

## PIT COUNT (cont'd.)



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides an approved methodology so every State is counting its homeless population similarly. Sheltered Homeless counts everyone who stays in a shelter or is sheltered in a hotel/motel paid for by an agency on the night of the PIT Count.

The methodology for counting Unsheltered Homeless (those sleeping on the streets, in cars or under bridges) has been altered due to COVID safety concerns. Pre-COVID, volunteers would fan out across the State to count everyone "sleeping rough". Like last year, this year's count of Unsheltered Homeless will rely on data contained in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Outreach staff who work with this population year-round will verify who was unsheltered on the night of the Count.

According to the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), the agency who organizes Connecticut's annual PIT Count, 2,594 people were experiencing homelessness in CT during last year's PIT Count. The data collected on January 26, 2021 showed that family homelessness declined by 23.5% and there was a 31% decline in children experiencing homelessness. Fewer families and children experiencing homelessness means that Always Home and other homeless providers are doing a great job of preventing family homelessness before it happens.

But the 2021 PIT Count also showed a 32% increase in the Unsheltered Homeless population over the prior year. CCEH attributes the increase to the change in methodology but considers the count to be more accurate. Because last year was the first time using this methodology, the 2022 Pit Count data will provide an opportunity for real comparison.

## GUIDED BY HEART (cont'd.)



When Faith reached out to Always Home, she was desperate for help. She knew how important a stable home was for her son to feel safe and secure during this uncertain time. Always Home's Social Worker, Marlynn Benker, agreed that Faith and her son shouldn't have to worry about housing during her recovery. But that required a lot more in rental support than Always Home's typical hand-up. But Faith's situation was unique, and we committed to helping her.

In November, The Day reached out to Always Home for a client story for their annual *Make a Difference* campaign. Faith agreed to share her situation with the public. The response from The Day's subscribers was overwhelming. Over \$5,500 was raised to help Faith in the days ahead! With these donations, along with support from Always Home, Faith and her son are stably housed as she focuses on getting stronger.

Goodwill from the community didn't stop there. Faith was hoping to surprise her son with a new bike for Christmas. Long-time supporter SAVA Insurance Group stepped in to make a child's dream come true. SAVA's employees truly live by their company motto, Guided by Heart. Just before Christmas, they met with Faith to give her the bike (on SAVA's Pajama Day – see who's in their jammies in the prior photo!). The smile on her son's face (photo above) was the only present Faith needed.

For Faith, the support from SAVA and The Day's *Make A Difference* donors was a beautiful reminder that people care. She shared, "I've always been so independent, but the kindness from strangers, family, and friends is heartwarming. This has been a very humbling experience. I can't wait until I'm back on my feet to pay it forward."