



**Always
Home**

PREVENTING
FAMILY
HOMELESSNESS

Serving Communities Since 1998

October 2024 E-Newsletter



This single mom and her toddler faced homelessness when the apartment building they lived in was sold. The new owner/landlord declined to renew the lease and evicted them. Mom and son lived temporarily with family, but it wasn't a viable long-term solution. Yet with every housing option available to her, the cost to secure a lease was beyond the means of this low-income parent. Helping families regain housing security is one of the ways Always Home promotes the safety and well-being of young children. By covering the cost of the security deposit and first month's rent, we were able to give this family a fresh start. Both the mom and Always Home's staff agree, however, that it wouldn't have happened without the kindness and support of the community. Thank you!



Light the World Giving Machines are Coming to Mystic!

Always Home is excited to share that we are one of five Connecticut nonprofits selected to take part in this year's Light the World Giving Machines. Sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Light the World Giving Machines will provide a unique and memorable way for the public to support our neighbors in need this holiday season. Olde Mistick Village will be hosting two vending machines on the Village Green from December 5th to December 17th. Mystic is one of only 108 cities worldwide to receive a Giving Machine!

In addition to Always Home, other Connecticut charities featured include Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, Gemma Moran/United Way Mobile Food Pantries, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp and Hartford HealthCare Neighborhood Health Mobile Health Clinics. You'll also have the opportunity to contribute to two global nonprofits, UNICEF USA and iDE. Every donation goes entirely - 100% - to the organization of your choice. Always Home staff will be on the Village Green with cookies and cocoa on December 12th from 3:30 to 5:30. We invite you to stop by and say hello!

Always Home Welcomes New Board Members



Rev. Christa Swenson is Senior Pastor of Mystic Congregational Church, an open and affirming congregation she has led since 2016. Christa is dedicated to promoting justice and fostering a community where everyone feels valued.

"I am honored to join the Board of Always Home and contribute to the impactful work that has already been done to assist families facing homelessness. Always Home's commitment to providing early intervention and supportive services to maintain housing and stem the causes of homelessness enables families to maintain dignity while navigating a difficult season in their life. I look forward to contributing to the continued success and transformative impact of this vital organization as we face the growing challenge of affordable housing."



Pantea Umrysz is co-owner of East Coast Pro Painting LLC, a member of the Groton Economic Development Commission and serves as a mentor for students of the Groton Public School system. As a Groton resident and small business owner, Pantea is committed to contributing to the region's growth and prosperity, believing that "every step forward, no matter how small, brings us closer to our collective vision of a vibrant and thriving community."

"Growing up, I dreamed of starting a homeless shelter called 'Home,' where no matter what stage of life someone was in, they would always have a place to call home," shared Pantea. "In a way, joining the Board of Always Home feels serendipitous. I'm honored and excited to be part of such an incredible organization that makes a real difference in our community."



Natalie Webb is a licensed, registered dietitian nutritionist, President of the Nutrition Network and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions at the University of Hartford. She is particularly sensitive to the needs of others in her role as Regional Leader for New London County for Lasagna Love, a nationwide initiative to "feed families, spread kindness, strengthen communities."

"I recently moved back to the home my parents built and I was born and raised in Mystic, Connecticut. A place that provides me with a sense of belonging, comfort, security, and stability – filled with great memories and many life lessons. A home is not only key to our comfort and joy but is the foundation to our well-being. I look forward to actively participating as a board member for Always Home – an organization that understands the importance of a home and aids folks to have one."

Stepping down from the Board is President, Annemarie Seifert, Ph.D. (Campus Dean and Chief Administrative Officer of UConn Avery Point) and Secretary, Rev. Adam Thomas (Rector, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Mystic). "Annemarie and Adam's many years of service have left a lasting impact on the organization," said Always Home's Executive Director, Tricia Cunningham. "Their contributions have not only shaped the success we see today but have also helped create a robust and inspiring strategic direction to lead us forward."

We're also deeply grateful to the following members who have been elected to serve as Board Officers: Rev. Lonnie Brown (Senior Minister of Union Baptist Church, Mystic) as President; Ali Dunigan (Executive Director of Association of Northeast Extension Directors/Lighthouse Consulting Group) as Vice President; Robert Sampson (Founder & CEO of RJS Financial Group) as Treasurer; and Crystal Sides (Senior Vice President & Chief Operations Officer of Dime Bank) as Secretary.



Celebrate Autumn with a
Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquet
from the Groton



For each \$10.99 bouquet sold during
October, Always Home will receive a \$1
donation in support of our mission
Preventing Family Homelessness.



Foundation grants are an important source of income for Always Home and a way to raise targeted support for our Homelessness Prevention programs. We are very grateful to the following funders for recently awarding our agency generous program grants: Anderson-Paffard Foundation, Inc.; Groton Rotary Foundation; Mystic Woman's Club; Nordson Corporation Foundation; R.S. Gernon Trust, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee; and Webster Bank.



Save the date for Always Home's annual Heart to Heart Gala, a special evening honoring your dedication to Preventing Family Homelessness. We look forward to seeing you in April and celebrating the power of coming together to create positive change! Our heartfelt thanks to Michelle Marra for allowing us to feature her joyful artwork in this year's invitation!

