

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

This issue of *Friends Talk* serves as our annual report (with some acknowledgements of ongoing community support). As such, it is a good place to pause and celebrate.

In the last three years, we have been an organization undergoing transformation. After the sale of our Home Health Care Division, we restructured to accommodate our refined focus. We've embraced the community schools vision, developed a compelling mission statement, and implemented a strategic plan which is harnessing our organizational strengths to deepen our community impact. We unified our communications and our advancement efforts enhancing the way that each of our parts works together to strengthen the whole.

With the courage of the board of trustees, tireless commitment and ingenuity of the staff and steadfast support of our donors, we reinstated summer preschool, started bridging the digital divide, embraced a trauma informed care initiative, expanded our food bank, and launched a community school!

Extremely proud of what we, together, have been able to accomplish and confident that this momentum will continue through the next leg of this nearly 60 year journey, I will be leaving my post as executive director of Mercer Street Friends on June 3, 2016.

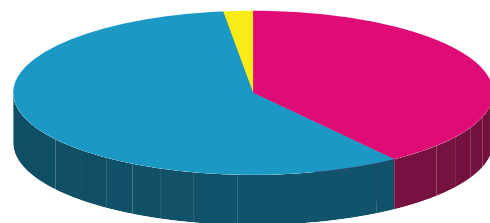
As the news of this has been shared, I have been asked "why". Simply put, I have done what I took this position to do – cast a vision, set us on a course, strengthen this great organization and deepen our impact. My prior 10 years of experience with the senior staff assured me that together we could. And together we have!

I have every confidence in the future of Mercer Street Friends and the community school movement. It is with a tremendous sense of accomplishment, joy and anticipation that I say...

Onward!

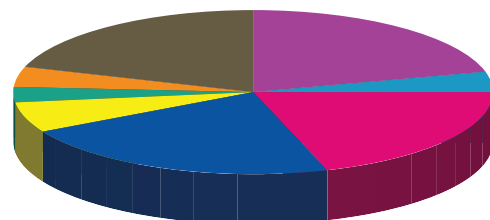
Shannon M. Mason, Ph.D.

MSF FINANCIAL OVERVIEW FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015



INCOME

- Contributions 40%
- Government Support 58%
- Miscellaneous Income 2%



EXPENSES

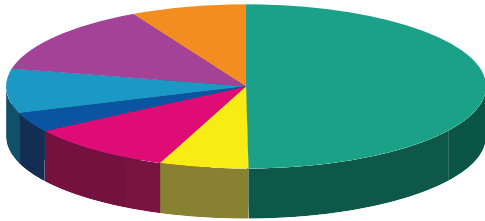
- Food Bank 21%
- Home Health Care 4%
- Parenting and Adult 20%
- Preschool 22%
- Youth Services 6%
- Other 3%
- Fundraising 4%
- General and Administration 20%

Bridging opportunity gaps...helping families and communities make the journey out of poverty.

FOOD BANK

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

■ Received 2,758,597 pounds of food and groceries – 95% of the food fell within recommended nutritional guidelines.



- USDA Commodities 50%
1,374,828 lbs.
- Food Industry Donations 6%
165,220 lbs.
- Produce Donations..... 10%
276,289 lbs.
- Retail Gleaning Donations..... 4%
106,875 lbs.
- Food Drives and Local Donations... 8%
240,574 lbs.
- Purchased with Govt. Grants..... 14%
379,856 lbs.
- Purchased with Private Dollars 8%
214,955 lbs.



■ Distributed 2,610,644 pounds of food and groceries to 55 food pantries and meal sites:

- Abundant Life Christian Center
- Anchor House
- ARC Mercer
- Bethel Seventh-Day Adventist Church
- Cadwalader-Asbury United Methodist Church
- Catholic Charities – Emergency Services
- Catholic Charities – New Choices
- Catholic Charities – Partners in Recovery
- Celestial Church of Christ
- Christ Presbyterian Church
- Community Action Service Center/RISE
- Crisis Ministry – Hanover Street (Trenton)



The Food Bank's **Retail Gleaning** program rescues meat, produce, dairy, prepared, bakery and non-perishable food and groceries donated by supermarkets, club stores, and Amazon – food that otherwise would go to waste. With a grant from NRG Energy, the Food Bank purchased a second truck to make more retail pickups. Last year, Mercer Street Friends received food donations from 25 retail outlets.

- Crisis Ministry – Nassau Street (Princeton)
- Crisis Ministry – S. Clinton Avenue (Trenton)
- Divine Mercy Food Pantry
- East Trenton Center at Habitat for Humanity
- Faith Baptist Church
- Faith Deliverance Cathedral
- Family Preservation Center (HomeFront)
- First Haitian Church of God
- First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury
- First Presbyterian Church of Morrisville
- Griggs Farm
- HomeFront Pantry
- Isles Inc. YouthBuild
- Jewish Family and Children's Services
- Lawrence Community Center
- Mercer Street Friends – Mobile Pantry
- Mercer Street Friends – Parent Child Center West
- Mercer Street Friends – Preschool
- Mount Carmel Guild
- New Covenant United Methodist Church
- New Hope Church of God
- NJ Conference Adventist Community Service Center
- Primera Iglesia Pentecostal Alpha & Omega
- Princeton Deliverance Center
- Rescue Mission of Trenton
- Restoration Outreach Christian Kare Center
- Resurrection Lutheran Church
- Sacred Heart Church
- Salvation Army (Adult Rehabilitation Center)
- Salvation Army (Canteen)
- Samaritan Baptist Church
- St. Raphael/Holy Angels
- The Victorious Church
- Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
- Trenton Deliverance Center
- Trinity Episcopal Cathedral
- Turning Point United Methodist Church
- United Progress, Inc.

- UPI Transitional Housing
- Urban Promise

SEND HUNGER PACKING

■ Partnered with 16 schools and provided 20,696 Send Hunger Packing weekend meal packs to 705 children facing food hardships at home.

- Antheil Elementary School (Ewing)
- Community Park Elementary School (Princeton)
- Fisher Middle School (Ewing)
- John Witherspoon Middle School (Princeton)
- Johnson Park Elementary School (Princeton)
- Klockner Elementary School (Hamilton)
- Littlebrook Elementary School (Princeton)
- Lore Elementary School (Ewing)
- Mercer Street Friends Preschool (Trenton)
- Parker Elementary School (Trenton)
- Parkway Elementary School (Ewing)
- Princeton Nursery School (Princeton)
- Rivera Middle School (Trenton)
- Riverside Elementary School (Princeton)
- Slackwood Elementary School (Lawrenceville)
- Wilson Elementary School (Hamilton)

SUMMER FEEDING

■ Closed summer meal gaps for 175 low-income children and provided a wholesome breakfast and lunch at Learning Lab (Trenton), Camp Promise (Trenton), Camp Truth (Trenton) and the CYO/Bromley Neighborhood Center (Hamilton).

SNAP OUTREACH

■ Assisted 87 households in applying for SNAP benefits. Average benefit was \$272.49 a month.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL INITIATIVE



- Began individual and group counseling for mental health services in October. Created and implemented referral criteria and processes for mental health services. Now seeing 24 students individually, 15 students in group sessions and 40 students in psychoeducation/life skills development.

- 75 students receiving Send Hunger Packing weekend meal packs; MSF community school staff distributing fresh produce provided by the Food Bank.

- Coordinating all the after school programs (Rivera Extended Day) that are conducted in the facility by Mercer Street Friends and other community agencies and building our presence and visibility among students and their families.

- Started “Drop-In Tutoring.” Program with two students. Increased participation to nearly 40 students weekly, working with eight volunteer tutors.

- Mercer Street Friends staff serving on multiple school teams, i.e., School Leadership Team (SLT), Attendance Team and Climate and Culture Team.

- 2015 was a year of planning and implementation, culminating with the opening of the Luis Muñoz Rivera Middle school in September as the first community school in Trenton.

- Mercer Street Friends staff settled into Rivera Middle School on a full-time permanent basis. Space within the schoolhouse was renovated for community school offices and programs.

- Held the first official community event in March at Rivera Middle School – eye exams by Optical Academy for students, their families, and neighborhood residents. 63 adults and kids came to the school to get exams and obtain glasses if needed.



Ribbon cutting ceremony: (left to right) Interim Superintendent of Schools Lucy Fera, Mercer County Freeholder Pasquale “Pat” Colavita, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, Rivera Community Middle School Principal Bernadette Trapp, Mercer Street Friends Executive Director Dr. Shannon Mason, Trenton Mayor Eric Jackson, Trenton City Councilwoman Marge Caldwell-Wilson and Mercer Street Friends Community School Coordinator Anniasha Walker.

Our vision to implement a community school model in Trenton earned the confidence of the U.S. Department of Education which awarded Mercer Street Friends a five year \$2.27 million grant.

Key expected outcomes include: improvements in attendance and retention rates; improved parental engagement; positive changes in behavior among children and parents; and increased access to supportive services for students, family members and community.

WEST WARD ALLIANCE

- Members of the West Ward Alliance Steering Committee collaborated with Mercer Street Friends’ Community School staff in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment utilizing focus groups with students, parents and caregivers, faculty, and staff. WWA members assisted with scheduling, space needs, secured facilitators and recorders and helped develop questions geared to each group, i.e., students, parents and staff and instructions to participants.

- There were separate focus groups on multiple days for each grade level, six through eight, for each staff department (i.e., paraprofessionals, math, science, language arts, social studies, etc.), and for parents/guardians. A common question for each group was “What additional services or resources from the community do you feel would benefit you?”

- The three areas identified as priority needs were parent engagement, coordination of after-school programs, and social services.



PRESCHOOL



End of school year celebration

■ Educated and nurtured 87 children, ages three to five, at our fully accredited early education center during the regular school year. Our curriculum emphasizes cognitive, social and emotional growth to create resilient children with long-term academic advantages.

■ 22 children were able to attend our summer program, minimizing the summer learning gap, a problem that is particularly prevalent in low-income communities.

■ In addition to on-site meals, the preschoolers received a weekend Send

Hunger Packing food pack from the MSF Food Bank.

I love the genuine care and concern the teachers show for the children. I've noticed my child has developed structure – he's learned how to create his own routine at home.

Erika Monk, Parent

YOUTH SERVICES

■ Engaged 95 youth in life and vocational skills training programs to teach and practice skills needed for success in social relationships, employment and academics. Topics included communications, goal setting, college preparation and workplace etiquette.

■ Placed 20 youth in internships allowing them to apply vocational training and life skills and explore career interests. Internship sites included: Trenton Public Library, NOW (Nutrition, Obesity and Weight Management Organization), Habitat for Humanity, Rivera Middle School and Mercer Street Friends' Trenton

Digital Initiative, and TCNJ's Video Gaming Design Program.

■ Supported 30 youth who received individual or family clinical counseling services to address risk factors relating to mental health, substance abuse, family issues, peer conflict and other socially relevant areas.

■ Hosted and mentored six student interns from Rutgers University's Masters in Social Work Program and Princeton Theological Seminary who are pursuing undergraduate and graduate learning in psychology, social work and theology.

TRENTON DIGITAL INITIATIVE (TDI)

■ Secured donations of 609 used computers.

■ Refurbished 409 computers with the help of four adult volunteers and 15 Youth Services program participants who were taught how to clean the computers and install new software.

■ Distributed computers to 200 Trenton families and, if qualified, linked them to Comcast Internet Essentials, a program that offers low cost internet access to eligible low-income families.

■ In partnership with MSF's Parenting programs at the Parent Child Center West, taught a group of 35 parents how to operate a computer and use for job searches, resume building, homework help and to find useful sites for parenting and child development information. These parents, and an additional 75 parents participating in other parenting programs, received a free computer for their homes.

The donated lap tops from TDI were given to graduates of our Web Design classes. Having this technology in their homes enables them to access the internet, explore entrepreneurial ventures and discover freelance career opportunities.

Jennifer Jones,
Workforce Development Specialist, Shiloh Baptist Church CDC Career Center



PARENTING



Tina Brown (left) and her baby, Da'Monz, with **Parents as Teachers** Parent Educator Maria Morales (right). Maria is giving the baby colorful blocks and showing him how he can tap them together. She is role modeling this type of simple activity for Mom and encouraging her to do this at home to promote her child's growth and development.

MSF PARENT CHILD CENTER WEST

■ At the Parent Child Center West, 492 parents and children found the resources and received support to assist them in managing both immediate problems and long-term issues of health and family well-being. Services at the Center include case management, parenting education, classes in stress management strategies, workshops for pregnant and new moms, developmental screenings for children, pregnancy testing with linkages for prenatal care, books, MSF Food Bank Food Bags to ease food shortages in the home, and distribution of donated winter clothing items (hats, gloves, scarves, and jackets), warm handmade blankets, and personal care items.

HEALTHY FAMILIES – TIP

■ Certified Family Support Workers (FSW) completed over 2,000 home visits to 124 families with young children in 2015.

■ The goal of these visits is to provide parents with the opportunity to partner with their FSW to learn about community resources, parent and child health care, positive parent interaction, healthy childhood growth and development, discipline, stress management skills, and nurturing parenting practices.

■ In addition, all actively enrolled parents are supported in developing personal/family goals identifying the steps to achieve them. Family Support Workers help them access information and resources, as well as provide encouragement and incentives as they move through the steps to achieve their goals.

This program has helped me because of my support worker. She is very understanding and helpful and is showing me different ways to interact with my child and knowing the cues when my child really needs me.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Each of the 75 families enrolled in Parents as Teachers received regular visits from trained MSF Parent Educators. The Parent Educators supported parents in managing stress, helped them better understand child development, connected them with resources, and reinforced the development of healthy, nurturing parenting skills.

FAMILY SUPPORT AND REUNIFICATION

■ The Family Support and Reunification Program (FSRP) is a parenting education and support program developed to promote effective parenting among families who are at risk of or have experienced the removal of minor children by the NJ Division of Child Protection & Permanency. In particular, this program serves families that have been affected by the abuse of drugs and alcohol and provides a resource that will assist in reducing the amount of time that children spend in temporary placement or avoiding placement altogether.

■ An interdisciplinary team consisting of a clinical social worker, trained Family Support Worker and certified counselor partnered with 81 families to guide and support activities and strategies focused on reducing the risk of continued child maltreatment and establishing safe and healthy parenting skills and behaviors.

■ The FSRP team provided 451 individual parenting education sessions, 46 weekly psychoeducation group sessions, and 27 individual/family counseling sessions. Twenty-eight families avoided out of home placement or were reunified with their children.

At first I was wondering why I was here. Later I could see that I have learned different ways to deal with my sons after coming for sessions. I also could see that there are some things I'm doing that are good with them; others things I would like to work on.

ADULTS

ADULT EDUCATION

■ Over the course of 2015, staff and volunteers worked with 168 adult students (ages 16 or older) to help improve their literacy skills



in reading, writing and math; earn a high school diploma; gain or retain employment; or enter post-secondary education or training.

■ Following the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core Standards, staff instructors, along with 14 highly skilled volunteer tutors, offered intensive one-on-one and small group instruction.

■ Ten students took the high school equivalency exam and nine passed. Six students entered employment, and three entered post-secondary education/training.

I enjoyed the individual care that this program gives, compared to other programs where I was lost in a big group.



Nathaniel Arrington, who earned his NJ High School diploma, celebrates his achievement. Says Denise Dance, CWEP/EDREP program coordinator, "Nate is a bright intelligent young man with the ability to become whatever he desires. We're proud to have had Nate in our class and we wish him much success".

COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM-EDUCATION DIRECTLY RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

■ Our highly-trained staff helped 365 parents who receive public assistance improve their employment readiness. Utilizing the Atkins Curricula, Jist Assessments, and Individual Action Plans, our staff measures the parents' readiness for, and interest in, employment or workplace reentry.

■ Our staff supports the parents in working towards goals focused on self-sufficiency and overall wellness; building self confidence and self-esteem, and helps them identify barriers and challenges that could hinder success in achieving their employment goals.

■ Parents receive assistance with resume writing, mock interviews, telephone techniques, and typing skills. The McGraw Hill curricula was used to prepare program participants for the new High School Equivalency exam and to brush-up on any areas of challenge identified by the Test Adult Basic Education test (TABE).

Adult education students face many situational barriers, such as unemployment, housing, child care, and transportation, as well as challenges stemming from lack of self-esteem, learning disabilities, problems with focusing and retention, lack of family/peer support, inexperience with commitment to a task, and a history of school failure.

DONOR RECOGNITION

Too many donor names to list here, so please visit our website to view:

- **2015 Donor Report**
- **Food Bank's 2015 Honor Roll of Food Donors**
- **TDI Computer and Monitor Donors**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

October 2014 - September 2015

OFFICERS

Robert E. Anderson, *Chair*
Delia C. Pitts, *Vice Chair*
Lisa H. Ogletree, *Secretary*
William W. Heinemann, *Treasurer*

TRUSTEES

James (Butter) G. Allen
Annie Born
Michael D. Bradshaw
Michael L. Carter
David W. Fraser
Glenda Gracia-Rivera
Joseph Hulihan
Jaap J. Ketting
Daniel T. Rodgers
John D. Spears
John R. Weingart
Bruce B. Woodger

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Kristin Appelget
Jack Ball
Sybil Chahbandour
Hal English
David Geist
Andy Forsell
Dawn Hiltner
Chris Kane
Odie LeFever
Deborah Osgood
Peter Sargent
Stephen Shueh
Gerald Stockman
Peter Taft
Jerry Walther
Ross Wishnick

RECENT GRANTS AND AWARDS

PARENT AND ADULT PROGRAMS:

- James Kerney Foundation

FOOD BANK:

- Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation
- Bristol-Myers Squibb
- George H. and Estelle Sands Foundation
- The Grainger Foundation
- Karma Foundation

- JM Restaurant Group Holiday Meal Campaign
- Margit and Eli Marie Arvesen Fund of the Community Foundation of New Jersey
- Mary Owen Borden Foundation
- Paula M. Steiner Family Foundation
- TD Bank Foundation
- Whole Foods Feed 4 More Campaign

MSF FOOD BANK VOLUNTEER COUNTS

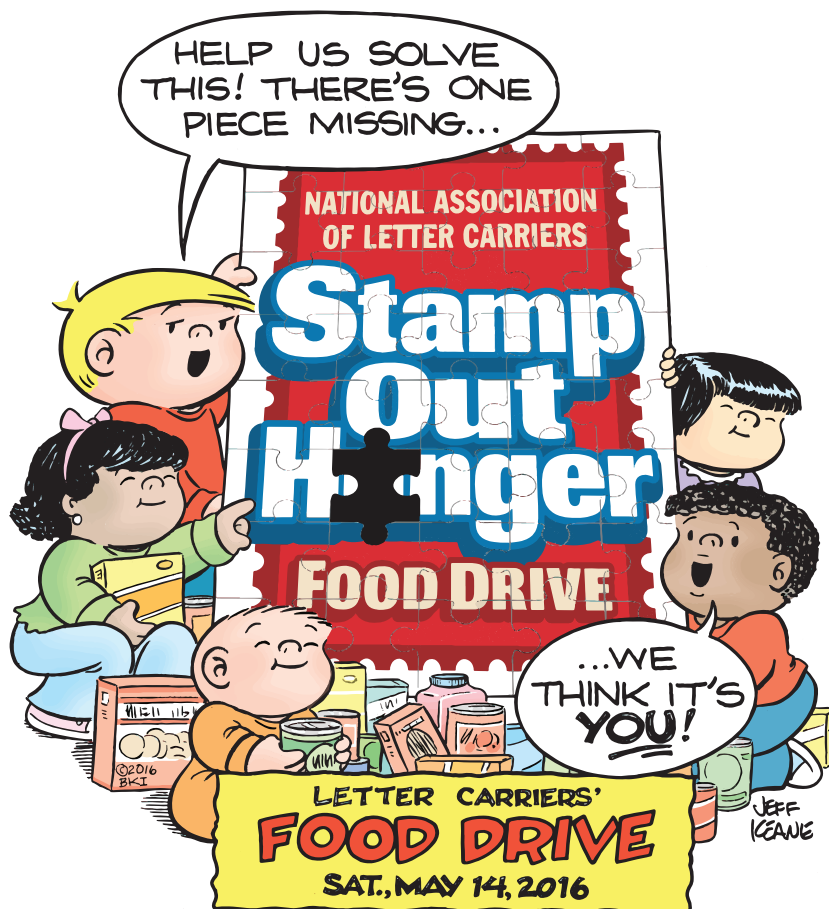
November 2015 through February 2016

Visits by Volunteers..... **470**
 Number of Hours..... **1,310**

Thank you to the following groups for helping in the warehouse during this period.

- Alpha Phi Omega – TCNJ
- Ameriprise Financial
- Billtrust
- Bloomberg
- Cadwalader-Asbury United Methodist Church
- Center for Jewish Life – Princeton Hillel
- Credit Suisse
- Delaware River Basin Commission
- ETS Cares
- Heritage Court Friends
- Hun School
- Investors Bank
- Janssen Pharmaceuticals
- Lawrenceville School
- NJ Economic Development Authority
- NJ Sikh Association
- Notre Dame High School
- Philadelphia Insurance Company
- Princeton University
- Red Nucleus
- SERV
- TCNJ Bonner Center – Health and Environment Team
- USDA Mid-Atlantic Regional Office – Food and Nutrition Services
- Wegmans
- Wegmans Pharmacy

If you would like to volunteer, please call the Food Bank at 609-406-0503.



Please fill a sturdy bag with nonperishable food items such as tuna, canned soup, canned vegetables, pasta, rice, and cereal and place the bag next to your mailbox prior to the time of regular mail delivery on Saturday, May 14th. Our area letter carriers will collect your donations and at the end of the day, the food will be delivered to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank.



151 Mercer Street
Trenton, NJ 08611
phone: 609-396-1506
fax: 609-392-8363
www.mercerstreetfriends.org

Executive Director
Shannon M. Mason, Ph.D.

Board of Trustees
Robert E. Anderson, Chair
Delia C. Pitts, Vice Chair
Lisa H. Ogletree, Secretary
William W. Heinemann, Treasurer
James (Butter) G. Allen
Michael D. Bradshaw
Michael L. Carter
Christopher DeJesus
David W. Fraser
Glenda Gracia-Rivera
Joseph Hulihan
Wendy B. Kane
Jaap J. Ketting
Nikki Loscalzo
Daniel T. Rodgers

Please Join Us at a Viewing of “Oyler: One School One Year”

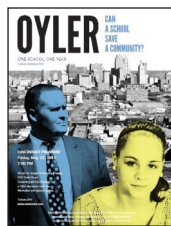
– a Documentary Produced and Directed by Amy Scott
in Association with American Public Media.

Can a School Save a Community?

“Oyler: One School One Year” asks just that, telling the story of a Cincinnati “community school” fighting to break the cycle of poverty. The film takes viewers through a year at the school, focusing on the principal’s mission to transform a community and one student’s quest to be the first in her troubled family to finish high school and go to college.

Sunday, April 24
2:00 pm - 4:30 pm

**Princeton Theological Seminary
Library**



Following the screening will be a panel discussion with Amy Scott, Mercer Street Friends Executive Director Dr. Shannon Mason, and other experts. Seating is limited. To reserve your place, please contact cvandenberg@mercercstreetfriends.org.

FriendsTalk

Editor: Phyllis Stoolmacher
A PUBLICATION OF MERCER STREET FRIENDS

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Executive Director’s Message
- 1 Financial Overview FY 2014-15
- 2 Food Distribution
- 2 Send Hunger Packing
- 2 Summer Feeding
- 2 SNAP Outreach
- 3 Community School Initiative
- 3 West Ward Alliance
- 4 Preschool
- 4 Youth Services
- 4 Trenton Digital Initiative (TDI)
- 5 Parent Child Center West
- 5 Healthy Families – TIP
- 5 Parents as Teachers
- 5 Family Support and Reunification
- 6 Adult Education
- 6 Community Work Experience
- 6 Board of Trustees (10/14 - 9/15)
- 7 Recent Grants and Awards
- 7 Stamp Out Hunger
- 7 Food Bank Volunteer Counts