

# Living Hope Empowerment Center

## Executive Summary

**Introduction:** The *Living Hope Empowerment Center* was conceived in response to the increasing needs of lower and middle income, inner city families. Birthed in Trenton, we endeavor to be a private, not-for-profit, faith-based organization whose mission is “to holistically empower urban families.” *Living Hope Empowerment Center* is a recognized not-for-profit corporation by the State of New Jersey, and was incorporated in 2006. The Living Hope Empowerment Center is intent on establishing collaborative partnerships with local organizations, churches, and private agencies, in order to offer a comprehensive range of programs and initiatives including educational, vocational, recreational, cultural, spiritual, and motivational training.

**Need:** The socio-economic conditions of the Trenton, NJ are well documented and nationally known. According to the US Census 2005 population estimates for Trenton the total population is 84,638. Forty seven percent are African-American and thirty three percent are Hispanic. The median household income (2005) is \$34,356 compared to a national average of \$46,242. Twenty percent of families were below the poverty level, compared to a national average of ten percent. Five critical factors add to our urgency in developing the *Living Hope Empowerment Center* (LHEC) in this community: 1--The lack of comprehensive family-oriented, multi-service programs. 2--The lack of safe recreational facilities. 3--The need for an out-of-school safe haven with a multitude of positive activities for children and youth. 4--The need for more educational and vocational enrichment programs for the whole family. 5--The need for indigenous leadership development and community empowerment initiatives.

**Goals:** While the qualitative goal of the center is to improve the quality of life in Trenton, the quantitative goal is to increase the educational, vocational and personal well being of each program participant, empowering them to become transformational community leaders.

**Principles:** The root that grounds the center can be found in our commitment to five guiding principles. 1--**Leadership:** After identifying emerging leaders within the community, particularly youth, we propose to develop and support their civic and community engagement. Through support and encouragement, we hope to empower them as agents of transformation for not only Trenton but also other communities in need. 2--**Outreach:** We recognize that by working in partnership with other organizations, we are both strengthened in our abilities to provide needed services in our efforts to build community. Schools, community based organizations, businesses, colleges, juvenile justice institutions, churches, faith-based organizations, public agencies, and other organizations are just a few of the organizations we have found who share our vision. 3--**Values:** The values to which we are committed are ones that build character, promote citizenship, and strengthen the family. 4--**Empowerment:** We believe that the development of personal, economic, social, material, spiritual, and cultural conditions are necessary for all people to flourish and reach their full potential. By standing alongside the people of Trenton we will be able to provide tools, develop skills, and inspire hope. 5--**Love:** The most important work of this organization is to love each and every person. The most urgent claim on our love of neighbor is the poor and the marginalized. Standing alongside them, our solidarity takes action as we strive to transform structures,

systems, and powers that oppress people and promote principles, programs and paradigms that will create a more just and equitable society.

**Programs:** The LHEC has established several programs for the community.

In 2005 we started a **Living Hope Summer Soccer League** for children ages 4-12. This league has grown from 150 children to 230 with 16 sponsored teams. Through the volunteer efforts of people in the community and the team sponsorship of local businesses children have been able to grow in a safe, fun environment and at the same time learn about team work, responsibility and sportsmanship. It has created an environment for parents to encourage their children on the soccer field and at home. At the same time we are able to help families who may have a particular need and refer them to the appropriate agencies that will help solve their particular problems.

In 2007 we started the **Trenton Peace Movement** with a direct outreach to gang members in Trenton. We have made connections with gang members looking to get them out of their violent environment. We recruited 15 gang members for meetings with local leaders to help them redirect their lives. We dressed the gang members with business suits and referred them to various life skills/work programs in the city. In order to keep a better track of the progress of these gang members we have developed our own 15 week course for gang members and at-risked young adults called **Building Your Character for Life and Work**. We plan to offer this course 2 times in 2009 (see course curriculum).

In 2008 we started the **Living Hope Racing School (LHRS)** which provides an opportunity for middle school and high school students to learn about go-kart racing, mechanics and technology. Currently a team of 8 young people race at Raceway Park in Englishtown, NJ with go-karts that have been donated to us. We ultimately envision providing programs and services six days a week. The LHRS during the 2009-2010 academic year, will focus primarily on starting an after school club for middle-school and high school students, from 3pm to 8pm, Monday to Friday. The program will consist of providing homework help and tutoring to the youth and teaching them to race go-karts and acquire vocational skills in go-kart and car mechanics. This program will provide teens a safe and positive alternative to the negative influences of the streets and at the same time expose them to a future career in science and technology, encouraging them to pursue college studies. Presently the Living Hope Racing School operates every Mondays and Wednesdays from 3-7pm.

Due to the housing crisis and foreclosure facing many in our city, the Mayor asked us to start a **Housing Counseling and Lost Mitigation Office**. After receiving training, we opened this office in the fall of 2008. The office has helped over 12 homeowners by directly negotiating with the lenders of these homes and has provided the housing counseling needed for the owner to get back on track with their home mortgage. We have also joined our efforts with Lighthouse Ministries and formed H.A.R.P. of Trenton (Housing Assistance and Recovery Program). The HARP program is a lease buy back opportunity for families who are in the process of foreclosure. HARP will buy the foreclosed home from the bank/lender and then lease the home back to the qualified owner. During a period of 2 years HARP will help the owner improve their credit in order that they buy back the home from HARP, usually at a lower amount and rate of their original mortgage. HARP has secured up to 6 million dollars from Roma Bank. This innovative model will help homeowners under foreclosure keep their homes and restore their credit.

**Model:** The *Living Hope Empowerment Center* will use a five-part model in serving the families in Trenton: 1--**Family-Oriented:** Providing programs and initiatives that empower and strengthen inner-city urban families; 2--**Partnership-Driven:** Establishing collaborative working relationships with other agencies, private and public, that will link with this organization in providing services for families; 3--**Community-Based:** The center is located in Trenton and committed to the people of the Trenton and surrounding communities; 4--**Faith-Based:** This organization has a spiritual foundation and promotes biblical values that nourish the whole person; 5--**Multi-Service:** To provide a matrix of services that will meet the needs of the urban family.

**Partnerships:** Several strategic alliances have already been established with organizations that are committed to partner with us. We have formed partnerships with the Living Hope Church, Lighthouse Ministries, the Department of Recreation, Natural Resources and Culture of the City of Trenton, and the Trenton Board of Education.

**Finances:** (see financial proposal)

**Summary:** The need for personal, social and community services for families in Trenton are enormous. With the expansion of the *Living Hope Empowerment Center*, we will fill a gap in the community by meeting many the needs of children and youth as well as their parents and guardians thereby ministering to the whole family. Our vision is to be a lighthouse of hope where families in Trenton and other communities can find the tools, programs and inspiration to improve the quality of their lives. The funding we are asking for will support our efforts to realize this vision and effect a positive lasting change in the community.

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## 2009 & 2010 Projected Budget – Living Hope Empowerment Center

(Draft Aug. 5, 2008)

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	
<b>INCOME</b>			
Soccer Reg. & Sponsors	\$ 18,000	\$ 20,000	
Racing School Donations	\$ 50,000	\$ 90,000	
Gifts and Grants	\$ 112,000	\$ 250,000	
Fundraising Events	\$ 20,000	\$ 40,000	
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<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$200,000.00</b>	<b>\$400,000.00</b>	
 <b>EXPENSES</b>			
Office	\$ 3,000	\$ 7,000	
Soccer	\$ 12,000	\$ 15,000	
Center Program Expenses	\$ 22,000	\$ 50,000	
Admin Supp	\$ 2,000 (PT)	\$ ----	
 <u>July – December 2009</u>			
Racing School	\$ 30,000	\$ 60,000	
Rent & Utilities	\$ 35,000	\$ 75,000	
Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$ 92,500	\$	
185,000	Director	\$30,000 (6	
mos) 60,000	Admin Supp.	\$25,000 (6	
mos) 50,000	Racing Dir	\$27,500 (6	
mos) 55,000	Racing Asst.	\$10,000 (PT)	20,000 (PT)
Insurances	\$ 2,500	\$ 5,000	
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,000	\$ 3,000	
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<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 200,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 400,000.00</b>	