



Caritas Communities

# Rebuilding Lives

Stories from Caritas Communities • Preventing Homelessness Through Affordable Housing

## 30 Houses in 30 Years. Thousands of lives improved.



### P. Leo Corcoran was a visionary.

Three decades ago he witnessed a staggering increase in homelessness among individuals employed in low-wage jobs. As other housing options diminished, the national housing policy was turning toward shelters for the poor, although many knew it was not the long-term answer. However, P. Leo knew what few others did—that the solution to homelessness was permanent housing that low-income people could afford.

Many variables contributed to the decline of affordable housing for the poor and the emergence of mass homelessness. By the early 1980s, in just five years, HUD's Low/Moderate Housing budget suffered a 77% reduction in funding. Simultaneously, local, urban renewal and development focused on the affluent, and with that, the majority of rooming houses in Boston's North, South, and West Ends and Back Bay disappeared with record gentrification. Between 1981–1989, the Northeast experienced a five-fold increase in homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

### Fast forward to 2015, conventional wisdom is catching up to what P. Leo knew to be true.

As noted in many of today's headlines, the leading cause of the Massachusetts' homelessness crisis is due to a lack of affordable housing.<sup>2</sup>

Executive Director Mark Winkeller and the Caritas Board of Directors share P. Leo's belief that acquiring and developing single-room occupancy (SRO) affordable, well-managed, supportive housing is necessary for people to stabilize and rebuild their lives.

### 30 years, 30 buildings and 20 supportive service partnerships later, the Caritas SRO model works.

Affordable housing improves lives, relieves human suffering and reduces the societal costs of homelessness. Caritas housing allows residents living from paycheck to paycheck to create savings rather than spending every dollar on unaffordable rent, which often plunges many back into homelessness. It diminishes the cost of relapses to hospitals, police spending, incarceration and the need for shelters. At the core of our mission, Caritas knows that a home is a necessity to work toward a healthy, stable life.

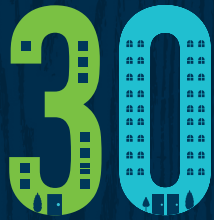
P. Leo was right. He knew that homelessness could not be resolved through shelters. **Homelessness is resolved through housing and the right support systems.** Caritas is proud to be the largest non-profit provider of SRO housing in Greater Boston. ■

**“THE LEADING CAUSE** *of the Massachusetts' homelessness crisis is due to the lack of affordable housing.*”

### SURVEY FINDS ACUTE HOMELESSNESS IN BOSTON

By Katie Johnston, Globe Staff, December 11, 2014

More Boston residents are living in emergency shelters than in any of the 25 major cities surveyed nationwide, according to a report released by the US Conference of Mayors. The survey provided a detailed snapshot of Boston's homeless population, including the revelation that a quarter of the city's homeless adults have jobs. In Trenton, N.J., by comparison, only 4% are employed. Still, these jobs don't pay enough to put a roof over their heads.



30 HOUSES IN 30 YEARS

Fall 2015

## Dear Friends,

It all began with one triple-decker with 12 units in 1985. Thirty years later, we proudly provide a home to more than 895 individuals within our 30 homes. In that time, our commitment to our mission has not wavered. What P. Leo started in the mid-1980s is ever more relevant today with the record number of working yet homeless individuals in the Commonwealth: if you have a safe, clean place to sleep that you can afford, you have a chance at putting your life back together. Without it, you don't.

Thirty years is a time for reflection. Our growth has been fueled by careful acquisition and renovation of large and small properties throughout Greater Boston. Looking ahead for the next several years, we intend to continue to increase the number of individuals we serve by acquiring more housing. And we continue to evaluate and build on existing relationships and establishing new partnerships with agencies who can provide social services to our residents.

In the years ahead, we will continue to compete for scarce resources to provide new housing opportunities for residents living with the fewest resources at the economic margin.

Housing is an essential need that society must meet for the low-income worker, disabled, elderly, veteran and homeless. Thank you for being a part of our family of funders and doing your part. Your gift shows great compassion, and we are deeply grateful.

Mark Winkeller



## THE CHEAPEST WAY TO END HOMELESSNESS IS RIDICULOUSLY SIMPLE



According to the Largest-Ever US Study by T. Drake Baer, *Business Insider*, May 28, 2015, The Economic Roundtable just came out with the largest study on homelessness in American history. And it turns out the best way to combat homelessness is to provide homes.

## Rebuilding Lives

This newsletter is published twice a year for supporters and friends of Caritas Communities. For information about Caritas or to arrange a tour of our properties, please contact Karin Cassel, Director of Fund Development and Communications at 781.843.1242 ext. 23 or [kcassel@caritascommunities.org](mailto:kcassel@caritascommunities.org). Mark Winkeller, Executive Director. Karin Cassel, Editor. Wendy Price, Writer. Carol Maglitta/One Visual Mind, Designer. Romana Vysatova, Photographer.

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### Footnotes from page 1

- <sup>1</sup> Martha R. Burt, "Causes of Growth of Homelessness During the 1980s," in *Understanding Homelessness: New Policy and Research Perspectives* (The Urban Institute, Fannie Mae Foundation 1991, 1997), 183.
- <sup>2</sup> Johnston, K., "Homelessness Population in Mass. Rising Faster Than Any Other State" (The Boston Globe, October 30, 2014).

## OUR RESIDENTS BY THE NUMBERS

 MORE THAN **60%**

Have experienced homelessness, and more than 120 are formerly homeless veterans.

 **895**

Very low-income, working, formerly homeless, veteran, elderly and disabled residents are served by Caritas Communities every day.

 MORE THAN **48%**

Are employed, most earning minimum wage in service sector jobs. The other half are unemployed and either retired, looking for work or disabled.

 **59%**

HAVE AN ANNUAL INCOME OF LESS THAN \$15,000.

# My Name is Invisible

**M**y name is Invisible, because that is how I often feel. I represent those of us living on the economic fringe, but with a story to tell. For most of us, it's not a pretty story. We are veterans who returned home differently than when we left. We are the minimum wage worker who simply can't afford a place to live. We are the survivors of all kinds of abuse. We are in recovery or maintaining sobriety. We've lived on the streets, in our own homes that we've lost, in shelters or served our time in prison. We are parents and grandparents, educated and uneducated. We might park your car, pack your groceries, serve you a meal or make the bed in your hotel room. We're a part of your everyday world.

The photos in the pages of the Caritas materials are the faces of real Caritas residents. The stories are a result of interviews, told in our own words—maintaining our dignity and allowing for us to be our own storytellers. **When we see our photos on these pages and read our stories, there are no words to express how it feels to be visible.**

For 30 years, Caritas has maintained a fundamental belief that everyone deserves a place to call home. For many of us, the road to Caritas has been long and painful, but we are now safe. We now have an address, a key to our room, a place to shower and prepare a meal. Where we will be treated with dignity. Thank you for caring and giving us a chance. ■



## Community Action Partners, Harvard University

**C**aritas has been a two-time recipient of a Harvard Community Action Partners (CAP) team consisting of graduates from the Kennedy and Harvard Business Schools, whose mission is to enhance the lives of people living in Greater Boston through pro-bono consulting to non-profits. The 2014 team focused on creating our successful strategic plan. In 2015, the team focused on improving Caritas' messaging and overall communications and outreach. Results will be unveiled at our Annual Dinner, November 17th. Curious? Please attend and learn.

In addition, Caritas Communities was chosen as the featured client for CAP's year-end event at the Harvard Business School. Resident Wayne W. spoke about his escape from childhood poverty in the ghetto of Detroit to the stability in his Caritas home where, at 27 years old, he is proud to be working while pursuing his college education.

Congratulations, also, to our Executive Director, Mark Winkeller, one of two scholarship recipients to attend the Harvard Business School Strategic Perspectives in Non-Profit Management Program. ■



*Top: Caritas resident speaker, Wayne W. (l.) and Mark Winkeller, Caritas Executive Director*

*Bottom: CAP team and Caritas staff and Board members: Jim Coughlin, Ross Trimby, Dave Wilson, Ruth Carey, Bill Churchill, Gavin Corcoran, Mark Winkeller, Maura Murphy, Brian Kopperl, Barbara Wall Lobosco, Tom Palmer, Karin Cassel*



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HBS ASSOCIATION OF BOSTON



## Caritas Communities

Preventing Homelessness with Affordable Housing

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# 30

## Caritas Communities

30th Annual Dinner • Sponsorship Opportunities

### CELEBRATE WITH US!

Tuesday, November 17, 2015,  
at 5:30 p.m.

The Westin Boston  
Waterfront Hotel  
425 Summer Street, Boston

### PLEASE CONTACT

Please contact Karin Cassel at  
[kcassel@caritascommunities.org](mailto:kcassel@caritascommunities.org)  
or call 781.843.1242 ext. 23



2015 P. LEO CORCORAN  
HUMANITARIAN AWARD HONOREES  
*Anne & Marc Margulies*



## Have a Few Minutes? Give. Do. Receive.

**SECOND ANNUAL HOLIDAY DRIVE. An easy and meaningful way to volunteer.** Please join Kathleen and Mary Corcoran, along with Board member Carol MacDonald, to become a WISHMAKER for the 128 previously homeless men living at Central House in Cambridge by providing:

- Toiletries, socks, white t-shirts
- \$10 gift cards to Shaws
- Gloves and hats
- \$10 laundry cards

During a time when many of our residents experience feelings of isolation, please take part as you did last year to ensure that no one feels forgotten during the holiday season.

**Join us for our Central House Holiday Party on December 16, 2015.** For more information on becoming a WISHMAKER or volunteer gift wrapper, please email [CaritasCentralHouse@gmail.com](mailto:CaritasCentralHouse@gmail.com).

### Give the Gift of a Home.

Please support Caritas Communities.  
Contact Karin Cassel at  
[kcassel@caritascommunities.org](mailto:kcassel@caritascommunities.org)  
or visit [www.caritascommunities.org](http://www.caritascommunities.org)



## Why Caritas Communities?

Because we believe every person deserves a safe, clean place to call home.

- Established in 1985 by P. Leo Corcoran, Caritas Communities is the largest non-profit owner and manager of permanent veteran and single-room occupancy housing in Greater Boston.
- Caritas provides low- and extremely low-income residents safe, clean and stable housing in its 895 rooms in 30 buildings in Greater Boston.
- Rents range from \$120 to \$145 per week and include all utilities and furnishings.

Photos on front cover and bottom of back cover by Romana Vysatova