

## For Hundreds of People in the Midlands, Mirci Housing a Life Changer

Recently, a client who had been living in her car for over a year was so excited to be moving into her own apartment, she threw her arms around Mirci Housing Specialist LaTonya Benjamin.

“She hugged me so tight, she knocked my glasses off,” LaTonya said. “The joy on her face - it meant so much. That joy and the sense of relief from clients are what give me the greatest satisfaction in my job.”

LaTonya is part of the Mirci team that makes it possible for more than 335 Midlands residents who previously experienced homelessness to now live in safe, affordable apartments.

David, 62, is one of those clients. He has lived in Mirci-provided housing since 2006 and says it has made all the difference in his ability to manage his mental health condition and recover from substance use disorder

"Before I found out about Mirci, I lived for awhile at Oliver Gospel Mission, then I bounced around various room and board kind of situations," he said. "With all the moving around and confusion, it was really hard to support my sobriety. Mirci gave me a place to live, a safe place. This is the longest I've ever lived in one place."

David said he continues to meet with his Mirci counselor weekly.

"Things are as good and stable as they've ever been," he said. "I even volunteer with an end of life organization. Mirci didn't let me fall, and it has supported me in making good choices for years. It gave me a home. Now I want to give back as much as I can to others."

Mona, 65, is another client who has lived for years in Mirci-provided housing. Until she was referred to Mirci by a psychiatric hospital in 2009, she had spent most of her adult life living "like a gypsy" rarely able to remain in a home more than one or two years.

"I have bi-polar disorder and for much of my life I had episodes when I couldn't sleep for days and days and that would cause me to lose jobs and get into arguments and end up losing my housing," she said. "Also, because I was abused growing up, I'd fall in with the wrong kind of people, people who would abuse me, and so many times I lost housing suddenly because I was dependent on their unpredictable behavior. And too, it was often either food or rent but not both on my SSI check."

Mona said she still finds it 'kind of unbelievable' that she has lived in the same place for years.

"Just having a stable home, a place I can go out and come back to, that no one can kick me out of, it means everything to me," Mona said. "It's something I had never experienced before Mirci. My mental health is a whole lot better because of having a home and having support. I'm so thankful for Mirci."

Housing Director LaTrish Garvin said without Mirci's help, even the clients who receive Supplemental Social Security checks (\$841/month) would be hard pressed to find a safe, livable and affordable apartment in Columbia, where the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is now \$1,140.

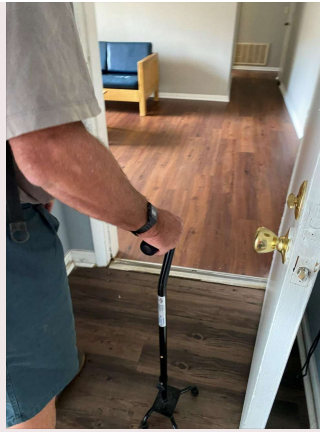
"We keep apartments affordable by charging our clients just 30 percent of their income for rent," LaTrish said. "If they do not have an income, they are not charged."

Mirci has been providing housing for clients experiencing homelessness since the early 1990s. Executive Director Julie Ann Avin remembers what things were like before Mirci expanded its services to include housing.

"When people came to what was then called Friendship Center each day, they had all their belongings with them," Julie Ann said. "We'd see them stowing their things under the stairs or stashing them in corners. The main downtown shelter at that time did not allow people to leave their belongings there during the day. So people had to carry whatever they owned with them wherever they went."

Today, not only does Mirci provide housing to those who qualify, it even furnishes each apartment and gives clients dinnerware, pots and pans, bedding and other necessities, thanks in part to the generosity of donors.

"We do all we can to set people up for success," LaTrish said. "We want them to succeed and continue to work on their mental health."



*Mirci is always in search of suitable apartments in the Midlands. Rental payments are 100% reliable and properties are leased by Mirci. Mirci also guarantees 24-7 client support. If you own well-maintained, conventional multi-unit rental property in a safe neighborhood or know someone who does and you would like to learn more about leasing to Mirci, please email LaTrish at [LGarvin@mirci.org](mailto:LGarvin@mirci.org).*

[Click here to donate a housing starter kit for a Mirci client](#)

## Thanks to The Newcomer's Club of Columbia!



Thanks so much to The Newcomer's Club of Columbia. The club adopted Mirci as its 2022 and 2023 charity partner, and its 120 or so members are raising money to support our work.

The Newcomers' Club is made up of women who have relocated to the Midlands from other places. The club organizes twice monthly gatherings to help members make new friends and share fun experiences like game nights, happy hours, dinners, luncheons, nature hikes, theatre and movie nights, concerts, coffee meet-ups and

more. The Newcomers also sponsor special interest groups including a book club, bridge and canasta clubs, and clubs focused on gardening and golf. It's a wonderful organization, and we're so grateful for their partnership!

Learn more about The Newcomers Club at <http://www.newcomersofgreatercolumbia.com/>.

If your organization would like  
to support our work,  
please email us by clicking here.

## Panera Bread Makes Mornings Sweeter for Our Clients



Sending gratitude to Panera Bread's Gervais Street location in downtown Columbia for the store's twice-weekly donations of delicious fresh pastries, bagels and bread for clients using our adult and youth outreach centers. Panera bakes its products fresh daily and donates unsold baked goods at day's end to local charities. Shown are gracious Panera employees Tavoria Stafford, the store's baker, and Zachary Dougherty, the manager.

*We're looking for volunteers to help us pick up these delicious and much appreciated baked goods from the store on Thursday nights and deliver them to Mirci first thing Friday morning. If you'd like to help, please email us at [info@mirco.org](mailto:info@mirco.org). Thank you!*

## Why Mirci?

***Mirci volunteer and Board member Melanie Matthews is a former elementary and middle school teacher and vice-president of her family's business, Modern Exterminating. She shares why she has donated her time and resources to Mirci the past four years:***

"I first learned of Mirci in 2014. Mirci was a client of Modern Exterminating and they invited us to sponsor their art show fundraiser, *52 Windows*. We started attending the event and I really loved it. It has become one of my favorites – it's fun and there's beautiful art at a great price and all for the benefit of a wonderful organization.



I've always known that when it comes to mental illness and homelessness, there but for the grace of God, go I. It could so easily be my children, my parents, my friends. I also taught school for 17 years and I saw firsthand the stigma facing children with mental illness and also parents with mental illness and families who are struggling. So

often, people working in the school system just want a child to sit down and shut up. It was easy to imagine how some students could get lost in the system and end up homeless. I always thought how awful it would be to one day run into one of my former students living on the street.

Then five years ago, I went on a church mission trip to Los Angeles to work with an organization that helps people experiencing homelessness and families on the verge of eviction. That experience - getting to know people up close who were going through this trauma - made a powerful impact. When I got back to Columbia, I realized that Mirci is the organization most similar to the one I volunteered for in California. I told Mirci I wanted to become more involved and supportive.

We started doing supply drives at the office for Mirci, and our employees began delivering Thanksgiving Day meals to Mirci clients, which everyone loves. We increased our financial support. Two years ago, I was invited to join the Board, which was a real honor, then last Spring, I co-chaired the *52 Windows* planning committee. I guess you could say things have come full circle.”

## You're Invited to Merry Mirci Holiday 2022!

Get into the holiday spirit with us at Merry Mirci Holiday 2022! Our relaxed and casual wine tasting/food pairing event will be held from 6-9 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 1st, at [The Hall at Senate's End](#). This warm and friendly gathering for good features live jazz, delicious wine and food, expert advice on holiday wines, a silent auction and more. Tickets go on sale October 15th.

### Sponsor Merry Mirci!

Support our meaningful work by sponsoring Merry Mirci Holiday! See the sponsorship levels below, and reach out to us to sign up. Simply [email Karen Addy](#) or call her at (803) 786-1844, ext 103.

### MERRY MIRCI HOLIDAY SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

SPONSORSHIP BENEFITS	GOLDEN \$10,000+	SILVER \$5,000 - \$9,999	BRONZE \$2,500 - \$4,999	COPPER \$1,000 - \$2,499	BENEFACTOR \$500 - \$999
Tickets to Merry Mirci Holiday*	●	●	●	●	●
Recognition on Event Invitation, Program + Signage	●	●	●	●	●
Recognition in MIRCI's Newsletter + Annual Report	●	●	●	●	●
Banner on Auction Website with Link Back to Company Website	●	●	●	●	
Facebook, Twitter and Instagram Mentions on MIRCI Accounts with a Link to Company Site	●	●			
Name Recognition in Event-related Press Releases	●				

TICKETS PER LEVEL\* | Golden: 12 - Silver: 10 - Bronze: 8 - Copper: 6 - Benefactor: 4

Join MIRCI in providing

# a way **FORWARD**

in the areas of:

Essential Needs  
Behavioral Healthcare  
Supportive Housing

Have you ever wanted to be a hero, to make a true difference in the world? Today, you can be a way forward for someone in the Midlands who is experiencing (or facing the possibility of) homelessness while also navigating the emotional uncertainty of mental illness.

By signing up for MIRCI's monthly giving program at any amount, you can make an instant positive change in someone's life:

- \$10 a month provides 5 days of transportation for someone trying to make appointments, go grocery shopping or meet basic needs.
- \$25 a month provides medication for an individual with schizophrenia
- \$50 a month provides sheets, pillows and a comforter for a person exiting homelessness after months or years without shelter
- \$125 a month provides a housing starter kit that contains 20 essential kitchen, bath and laundry items.

To sign up for our 'A Way Forward' monthly giving plan, simply go to the link below and select "recurring gift". Then sleep well tonight and every night going forward knowing that you're using your blessings to bless another. Thank you for whatever you can do!

Provide a way forward today!



For questions about volunteering or hosting a supply drive or fundraiser, please email:  
[mail@mirci.org](mailto:mail@mirci.org)



[Donate one of our most needed items.](#)



[Become a monthly supporter at any amount.](#)

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram!



**Our Contact Information**

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