



**ROUND HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH
IMPACT REPORT & GRANT REQUEST
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Inspirica Inc. is grateful to the Round Hill Community Church for its generous support of our mission: to permanently break the cycle of homelessness. Your investment in us is directly tied to our record results in moving thousands of men, women and children from the streets to health, jobs, homes – and dignity. Our work is not yet complete, however. Stubborn and persistent homelessness in lower Fairfield County has created soaring demand for services. In order to help us meet the increased need, we humbly request a grant in the amount of \$7,500 to support our unique ***Two-Generation Approach to Ending Family Homelessness***.

BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND GOALS

Inspirica's mission is to break the cycle of homelessness by helping people achieve –and maintain – permanent housing and stability in their lives. We are one of only a few organizations nationally (10-15) that has combined residential and support services under one roof in a “one-stop-shop setting.” Our ability to address both the physical aspect of homelessness (residential services) and its underlying root causes (support services) on a single, powerful, end-to-end platform eliminates gaps in services, allows programs to leverage each other, and exponentially increases our clients’ success rates.

We are one of the largest providers of services to the homeless in the region and by far the largest in lower Fairfield County. Each night we house approximately 350 people (1,050 per year, including 250 children). We operate 11 facilities in lower Fairfield County and provide an extensive array of support services including, vocational training; workforce education; job placement; housing placement; job & housing retention support; early childhood & parenting services; children's services (including an after-school program); health care, counseling, case management, and much more. We further provide direct access to mental health care, psychiatric care, dental care, substance abuse treatment through a network of strategic partnerships. Our approach is unique in four important ways:

- **Scope of Housing:** As noted above, Inspirica owns and operates emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, deeply affordable housing and rapid rehousing. Our ability to work across the spectrum of housing enables us to break the cycle of homelessness rather than provide only a temporary fix.
- **Scope of People Served:** Inspirica serves people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including single men, single women, families, people with mental illness, and people living with HIV/AIDS. Our ability to serve diverse populations enables us to work across the spectrum of those who are homeless rather than with just one segment.
- **Scope of Services:** Inspirica addresses not just the physical part of homelessness, but *all* of the underlying reasons a person becomes homeless, exponentially improving our success rate. We are one of only a few organizations nationally that have combined residential services with extensive support services on a single, end-to-end, comprehensive platform. This platform and our ability to integrate services are key elements of our success.
- **Focus on Results:** Inspirica is considered a leader in the field of metrics. We are intensely focused on outcomes that matter. We measure success not by how many people we serve, but the ultimate goal: how many of them achieve - and maintain - permanent housing and stability in their lives.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

The Stamford-Norwalk metropolitan area is now the 5th most expensive housing jurisdiction in the nation. While most daily expenses here track a few percentage points above national norms, housing costs are an outlier – they are more than double the national average. This has resulted in a different kind of homelessness: economic homelessness. While mental illness and substance abuse still play an

outsized role, the rising cost of living, coupled with wage stagnation, are leading to increasing homelessness. Compounding this harsh reality is the fact that 103 months since the end of the Great Recession, Connecticut has recovered only 89% of the jobs it lost during the downturn, making it the only state in the nation that has not yet recovered to pre-recession levels. In most cases, those jobs that have been recovered pay less than those they replaced. (Wage growth in Connecticut has been just 0.1% over the past eight years.) In 2017, the results of the annual Point-In-Time Survey showed an 18% decline in homelessness in our area. In 2018, the number of homeless essentially remained flat (there was a very slight increase). Given the large decline in 2017, we were glad not to give back any of these gains. However, we remain sobered by the fact that homelessness today remains at the same level as it was at the end of the Great Recession in February, 2010, when unemployment was 10.1%. In short, we continue to make progress, but the war on ending homelessness has hardly been won.

Unfortunately, due to Connecticut's dire fiscal condition, we have experienced significant cuts in state funding at precisely the time we are facing a surge in demand for our services. Last year, we lost \$570,000 in state funding, an amount that was not restored this year and is not expected to be restored in future years. This equates to losing 8.2% of our annual budget precisely when we can least afford it.

POPULATION SERVED

Inspirica serves individuals and families that live in poverty or near poverty. All are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The majority have little or no job experience and frequently their education backgrounds are deficient. Many suffer from substance abuse, mental illness and/or HIV/AIDS. We serve single women, men, families, and individuals with cognitive impairments. Some have histories of incarceration. All of the clients we serve have incomes at 25% of Area Median Income or below – typically far below. Most clients come to us with no job and very little income from benefits. The ages of our program participants range from newborns to seniors in their mid-80s. Without Inspirica, they are unlikely to overcome these barriers to success and secure employment that yields the income needed to live independently in the community.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Inspirica is unique in its ability to address the needs of our clients holistically and comprehensively through end-to-end platform of integrated services, all of which leverage each other. We are one of only a few organizations nationally that has combined residential and support services under one roof in a “one-stop-shop setting.” Our ability to address both the physical aspect of homelessness and its underlying root causes on a single, end-to-end platform eliminates gaps in services, allows programs to leverage each other and exponentially increases our success rate.

Residential Programs

- **Family Housing:** Our Family Housing Program has two distinct components: an emergency shelter that provides housing and support services to approximately 42 individuals (17 families) for up to two months; and, a transitional housing facility that provides housing and support services to approximately 63 individuals (25 families) for up to 24 months.
- **Women's Housing:** Our Women's Housing Program provides emergency shelter and support services to 25 single women for up to two months.
- **Gilead House:** Our Gilead Program provides transitional housing for 16 single men and women living with persistent mental illness, including three beds in a Jail Diversion Program.
- **McKinney House:** Our McKinney Program provides permanent supportive housing and congregate housing (with no maximum length of stay) for 15 people living with HIV/AIDS.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** Our Permanent Supportive Housing Program consists of five residences (Colony Apartments, Atlantic Park Apartments, Metcalf House, Rose Park and Summer Place) that together provide 104 people with permanent supportive housing. Tenants in this program hold their own leases and pay 30% of their income in rent.
- **Deeply Affordable Housing:** Our Deeply Affordable Housing Program consists of three residences (24 Woodland Place, 26 Woodland Place, and Summer Place) that provide deeply affordable housing for 55-60 people, including nine families).
- **Rapid Re-housing:** Inspirica is the contractor or subcontractor for three distinct rapid rehousing programs, through which we provide housing to approximately 25-30 families in the community.

In addition, in February, 2019, Inspirica will complete construction of a 53-unit building that will provide deeply affordable housing for individuals and families (125 people). This will bring the total number of people we house each night to 475. In keeping with our two-generation approach to ending family homelessness, the new building will include an Early Childhood Education Center (ECE) with six classrooms that provide 48 infant/toddlers age 0-3 with critical Early Head Start education.

Non-Residential/Support Programs

All of our residential programs are enhanced with substantial support services that are essential to addressing the underlying causes of homelessness, allowing people to break the cycle of homelessness and return to healthy, stable lives in the community:

- **Children’s Services:** Our Children’s Services Program provides critical foundational, educational, psychological, developmental, and after-school support to the children in our care, allowing them to maintain stability, gain self-esteem, excel in school, and develop in line with or ahead of their peers who are not homeless. In 2016 we launched a critical fifth component to address the needs of our most vulnerable residents – an **Early Childhood & Parenting Program** that provides pre-literacy and developmental programming to children from birth to age 5, with concurrent training for their parents.
- **Jumpstart Career Program:** Our Jumpstart Career Program provides participants with the core skills they need to prepare for, find, maintain and advance in employment. The program has three distinct components:
 - **Jumpstart Vocational Training** - Home Health Aide Certification, Certified Nursing Assistant Certification, Food Handler/ServSafe Certification
 - **Jumpstart Education** – Workforce education designed specifically for extreme-low-income, homeless clients.
 - **Jumpstart Employment** – A free employment agency that places people in competitive employment and allows them to earn the income necessary to exit homelessness and maintain healthy, stable lives in the community. Our Jumpstart Employment Agency further includes a Wage Growth Initiative to help clients increase their earning capacity.
- **Job & Housing Retention Services:** Our Job and Housing Retention Program provides essential job and housing retention support to participants who have recently become employed or moved into permanent housing. Without this support, many would likely lose their jobs or homes, perpetuating the cycle of homelessness.
- **Additional Support Services:** In addition to the above, we provide an extensive array of support services, including counseling and case management within our residential programs. We

further provide direct access to medical and dental care, in-patient substance abuse treatment, psychiatric care and more through a network of formal, strategic partnerships.

RESULTS

Inspirica holds itself to a high standard. We measure success not by how many people we serve, but by how many of them attain jobs and move into permanent housing. Our rigorous approach to metrics and ability to evaluate our programs in real time have proven successful. Our results include the following:

- **Job Placements:** Last year, we made 209 job placements, bringing our total over the past 8 fiscal years (through 6/30/18) to 1,477. Our average salary for the current fiscal year is \$12.78 per hour (27% above minimum wage) with each person working an average 32.0 hours per week.
- **Housing:** Last year, we moved a record 207 men, women and children into permanent housing, bringing our total over the past 8 fiscal years (through 6/30/18) to a record 1,312 individuals.
- **Children's Services:** At the end of the last school year, 100% of the children in our care graduated to the next grade level. Their average grade was a B-. Both statistics far exceed the national average.
- **Job & Housing Retention:** The people we place in jobs and housing remain employed and housed. Indeed, 100% of participants whom we place in permanent housing remain housed after 1 month, 97% after 3 months, 93% after 6 months, and 80% after 12 months. These results far exceed the national average and demonstrate the efficacy of our comprehensive approach to breaking the cycle of homelessness.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Inspirica believes in collaboration. We work closely with myriad partners on a local, regional and state level. Examples (partial list only) of various collaborations include: Early Childhood & Parenting Program (with CLC and Exchange Club Parenting Skills), the Clinic @ Woodland (with Optimus), Children's Services (with CLC and Child Guidance Centers), Opening Doors Fairfield County (multiple entities), Supportive Housing Works (multiple entities), Opening Doors CT (multiple entities), 992 Summer Street (Charter Oak Communities), Sexual Assault Center, CT Renaissance, St. Luke's School etc.

GRANT REQUEST & USE OF FUNDS

Inspirica's mission is a higher bar than most organizations that serve the homeless. Our goal is not to shelter people, but to fundamentally break the cycle of homelessness by addressing not just the physical component of homelessness, but also its underlying root causes. One of the most effective ways to do this is through children.

To this end, we have embraced a unique **two-generation approach to ending family homelessness**. We believe that to do this we have to address *all* components of the family: adults and children alike. We provide the adults we serve with the life and work skills they need to find, maintain and advance in jobs that provide the income necessary to secure an apartment. At the same time, we provide their children with the critical foundation they need to overcome serious learning and developmental deficits and develop in line with their peers who are not homeless. This two-generation approach is at the core of our Family Housing Program, Jumpstart Career Program, Early Childhood & Education, and Children's Services Program (including our afterschool Youth Center).

We respectfully seek funding for these programs (described in further detail below) as part of our innovative "two-generation" approach to breaking the cycle of family homelessness. A key element behind the success of this initiative is the ability of each program to leverage the others and eliminate gaps in service.

Family Housing Program: Inspirica’s Family Housing Program (FHP) is the only program that serves homeless families in the area that can house an entire family. As noted above, the program comprises two distinct components – an emergency shelter and a transitional housing facility – that serve 105 men, women and children. Families in both components of FHP receive comprehensive support services to address their myriad needs.

Jumpstart Career Program: Inspirica’s Jumpstart Career Program provides participants with the core skills they need to prepare for, find, maintain and advance in employment. The program also helps the people we serve develop critical life skills essential to breaking the cycle of homelessness such as budgeting, money management, conflict resolution, time management, etc.

Jumpstart Career Program has three distinct components:

- *Jumpstart Vocational Training* – Home Health Aide Certification, Certified Nursing Assistant Certification, Food Handler/ServSafe Certification
- *Jumpstart Education* – Workforce education designed specifically for extreme-low-income, homeless clients.
- *Jumpstart Employment* – A free employment agency that places people in competitive employment that allows them to earn the income they need to exit homelessness. (It further includes a Wage Growth Initiative to help clients increase their earning capacity.)

Children’s Services Program (ages 5-18): Most organizations that serve homeless families do not focus on the children; they are not the ones who get jobs and earn the income needed to move into permanent housing. This is not true at Inspirica. The statistics surrounding children who are homeless are staggering. They are sick 4x more often than children who are not homeless, have 4x the rate of developmental problems, 3x the rate of emotional and behavioral problems, and 2x the rate of learning disabilities. Math and reading proficiency among homeless children in high school are 11% and 14%, respectively, with less than 25% graduating.

Our Children’s Services Program provides critical services to the children in our care including: Foundational Support; Educational Support; Psychological & Developmental Support; and After-School Support. This comprehensive approach allows the children we serve to maintain stability, gain self-esteem, excel in school, and develop in line with or ahead of their peers who are not homeless. Without this support, most of our children would not be able to break the cycle of homelessness.

Early Childhood & Parenting Program: The need for early childhood programs for children ages 0 to 5 (particularly homeless children) is paramount. Over one third of all children nationally who enter school lack the language, print or sound processing skills required to learn. This deficiency is particularly pronounced among children in families who are homeless. By age three children who are homeless hear 32 million fewer words than their peers in families with college-educated parents. By ages nine and ten, test scores show they are deficient in critical areas such as vocabulary, listening, syntax and reading comprehension. As high as 80% of children in shelters do not read at grade level. The impact on future learning and success is typically irreversible. Statistics show that 66% of children who do not read at grade level by Grade 4 end up either on welfare or in jail. Research further shows that homeless children begin to demonstrate significant developmental delays after just 18 months of age – delays which later develop into behavioral/emotional problems and regressed speech. Birth to age 5 is a critical time – perhaps the most critical time – in a child’s development. Early childhood experiences are

essential to providing the foundation for cognitive development, brain development, motor skill development, and literacy/social skills – all of which impact future learning and success.

Our Early Childhood & Parenting Program (ECPP) prevents serious issues for our children before they happen.

ECPP combines crucial early childhood learning/development and a pre-literacy program for children with essential parenting skills classes for their parents. Children participate in verbal and written activities, movement games, exploration, music, art, science, stories and songs, all designed to promote school-readiness. At the same time, their parents participate in classes that cover areas such as socialization, communication, boundaries, behavior/discipline, nutrition, reading, writing, child development, and advocating for children. The program operates five days a week. Key components include:

- Infant/toddler classes, pre-K classes and parenting classes – each 3x per week
- Baby & Me Classes – 2x per week
- Support groups for fathers (Donuts for Dads) and mothers (Muffins for Moms) – 2x-4x per month

Additionally, to ensure our children are advancing within an appropriate developmental range, ECPP also provides intensive **one-on-one counseling for children every day**. Based on our monthly testing of children (using the ASQ evaluation tool), ECPP provides significant one-on-one support to children who are not testing within the appropriate developmental range for their age. This intensive approach allows us to address potential deficits in development in real time and as they emerge.

NOTE: We are deeply indebted and grateful to Round Hill Community Church. It was your early \$105,000 investment in Early Childhood & Parenting (over three years) that allowed us to build the program and for it to flourish! We hope you feel the same immense pride we feel about the program and the number of young children whose lives it has radically impacted and transformed. (We hope you view this proposal as extension of your early investment.)

Program Contribution to Mission: Poverty and homelessness are far too often intergenerational. Despite this, society tends to look at short-term solutions to addressing them. For example, we believe if we can house a person we have solved their homelessness. While this is true in the short term, our inability to address the underlying reasons people became homeless means that they will likely become homeless again. Indeed, recidivism rates are extremely high. Not only does this perpetuate the cycle of homelessness, but it is extremely expensive to society – not only in terms of direct expenses, but lost opportunity.

Inspirica’s mission is not to shelter people or make short-term housing placements. It is a much higher bar: to fundamentally break the cycle of homelessness once and for all. The “two-generation” initiative for which we seek support goes to the core of this mission by comprehensively addressing each adult’s needs AND at the same time addressing the needs of their children (who, far too often, are overlooked). Our success is unparalleled. By ensuring that 80% of the people we serve remain housed a full year later (which we consider a proxy for “breaking the cycle) and by ensuring that the homeless children in our care develop on par with their non-homeless peers, we are not only transforming their lives, but radically reducing the impact of homelessness on our community socially and economically.

Once again, we are deeply grateful for our long partnership with Round Hill Community Church. **Thank you again for your investment in us.** We humbly request that you support us again with a renewed grant of \$7,500 so that we can continue to move hundreds of men, women and children from homelessness to home.

Together, we make a difference!

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

KERI: FINDING HAPPINESS & HOME

Keri is a single mother of Patrick, age 4. She grew up in a rough neighborhood, lacked a high school degree, and had ongoing issues with authority. Unemployed and moving from one bad situation to the next, her future was not headed in a positive direction.

“I felt like I was sinking”... Keri

Helping Keri wasn't easy. She was angry and filled with a lifetime of self-doubt. After weeks of counseling she began to challenge herself. She enrolled in our Jumpstart Career Program, showing particular interest in our **Home Health Aide Vocational Training Program**. By the time she completed the 12-course curriculum, you could scarcely recognize the person who had come to us dejected and broken.

The same was true for Patrick. We enrolled him in our **Early Childhood & Parenting Program** where he received the critical early childhood development and pre-literacy skills necessary for children his age. The issues that plagued Keri in her early development will not afflict Patrick, allowing him to *break the cycle of homelessness*.

Keri is now a full-time Home Health Aide. She and Patrick are searching for a home. Because of Inspirica, we were able to make an everlasting change in their lives and Patrick and Keri will soon be home.

