

**GrantSpace - Collaboration Hub**

# Bethlehem Haven

## Participating Organizations

- Miryam's, Pittsburgh, PA

Please note that all data below was derived from the collaboration's nomination for the Collaboration Prize. None of the submitted data were independently verified for accuracy.

## Formation

**Type of Collaboration:** Merger by which governance, programs and administrative functions have been combined but which may or may not have included the integration into a single corporate entity.

**Geographic Scope:** County

**Collaboration Focus Area:** Housing

**Population Served:** Homeless

**Year Collaboration was Established:** 2007

**Goals Sought Through Collaboration:**

- Expand reach and/or range of services / programs
- Maximize financial resources
- Leverage complementary strengths and/or assets

**Reasons Prompting Collaboration:**

- Potential closure of one or more of the partnering organizations
- Advancement of a shared goal
- Response to a community need

**Who Initiated Collaboration:**

- Board member(s)
- Executive Director(s) / CEO(s) / President(s)

**Number of Participating Organizations:** 2

**Nature of Funder Involvement:**

- Funded initial exploration
- Funded implementation

**Were Partners Added or Dropped?:** No

**Consultant Role:**

- To conduct financial due diligence
- To draft the governing agreement or provide other legal advice
- To facilitate negotiations or discussions that led to the formation of the collaboration
- To develop a business plan or strategic plan for the collaboration

In 1981, Bethlehem Haven was founded by a collaboration of 5 churches in downtown Pittsburgh as a response to the growing need for emergency shelter for homeless women. Recognizing the value of collaboration, Bethlehem Haven grew beyond its original scope of “crisis intervention” to address the multiple issues limiting a woman’s chance for self-sufficiency. As a result, the Haven created a collaborative model of service providers in one building, bringing onsite healthcare, legal services, mental health and recovery services to the women of the Haven. Collaborative on-site partners include Health Care for the Homeless, Magee Womens Hospital UPMC, Mercy Behavioral Health, Western Psychiatric Institute, PA Organization for Women in Early Recovery (POWER), the Allegheny Co. Bar Foundation, the Urban League of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University. In 2007, Bethlehem Haven took the next step and entered into a formal merger between the Haven and Miryam’s, another Pittsburgh agency serving homeless women located just 4 blocks away from the Haven. While Bethlehem Haven provided emergency shelter for the night, Miryam’s provided a sanctuary for women during the day. Both organizations provided transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for women with a mental illness. When the opportunity to merge was presented, it was a natural decision to consolidate both programs and operations to expand and enhance available services. Not only did the women served by both organizations benefit from the merger, the additional space brought on with the Miryam’s building allowed Bethlehem Haven to add more on-site partners such as AJAPO to serve immigrants, and Kitchens with Missions which now provides the meals for all housing programs and the Day Program.

## Management

**Management Structure:** One Executive Director / CEO / President

In 2006, Bethlehem Haven was urged by the County to consider a merger with Miryam’s. At that time, board and staff of both organizations formed “transition teams” to prepare for a seamless merger of programs and operations. The teams included staff at all levels in both organizations and were formed based on department functions: administration and finance, human resources, housing programs, facilities and board oversight. Staff developed operational measurements for service outcomes to be evaluated by the Bethlehem Haven board of directors which included members from the previous Miryam’s board. As the larger organization with more infrastructure and fundraising expertise, the Haven took the lead in consolidating administrative functions, while providing leadership in the extension of the new services available to both groups of clients. Management of the combined entity included key individuals from both organizations. Subsequently, staff and board members have worked together to provide the best possible service to clients and to develop new opportunities. With a solid base of operation, several new programs have been introduced to enhance the merged operations including a Rapid Re-Housing program to secure permanent housing for women who have achieved self-sufficiency.

## Challenges

**Challenges to Making the Collaboration Work:**

- Coordinating / merging / integrating operations
- Raising funds or integrating fund development to support the collaboration
- Creating a shared culture
- Coordination / integration of programs & services

As with many collaborations, challenges were primarily related to staff and financial issues. Fortunately, Bethlehem Haven was able to secure funding from foundations and government sources to cover the purchase of the Miryam’s building, the merger costs, the infrastructure/integration costs, and provide programmatic support. Miryam’s had been operating at a deficit for several years, and their sources to cover the annual shortfall were no longer available. Additionally, Miryam’s was behind in billing to the County. With a stronger fiscal policy and more experienced finance staff, Bethlehem Haven was able to bring Miryam’s current on billing and prevented Miryam’s from bankruptcy, thus saving three valuable programs for women in the homeless community. Moreover, the staff at Miryam’s were sorely underpaid and underutilized. Post merger, almost all of Miryam’s employees received raises and many were promoted to positions that best suited their skills and talents. The staff of both organizations recognized that the combined entity was stronger in many respects than they were individually, and responded to the challenge to move forward together.

## Impact

## **Internal Efficiencies and Effectiveness:**

- Financial savings - Consolidation of management / administration
- Financial savings - Coordination / consolidation of programming
- Greater ability for each partner to focus on core competency - Greater ability to allocate resources to areas of need
- More efficient use of physical space - More efficient use of physical space

## **Community Impact:**

- Increase in number of clients / individuals / organizations served
- Greater range / variety of services/programs offered

The greatest impact of the merger was the saving of Miryam's important programs, including 30 beds for homeless women. The collaboration created a stronger organization with increased organizational capacity to support and to continually improve the effectiveness of the mission to provide a continuum of care for homeless women. Moreover, the staff reductions and consolidation in purchasing has produced a \$300,000 annual cost savings for the merged organization. Since the merger, the combined number of homeless individuals served each year has grown from approximately 1,000 to 1,500. This includes an increase in the number of beds available, increased number of meals served in the Day Program, increased number of individuals who have received job training and are now employed, and growth in the number of homeless who now have permanent housing. Now the Aftercare services of Miryam's are able to serve all of the women from both organizations who have moved on to permanent housing in the community. This allows for additional longer term measures of outcomes. By measuring these outcomes and benefits, we have learned that the continuum of care structure can achieve lasting results for our clients. The Haven has recently collaborated with Kitchens with Missions to purchase and implement Solutions Software to build upon and improve the individual and aggregate data systems already in place. In this way, we are substantially increasing our ability to track, assess, monitor and plan accordingly for program services. Clearly, this collaboration was a win for the community.

## **Model**

The merger between Bethlehem Haven and Miryam's can serve as a learning model for many nonprofit organizations. Bethlehem Haven has received recognition as a model program from a number of sources including the 2005 Alfred W. Wishart, Jr. Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management. We were also recognized in the 2008 Community Threads report issued by the Forbes Fund. Prior to the collaboration with Miryam's, we had already made great strides with our collaborative human services program, HR-C, which promotes efficient and effective use of human resources, space, equipment and supplies with two other nonprofit agencies. As a result, the Haven had already experienced success in collaborative efforts and this provided a good template for the consolidation of Miryam's. Our track record in successful collaborative efforts qualifies Bethlehem Haven as a worthy model for other agencies and we would welcome the opportunity to share our knowledge and expertise. From a beginning collaboration of 5 churches to a working model with many of Pittsburgh's leading institutions, the Haven can impart lessons learned and share successful pathways with other agencies.

## **Efficiencies Achieved**

The agreement to form a collaboration between Bethlehem Haven and Miryam's and the agreement's execution took place over a period of more than 12 months. The time frame was established to prepare staff members, clients, volunteers and board members for a seamless transition into combined program delivery, client services, staff schedules, and administrative and operational functions. Transition teams were organized by both organizations and included staff members at all levels. Each team focused on specific department functions, including housing programs, nonresident services, human resources, facilities, administration and finance, and board oversight. The teams established performance goals and department staff developed operational measurements for service outcomes. Financial savings and cost reductions were achieved as a result of minimal staff reductions (by attrition where possible) and consolidation of financial reporting and fundraising activities. These savings have amounted to approximately \$300,000 per year. Revenue necessary to fund the merger process and initial consolidation of activities was provided by several key private foundations in the Pittsburgh area. These foundations recognized the merger's short- and long-term benefits to the community.

Following the merger and transition, and in the ensuing two years, the expectations of private funders, board members, community partners, clients, and staff were met through uninterrupted service delivery and the continuum of care that has always been available to any woman in need. We believe that a number of services provided by Miryam's would have vanished had the merger not occurred. Instead, the key services offered by both agencies became available to the combined client base. These programs and services include Miryam's outstanding Day Program and residential facility as well as Bethlehem Haven's programs for emergency shelter, physical and mental health issues, employment skills, and permanent housing.

Further, overall program delivery for all clients has been enhanced as a result of the collaboration between Bethlehem Haven and Miryam's. Two specific examples demonstrate the merger's resulting increase in assistance to homeless women: continued availability of the Day Program and recent implementation of the Rapid Re-Housing Program.

Every day, our Day Program offers safe sanctuary, nutritious meals, personal care access, and community-building activities for unsheltered homeless women. The Day Program is available 365 days/year from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided along with a number of recreational and educational activities. In our last fiscal year, Bethlehem Haven provided more than 59,000 meals to women at risk. Program services include individualized needs assessment, case management, crisis intervention and comprehensive mental health and medical care. Without the merger, the Day Program may have been eliminated.

Day Program clients may be suffering from addiction, experiencing mental health issues, encountering domestic violence, abandoned unexpectedly, recently released from jail, or experiencing physical health issues. The following are examples of assistance provided for women in the Day Program and also identify occasions where collaboration with other agencies was enlisted to resolve a difficult situation:

- A former homeless client (elderly) received assistance in completing the recertification papers for her Section 8 housing. Staff also assisted her in applying for LHEAP and rent abuse, enabling this woman to remain housed.
- A woman came to the Day Program who had been incarcerated and was now street homeless. Staff secured a bed for her at the Haven's Emergency Shelter. The woman was also in need of a State ID so she could cash her SSI check, and staff provided the money order to obtain the State ID.
- A woman in her mid 80's, former Haven shelter resident, was being evicted from Mercy Manor because it was closing. She was on a waiting list for a senior high rise but with a two-week wait. Staff contacted Catholic Charities, Dept. of Aging, Urban League, and Mercy Manor to prevent her homelessness. The combined effort allowed her to stay at Mercy Manor until her new placement was available.
- The Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force provides services at the Day Program facility.
- The staff organized a "Day of Giving" for the women who were able to "shop" from the Haven's inventory and pick out clothes, shoes, purses, and coats.

Collaborative partners of the Day Program include: Alma Illery Medical Center, Health Care for the Homeless, Renaissance Center, Wellspring, WPIC Outreach Team, Community Human Services, CYF, Healthy Start, Mercy Behavioral Health, Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Rainbow Community Services, Mon Yough Community Mental Health providers, Allegheny County Mental Health Association Homeless Outreach, Peer Support and Advocacy Network, Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force, Addison Behavioral Health, Duquesne University School of Nursing, Action Housing, POWER, and the Neighborhood Living Project.

The Rapid Re-Housing Program, implemented in January, 2010, has already generated positive results. Women who come to the Haven are quickly connected to the program to begin the road to independent living. Rapid Re-Housing services include locating vacant apartments or other housing opportunities, determining eligibility for income sources, assisting women with managing their income, determining affordability, and working to finalize rental agreements. Our Housing Coordinator works to accomplish this by meeting frequently one-on-one with each woman to:

- Immediately identify supportive service and housing needs and preferences
- Assist individuals to complete applications for income assistance (SSI/SSEI applications)
- Enroll in onsite vocational rehabilitation services to promote employment
- Establish Housing Savings Accounts for deposits and first month's rent
- Facilitate Section 8 voucher applications
- Work with local landlords to quickly place those who are able to live independently
- Provide follow-up services through Aftercare to ensure stability in housing.

From January through early August, the Housing Coordinator met with 97 prospective Haven clients and submitted 248 various applications for housing. Of the 97 clients she has worked with, 63 have been placed in appropriate, stable housing, exceeding the goal of 75% for the program.

The typical approval rate for homeless persons is just 10-15%. Without income, many of the women we serve are unable to access housing. By implementing a thorough Intake and Assessment process staffed with trained professionals, we hope to increase the rate of successful applications by our clients to 60%.

These are just two examples of the benefits to the community provided as a result of the merger between Bethlehem Haven and Miryam's, and the ongoing service to homeless women and women at risk in Pittsburgh and the surrounding area.

To enhance our ability to accurately measure and analyze program outcomes and other key data, we have recently upgraded our evaluation and measurement software by purchasing Social Solutions software which is specifically designed for nonprofit agencies. The configuration we have implemented allows for very detailed examination of service delivery efforts and relates those efforts to outcome goals. This software will allow our staff to go well beyond case management and simple program participant counts. The Bethlehem Haven Board of Directors authorized the expenditure for this software, ensuring our ability to evaluate the effectiveness of our many programs and also provide tangible evidence that funds are being used in the most appropriate manner for the women we serve.

## **Evolution**

The initial concept of merging Miryam's and Bethlehem Haven was brought to the Haven in 2006 by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. Officials were concerned about the financial viability of Miryam's and the prospects for its Day Program and housing services for women. Both organizations were highly regarded for their mission, but Bethlehem Haven had grown to become the larger and more financially secure of the two agencies with a long history of success.

Bethlehem Haven was founded in 1981 by a group of five downtown Pittsburgh churches in response to a growing need for emergency shelter for homeless women; it was located in the Smithfield United Church's basement. Recognizing that the original focus of "crisis intervention" was insufficient to address the many issues facing homeless individuals, Bethlehem Haven created a collaborative model of service providers and moved into Fifth Avenue Commons, located in Uptown Pittsburgh. The outside collaborations provide a comprehensive approach to helping homeless individuals, primarily women, in Allegheny County. The continuum of care includes housing, health, and supportive services that allow each woman to identify her needs and work toward successful outcomes. The participants in this effort included Magee Womens Hospital, Mercy Behavioral Health, Western Psychiatric Institute, Allegheny County Bar Association, Urban League of Pittsburgh, and Duquesne University. Bethlehem Haven brought this track record of successful collaborations to the table when the opportunity to merge with Miryam's was presented.

Following the merger suggestion, Bethlehem Haven and Miryam's began negotiating a merger. With the approval of both boards and key management, a decision was made to move forward and combine operations. As the larger organization with more infrastructure and fundraising expertise, Bethlehem Haven took the lead in consolidating administrative functions. Simultaneously, Bethlehem Haven provided leadership for the process of extending new services that would now be available to both client groups. Program service redundancy was minimal, resulting in a significant expansion of services available to homeless women and women at risk.

The Bethlehem Haven board was expanded to include several members from the previous Miryam's board. The management structure of the combined entities included key individuals from both organizations to take advantage of a significant knowledge base and capabilities. Subsequently, our staff and board members have worked together to provide the best possible service to clients and to develop new opportunities as outlined in detail in G1 above. This structure has proven to be successful following the formal merger in 2007. Staff members have recognized that the merger has allowed for expansion of services to an increasing population of at-risk women. The strength of the combined organization has provided the opportunity to implement new programs such as Rapid Re-Housing. Further, Bethlehem Haven has received increased recognition from the community for the quality of service as noted in our initial application.

Challenges were primarily related to staff and financial issues. Bethlehem Haven secured funding to cover purchasing the Miryam's building, merger costs, infrastructure/integration costs, and provide programmatic support. Miryam's had been operating at a deficit for several years, and their sources to cover the annual shortfall were no longer available. Additionally, Miryam's had fallen behind in providing billing invoices and support data to Allegheny County. With a stronger fiscal policy and more experienced finance staff, Bethlehem Haven was able to bring Miryam's billing process up to date and prevented the organization's bankruptcy. This action saved three valuable programs for women in the homeless community and provided resource continuity. During the merger, we realized that most Miryam's employees were sorely underpaid and in some cases underutilized. Following the merger, nearly all Miryam's employees received raises and many were promoted to positions that best suited their talents. The staff from both organizations recognized that the combined entity provided additional strengths to the community, which was demonstrated by the increased number of women served and the merged operation's ability to expand current programs while developing new opportunities.

In the past fiscal year, Bethlehem Haven provided shelter and health and supportive services to more than 2,000 individuals in Pittsburgh (primarily women but including a small number of men), an increase of 30-40% from the number of individuals served when the Bethlehem Haven and Miryam's were separate entities. We have measured the success of our collaboration in part by the increase in the number of individuals served. Other measures of success, in addition to the data collected by our internal software program, is reflected in increased community awareness and visibility for Bethlehem Haven and our ability to serve as an active participant in community initiatives. We anticipate a continuation of current economic difficulties throughout 2010 and with it a growing number of individuals who will find comfort, hope for the future, and safety at Bethlehem Haven.

We firmly believe that Bethlehem Haven should win The Collaboration Prize because the merger with Miryam's has been successful in its scope and mission. We have demonstrated our ability to provide continuity for services that were in place at the time of the merger, and we have expanded programs and introduced new opportunities that have greatly benefited homeless individuals and the community at large. The merger also reflects the experience gained in our long and successful history collaborating with other organizations. The list of leading institutions in the region—large and small—that have joined Bethlehem Haven in implementing these projects is impressive. In addition, Bethlehem Haven serves as a learning model for many nonprofit organizations, allowing us to share lessons learned and successful pathways with other agencies. We look forward to that opportunity.

