



Always Home | PREVENTING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

Summer 2019

Sesame Street Introduces Lily *First Homeless Muppet*

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Always Home Awarded \$75k Multi-Year Grant

Always Home is thrilled to announce a multi-year grant award by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. The \$75,000, to be allocated over a 3-year period, gives Always Home the opportunity to expand existing programs, increase staff levels, and explore new and innovative ways to enhance the agency's capacity to serve Eastern Connecticut's homeless families. Securing this grant also allows Always Home to plan ahead with certainty.

"Preventing homelessness takes the work of many," states Betty Smith, Always Home's new Executive Director. "We are grateful to the Community Foundation and its philanthropic donors who, through this grant, will make a positive and enduring impact on the lives of our region's most vulnerable families."



For the past 50 years, Sesame Street has befriended children through a cast of colorful, cuddly puppets. Elmo, Kermit, Cookie Monster, Big Bird...these and other muppets have all played a critical role in the education of pre-schoolers around the world. And when a child identifies with a character because of a first-hand experience or through empathy and understanding of another's situation, critical social-emotional learning occurs.

Seven-year-old Lily is Sesame Street's first muppet to struggle with homelessness. She represents the 2.5 million children in America who experience homelessness every year, nearly half of whom are under the age of 6. By looking at homelessness through the eyes of a young child, Sesame Street seeks to raise awareness about the growing issue of (cont. on page 2)



childhood homelessness. By creating Lily in her homeless state, the hope is to reduce the associated stigma and teach children that “home” is more than where you live.

“We know children experiencing homelessness are often caught up in a devastating cycle of trauma—the lack of affordable housing, poverty, domestic violence, or other trauma that caused them to lose their home, the trauma of actually losing their home, and the daily trauma of the uncertainty and insecurity of being homeless,” Sherrie Westin, president of Global Impact and Philanthropy at Sesame Workshop, said in a statement.

“We want to help disrupt that cycle by comforting children, empowering them, and giving them hope for the future. We want them to know that they are not alone and home is more than a house or an apartment—home is wherever the love lives,” Westin added.

Lily first debuted in 2011 experiencing food insecurity. Sadly, her progression into homelessness is a likely scenario for many families whose persistent struggle with poverty often results in critical housing instability.

Last fiscal year, Always Home served 231 low-income families at risk of homelessness. Of the 729 family members we helped, 435 were children under the age of 18. For Always Home, preventing family homelessness is of grave importance to the youngest members of our community as it spares them the lasting and life-limiting consequences of homelessness. And we’re succeeding! Of the 231 families we helped, 228 never had to enter shelter.

For many families, like Lily’s, Always Home provides the support they need to successfully move beyond the risk of homelessness.

A Message from Our New ED

Dear Friends,

People frequently ask me, “Is there a problem with homelessness in our region?” I’m never surprised by the question; it’s one I asked five years ago when I first began volunteering for Always Home. The answer to the question, then and now, is Yes, there is homelessness in Eastern CT. As Lily of Sesame Street says, “It can happen to anyone.”

Shortly after I joined Always Home this spring, I learned that what happens in early childhood can last a lifetime. Exposure to a traumatic adversity like



homelessness can cause toxic stress that results in long-term health and behavioral risks. My passion for shielding young children of the families we work with from experiencing these adversities was sparked. Children of families in unstable housing circumstances often display behavioral issues, health problems, anxiety, and learning disabilities

throughout their lives. These are the families Always Home serves.

You are a part of our community making a positive, long-lasting difference in the lives of hundreds of children. We are so thankful for your support of our mission, Preventing Family Homelessness. As Lily says “We can get through anything if we’re together. WE GOT THIS!” I look forward to our journey together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty Smith".

Betty Smith, Executive Director



Seifert Joins Always Home’s Board

Always Home welcomes Annemarie Seifert, Ph.D. to its Board of Directors. Seifert is the University of Connecticut’s Avery Point Campus Director and brings to Always Home significant management experience, community building skills and passion for our mission. “When I was growing up, my family fostered children,” she shared. “I understood at an early age how important home and family is to a child’s well-being.” She added, “What also drew me to Always Home is the timeframe of their intervention. They’re working to prevent homelessness before it happens, before a child has to experience the trauma of not having a home.”

Community Collaborations



The Whaler's Inn

The Whaler's Inn, Mystic's "home away from home", is helping to prevent family homelessness. In recognition of their generous support, Always Home has dedicated a key homelessness prevention initiative in their name. When parents have reliable childcare, they can work, pay the rent and sustain housing for their children.



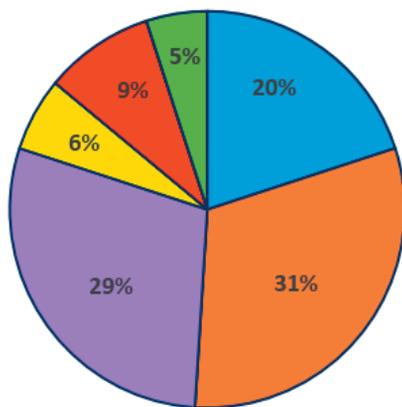
The Whaler's Inn Childcare Solutions Program provides critical financial assistance to families who cannot afford the high cost of childcare and valuable enrichment opportunities for vulnerable children. Always Home is honored to partner with a local business that cares so deeply about the greater community.

CDBG Small Cities Program

Always Home is one of five recipients of a State of Connecticut Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), also known as the Small Cities Program. Provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Small Cities Program is available to cities and towns with a population of 50,000 or less, and focuses on assisting a low- and moderate-income demographic. The grant was awarded to the Town of Stonington; United Way of Southeastern Connecticut will serve as fiduciary. The grant's objective is to increase shelter diversion capacity in Eastern Connecticut.

Shelter Diversion is a targeted form of homelessness prevention that focuses efforts at the "front door" of shelter. The goal is to help families avoid homelessness or time spent in emergency shelter. Always Home, along with New London Homeless Hospitality, Thames River Family Program, Noank Community Support Services and Willimantic's Access Community Action Agency, will execute the grant. With CDBG funding, Always Home will add a full-time Diversion Manager to its staff. This exciting collaboration between federal, state, regional, town and local agencies will directly benefit low-income families at risk of homelessness.

Always Home Thanks You for Your Support!



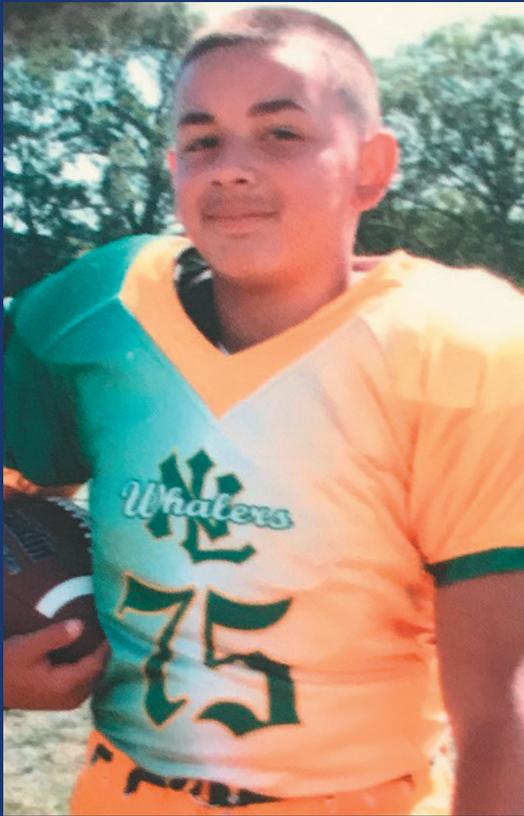
Always Home Fiscal Year 2019 Support to Date

- Individual, Corporate and Faith-based Giving
- Foundation and Non-Profit Grants
- Special Event Fundraising
- State & Municipal Support
- Below-Market-Rate Rental Income
- Other

How does Always Home achieve the success we do in Preventing Family Homelessness? It's because of you! Through the generous support of philanthropic individuals, local businesses, community-focused foundations, non-profit organizations, state and municipal agencies, and faith-based institutions, Always Home helps over 200 families avoid homelessness every year.

Whether you're attending one of our special events, volunteering, giving annually to our winter or spring appeal, remembering us with a legacy gift, donating in-kind goods and services, or making recurrent monthly contributions, when you give to Always Home, you give to low-income, working parents struggling to keep a roof over the heads of their young children.

This community has supported Always Home for over 20 years, and we couldn't be more grateful.



Play Together...Stay Together

To 14-year-old Jose, playing football is everything. It's being part of a team, training to be your very best and feeling like a hero when you score that touchdown. However, participating in school sports is expensive. Families who live paycheck to paycheck don't often have the discretionary income to pay for their children's extracurricular activities.

Jose's parents want the very best for Jose and his two siblings. They work, budget wisely and try to save each month. Always Home helped them when they were at risk of homelessness. They never want to experience the threat of losing their home again. In spite of their best efforts, they realized that Jose's football training camp was beyond their means.

Always Home, through The Whaler's Inn Childcare Solutions Program, sent Jose to the training camp with his teammates. In his own words, "Thank you for helping me play my favorite sport. Without your help, my football career would've been over." Jose's parents are proud of their all-star son. The entire family is excited to watch his games come fall. Go Whalers!

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