

# HousingPlus

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo by Quentin Esme Brown

### Opening doors for women in crisis

HousingPlus provides community-based permanent housing and comprehensive services to women, including women with children, to support them in overcoming poverty, homelessness, addiction, trauma, and the effects of incarceration, in order to build lives of stability, and to define and realize goals for themselves and for their families.

### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My Dear Friends,

“We will carry on” has been our motto over these many months as our worlds have been upended from the day the city first closed down. I have been touched by the kindness and generosity of friends like you; by the loyalty and dedication of staff to meet the needs of our tenants and at the same time care for their families and loved ones.

Your support has helped us welcome Evelyn Perez and her son Michael to their new home at Linwood Park and has supported a safety response plan that protects all tenants and staff. You have helped us to advance our activities for racial and social justice at a time fraught with racial tension and calls for justice. The crises we face are truly staggering but, living in and adapting to constant crisis is all too familiar to the women and families we serve. Their remarkable resilience and resolve inspires me. Surely, more will be asked of us and with your help “We will carry on.”

Warmly,

Rita Zimmer  
Founder and Executive Director

### COVID-19 PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- 210 adults and 157 children live across 180 housing units.
- Our food pantry tripled in size and we distribute 35 bags of food per week.
- Received 3,000 masks for distribution from the Supportive Housing Network of NY
- 22 laptops and 5 data-enabled tablets were provided to students for distance learning.

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



On the cover: Veteran Samantha Melville and daughter Aaliyah. The family lived with HousingPlus until fall 2020 when they bought a home in New Jersey with a VA loan.

Brittini A. Peters and Lady Peters of Allen Memorial AME Church in Brooklyn distributed Welcome Kits to new tenants at Linwood Park Apartments in July. The church is a new partner committed to supporting HousingPlus on an ongoing basis.

### FY20 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

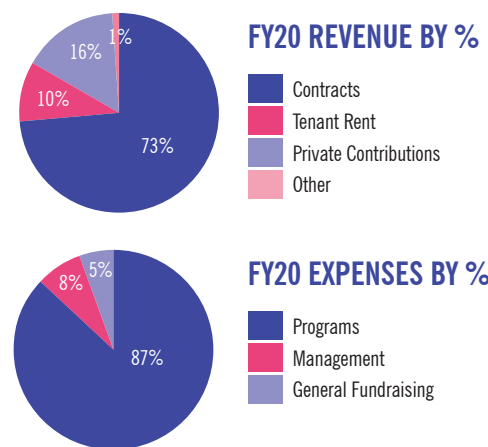
REVENUE	FY2020 UNAUDITED
Contracts	\$ 4,942,144
Tenant Rent	\$ 648,757
Private Contributions	\$ 1,048,064
Other	\$ 52,393
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 6,691,358</b>

EXPENSES	FY2020 UNAUDITED
Programs	\$ 5,922,995
Management	\$ 515,192
General Fundraising	\$ 357,130
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 6,795,317</b>

#### NET INCOME/LOSS

\$ (103,959)

*These totals do not include nearly \$300,000 raised in the rescheduled 2020 Annual Celebration and Good Person Awards which will be recognized in FY21.*



### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

US Department of Housing and Urban Development  
New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services  
New York State Office of Mental Health  
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
New York City Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice\*

\* Thanks to the Osborne Association for serving as financial administrator

### EVELYN PEREZ: HOME AT LAST

Evelyn Perez grew up in Bushwick, but her family is from Puerto Rico. She and her son Michael, age 17, moved into her new two-bedroom apartment at Linwood Park Apartments in early June. Prior to that they had been in the New York City shelter system for eight years.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit NYC and Evelyn says, “It was very scary. There were some people that were quarantined in our shelter, but we weren’t getting information about what was going on. The caseworkers didn’t want to be anywhere near us and treated us like we were sick. Michael didn’t tell me he was scared, but he wouldn’t go outdoors from March until June.”

Evelyn and Michael finally have a home of their own again. She says, “When we moved in I was shocked, I didn’t think we were going to have so much. Everything we needed was here including pots and pans, dishes, and even a trash can. The apartment is so welcoming, spacious, and nice and quiet. I can decorate the way I want to — I am blessed.” She describes the HousingPlus staff as respectful, warm, and helpful. Michael is “perfectly well now. He loves having his own room where he can watch TV, play video games, and have his two best friends over. They have been close since he was little and now their favorite thing to do is skateboarding.”

“It’s nice to have a park across the street, I go there to watch the kids play,” Evelyn says. “It feels so good to have our own place — it’s the best.”



Evelyn Perez in her new home at Linwood Park Apartments

*“The beautiful thing about HousingPlus is how it has always been able to adapt and provide flexibility for each of the women it supports as they navigate daily changes in their lives — that’s what they need. When the pandemic hit I knew that there was a plan in place, a solid structure, and the ability to pivot. As a funder, I had full faith in Rita Zimmer’s leadership, I knew that the board would come through, and that the highly capable staff — those running the programs in particular — would meet every challenge.”*

— Kara D’Angelo, Executive Director of the Patrino Foundation

### MAMIE MCINDOE: MEETING COVID-19 NEEDS

HousingPlus HERO Mamie McIndoe, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors has been at the “epicenter of the epicenter” of the COVID-19 pandemic as Associate Director of Patient Experience at Elmhurst Hospital in Queens. Elmhurst serves an area of nearly one million people in one of the most diverse communities in the United States. A 550 bed public hospital, it offers a safety net through its mission to serve, support, and care for everyone, no matter their ability to pay. When the pandemic hit NYC Elmhurst became an all COVID-19 hospital with hundreds of people waiting outside. Mamie shares that most patients are uninsured and come from all over the world.

She has seen so much but relays that “watching a woman being brought from Rikers into the hospital in an orange uniform, chained, and surrounded by policemen” is an image that has stuck with her daily.

Mamie describes working throughout the pandemic as lonely and isolating, but says it is her “calling — a devotion” and the work she does with HousingPlus is an extension of that dedication because it “offers an alternative to prison and a different trajectory for women and families . . . to make a house a home and have their best life.” Mamie’s volunteering includes her liaison with Marble Collegiate Church whose mission work has supported us since 2005.

There are a number of synergies Mamie sees between her work with Elmhurst and with HousingPlus — both address similar challenges, identify patterns and gaps, and find innovative solutions. She shares that family, faith, community support, and her mindfulness meditation practice have helped her continue to fulfill her purpose to help others and provide empathy and comfort. She says, “I’ve been looking for joy in each day. Life is short and life is fragile — it’s no longer a cliché.”



Mamie at Elmhurst Hospital



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[www.housingplusnyc.org/our-supporters](http://www.housingplusnyc.org/our-supporters)

## LINWOOD PARK APARTMENTS OPENS



Linwood Park Apartments, painting by Rita Zimmer

In spite of COVID-19, the new 100-unit building was completed on schedule and HousingPlus welcomed our first families in early June. Our role is to provide social service supports and rental assistance to 30 formerly homeless and justice-involved families. We are thrilled that 30 families now call it home and we share the stories of two, Evelyn Perez and Stephanie Haris, in these pages.

The development is a partnership between B&B Urban, L+M Development Partners, and HousingPlus with funding from the state of New York.

## HOUSINGPLUS' COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY

*"The forces of white supremacy and lack of racial equity affect everyone, but it is a challenge to overcome fear and resistance around this subject."*

*This year HousingPlus launched a top-down, agency-wide initiative to guide us in becoming an anti-racist organization. We began with informational and reflective sessions for Board members and executive staff. Next, we will conduct sessions for remaining staff and tenants and then compose a working group from all levels of the organization to examine all aspects of our environment, culture, and service delivery to develop an action plan which we will implement, evaluate, and adjust as needed. HousingPlus is deeply invested in making substantive, long-term, positive change from within and is committed to working with our colleagues and collaborators to increase equity across the service community."*

— Andrea Gibbs, HousingPlus Board Member

## WOMEN'S COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROJECT

WCJP — a collaborative partnership between HousingPlus, Greenhope Services for Women, Hour Children, and Providence House — operates 59 transitional housing units across four sites to divert women from the Rose M. Singer Center at Rikers Island. Ten of those units were opened this past year specifically to help women reconnect and reunify with their children from whom they were separated due to their incarceration.

Stephanie Harris came to HousingPlus through WCJP and she and her daughter Ee'jypt moved into their home at Linwood Park Apartments in summer 2020. She says, "I'm very grateful and I'm happy that you give us opportunities to plant a flower and watch the seed grow."

WCJP focuses on keeping women in the community, and firmly believes that supportive, gender-responsive services are far more effective than punitive measures. Kristen Edwards, who joined HousingPlus as Director of WCJP in January of 2020 says, "Nearly two-thirds of women who are incarcerated are mothers of minor children, and the majority are the primary caregivers. Gender-responsive housing and services can prevent further trauma for those children and support stronger families and communities."



Ee'jypt & Stephanie Harris in their new home at Linwood Park Apartments

## WCJA: A COVID-19 STORY



Sharon White-Harrigan, Elaine Lord, former Superintendent of Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, and Roslyn Smith with items for women at five correctional facilities

The Women's Community Justice Association (WCJA) — a sister organization of HousingPlus led by women with lived experience — advocates for and is committed to reimagining justice, dignity and safety for women in NYC and beyond through de-carceration and reinvestment in communities.

When COVID-19 hit everyone knew that women at Rikers and every New York State facility would not have basic protective equipment or food and essential personal products. In April, a Justice 4 Women Task Force of nearly 75 women with lived experience joined forces with the WCJA leadership and formed a plan — by Mother's Day they would deliver PPE that women (and correctional officers) needed, send Mother's Day cards and organize five "What About Her" rallies to tell women's stories to the public and elected officials. Taskforce members delivered 16,000 PPE items and over 2,000 servings of food products to five Correctional Facilities. They deposited \$20 in the accounts of all 190 women at the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers Island and in the accounts of women in the Nassau and Suffolk County jails.

Recently they have helped the NYC Department of Corrections with their Voter Registration effort at the Rose M. Singer Center — delivering 'VOTE Masks' and postcard reminders. Sharon White-Harrigan, Executive Director of WCJA, sees her role and that of Taskforce members as much more than a job. She shares, "As a formerly incarcerated woman I understand that way too many times in history we have been overlooked. We work every day to raise the voices of women and ask others to join us. Hurt people hurt people, but healed people heal people."



4 West 43rd Street, Second Floor  
New York, New York 10036



212-213-0221  
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