



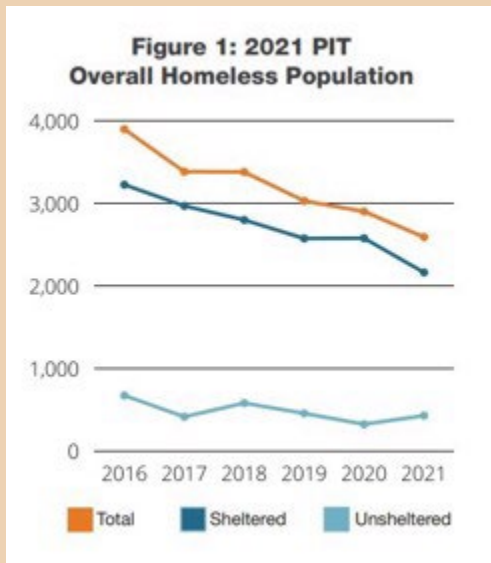
IT'S THURSDAY AND TGIF!

We're not getting ahead of ourselves this week. But we are excited to share that Project TGIF -Turn Grease Into Fuel has once again taken used cooking oil and magically turned it into heat for Always Home's client families. Jason Lin of Westerly Innovations Network assured us that the recycling process is actually quite simple. "TGIF recruits restaurants to donate their used cooking oil to the program and has our Biodiesel-making partner Newport Biodiesel pick up their grease," he explained. "The money then goes to Project TGIF and is distributed in the form of Bioheat® to local charities like Always Home."

Project TGIF has been converting grease into biodiesel since 2008 when Jason's daughter, Cassandra, rallied some of her 5th grade classmates to form a community service team dedicated to helping both community and environment. Cassandra, just 10 years old at the time, and her friends had no idea of the long-term impact of their efforts. Today, Cassandra and her classmates have all graduated from colleges, but Project TGIF is still going strong. Since its inception, with the help of generous restaurant owners, Project TGIF has helped to collect over 500,000 gallons of grease and has generated 400,000 gallons of biodiesel. So far the project has donated 74,000 gallons of Bioheat® (approximately \$255,000 worth) to heat the homes of 740 local families.

Today, Project TGIF collects over 55,000 gallons of waste cooking oil a year from 90+ restaurants and grease receptacles where local residents can recycle their oil (such as the one at the Stonington transfer station). That grease, once recycled and processed into biodiesel, warms hundreds of needy households throughout Connecticut and Rhode Island. The benefit to the environment is significant too. Biodiesel is a clean-burning alternative to petroleum-based diesel and greatly reduces the amount of carbon dioxide being released into the air.

This year, Project TGIF donated 1,000 gallons of bioheat (a donation of over \$3,000) to Always Home to heat our below-market-rate rentals during the winter months. Jason encourages local restaurants to help nonprofits like Always Home by donating their used cooking oil to be recycled. "Joining Project TGIF is easy," he said. "Just contact Newport Biodiesel (tel: 401.846.1117) who collects used cooking oil in the area."



2022 POINT IN TIME COUNT

Annually, communities across the United States conduct a federally mandated census of the nation's homeless population. This single day Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a snapshot that reflects the average number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families on any given night. This year's PIT Count is scheduled for Tuesday, January 25th, 2022.

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 (*cont'd. on next page*)



GUIDED BY HEART

As a single mom, Faith's 8-year-old son is the center of her universe. When she was told after a routine mammogram that she had Stage 1, Grade 3 invasive breast cancer, her only thought was to overcome the cancer, so she can watch her son grow up. The road forward has been arduous. She underwent a double mastectomy and then a second surgery after developing an infection. Sideline by the surgeries and the chemotherapy that followed, Faith was unable to work. The bills started to pile up and she fell behind on her rent.

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. (*cont'd. on next page*)



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.



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. Before Christmas, they met with Faith to give her the bike (on SAVA's Pajama Day – see who's in their jammies in 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."

Lingering winter temperatures make us hopeful for Spring.
We're ready for warm weather and all it may bring.

Always Home is busy planning our next in-person event.
A chance to come together with shared purpose and intent.

Preventing Family Homelessness is a collective mission and goal.
When families have stable housing, their lives are more whole.

Always Home's Heart to Heart Gala will help families in need.
But we need your help to really succeed.

We'll be honoring Dave Cruthers, long-time supporter and friend.
May 13th, filled with promise, is an evening we hope you'll attend.





10th Grader Starts Publication to Help Homeless

We're happy to spotlight another young philanthropist. Kaiden Chandler is a 10th grader at the Marine Science Magnet High School. He originally started his digital publication the *Weekly Week* during the early days of the pandemic to spread joy and happiness. Later, he reimagined the *Weekly Week* with the mission of providing quality entertainment that spreads community kindness and creates positive social change.

Through a partnership with Always Home and the generosity of subscribers, the *Weekly Week* has raised hundreds of dollars to help families with children establish housing stability. Kaiden said that he "hopes to continue to bring joy to others and to raise additional money for a great cause."

You can subscribe to the *Weekly Week* by clicking on the button below.

[**Subscribe**](#)



With Heartfelt Thanks

Preventing Family Homelessness is achievable because we live in a community that cares. Over the past 6+ months, Always Home has helped 159 families avoid the trauma of eviction, homelessness or time spent in emergency shelter. Your support makes our work possible. Our gratitude to everyone who generously contributed to our Winter appeal and to the following grantors: Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut's Southeast Area Women & Girls Fund; Dime Savings Bank Foundation; Liberty Bank Foundation; New London Telephone Community Service Association Fund; Olga Sipolin Children's Fund, Bank of America Trustee; George A. Ramlose Foundation; Rotary Club of Groton; Rotary of the Stoningtons; and Seedworks Fund.

If you want to give to Always Home throughout the year, consider providing a monthly recurring gift by joining our **Hopeful Hearts Monthly Giving Club**.

[**Donate Now**](#)



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