

Housing Initiatives of Princeton

# News



Housing Initiatives of Princeton, LLC, is a program of Princeton Outreach Projects, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization

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Dedication day at Prescott House at 11 Mercer Street and some of the beautiful rooms decorated courtesy of donors and volunteers

**Donor Profile**

## Debbie Schaeffer

At Mrs G TV and Appliance on Route 1 in Lawrenceville, Debbie Schaeffer has a public title—President—and a private one: granddaughter to Mrs. G herself, Beatrice Greenberg. Schaeffer first heard about HIP from a board member, but as a Princeton resident she was already familiar with the house at 11 Mercer Street, and she was eager to help. “I loved the whole idea,” she says, of her initial donation of a complete set of kitchen appliances for the first apartment (including a refrigerator, microwave, dishwasher and stove). “I met the family who were about to move in, and they thanked me and said they were looking forward to using the appliances. It made me feel good that we could help.” Two years later, Mrs. G donated a similar set of appliances for the upstairs apartment.

Schaeffer feels that all business can find room for charitable donations like these. Nowadays, she has an opportunity to feel satisfaction at her own donation each time she drives past Prescott house. “It’s wonderful to think of the people living there, with some stability to raise their families and get their lives in order.”

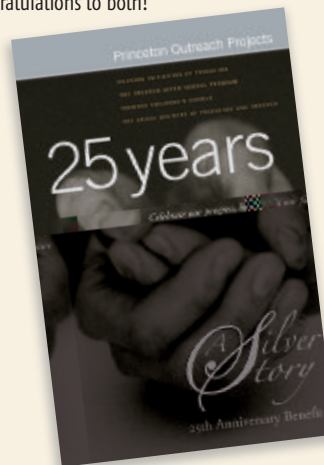


Debbie Schaeffer and her grandmother Mrs. G herself, Beatrice Greenberg

## HIP’s Year in Review

2005 was an eventful and rewarding year for Housing Initiatives of Princeton. The board of trustees gathered for a day retreat in January to refine and reaffirm our mission. With the dedication of our second apartment at Prescott House in May, we saw the fulfillment of our goal of providing transitional housing for two families in downtown Princeton, and we worked with our client families to address problems ranging from medical needs, to debt management, to transportation requirements, to job training. In financial terms, our net revenues increased to \$53.4 thousand, up 63% over 2004, largely due to the success of Princeton Outreach Projects’ Silver Story Fundraiser, but also to congregational support, grants, individual contributions and agency support of rent expenses. Our expenses also increased to \$28.5 thousand (up 241% over 2004) as we completed our first full year of occupancy in our first apartment and a partial year in our second apartment. In addition to rent, utilities, insurance and start-up expenses, we allocated a portion of our budget to family assistance, covering expenses related to career counseling/ training, transportation, medical /dental care that will help prepare our clients for financial independence. We ended the year with a cash balance of

\$88.8 thousand, up from \$58.6 thousand at year end 2004. We will continue to operate both existing transitional housing units on a year-round basis and we have begun to cast our gaze beyond 11 Mercer Street, looking ahead to the possibility of further properties to acquire, and further families to help. Finally, both of our current client families ended the year with wonderful news. For one family, that was a job offer following professional training underwritten by HIP as well as a donation of a mechanically sound and reliable vehicle. For the other family, it was an offer of admission from Princeton University for a high school senior. Congratulations to both!



## A Silver Story

On October 23rd, 2005, a large group gathered at the Trenton War Memorial for A Silver Story, an event marking the 25th anniversary of Princeton Outreach Projects, a group now encompassing four Princeton based organizations: Housing Initiatives of Princeton, The Crisis Ministry, Trenton After School Program and Trenton Children’s Chorus. Recognition was given to twenty-five individuals “silver stars” who have made extraordinary contributions to one or more of the organizations. HIP’s silver stars were: Kirk Garber, Chrissie Knight, Karen Longo-Baldwin, Mary Ellen Marino, Peggy Prescott and Kit Sherrill. Attendees were able to bid on a wide range of silent auction items, ranging from stays in vacation homes to theater tickets in New York. Videographer Gerardo Puglia produced and presented a film about the four organizations, and Reverend Darrell L. Armstrong, a graduate of the Princeton Theological Seminary and pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton, spoke movingly of the roads that separate—and connect—communities in need and communities of wealth in America. Rasheeda Robinson, one of the first 20 enrollees at the Trenton After School Program and now an elementary school teacher, paid tribute to the program that nurtured her, and to the mentors who changed her life. The event concluded with a performance by the Trenton Children’s Chorus. A Silver Story was successful in raising awareness of the ever increasing circle of need in our communities, and raised over \$96,000 for Princeton Outreach Projects, \$23,250 of which came to Housing Initiatives of Princeton.

Ruth Thurmond Scott and Judy Guder, A Silver Story co-chairs. The complimentary program highlighted the afternoon’s events.





## Mind the Gap

In Princeton and much of Mercer County, the victims of homelessness are the working poor, such as health care support workers, retail sales clerks, custodians and others not earning a "living wage". A full-time worker in Mercer County earning the minimum wage of \$6.15 per hour will earn \$12,792 annually or \$1,066 per month. It is nearly impossible to stretch \$1,066 each month to pay for housing, food, childcare, utilities, and transportation. The result is often homelessness.

## Church & Dwight Donation

On Monday, November 14th, Church & Dwight, the Princeton based manufacturer of Arm & Hammer products, presented Housing Initiatives of Princeton with a check for \$5000 as part of its employee giving program. A brief ceremony, held on the steps of HIP's Prestcott House at 11 Mercer Street, was attended by HIP board chairwoman, Ruth Thurmond Scott, board members Catie Newcombe and Ravi Ravindranath, and Church & Dwight representatives Angela Olsen and Scott Harmon.

Olsen, who directs Church & Dwight's employee giving fund, became aware of HIP's work through her church, Nassau Presbyterian, and encouraged HIP to formally apply for a grant. "We surveyed our employees on areas of giving, and homelessness, hunger and housing were some of the top giving categories they had an interest in supporting," said Olsen. "We looked at organizations that fulfilled those needs, with low administrative costs. We wanted well run programs that we could see were helping people, and HIP fit into that category."

Church & Dwight representative Scott Harmon with Catie Newcombe, Ruth Thurmond Scott, and Ravi Ravindranath of HIP



### Volunteer Profile

## Ravi Ravindranath

Ravi Ravindranath and his wife Margie are both members of the Housing Initiatives of Princeton Board of Trustees. The couple, who attend Princeton Nassau Presbyterian Church, first learned about HIP through their friend and HIP's first chair, Peggy Prescott, in whose honor the building at 11 Mercer Street is named. Ravindranath, who has been director of financial planning for Guardian Life-Park Avenue Securities for six years, was impressed by the organization, but wasn't immediately sure how he could help. "I didn't expect that I'd get involved with this kind of depth," he says, but reviewing the circumstances of one client family encouraged him to become more directly involved. "They looked like they could use some financial guidance, so I said, 'I'd love to see how we might be able to help them get through this and take the next step.' In this particular case, the family had gotten into serious trouble through debt, and then problems with income tax and so on. They were tangled up in this web of problems. I felt we could solve them and get the family into a house of their own."

Ravindranath began meeting with the family on a monthly basis. "We talk about where they are financially, and the steps that need to be taken in order for them to get out of their situation. Each time we meet we talk about their progress, and what needs to be done for the next month." These meetings are satisfying in some of the same ways his professional work is: "Often when clients come to me, they are in similar circumstances, and I help them get going and get their financial house in order and move forward. This is kind of an extension of that. It's a great feeling when you know you've made a difference in somebody's life." But for these very special "clients", there are some unique rewards. "I think they're very appreciative, not only of my efforts but other people's efforts. The mother in this family mentioned recently that she was so thankful for the help; she's now more sensitive to others and would be motivated to help others in need." Ravindranath's most recent task for one member of this family has been especially pleasant: pursuing



additional tuition funding for a son who has just been accepted to Princeton University.

Ravindranath has enjoyed his experience on the HIP board. "It's been fun to see the talents on the board, and be able to pull together all the different talents. It's a great board, very compassionate, very understanding and very capable." He urges others to get involved, not just through donations but by asking themselves what skills they have to contribute. "You really get a lot more personal satisfaction out of helping somebody beyond the money, because now we're talking about somebody's life. That's far more satisfying than writing a check." Though, like any good board member, he is quick to add: "Though we still need checks!"



## Get in touch...

We thank our supporters for all of their good work, good will, and yes, good checks. We are determined to expand our support to additional families, and help them bridge the gap from homelessness to affordable housing. You can help! Do you know of a potential partner or benefactor who can help us acquire additional housing units? Are you a potential board member or volunteer skilled in grant writing, fundraising or legal training? Please get in touch with HIP at 609-279-6987! Donations of any kind eagerly and gratefully accepted.

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