

## CODE BLUE

The HABCORE Board of Trustees is pleased to see that options for the homeless in the Red Bank area have increased with the opening of a warming center supported by the JBJ Foundation, Pilgrim Baptist Church and the JBJ Soul kitchen.

Immediate action during Code Blue alerts (when snow or rain falls in freezing weather, or when wind chill temps are headed to 20 degrees or below) is essential. Local officials check in with the most vulnerable and offer them immediate options of warmth and meals.

Homelessness has a persistent presence in both Monmouth and Ocean counties. We know that the estimated dozen homeless in Red Bank would be a higher number if not for the existence of HABCORE, which offers permanent, supportive housing to the previously homeless. HABCORE has 21 residents in its Red Bank boarding home and 10 apartment tenants in Red Bank alone. The agency is pleased to announce a planned expansion of four more one-bedroom apartments on River Street in Red Bank in 2019.

Across Monmouth and Ocean counties, HABcore has 300 tenants which includes 100 children, as well as veterans and individuals with special needs. HABcore offers a permanent and supportive solution to housing crises, knowing that stability is a key to improving lives.

Steve Heisman, HABCORE's Executive Director, responds to current initiatives to assist the homeless:

*"HABCORE applauds the efforts of the Pilgrim Baptist Church and JBJ Soul Kitchen to take the reigns and address a desperate need. While one square mile on the West Side contains a corridor for many service organizations such as HABCORE, Lunch Break, the YMCA, Monmouth Day Care Center, Red Bank Resource Center, Boys & Girls Club, and the Parker Clinic, addressing Code Blue has been a missing component."*

In the absence of Code Blue alerts and organizations such as HABcore, three men froze to death on the streets of Red Bank in 1988. This tragedy initiated the incorporation of HABcore as an offshoot of Lunch Break to address the homeless issue.

Thirty-six years ago in March 1983, Lunch Break opened its doors to feed the community's homeless, hungry and financially challenged individuals. At that time, the agency helped just a small amount of people. Lunch Break has grown since then and, as of 2018, served more than 80,000 hot meals and assisted more than 2,000 families in the Client Choice Pantry. Clothing pickups now number more than 40,000!

People are coming from all over Monmouth County and beyond for Lunch Break's services, as well as for fellowship and a temporary place to be in the daytime. Lunch Break is a place to stay warm in winter or cool during the summer — for people to enjoy a cup of coffee and conversation with one another before or after their meal has been served.

In keeping with the organization's mission of offering help for today and hope for tomorrow, Lunch Break Executive Director Gwendolyn O. Love responds to the hope provided by the Code Blue initiative:

*"Lunch Break is proud to be partnering with its neighbors HABCORE, Pilgrim Baptist Church, JBJ Soul Kitchen and other community partners on the Code Blue initiative. Together we can accomplish much for our community members in need. Because no one should not have shelter from the cold or be seeking a place to lay their head down in the dead of winter."*