



12200 Tech Road, Suite 250, Silver Spring, MD 20904 • Phone: 301-622-2400 • Fax: 301-622-2800

Contact: Sabrina E. Williams
301.812.4138; swilliams@mhpartners.org

Press Statement

MHP Remembers the Lives Lost and Families Displaced One Year After Long Branch Explosion

August 10, 2017

Today, marks the one-year anniversary of the terrible fire/explosion that rocked the Long Branch Community. As flames engulfed the Flower Branch Apartments, residents dropped their children out windows, then jumped. Hundreds awoke to a blast that forever changed their lives. Seven lives were lost, two of whom were children, and hundreds were left homeless.

While not one of Montgomery Housing Partnership's (MHP) properties, as a nonprofit with a long history of supporting the Long Branch community, MHP was honored to establish the Long Branch Fire Victim Fund.

The outpouring of community support was humbling. Kids opened their piggy banks, individuals wrote checks for \$1,000, and local businesses held fundraisers to support the families impacted by the fire. MHP raised more than \$820,000. All funds received went directly to support the families affected, with \$50,000 used to cover the most immediate needs, including cell phones and cell phone chargers, car key replacement, food, hotel stays, moving costs, and document replacement. More than \$600,000 went to the displaced families in two rounds of direct cash assistance, and close to \$170,000 was released to cover funeral costs, repatriation expenses, and direct assistance to the seven families that lost loved ones during the tragic event. *

MHP staff spent close to 900 hours working on relief efforts. This included direct work with the families at the shelter, replacing items lost in the fire, distributing donations, providing translation services, explaining the financial assistance available, and, in many cases, just being there to listen and show solidarity with the impacted residents.

MHP continues to maintain close ties with the community through our neighborhood revitalization work, including our work with the Long Branch Business League. An unintended consequence of the explosion, has been a loss of customers to the small business community in Long Branch. Since the fire MHP has been working with the Long Branch Business League to re-brand the area to get the word out about this commercial area tucked between Takoma Park and downtown Silver Spring through community speaker series, community events, as well as the development of a Long Branch business directory and website, youth arts studio, and tutoring programs.

Also, on Sunday, October 15th, at 7:30 AM, MHP in partnership with the Long Branch Business League will hold the 2nd Annual Long Branch 5K Run/Walk. The proceeds from the race will go towards building a memorial for those who lost their lives in the deadly fire.

Our deepest and sincerest condolences remain with those impacted by the devastating explosion and fire. MHP remains steadfast in our commitment to support the Long Branch community in every way we can. Throughout this entire tragedy, we have seen the true meaning of neighbors helping neighbors. MHP is thankful to all who demonstrated extraordinary compassion in the aftermath of the explosion.

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****Each household received monetary support ranging from \$7,356 for a single person household to \$19,704 for households with six or more individuals. Additionally, death benefits of \$24,000 were provided/deceased.***

For more than 25 years, Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) has created quality affordable homes in Montgomery County. It houses people, empowers families, and strengthens neighborhoods. Through its affiliates, MHP has developed nearly 1,750 affordable apartments, condos, and townhomes. It also works with residents to enhance the vitality of the neighborhoods where affordable housing is located, and implements Community Life Programs for its residents. It is a chartered member of NeighborWorks® America. For more information on MHP, visit www.MHPartners.org.