



# Mary Ellen's Hearth

at Nellie Burge Community Center

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

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## Organization Overview

For over 112 years, Nellie Burge Community Center has been serving vulnerable families in the River Region. After a lengthy assessment of needs in the community, the Board of Directors determined that the Nellie Burge Community Center could best serve the community by providing transitional housing for homeless women with children. Mary Ellen's Hearth was established in 2011 in honor of long time board member and volunteer Mary Ellen Bullard. With strong roots in civic engagement and community collaboration, Mary Ellen's Hearth helps families mobilize toward stability and self-sufficiency.

In an otherwise wealthy county, deep pockets of poverty and a lack of affordable housing options leave some families unable to meet their most basic needs. While every family impacted by Mary Ellen's Hearth is low income, according to HUD definitions, 50% of the families served are very low income and 30% are extremely low income. Families living in poverty are under constant distress. Hunger, scarcity, and housing insecurity caused by poverty often lead to chronic trauma. Under these conditions, families are ill-equipped to gain and maintain access to stabilizing services that could lead to self-sufficiency. By stabilizing a family's housing situation and providing critical services that support movement towards self-sufficiency, Mary Ellen's Hearth works to alleviate the effects of homelessness on the children and families they serve. The following program components provide essential support so that families experiencing homelessness can make transformational changes:

### Transitional Shelter (Mary Ellen's Hearth)

In the time that we have worked with families, we recognize that a 90-day stay in emergency shelter is rarely—if ever—enough time to heal from the traumas that impede positive life changes. In response to this significant need, Nellie Burge Community Center opened Mary Ellen's Hearth to serve as a stabilizing transitional housing option. Families are housed for up to two years, during which time they receive intensive case management and the necessary support to work towards identified goals for a successful transition to safe, affordable, decent housing.

### Support Services

During their time in MEH transitional housing, families receive comprehensive support services designed to help parents care for themselves and their families; they begin intentionally improving their life skills and decision-making abilities; and they develop the internal resources necessary to become self-sufficient. Services include Intensive Case Management, Life Skills Training, Children's Services, and On-going Support Services for families who have moved into permanent housing.

### Mission Statement

The mission of Mary Ellen's Hearth is "offering hope, help and healing to homeless women and children through Christian love and values." We offer hope by providing life skills training. We offer help through our transitional housing services. Finally, we offer healing by covering everything with Christian love and support. Our goal is for residents to leave the program fully prepared for independent living, with their dignity and self-respect restored.



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## SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR FY 2015-2016

Mary Ellen's Hearth has historically utilized a diverse pool of funding sources to ensure our longevity. In FY2015-2016, Mary Ellen's Hearth reevaluated and challenged its fundraising efforts. Individuals, partnering congregations, organizations, special events, corporations, foundations, grants, and earned income provided our income. We are grateful for the support! We are also proud to be part of a select group of organizations chosen to receive United Way funding.

### Church Donations:

United Methodist Women  
Alabama West Florida- Districts 5  
On the 5th  
First United Methodist Church  
The Seekers Sunday Class  
Tower Class First UMC  
Aldersgate UMC  
Frazer Memorial UMC  
Agape Sunday School Class  
Willie Whitfield Memorial UMC  
Wesley Sunday School Class  
Challenge Class Brundidge UMC  
New Horizons Class FUMC  
Woodland UMC Morning Circle  
Church of the Highlands  
Maxine Beck Circle  
Methodist Women in Missions  
Memorial UMC  
Lester Spence Circle  
Millbrook Methodist Church  
Metropolitan UMC  
Mulder Memorial United  
Neal's Chapel Church

### Individual Donations:

Various Donors



### Special Events:

Boston Butt Sale

### Earned Income:

MACOA Revenue

### United Way:

River Region United Way

### Foundations:

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama  
The Gordy Mead Britton Foundation  
Korean American Fund  
Alabama Civil Justice Fund  
Mary Katherine Archibald Fund  
Greil Memorial Foundation  
T.R.U.S.T.  
The Wayne & Shan Russell  
Charitable Foundation  
Civil Air Patrol Foundation  
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

### Grants:

Working Women's Grant  
BB&T Grant  
Daniel Foundation Grant  
Schwab Charitable  
Southern Poverty Law  
Emergency Food & Shelter Grant  
CACF

### Business Donations:

BB&T  
Daniel Motor Company, Inc.  
Gibbons Development LLC  
Ross Clayton Funeral Home, Inc.  
Knology  
Norris Building Company, Inc.

### Government:

Emergency Solutions Grant

### Organizations:

Project Night Birmingham  
River Region Alternative Gift Fair  
Alabama Power Co. Energizers  
Inc.  
PEO Chapter G  
New Era Literary Club



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## PROGRAM IMPACT

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Mary Ellen's Hearth has provided critical housing and support services to 109 families comprised of 27 adults and 48 children (direct services) and 34 adults (indirect service). In FY2015-2016, of the 27 families served, over half of the children were 5 years old or younger. The following outcomes were achieved by families residing in transitional housing:

### **Families took goal-directed steps towards stability:**

- 97% of eligible families applied for mainstream government benefits within 30 days of entry
- 93% of families created a working, realistic budget during their stay
- 90% of families maintained or improved their employment status during their residency
- 93% of families passed monthly apartment inspections
- 86% of families participated in weekly educational programs

### **Children attended school regularly:**

- 81% of children were enrolled in childcare or school, as age-appropriate, within 90 days of shelter program entry
- 100% of school-aged children attended school on a regular basis

### **Families improved financial empowerment**

- 10 families maintained full-time employment over the last 12 months

### **Families continued to move toward /maintain self-sufficiency after leaving the shelter:**

- 4 families received housing subsidies to support their move out of our transitional housing program
- 10 families who "graduated" from transitional housing program received on-going case management support services to improve their chances of success during their continued journey towards self-sufficiency
- 86% of families, who had moved into stable housing, retained their housing for at least 3 months after leaving; 86% retained housing for at least 6 months

### **Rhonda's Story:**

We were pleased to have an MEH graduate return this year to speak to current residents about her time as a at Mary Ellen's Hearth resident. Rhonda entered our MEH Transitional Housing program in November 26, 2014 with her 10 year old son, Kaleb. She admitted her surprise to discover that Mary Ellen's Hearth Transitional Housing program "didn't feel like a homeless shelter." The volunteers were "beyond incredible." They cheered along with her and created an environment that almost felt like a home. Rhonda soon found support among the other MEH families; they became a support system.

While living at MEH, Rhonda worked with the program manager to develop an individualized family plan. She went back to school to finish her advanced degree, and she maintained full-time employment. By the time Kaleb was 11 1/2, Rhonda had been promoted at her job and was earning enough money to begin the permanent housing transition. In February 2016, Rhonda moved in a small home. She and Kaleb received gifts, food, and housewares through MEH and volunteers. Since 'graduating' Rhonda has donated her time to "pay back" the organization and people who helped her so much.



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## VOLUNTEERS



Mary Ellen's Hearth thrives on the generous support of our precious volunteers so that we can continue to provide cost-effective services. Since our inception, volunteers have comprised the backbone of our programming. The majority of our volunteers are members of our partnering congregations and community. Over 4,500 volunteer hours were donated in FY2015-2016 to our transitional housing program. MEH volunteers help with painting, cleaning, administrative, sorting donations, and maintenance. Specialized volunteers facilitate our weekly life skills/parent education workshops and children's programs.





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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Board of Directors is highly involved with Mary Ellen's Hearth activities, growth, and sustainability. Board members actively volunteer in multiple roles to support administrative needs and the needs of our families. They help, plan, and participate in annual fundraising events and 100% of the Board make an annual financial contribution.

**Guy Davis, Board Chair - Development**

Banker - BB&T

**John Bullard - Board Vice Chair - Building & Grounds Chair/Development**

Commercial Construction - Bullard Cook, Inc.

**George Mingleford - Board Treasurer - Finance Committee Chair/Development**

Retired - State of Alabama and Full-Time Volunteer

**Brenda Dennis - Board Secretary - Development Committee Chair**

Alabama Dance Theater

**Paul Klein - Communications/Development**

Director of Business Development - Kyser Office Works

**Scott Key - Development**

Sales Development Manager - New York Life

**Kym Klass - Communications/Development**

Reporter & Wellness Columnist - The Montgomery Advertiser

**Genie Lindsey - Events Committee Chair/Development**

Full-Time Mom and Volunteer

**Bonnie Trulove - Committee Chair/Development**

Student in Biblical Counseling - Birmingham Theological Seminary

**Brad Norris - Development**

Norris Building Company

**Pat Sefton - Development**

Attorney - Sasser Sefton & Brown

**Roger Spain - Development**

Banker - Oakworth Capital Bank

**Ex Officio: Susan Hunt - Development**

Director of Mission & Advocacy - AWFUMC

**Ex Officio: Amelia Barnes - Immediate Past Board Chair/Development**

Full-Time Mom and Volunteer

**Ex Officio: Gillian Walters - Development**

Minister of Discipleship - FUMC

*"She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy" - Proverbs 31:20*