



## A Grandmother's Gift



"I just wanted to do something BIG," says Shannon Mason, Mercer Street Friends Director of Children and Youth Services. She's describing her ambition, while growing up in Orange, New Jersey—"not West Orange, or South Orange, or East Orange, but Orange!"—to become the first African-American supreme court justice of the United States. "I had no idea what the Supreme Court did, but I knew it was something BIG and that the justices impacted the lives of many people. So from the age of nine, I was determined to become one."

Listening to this engaging and accomplished woman, it doesn't seem at all improbable that she would now be "Justice Mason" if she had stayed with her early career aspirations. Her mother and father, though struggling as teenage parents, instilled in her the importance of education and sacrificed much so she could have quality schooling. Her first books were a King James Bible and Webster's Collegiate

**"...what you see with Shannon is what you get. She's one of the most transparent, unpretentious people I've ever met."**

*- Hope Crumbley  
MSF Executive Administrative Assistant*

Dictionary that were presents from her paternal grandmother at birth. Asked at the time to explain why anyone would give such reading to a newborn, Daisy Mason replied: "I want her to be very intelligent and be used by God."

The Supreme Court's loss, and MSF's eventual gain, began with a psychology class in Dr. Mason's junior year of high school. Intrigued by it, she began to weigh the pros and cons of a career in law versus one in counseling. The issue finally resolved itself at a school retreat in her senior year. "I really, honestly and truly, had an epiphany," she recalls. "I remember standing there almost

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## Bessie Staley Honored as Home Health Aide of The Year

Mercer Street Friends Home Health Care employee Bessie Staley was recently awarded the distinction of Home Health Aide of the Year by the New Jersey Home Health Care Association, at its annual conference in Edison, New Jersey. She was also honored by the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders with a proclamation designating her the Mercer County Home Health Aide of the Year.

Always exemplifying a spirit of excellence in her profession, Ms. Staley has been employed by the Home Health Care division for more than twenty-five years.

Bessie comments, "I guess I just enjoy being a Home Health Aide because this line of work comes naturally to me. I take care of my patients just like one of my family."

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*Pictured left to right are Board of Chosen Freeholders Anthony Carabelli, Keith Hamilton, and Ann Cannon, Mercer Street Friends Bessie Staley and Freeholder Lucylle R.S. Walter honoring Staley's distinction as Home Health Aide of the Year*

### HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH MERCER STREET FRIENDS HOME HEALTH CARE?

- Call Mercer Street Friends Home Health Care Intake Department at 609 396 1507
- Talk to your physician
- If you or a family member is a patient in a hospital or other medical facility, talk to a social worker or discharge planner
- Most local hospitals and facilities have a Mercer Street Friends Home Health Care nurse liaison representative to assist you with the process.
- Ask for us by name!

## Dear Friends,

*There has been much written in both the popular press as well as philanthropic journals about how the “intergenerational transfer of wealth” is greater today than in all previous history. How much impact that may or may not have on the programs of Mercer Street Friends is yet to be determined.*

*There is, however, another type of intergenerational transfer that has had a tremendous impact on the leadership of Mercer Street Friends. In November, our agency held its ‘first of a kind’ former board member reunion. Attending were founding and current board members, as well as representatives from each of the decades from 1958 through 2007. An auspicious gathering, to be sure.*

*Every one of the former board members stood and spoke, sharing experiences and insights gained from their tenure with the organization. Their stories were powerful, personal, reflective, and compelling. Being relatively new to MSF, it was astounding to me how much information, insight, and institutional knowledge was presented. To me, this was an example of the “intergenerational transfer of wisdom.”*

*There was an intrinsic connection between the past, present, and future of the agency that was inspiring. While the face of Mercer Street Friends has changed over the years, as have some of its specific services, it becomes clear that the basic values, the mission, and spirit of the organization have remained the same. Further, the lasting impact of those values continues to guide the lives of the past board members as it does our current leadership and staff.*

Sincerely,



Barry H. Cole, Ph.D.

## A Grandmother's Gift

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overwhelmed and in tears, saying, ‘Oh my God, I’m supposed to be a psychologist. This is what I’m supposed to do.’”

The division she now directs serves youngsters from infancy to late teens, providing them with a wide array of services: day care, before-and after-school care, individual and family therapy, substance abuse counseling, educational and cultural enrichment, recreation, community service, and job training. The merging of MSF children’s programs with its youth services occurred late last year, and was inspired in no small measure by Shannon’s academic background and hands-on clinical experience across the chronological spectrum of childhood. Her personal philosophy, supported time and again by studies, is that prevention is more effective and efficient than treatment. “If we can get our hands on these kids at a younger age and begin to integrate what we’ve learned from working at the other end with teenagers, we can do wonders for the community.” She sees her professional role as figuring out how to bring the highest quality of service to those who are most in need but least likely to have access.

In Dr. Shannon Mason, the disadvantaged couldn’t have found a better advocate or ally. Passionate, highly respected, empathetic, and insightful, she touched board members recently with a heart-opening exercise that profoundly deepened their understanding of poverty. At the other extreme, she’s used humor and parody to help teenagers see through their magical thinking and take responsibility for their actions. While clinical director of Youth Services, she was known to come into the office at night after being out sick all day—just to meet with a troubled client.

In the same way that each individual faces a different constellation of problems, successful outcomes manifest differently. For one person, it may mean showing up each week for the duration of a program; for another, it’s a college acceptance; for still another, it’s reconciling with a mother who’s now able to parent all her children effectively. Whatever the success is though, it always begins at the same place: taking the time to connect and acknowledging the greatness within.

Sunday afternoon in the wood-paneled banquet hall of the Slackwood firehouse in Lawrenceville, the New and Living Way Ministry is holding its weekly service and Pastor Shannon Mason is at the front, keeping time with a tambourine as the Praise and Worship portion climaxes. The young congregation—infants and toddlers, adolescents and teens, young adults and couples—is swaying and singing a joyful noise. In two years, it has grown from six members to fifty, drawn by Shannon’s welcoming arms and guidance. Her sermon today dwells on Ephesians 6:12:17: “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.” To her, this ministry is not that different from her work at Mercer Street Friends. Both are the fruit of what Daisy Mason sowed 29 years ago.





## MSF Board

# Welcomes Rich Micali

The newest appointment to the Mercer Street Friends board of directors is Rich Micali, who resides in Newtown, Pennsylvania. He is currently a vice president sales, for Bristol-Myers Squibb. In this role, he is responsible for all sales operations for the Oncology Division.

Rich has been in the pharmaceutical industry for 24 years, all of those with Bristol-Myers Squibb. He began his career as a sales representative for Mead Johnson Pharmaceuticals in Cleveland, OH. His business background includes sales, marketing, managed care, and business development. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and a MBA from John Carroll University, also in Ohio.

Previous board appointments include Capital Health Systems Foundation in Mercer County, New Jersey and the Pennsbury Football Parents Club in Lower Bucks County Pennsylvania.

Rich is supported by his wife of 27 years, Hallie, and three wonderful children, Dominic, Emily, and Madeline. He is particularly active in his church and enjoys sports and reading.

# ROBERTA ORSI SAVES THE DATE

For Roberta Orsi, Christmas begins in early October with an e-mail "Save the Date" announcement. The labor of love that follows culminates in mid-December when the MSF gift-wrap fund-raiser, which she has spearheaded since 2004, sets up shop in the Barnes and Noble bookstore at Princeton's MarketFair. Over the course of four twelve-hour days, seventy volunteers split two-hour shifts (or longer) wrapping holiday purchases in exchange for optional donations. Roberta coordinates it from home, and also on site, relying on Excel spreadsheets and her ever-expanding network of personal contacts. Give her your e-mail address for any reason at all, and odds are excellent that you'll hear from her in the fall. Now retired as manager of test operations and support for the New Jersey Department of Personnel, she's adept at running complex, service-oriented logistical operations. But it was the care she received from an MSF visiting nurse while recovering from breast cancer that engaged her heart so deeply.

"I didn't know anyone who had gone through this, and I kept it a secret from all but my partner, Ken, and friend, Maryann," explains Roberta. "I didn't sense I was going to die, but neither did I know how I'd get through it. The nurse, who may have been a survivor herself, was so reassuring, so warm, so caring, and so available. She told me what to expect from my chemo and radiation in a way that I could easily grasp."

In 2004, the holiday gift-wrap project was having its own crisis. The Mercer Street Friends staff couldn't afford to spend the time needed to recruit the number of

volunteers needed to staff the gift-wrap fund-raiser. The administration reluctantly decided that they needed to end the program when MSF computer Specialist Dave Zboray asked, "What if we can find an outside volunteer to manage it?" Dave asked Barbara Rooks, a friend from accounting, if she knew of anyone who could be talked into doing it. Barbara immediately thought of Roberta, a skiing buddy from the Trenton Ski Club who was competent, recently retired, and a regular contributor to TSC's charitable activities. Barbara also knew how grateful Roberta was for her visiting nurse experience.

Needless to say, it took little convincing. Once she came on board, the program underwent a complete transformation. Instead of volunteer absenteeism, "Roberta's people" (as Nancy Nicholson, the Community Relations Manager at Barnes and Noble is fond of calling them) became so dependable they took over a gift-wrap service for the entire mall when another group's volunteers failed to appear. People started to bring their kids and other family members, friends and colleagues, with them on shifts. Some are reserving their time slots as soon as they receive their October e-mail invitation.

This year, a suggestion was made by newly appointed Director of Communications Janina Akins to broaden the allotted time for the fund-raiser by adding two weekend evenings of gift wrapping in MarketFair's Center Court. This addition proved lucrative and the proceeds for the fundraiser amounted to

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## Food Bank Reports Banner Fundraising Returns

Check-Out-Hunger, the annual supermarket-based fund-raiser that allows shoppers to donate directly from the check-out line, has presented its most lucrative results ever, with donations totaling over \$70,000 from the retailers that have reported to date. Of that total, Wegmans Market in Princeton contributed over \$48,539, the most money raised in any single store in the history of the fundraiser.

Additionally, Princeton's Whole Foods Market partnered with the Food Bank for the first time in a double promotion that combined a "Five Percent Day" with Clementine bag sales. Whole Foods donated five percent of all sales at the store and all proceeds from sales of reusable cloth grocery bags sold Thanksgiving through January 31. The Whole Foods gifts totaled over \$7,000.



# Bracco's Santa Express Touches Down in Hamilton



The Bracco Group of Princeton joyously distributed its fourth annual cache of holiday gifts to squeals of delight and peals of laughter when The Santa Express rolled into both the Hamilton Avenue and West State Street child care centers just before Christmas.

The yearly donation program, headed since its inception by Senior Executive Administrator Helene Vitella, began four years ago to distribute gifts to children in the Greater Trenton area. Pictured above with Santa—who bears a remarkable resemblance to Bracco's Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Scott Hollander—is the Ladybug Class of the Hamilton location along with Director Hazel Powell, teachers, aides, and Bracco's cast of assorted elves and helpers for 2006.

# Items We Can Always Use In Our Programs

## • Mercer Street Friends Food Bank

Contact: Ivette Olmeda 609 406 0503  
Common spices, such as pepper, oregano, and garlic; canned protein such as tuna and chicken; rice, cereal, and grains; canned fruit and vegetables; personal hygiene items; shrink wrap, and packing tape. No glass containers, please. Plastic containers, cans, and cardboard boxes are all acceptable.

## • Mercer Street Friends Parenting and Adult Services

Contact: Ali Cassaday 609 989 1395  
Disposable diapers in all sizes. New or gently used baby clothing, baby carriers, and baby furniture such as cribs, playpens, bassinets, changing tables, highchairs, and toddler tables with chairs. New linen, baby dishes, and receiving blankets. Toddler art supplies, board books, large puzzle pieces.

## • Mercer Street Friends Children and Youth Services

Contact: Betsy Schumann 609 393 8777  
Gently used clothing for infants and toddlers; new mittens, gloves and scarves; gently used, cleaned warm coats; new or gently used children's books for all ages

## • Mercer Street Friends Home Health Services

Contact: Beverly Henderson 609 396 1507  
Ensure Liquid Nutrition in both cans and bars for low-income patients; toiletries, such as shampoo, moisturizing lotion, shaving cream, liquid soap (*no glass containers, please*).

# Roberta Orsi Saves the Date

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nearly \$1,000 more than the previous season.

"This increase could never have occurred without Roberta and her amazing network of volunteers. The suggestion was made, but she put the plan into effect," comments Akins. "Her dedication and the dedication she inspires in others is why this fund-raiser exists at all."

It's a program that works on many levels, for so many parties. Barnes and Noble burnishes its image as a good corporate citizen and avoids hiring extra staff for gift-wrapping duties and customers give to a worthy cause in return for one less thing to worry about. Volunteers have the satisfaction of doing good works, and MSF raises valuable funds as well as its public profile. The affirmation that comes from hearing patrons describe how their lives, or those of their loved ones, have been touched by MSF programs is priceless. As Roberta says: "Because so many people in this area count on Mercer Street Friends, as long as I'm in this area, MSF can count on me."



**Yes!** I will join those actively supporting Mercer Street Friends through a contribution of:

\$35 \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 \_\_\_\_\_

\$100 \_\_\_\_\_

\$250 \_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DAY PHONE/EVENING PHONE/E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your check, made payable to: Mercer Street Friends, 151 Mercer Street, Trenton, NJ 08611, or donate at [www.mercerstreetfriends.org](http://www.mercerstreetfriends.org). Your contribution is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

You can specifically designate Mercer Street Friends as a recipient of your workplace United Way contribution by writing in our name or by using your company's donor designation number for Mercer Street Friends.



Circle of Friends  
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Contributor: Alan Goldsmith  
Photography: Beverly Henderson, Dave Zboray  
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Would you prefer to receive this newsletter online? Do you have a suggestion for a future issue? If so, please contact Janina Akins, Director of Communications online at: [jakins@mercerstreetfriends.org](mailto:jakins@mercerstreetfriends.org) or by phone at 609 396 1506.





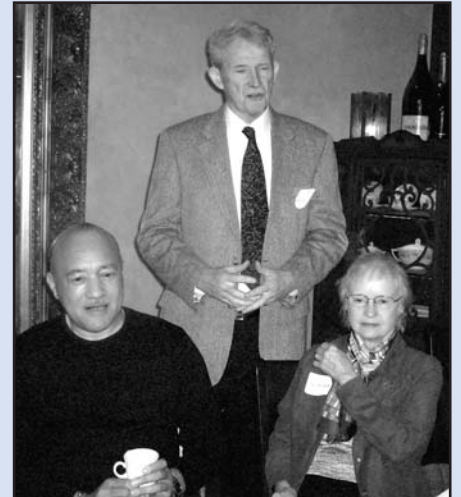
# FORMER MERCER STREET FRIENDS BOARD MEMBER REUNION

## Six Decades of Attendees Share Reminiscences and Hopes for the Future

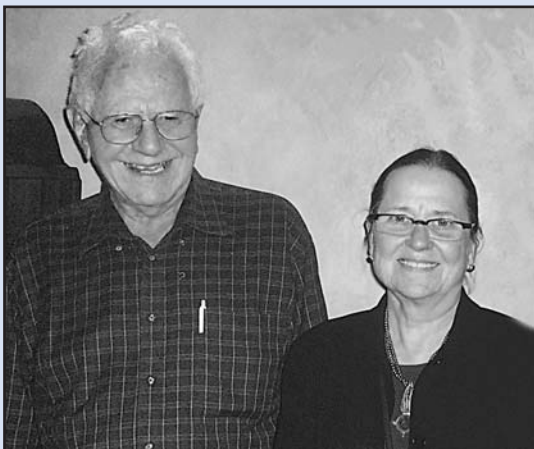
On November 15, 2006, thirty-one former and current Mercer Street Friends board members—spanning six decades of social service in the greater Trenton area—gathered together at a luncheon at Marsilio’s Restaurant in Chambersburg to reunite and to toast longtime Executive Assistant Maj-Britt Smith on the occasion of her thirtieth anniversary with the organization.



*Arthur Manual, Julia Manual, Eugene McCray, and John Heilner (left to right)*



*Kenneth Faulkner, George Carroll, and Jan Williams (left to right)*



*Robert Appelbaum and Odie LeFever (left to right)*



*Reverend Raul Mattei, Ann Reece, and Edwina Asch (left to right)*



*Thomas Fee, Maureen Darrow, and Jerry Eure (left to right)*



*Susan Snipes Wells and Executive Assistant Maj-Britt Smith (left to right)*



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www.mercerstreetfriends.org  
609 396 1506

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# \$10,000 TECHNOLOGY DONATION BENEFITS MERCER STREET FRIENDS

Correctional Medical Services of Ewing, New Jersey recently donated an estimated \$10,000 worth of computer equipment to Mercer Street Friends. This is the largest technology donation to date to Mercer Street Friends.

The generous donation was the result of a major CMS equipment overhaul. The company's gift included numerous desktop and laptop computers, monitors, keyboards, accessories, fax machines, and printers.

The desktop models are now outfitting the six Abbott Classrooms at the preschool facility at 1201 West State Street, in Trenton's west ward. They are now providing the teachers with long-needed internet access. The computers will also be used as educational tools to facilitate computer literacy at the pre-school level. The laptop computers have allowed MSF Computer Specialist Dave Zboray, to set up a



*Pictured left to right are MSF Computer Specialist Dave Zboray, CMS Consultant Scheduler Jose Torres, CMS Director QI Ombudsman Carl Ausfahl, and CMS Senior Regional Manager Marge Amodei*

“portable classroom” for Mercer Street Friends employee training.

## Bessie Staley Honored as Home Health Aide of The Year

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The respect she has earned at Mercer Street Friends and the New Jersey Home Health Care Association is closely followed by the admiration she has earned at The Escher Street Home Project where she prepares meals and provides personal care to those who can not manage on their own.

Mercer Street Friends Home Health Care is a full service home health agency—covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and most insurance plans—providing a broad range of services including skilled nurses, certified home health aides, physical, occupational and speech therapists, registered dieticians and medical social workers.

