone. Now, I've learned who I am and what 'I' can do with my life. I no longer feel like the person I was when I first came to live in our residence. Thank you Mercy Haven, I will never forget how good you've been to me and how happy I've been living with you."



When one of our residents, Peggy, died, it wasn't very hard to remember this gentle, determined woman with a sweet laughing soul. She had not only chosen to live with us but she also was a part time staff person. When we were introduced to her family at her wake, her dear friend said "This is S. Pat and S. Kathy. They worked with Peggy." He had no idea the gift of joy that he gave to us in that introduction. He saw this was a mutual relationship that allowed each of us to be touched by the life, hope and dreams of the other. And at the end of any of our lives, what else counts but that we mattered in living our life with and for the other?



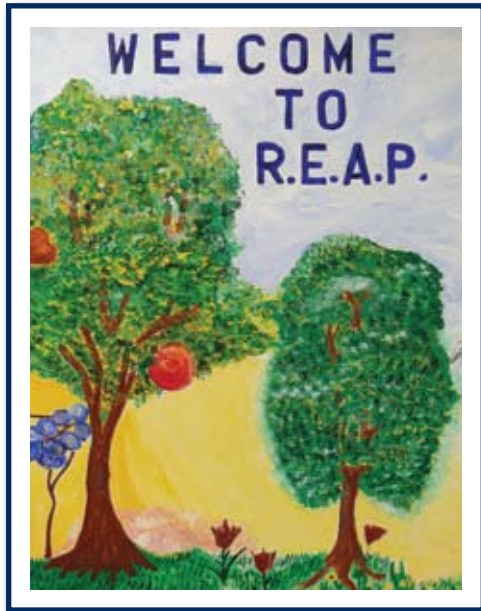
Over and over again, it has been my experience that the ones we think we minister to are the very people that end up the seers, the teachers, and reflecting life to us in a new way. It is not unusual that I invite one of our residents to come with me to speak publically about Mercy Haven. I am always in awe of the depth of their connection to us and their willingness to take such a risk. Without hesitating many will say yes, like Melissa and Chris, having had little or no experience speaking in public. In fact it is after they say yes that they also acknowledge they are nervous but they want to 'volunteer' this gift to us.

That's one of the gifts of stepping into the world of volunteering: our lives are forever changed, values are clarified and deepened, and, a healthier appreciation of life is reached. It also helps one to be grateful for the ordinary gifts of every day. Volunteers know we cannot afford as human beings not to be involved in something beyond what meets only our needs. There's too much of life to be tasted in reaching beyond our own comfort zone. It is one way we leave our world a better place for the next generation.

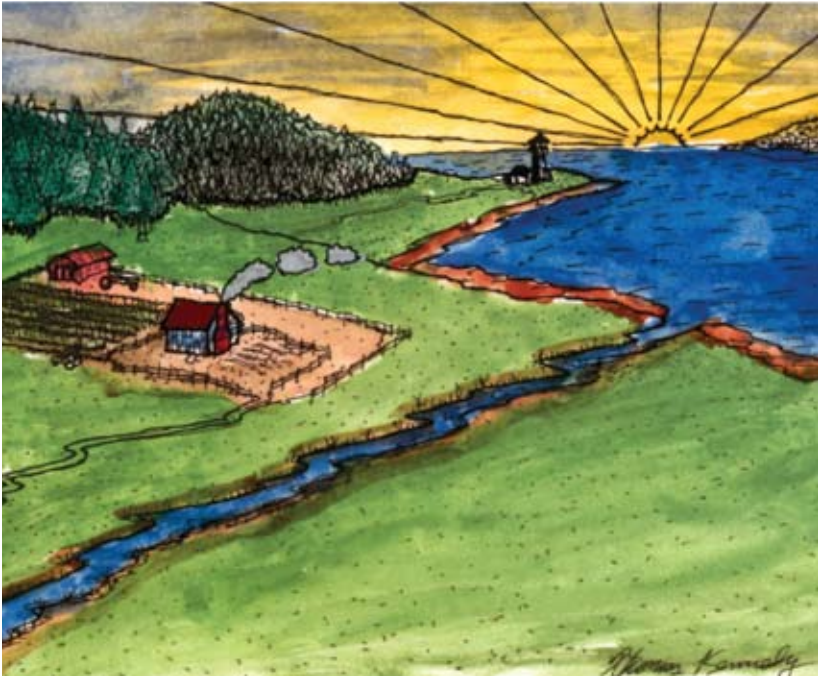


*“...Have the grace to look up and out  
And into (y)our sister’s eyes, and into  
(y)our brother’s face, (y)our country,  
And say simply,  
Very simply  
With hope,  
Good morning.”*

- Maya Angelou



*Artwork by many of our residents*



*Artwork by Thomas K.*

*Find the  
thing that  
stirs your  
heart and  
make room  
for it.*

*-Joan Chittister O.S.B.*

# *Seeds of Hope*

How long can a seed lie dormant? Must we remain unaware of children with special needs, or an aging parent, or a person living with mental illness until a face, life, awakens us? Is it then the learning begins?



We need to be able to be attentive, to be ambassadors of good news, bringing attention to seeds coming to birth. It may be more important now than ever before especially when many bear the burden of what is happening in our own country. I know I need good news. That's why I love to hear stories about the people we serve and how staff's relationships with them, even if it takes time, will forever cause part of the change that is needed. The media doesn't give good news equal time so my campaign is for each of us to do it one by one with one another. Try it. It's not easy. Our habits often have us noticing the glass half empty. What one seed might I sow, or reap, right now? Might it be my openness to meet a stranger, or to learn more about the reality of poverty in my own country, my neighborhood? Might it be to attach myself to the donations I make and having my heart opened wider? These are my choices and I am grateful to be in a place like Mercy Haven where the invitations are constant. This community has given witness to me that "What is given is secret even from you until it rises and flowers within." (M. Southard inspired by D. Whyte's poem "The Song of a Lark").



It isn't uncommon for our staff to spend a day together for reflection on our own personal mission and the mission of our agency. It gives us all, me included, the opportunity to again acknowledge, and feel, the absolute gift of the staff, not only to the lives of our residents, not only to myself or the agency, not only to the local community, but to the future condition of the world's heart. None of our staff boasts of the gifts they bring, or the credit they deserve, for working in this field while it remains on the "non-priority" list of to-dos for so many. Some have left the for-profit community to be part of a mission based work. Perhaps that is because they each understand, more than many others, Anne Frank's words: "Give of yourself...you can always give something, even if it is only kindness...and no one has ever become poor from giving." Times together like these will remain a source of encouragement and life. Thanks staff!



Early on we came in contact with parents and family members of persons who were living with mental illness through an advocacy group called the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). They were so happy to find others who were making visible the needs of a hidden group of people. It was through this group that we met a woman who would eventually move to Florida only to find services more scarce there. She had learned enough prior to her move about not allowing this illness to remain hidden. She quickly called me and I was able to walk with her through months of organizing her community, educating elected officials as to the need and eventually, in 1997, to open her group home. Her son was one of the first occupants and we were honored to have it named after us. And so a "Haven" also exists in Florida!



There were a lot of fine memories as we celebrated, in 2009, the 20th anniversary of our Community Residence program. I can still feel the excitement of the volunteers and school children who came twenty years ago to clean up after the construction crew completed its work. I wonder what seeds were planted by this experience in the

hearts of those children. With the help of Carol Graham, our own interior designer, the furnishings and décor made our houses into homes. She taught Kathy and me a lot about colors! I remember the first lunch with our very first residents. With our hearts so filled with joy, Kathy and I joined staff in welcoming the first three or four new members of Mercy Haven. As we enjoyed the time, clearly an adjustment for all, Kathy kept telling us she heard someone at the door. Upon checking the front door this seemed to be untrue. The next time she said it, and I denied it, one of the residents asked her if she heard voices too! Disarming seeds of laughter filled the room. That might have been the beginning of what I believe is the one quality that over the years is the greatest gift our staff extends to the residents. It is hospitality of heart. Amidst all the services, all the education and instruction braided into the support and encouragement each brings, this is the gift that has made the difference. It is a way of being available that is filled with a desire to connect, to befriend, to understand, to accept and to see another. Because of this gift, we watch our residents and one another unfold in ways that would not have happened had we not met. I remember a gentleman who, after living in Westbury with us for years, blessed me the day he was able to be the one to say hello first and call me by name. Our staff has not only made their skills and knowledge available to those who have lived in our homes, they have given their hearts and helped us to see.



Have you ever asked yourself “How did I end up here?” Do you ever wonder why it is that things that matter to you often are not of the same concern to others? Where did those seeds get sown? I often credit my Mom and Dad for planting a lot of these, especially hospitality and the welcoming of others. Then there’s Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, whom I only know through the tender hearts of my sisters and what I’ve read. I believe like spirits do attract one another. She never wanted to be a nun, all she wanted was to be about giving those in need assistance “today, not next week.” Guess I can attribute my holy impatience to her!

One of our Board Members who previously was a Program Director in the Agency, Ruth Anne Young, took a year's leave to work for the United Nations in places like Sarajevo and Bosnia. As her year changed into years, she challenged us as an agency to do more than just speak and act locally. Our time and talent and resources are needed beyond Long Island if justice is to be known by all humankind. And, if peace is to be, I need to begin with myself and make sure that I am being faithful to the gifts that I have been given for the good of the universe. It is amazing that the resources available for each of our lives are so deeply seeded that, not only is every day new, but so are we.



Our class action litigation to get equal access to food stamps for people living in our group homes extended its work and concern for all people throughout New York State. This is an example of the systemic change caused by strong and determined advocacy and being able to put a face on a person in need. Had we not built more than a place for our friends to live, had we not also built community with them, had we not believed in our call to seek justice seasoned by mercy with them, 115,000 food stamp households would have stayed the victims of a system that is often not just, and hardly merciful. Because of the courage of a few of our residents along with the integrity of John Castellano, our advocacy attorney, to stand against such a system \$150m has been secured annually for these people and seeds of justice and mercy were planted.  
(Graves v Doar)



“We are fired into life with a madness that comes from the gods, which leaves us pathologically restless, ... and which will not give us rest outside of a great love, that is, outside of some great embrace through which our partial selves become whole and through which we can perpetuate our own seed and contemplate the divine. That is quite a mouthful.” Even the author, Ronald Rolheiser, thought so!



*Artwork by Josephine M.*

*The  
conclusion  
is the same:  
love is the  
most powerful  
and still the  
most unknown  
energy of the  
world*

*-Teilhard deChardin*

# *It is Our World, Our Choice*

I have this ache inside me, perhaps you know it too. It is a longing for each of us, and all humanity, to set aside fear and to allow our power of love to fully emerge. Mercy Haven's ministry of creating not just houses, but homes, of building not just buildings, but community, continually challenges my faith and my hope in humankind.



The very beginning was about choice. We could have walked away. We had so many justifications to do so. I remember Bernie Haske writing as one of the first Board Members: "We soon realized that we were the logical ones to start such an agency. In retrospect, this seems like madness rather than a dream. We had no experience and no money but we were rich in conviction and resolve. Our future was beginning to look brighter until the Baybright's small fire became the occasion for the residents to be permanently relocated. This might have been the death blow to our dreams, but it turned out to be the resurrection of our resolve. We began developing grant proposals and plans for incorporation as a non-profit agency while community opposition mounted and the fight for the Baybright became more political than ever... Hope turned to ecstasy and ecstasy turned to anger, frustration and tragedy as the maneuverings of local politicians became enmeshed with our plans. The emotional roller coaster reached an all time low when we realized that we had been kept busy, and, what we thought were efforts of cooperation, were really efforts to block our purchase of the Baybright. ...This was enough to discourage most people, but

our commitment to the deinstitutionalized was irrevocable and the leadership of Sister Pat Griffith and Sister Kathy Nolan was unwavering...It's exciting retracing the 'roots' or Mercy Haven for it helps me see more clearly who we are. It also helps me to recognize how life was mirrored in these events...tragedy, comedy, fear, anger, hatred, love and joy all played out in time. Most of all however, I have an abiding respect and appreciation for the countless individuals who saw their neighbor in the weak and helpless and who made themselves a part of this dream. Their support has helped to define and sustain Mercy Haven and they promise a future which is even more exciting."



Each of us has to keep checking our own life, our time, our commitments to make sure that what happens to institutions doesn't also happen within our own hearts, homes and priorities. I know there are only twenty four hours to a day and as I get older I realize more the value of the minutes in those hours and spending my time well. A story is told that during WWII, a German widow hid Jewish refugees in her own home. As her friends discovered the situation, they became extremely alarmed. "You are risking your own well-being," they told her. "I know that," she said. "Then why," they demanded, "do you persist in this foolishness?" Her answer was stark and to the point. "I am doing it," she said, "because the time is now and I am here." If she could do that, I can do more. This is my constant challenge.



"Hope", St. Augustine says, "has two lovely daughters: anger and courage. Anger so that what must not be may not be; courage so that what should be can be." There's a lot of work that needs to be done so that the stigma of mental illness and the isolation of persons living in poverty is lessened and the arms of communities are open to the needs surrounding us.

An example of this hope came through my sister Mary Jane. It was the gift of a quilt sent from her young students from North High School in Phoenix to establish their profound connection with the pain of New Yorkers after 9-11. Like so many others we felt the pain acutely because of the people we knew who lost their lives that day. None can forget the trauma of that day, the waiting to find loved ones and still the ongoing need for healing. Our most generous supporter, Chris Quackenbush, died that day. He still remains in our hearts and lives as we know we would never have been able to take the risks we have, nor developed the depth of the agency that we know today, without his encouragement and advice. Amidst the devastation this quilt, the words and artwork of our youth, was a gift of comfort and a challenge for each of us to live in hope. "It's a shame" Elizabeth's reflection said, "that something like this had to happen to bring us together. Yet, together we can do so much more." Others proclaimed: "We will come out of this stronger and united!" "Seek justice not revenge!" While Phyllis' words begged us to remember that "The human heart is bigger and stronger than anything that happens to it." What we believe is indeed our choice.



*Quilt made by the students of North High School*



Another experience of goodness, dedication, vision, and commitment in service to humanity was a two-day retreat with the Directors of our agency. We pondered the many challenges found in a book by Margaret Wheatley, Turning To One Another, in which her question “What can we do now to restore hope to the future?” is followed by the most simple and most challenging thesis. She says that “We’ve taken the essential elements of being human, our spirits our imagination, our need for meaning and for relationships-and dismissed them as unimportant... We’ve organized work and societies around...greed, self-interest and competition.” So, the challenge is found in reawakening the human spirit in each of us through the gift of conversations with each other, setting aside the to-do lists and really listening to one another. As the leader in this agency I am responsible to encourage the same for us.



S. Kathy and I had the privilege of visiting the missions of our Sisters of Mercy in Panama. At first, we referred to that time as vacation. While preparing, we referred to it as an education. Upon our return, we called it a renewal. I hadn’t considered myself as one outside of the experience of the poor given the blessings I’ve had of loving and being loved by this community of people over these many years. But the material poverty we were exposed to was more than I had ever walked through. Families, predominately women and children, who were homeless, or living in homes that had no electricity or plumbing, welcomed us. If we visited in their home, a room with maybe 15 people, the family presented us with gifts of hospitality that we will cherish forever.

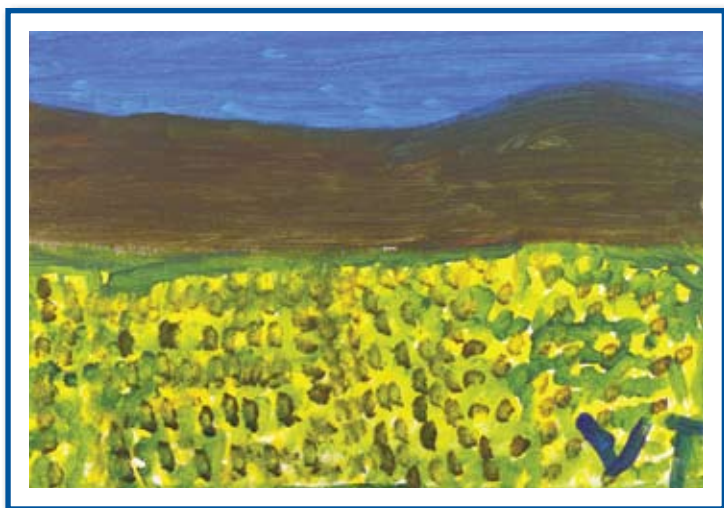


Phoenix, Arizona

The same thing happened as I brought whatever assistance I could after Katrina to New Orleans and Mississippi. The devastation of the places, the stories of the people's raw terror is etched in my heart forever. I remember the persons of the 9th Ward, a predominately black community, telling their story of being held back at gunpoint while other sections were given priority for evacuation. Five years later we find the stories of discrimination confirmed in the federal investigation that is taking place. Yet after such tragedy the hope for rebuilding and returning to home was strong. The presence and generosity of some for the long journey back is an example to each of us of what can, must be, done for so many more.



We have also had the honor of welcoming three different groups of women who participated in an international symposium at the United Nations. The Sisters of Mercy have consultative representation on the UN's Non Governmental Organizations branch through Sister Deidre Mullen RSM. It was she who invited us to present to these women the social needs of persons in the United States and the systemic changes we have initiated. Two of these gatherings were at our main office and offered the opportunity to both guests and staff to meet persons from different cultures and to broaden our understanding of human need. Perhaps it was the seeds sown from this experience that has led staff to offer financial support to Haiti during this last catastrophe.



*Artwork by Vincent T.*

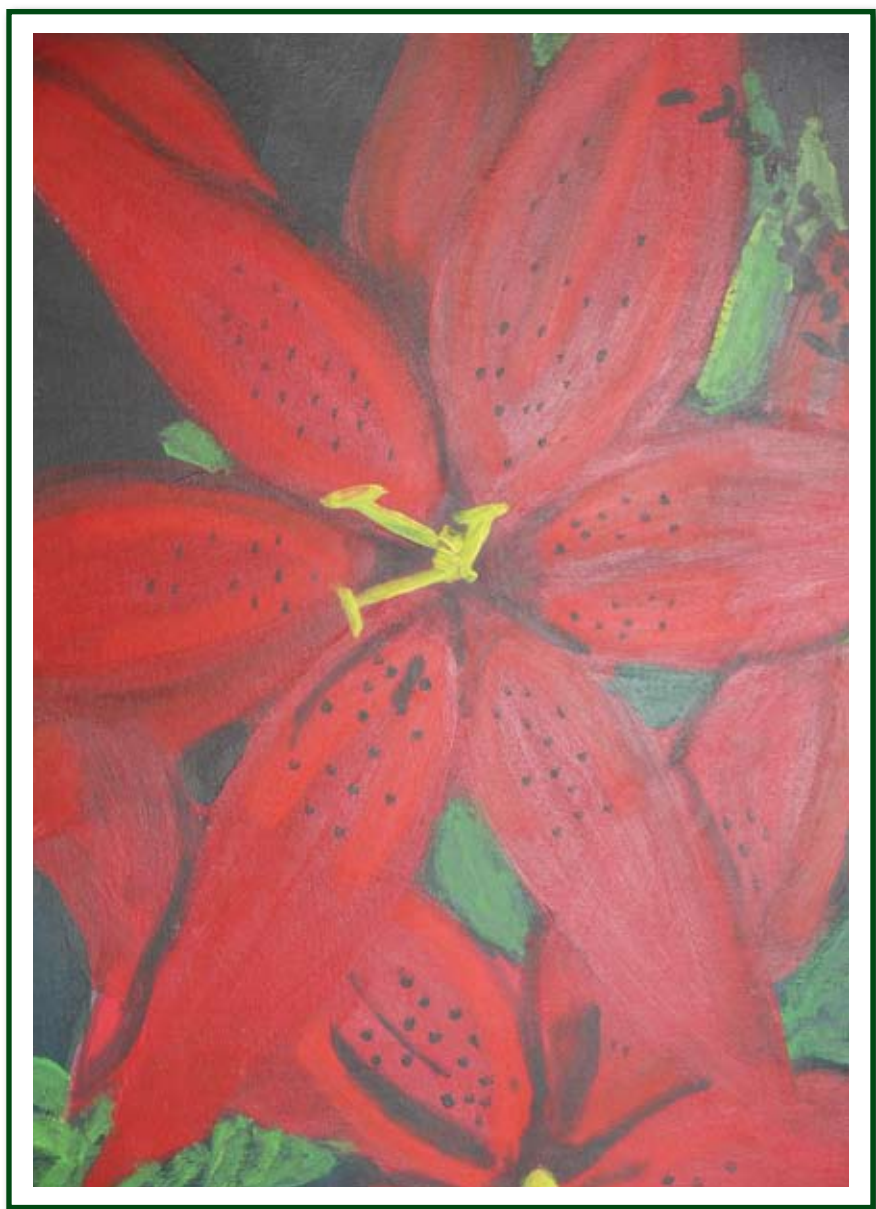
Friends often say trips like these “must have been so hard, so depressing, or so, so sad.” And actually it was the opposite. The generosity, simplicity and hospitality of the lives of the persons we met sent us home with an ache to be like them. We saw children who by our eyes appeared to be so poor, bring us into their circle of play unencumbered by class. We found joy, peace and hope wrapped in a plea to us as Americans to understand, to do our part in opening our minds and hearts to what is happening to our family all over the world. Yes even, and increasingly, in our United States. Each of these experiences was in reality a renewal of our commitment to walk with the pain of others and to continue in our resolve not to take ‘no’ for a response when there’s a human need.



I am reminded once again of a quote from Franklin D. Roosevelt: “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough to those who have too little.”



*Artwork by Marie B.*



*Artwork by Susan R.*

*Compassion  
is the  
radicalism  
of our time*

*-Dalai Lama*

# *A*gainst a New Horizon

On a beautiful summer day, I am taken by the eagerness with which the tightly held bud of the hibiscus gives up her hold to the warmth of the day and, in this gesture, starts a different phase of life. Trees apparently barren for the hard months of winter have surprised us with all the life they have held inside, perhaps hidden from our eyes. Each day we are greeted with another unfolding of nature's luxurious gifts.



Perhaps I am also drawn to these symbols because of the time in which Mercy Haven finds itself. Twenty five years - what a miracle! As I think of those years, I am really filled with great gratitude for all the moments when I have witnessed the closed mind, closed life, or fearful heart unfolding by what Mercy Haven has done. I think of the power of hope held by our staff believing that one of our participants, fellow staff members, or neighbors has more gifts than maybe, as yet, have been realized. Like the tree, this hope-filled person knows that the right time and the right atmosphere will beckon new life in both the giver and the receiver. Like Catherine McAuley perhaps the one thing we have been sure of is the need to introduce persons of means to persons who are in need. Certainly the journey of our first twenty-five years proves this to be true. From seeds sown by each and all of us, shoots have sprouted and buds have blossomed. Many of us would simply say we just took one step at a time and did what had to be done. Thanks for stepping with us these past 25 years. As we step into the future, imagine what more we still can do!



I visit over and over again in my heart all the individuals who took their turn being restless until they saw their dream, their seed, not only nourished but now flourishing through Mercy Haven. It is to experience a miracle that I believe does happen more than once in a lifetime if we only treat ourselves to noticing and doing.

Driving home one day while I was writing this an evening sunset that so many times I'd hurry by beckoned me. I found myself wondering about how changed our world might be if each of us, blessed to be on the road at that time, had noticed. Or what change might happen if we just let another driver merge in ahead of us AND we said thanks to each other? That's a systemic change too. Listening again to advocacy groups for persons living with mental illness express their frustration over the lack of priority and proactive planning for our clients, whom we call friends, I remembered this evening and renewed my own commitment to seeing the life we live day in and day out, the seed we sow, against the infinite horizon.



We have had our 'Gala Celebration' of 25 years of discovering and responding to the needs of persons within our community. Begun with only one building in mind and one group of persons etched in our hearts, who would have known all that was awaiting us? Who would have guessed that we would not only be able to respond to our local need but be able to offer what we have learned and what we believe is possible with people throughout the world. We have so much for which to be grateful. Amazing Grace!



During this 25th year we had several occasions to celebrate a fine group of people without whom Mercy Haven would never be who we are. I'm referring to our staff who day in and day out (literally) choose to spend their gifts, time and life with eyes fixed on the mission of this agency. They know they make a difference and, during July, we spent a week reminding them of how precious they are. One of the ways to thank them was a trip to Central Park in which we toured the section dedicated to John Lennon's dream expressed in his song *Imagine*; walked amidst the diversity of guests in Manhattan in the beauty of the gardens and strolled along side staff we may not have time for conversation with except for this day. They were great moments to behold. And then, another reminder was given. Amidst our day of fun, there was a gentleman sorting through the garbage, I assumed he wanted to collect our returnable

refuse. Keeping him in my gaze, I noticed he was also taking what we had left in those cans and bottles and combining them in an empty container. One would hope to dispose of, but it was to quench his own thirst. A poignant moment that reminded me our work may be 25 years old, but surely is not finished.



In Marianne Williamson's book, A Woman's Worth, she states: "We are meant to hold the heart of the world within our hands. We must cater to it and minister to it, and kiss it when it cries. We are meant to keep the home fires burning, the fires in our hearts. We are meant to prepare the food, the spiritual food of love and compassion. We are meant to care for the children, not just our own, but everyone's child. When we do not recognize our cosmic function, our own hearts break, and so does the heart of the world."



Thank you to each of you who continues to allow your heart to be broken so that the ache of the world can be healed. Thank you for walking this journey with us. Thank you for 'holding the heart' of so many in yours. You have been cornerstones in what we have built and what seeds we plant for the next generations.



In the kind of work our Board of Directors, our staff, our supporters and our residents are about, it is easy to notice what is not yet and, in so doing, I have missed the blessings of some of the days. The opportunity of a moment like this, a 25th celebration, is to learn the lesson of the worker, who when asked "what do you do for a living?" rather than answering as a coworker did, "I'm a bricklayer," this worker replied, "I am building a cathedral".



May we continue to see each occurrence of our life's days, years, struggles and celebrations against such a horizon.





*Artwork by Walter T.*



*Artwork by Valerie T.*



*Artwork by Michael P.*



*Artwork by Vinnie S.*



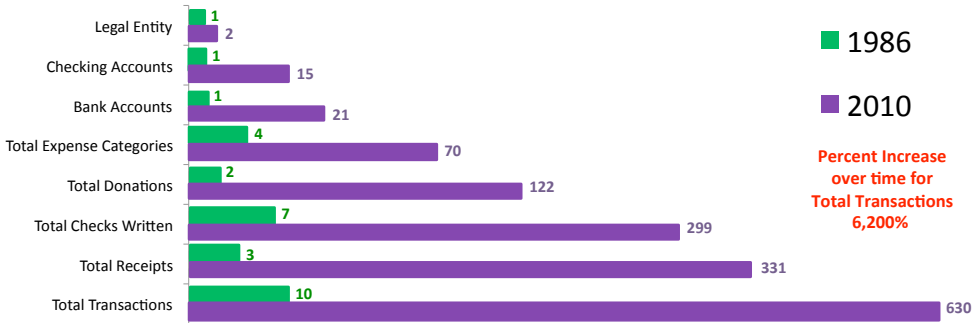
*Artwork by Francine L.*



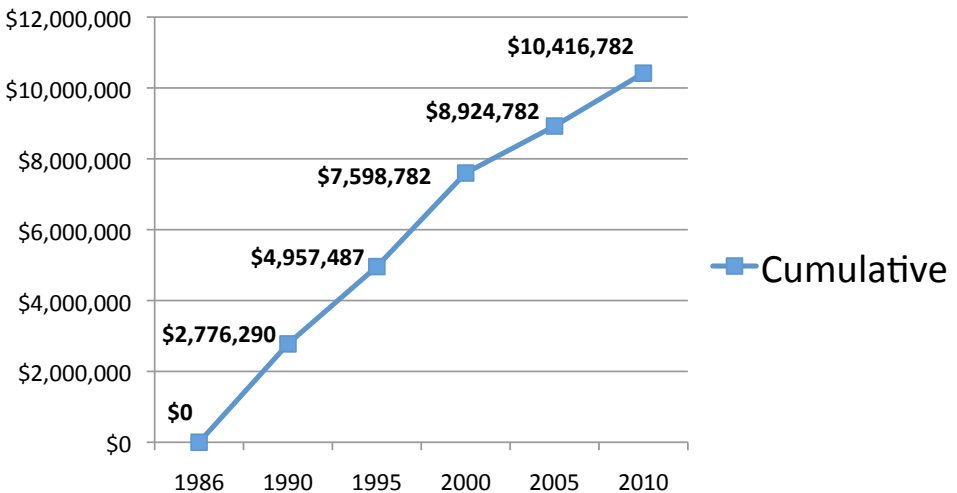
*Artwork by John F.*

# Charting Our

## Comparison of Financial Activities June 1986 vs. June 2010



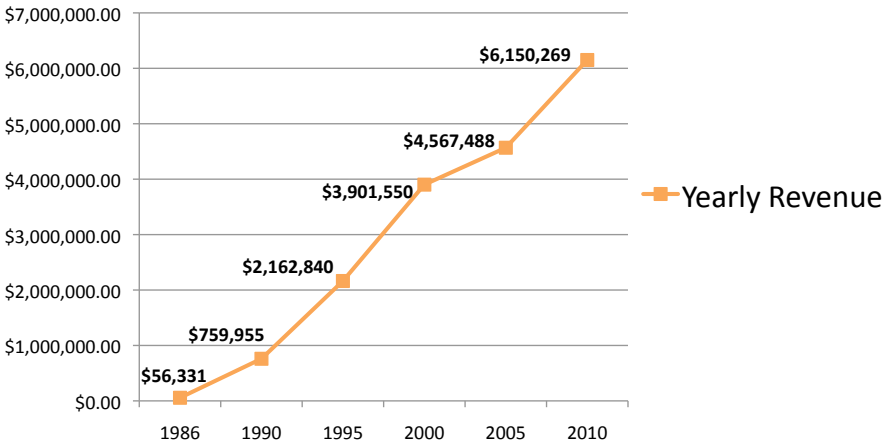
## Grants for Housing



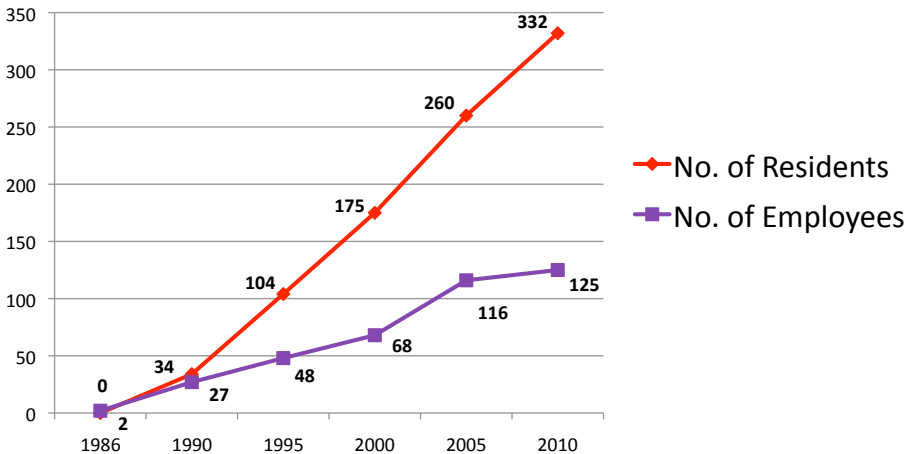
This doesn't include grants we received in the amount of \$6.5m prior to 1989 which we were unable to use.

# Course ...

## Revenue Growth



## Staff / Resident Growth



# — Through the Years ... Many of

David Abbott Zakiah Abdur-Rashid Elliott Abney Akil Abraham Rebecca Abrams Ben Achampong Amie Acierno Steven Acierno Janis Acker Patrick Adams Charles Adams Brian Addison Melissa Aguanno Imran Ahmad Matthew Alesi Claudia Alfaro Laurel Allen Mercedes Allen Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Allen Marie Alliance Patricia Amenita Elijah Anderson Dianna Andres Melissa Angell Steve Antaki Ronny Antony Maritza Archer Sharon Arnold Bernardo Arrango Monica Asberry Odney Avril Cosmo Azzara Ralph Baer James Bagger Ann Bailey Shakhish Bailey Phyllip Baker Martin Bana Tacia Bangs Eduardo Barbosa De Oliveira Mildred Barham Patricia Bartoszak Ines Basso-Glick Thomas Bayne Kerby Beaubrun Mardoche Beauliv Sunita Bechan Laura Beck Marion Beckwith Frank Beiter Barbara Bell Maria Belzer Mr. & Mrs. John Bendick James Berg Christopher Bergman Lucinda Bernard Saunjala Bethea Francine Beverly Jessica Bianchi Rosemary Bianchini Kathleen Bickmeyer Dolores Bier Patricia Bishop-Kelly Deanna Bivona Michele Blackwood Yolanda Blaize Brian Blizzard Wendy Bocian Jeffrey Bogdan Samantha Boggs Donna Boking Barbara Boland Susan Bonich Francisca Booh Tara Booth Marguerite Bosche Joe Boshko Michael Boshko Christine Boteler Spiros Botos Michael Bove Yvette Bowman Barbara Boyle Strak Bozena Bernadette Brachio Victoria Brady Kathleen Brandt David Breitkopf Fred Brendel Kathleen Brennan Thomas Brett Christina Brewster Nadine Briggs Marianne Briglia Betsy Brito Gloria Brooks Collin Brown Dawnmarie Brown Georgia Brown Michael Brown Penelope Brown Rochelle Brown Sheila Brown Slate Brown Tamika Brown Terry Brown Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Brownyard Felicia Bryant Jerrold Bryant Nicola Bryant Shereina Bryant Laura Buonacore Robert Burke Barbara Burke David Burns Arsellia Burton Henry Buskey Funda Buthelezi Evan Buttafuoco Margaret Byrne Sandra Cabrera Nina Cabrol Gerardine Cadet Marie Cadet Victoria Cahlstadt Christopher Calamia Jessica Calamia Carl Calo Blanche Camacho Michele Campbell Michele Cantore-Eaton Frank Capece Jeanne Capriola Ivis Cardona Joann Cardona Jamie Cardoza Coleen Carey Tiffany Carrioso Christine Carignan Jane Carlson Dameraia Carpenter Iris Carrero Prima Carriere Tammy Carrington Gerard Carroll Matt Case Kristin Cassidy Christopher Castellano John Castellano Liz Castellano Sarah Castellano April Castronova Bethann Cavallo-Smith Kerri Caveny Kimberly Cevher Saju Chacko Barbara Chadwick Richard Chalfoux Marie Cheryl Melissa Chiovaro Ying Chow Carina Ciccarelli Gloria Ciolli Margie Clacher S. 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*Be the change you wish to  
see in the world.*

*— Mahatma Ghandi*



*Artwork by Kathleen S.*



