



HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE

NEW JERSEY

#HelpMeImagine
safe spaces
for LGBTQ Youth



ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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We are extremely grateful to our first HMI: NJ Board Members for the guidance and commitment. We are always looking for people who are interested in supporting New Jersey's youth through their time and talents. For more information contact aflaming@hmi.org.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**"NO ONE IS USELESS
IN THIS WORLD
WHO LIGHTENS THE
BURDENS OF
ANOTHER"
CHARLES DICKENS**

What a remarkable year 2016 has been here at HMI: New Jersey. We've settled comfortably into our new home at 550 Broad Street and we're now serving more young people than ever before. Along with our growth, however, we have also faced some very sobering realities as well. Our young people continue to struggle with hostility, violence, chronic homelessness, and a myriad of other potentially life-threatening challenges, which many confront on a daily basis—all because of their sexuality.

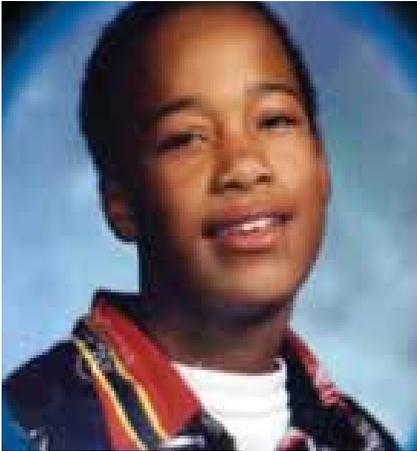
At HMI: NJ, one of our primary goals is to provide a secure and nurturing safe space where they can leave their daily trauma at the doorstep. Simply by walking into the doors of our new home, our young people have the opportunity to escape what is for many the grim reality of living at the intersection of being LGBTQ, poor, marginalized, and labeled as "at-risk." As we address the many issues facing this fragile population, our core afterschool program continues to grow and flourish to address their needs.

We are also expanding our work to help as many young people as possible through the establishment of "mini-sites" in several schools here in Newark, including West Side High, Barringer High, Newark Leadership Academy, and Shabazz High. Easy access to services can make a huge difference in the lives of our youth. That said, I am proud to report that our social work team members provide both one-on-one and group counseling at these schools as a way of delivering a continuum of care to our youth members—and especially those who cannot make it to our main site. Additionally, our NJ Training Institute provides training sessions to a wide range of youth-service providers—all geared toward establishing safer schools and communities in an effort to prevent the bullying and victimization of LGBTQ youth statewide. To date we have trained more than 100 providers.

As 2016 draws to a close, we remain motivated and committed—knowing that we are changing lives, one child at a time. While we will continue to reach out to LGBTQ youth through any means available to use, we know that education is the most promising vehicle for moving young people out of poverty, into a place of self-respect and acceptance, and on the path toward a college education. I know you stand with us along every step of the way and I thank you wholeheartedly for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Dr. Ashawnda Fleming
Executive Director

REMEMBERING SAKIA



The 2003 murder of 15-year-old Sakia Gunn, an African-American lesbian, in a hate crime in downtown Newark precipitated an outpouring of support and commemorations. More importantly, it also mobilized her friends, other students in the city's public high schools, and the wider Newark community. Indeed, the response to her death signaled a turning point in Newark's LGBTQ history.

At 3:30 AM on Sunday morning, May 11, 2003, Gunn was waiting for a bus at the corner of Broad and Market Streets in downtown Newark. Gunn had returned on the PATH train from Greenwich Village with three friends, also young, out lesbians. She was on her way to her home in Newark's far western Vailsburg section where she lived with her mother and grandmother. At the bus stop, two men emerged from a white car and propositioned Gunn. When she refused—stating that she was not interested because she was gay—one of the men stabbed her, returned to his car, and calmly drove off. Gunn died in the arms of her friend while en route to University Hospital, thanks to the help of a passing motorist.

Over the ensuing years, LGBTQ Newarkers purposefully and strategically have drawn attention to the tragic consequences of stigma, exclusion, harassment, and violence. Cory Booker, who became mayor in 2006, created the Mayor's Advisory Commission on LGBTQ Concerns. The office of the Essex County Executive followed suit by creating an LGBTQ Advisory Board. In 2007, four years after Sakia's murder, Booker raised a rainbow flag in front of City Hall. It was within this tragic, yet galvanizing, context that the Hetrick-Martin Institute's New Jersey project (HMI: NJ) was born in 2011, which was modeled on HMI's 36 years of successful LGBTQ youth services in New York City. HMI: NJ became the first comprehensive LGBTQ out-of-school program for youth in Northern New Jersey dedicated to providing LGBTQ youth who are at-risk for harassment, abuse, neglect, homelessness and disconnection with a safe, supportive environment in which to grow and thrive.

HOW WE APPROACH OUR WORK

HMI: NJ is fortunate to have the opportunity to replicate the direct-services model that has already been recognized as a best-practice for working with LGBTQ youth nationally. Our national office in New York City, which has been delivering services to area youth for more than 36 years, continues to serve as model for our own activities in northern New Jersey. As background, our work is grounded in the core philosophies and principles that our founders Dr. Emery Hetrick (a psychiatrist) and Dr. Damien Martin (a professor at NYU) established in 1979. HMI: NJ is a safe, non-judgmental place for young people to come to receive a range of services that include mental health counseling, college prep, tutoring, job search assistance, health and wellness, arts and culture, and more. Our approach to the work is purposefully methodical and tied to three core theoretical models: Trauma Informed Care, Harm Reduction, and Positive Youth Development.

In terms of need, did you know that ...

- ♥ 96% of the young people served by HMI: NJ are classified as Title I, living at or below the federal poverty line. The majority of our youth come from communities that are identified as being among the lowest-income neighborhoods in the state of New Jersey. These young people have experienced heightened levels of trauma and stress that are typical in these neighborhoods. Many have witnessed or been victims of violence.
- ♥ The young people we serve tend to be disconnected from support systems that address the crucial issues of homelessness, poverty, depression, substance abuse and risky sexual behavior. This gap results in a multitude of social, education, and economic barriers that negatively impact their lives.
- ♥ According to the Centers for Disease Control, LGBTQ teens are three times more likely to attempt suicide in comparison to their heterosexual peers.
- ♥ Sadly, 35% of the young people served by HMI: NJ cite hunger as their primary reason for attending the program, at least initially.

Our programs are designed to first stabilize young people by providing a safe, nurturing environment, after which our staff work diligently to meet their individual physical and emotional needs. Our social work team interacts strategically with all youth members to help them formulate and obtain their short- and long-term goals. In fact, HMI: NJ staff mem-

bers often become the primary support system for our youth, many of whom are disconnected from their family of origin. We pride ourselves on being more than an afterschool program. We also provide comprehensive wraparound services to young people, such as working with guidance counselors to ensure academic success, scheduling and escorting young people to medical/dental appointments, working with parents/guardians to assist them with issues surrounding their children, coordinating corporate internships, and arranging monthly outings to expose young people to a variety of fun and interesting experiences.

All interventions utilized by HMI: NJ staff follow the "SMARTER" model, in that they are:

S *pecific* in purpose

M *asurable* in outcomes

A *ttainable* in design

R *eplicable* in nature (i.e., can be reproduced in other locations as we expand our outreach)

T *ime-sensitive* in that they have a beginning, middle and end. They also feature an...

E *ducative* component (meaning that youth members should walk away from the experience having gained some newfound skill or knowledge), and

R *eady* to engage our youth at whatever stage they're at.

To maximize HMI's comprehensive integrated services, we use the Salesforce database to collect, track, and report all youth member data, such as our youth's frequency in accessing our support services. In addition to Salesforce, HMI collects other behavioral variables that are maintained in appropriate Statistical Package Software System (SPSS) databases under the auspices of our Data Information Coordinator.

KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE HEALTHY



By raising awareness, helping youth navigate the healthcare system, and facilitating the delivery of actual medical, dental, and mental health services, our Health and Wellness programming encourages youth to take ownership of their own health. This project—which is funded through the generous support of The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey and Verizon—designates a specific staff member who is experienced in assessing health needs and delivering interventions to our youth before a health crisis emerges.

First, we assess each youth and their health needs by checking if they have access to a doctor and dentist, ascertain their risk for violence, and determine their substance use patterns, sexual and reproductive health, and frequency of exercise. Next, youth are provided with an individualized plan that also incorporates their

personal goals for health; importantly, this plan addresses not only their physical well-being, but also any behavioral health needs. We deliver these services at both our main site, as well as at our four mini-sites. As a part of our commitment to the public health of our community, we routinely facilitate groups that provide sex education, with a focus on positive body image, HIV prevention, rapid HIV testing (with information about PEP and PrEP—drugs that may also prevent HIV), and safety strategies for those who are living with HIV and AIDS. In addition, youth are taught skills to improve self-regulation, the ability to think dialectically (acceptance and change), and how to begin and sustain a mindfulness practice.

These groups increase emotional and cognitive regulation, which are coping skills that are crucial for reducing substance use and maintaining sobriety, increasing interpersonal effectiveness, and regulating impulse control—all of which we believe reduces the likelihood of interpersonal violence and self-harm, including suicidal urges or actions.

We are proud to report that approximately 75% of our active youth members are reporting a decrease in behaviors that contribute to injuries and violence—specifically around issues of domestic violence. We've also found that there has been a decrease in risky sexual behaviors among youth members who have developed health and wellness plans. Additionally, youth members report using condoms (female and male), finger guards, and dental dams more frequently to protect from STDs/STIs and unintended pregnancies.

PULSE...ORLANDO, WE WILL NOT FORGET

It ought to be true that things eventually get better. It ought to be true that conflict and ignorance is only temporary—but that with education and time our LGBTQ youth will eventually find themselves to be valued members of a wholly-accepting, safe community. It also ought to be true that as a generation ages and matures, social persecution and marginalization gradually become less ubiquitous. All these things ought to be true. Sadly, events in this nation and the world continue to prove us wrong. Instead of greater social awareness and tolerance taking root and flourishing, patterns of fear, hatred, ignorance, and intolerance continue to manifest themselves throughout our world. Witness the unfathomable tragedy of the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, where 49 young men and women died and many more were injured. It's no wonder that our LGBTQ youth are slow to trust.

The concept of home—a space where children and adolescents can be their most authentic selves, wholly and unabashedly—is integral to the healthy development of a confident, positive young adult. This need for a safe haven is real for all people, but it is extraordinarily critical for our HMI youth members who, unfortunately, exist at the intersections of bigotry, class elitism, homophobia, sexism, and transphobia. Their reality is why we powerfully and stalwartly continue in our mission to recreate home and safe spaces for our LGBTQ youth.

When the sanctity of a home is defiled by violence, its occupants are left feeling hopeless and dangerously vulnerable. There are so few truly safe spaces for LGBTQ youth of color—especially those



who live in impoverished, culturally unaccepting communities. Thus, the violent attack on the Pulse nightclub, a safe and accepting home to many, continues to be intensely upsetting and disturbing for all at HMI ... but especially for our youth, who are deeply affected by the ongoing prospect of senseless violence.

As a community, we must acknowledge and confront this tragedy if we are to move forward as a self-aware LGBTQ community. Indeed, the loss of so many innocents represents a powerful indicator of how much harder and diligently we must press for social change in order to ensure that the community we serve feels valued and empowered. Make no mistake—this pressing mandate will be trying and taxing and we may have to confront other violent acts in the future. Nonetheless, as change-makers we must continue on with hope and dedication toward a brighter future.

SUMMER 2016



At HMI: NJ, our logo is a house—and it’s a house for a very good reason. As a team we are committed to replicating the family support structure that so many of our young adults are missing. Similar to the importance of having a home, the concept of normality is about our youth feeling comfortable with themselves and engaging in activities that most kids their age are taking part in during the summers—especially those that promote self-discovery and fun.

During the summer months at HMI: NJ, we extend program hours from 2:00 to 7:00 PM each day to ensure that our young people have a safe place to go. One of our key summer partners is the Newark Summer Food Program, which is funded by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Every day, we provide nutritious and delicious meals for our youth participants—a healthy meal they might otherwise have to go without.

Along with our summer academic enrichment programming, our educational/cultural excursions remain a cornerstone of the summer schedule. Because most of our youth members often don’t even have a chance to leave their own local neighborhoods, we make it a point to expose them to new experiences that they would be likely to miss due to their socioeconomic or marginalized status. These activities also represent a central component of our commitment to the Positive Youth Development model of care.

Thankfully, “Summer 2016 was filled with new learning experiences and exciting trips! Interior Designer, Tyler Wisler (from HGTV and NBC), conducted an eight-week series where our youth members learned the basics of how we all experience living space. As a method of art therapy, youth members learned how interior design represents an essential aspect of our daily lives and how it influences how we live, work, play, and even heal. The workshop culminated with a field trip to the New York Design Center in Manhattan. Thank you very much Tyler!

Another youth favorite was our trip to Long Branch Beach on the Jersey Shore. None of the youth who came with us

had ever been to a beach in New Jersey . . . or anywhere else! The young people eagerly anticipated the trip; in fact, I believe some began packing their swim bags the minute we announced it a month prior to the excursion. just like all teenagers across the U.S., they were all abuzz about what to wear and what to bring. One of our transgendered youth members was particularly self-conscious about wearing swimwear in public—but with the help of fellow youth members and HMI: NJ staff, all were comfortable and happy to get in the water and enjoy the day!

Our trip to the Newark Museum, an overlooked treasure tucked right in plain sight in bustling downtown Newark, was also a hit! In particular, they were struck by its elegance and exquisite, introspective silence. That trip included a visit to the adjacent 1890s-era Ballantine House, where our youth toured each and every elegant room. Last, but certainly not least, our young people enjoyed a fun-filled BBQ at Branch Brook Park. HMI: NJ staff members prepared all of the food and coordinated outdoor games, which our youth members enjoyed immensely.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention that New Jersey Senator, Cory Booker, took time out of his incredible busy schedule to personally take our young people out for dinner and a movie one evening in July. As a follow up to that event, he had this to say about HMI: NJ:

“The Hetrick-Martin Institute is one of our country’s oldest and largest organizations dedicated to providing a supportive environment for at-risk youth and their families. I am pleased to have worked with HMI to bring their nationally-recognized services to Newark back in 2011, making HMI-New Jersey the first comprehensive non-school-based program for LGBTQ youth in the state. LGBTQ youth make up one of our most vulnerable populations, representing a large part of the homeless youth community and are at a greater risk for adverse health outcomes. I applaud HMI’s tireless work on the ground to guarantee mental health resources, career readiness training, educational assistance, and general supportive services to LGBTQ youth in Newark and across our region.”—Senator Cory Booker.

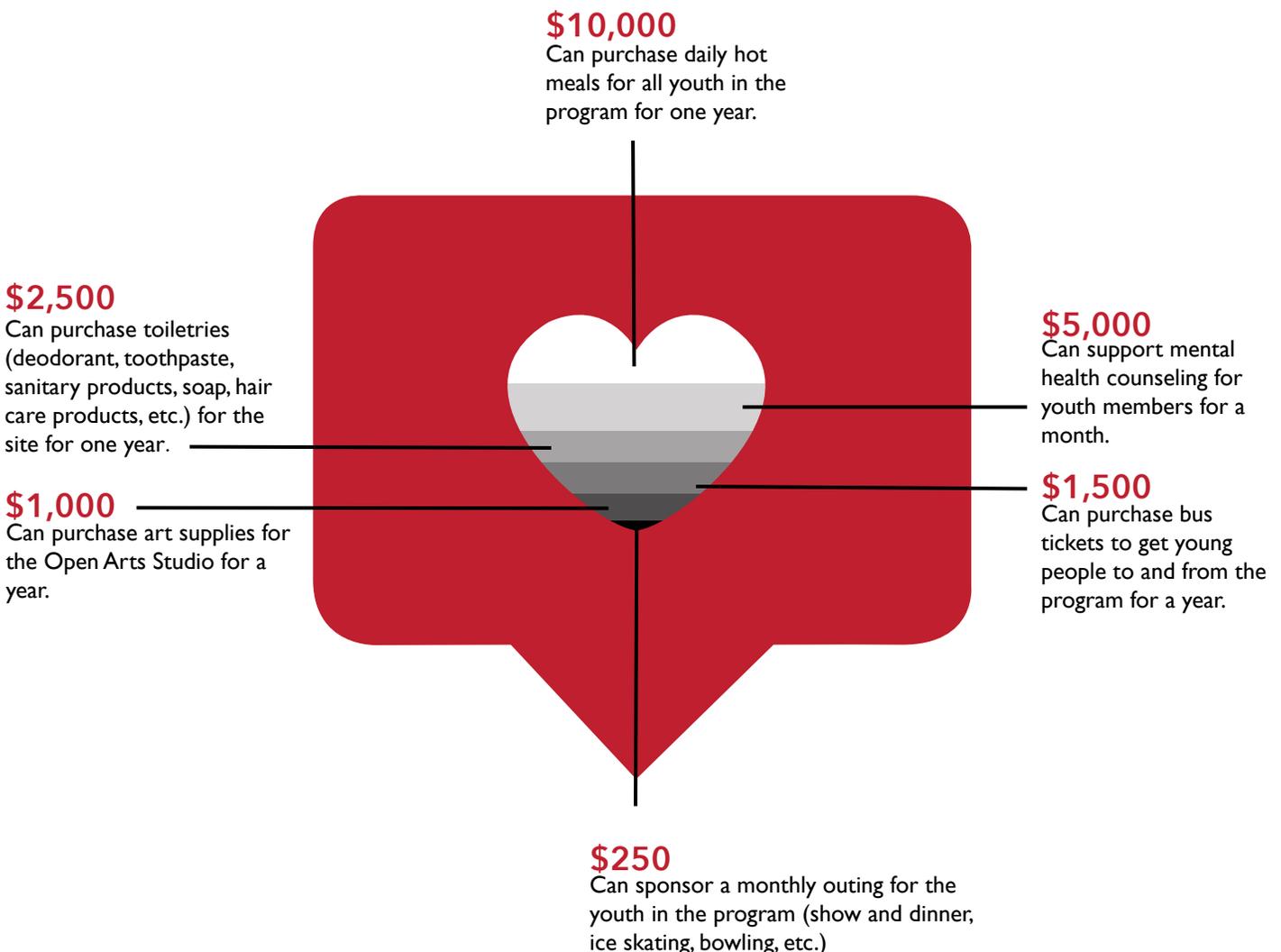
HOW YOUR DONATION CAN WORK

Positive youth development is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances the individualized strengths of your youth; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

Positive youth development has its origins in the field of prevention. In the past, prevention efforts typically focused on specific problems before they surfaced—such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency. The youth development field then began to examine the role of resiliency—namely, the protec-

tive factors in a young person's environment—and how these factors could influence one's ability to overcome adversity. These protective components include family support, access to caring adults and positive peer groups, a strong sense of self and self-esteem, engagement in school and community activities, and others.

At HMI: NJ we recognize that young people who have access to a diverse set of protective factors can, in fact, experience more positive outcomes. Moreover, our programs and interventions are strengthened when they involve and engage youth as equal partners. Given these known factors, we strive to make our programming and services relevant, impactful, and enduring. Here's how you can help us succeed.



A NEW YORK GIANTS GIFT!

HMI: NJ would like to extend our sincerest thanks to the You Can Play Project, The Center for American Progress, and the NY Giants for creating a once-in-a-lifetime experience for our youth members. From the moment we were contacted, the surprises seemed to keep coming one after another!

First, athletes from the NY Giants and their front office executives visited our program and spoke to our youth members about the importance of overcoming adversity and understanding differences. Shortly after their visit, the Giants invited us to their next home game! This was the first time any of our youth had ever attended an NFL game!

As game-day drew closer, the young people learned that not only would they be attending the game—but they would be doing so in style from VIP box suites! The day also included an on-field experience



that they will never, ever forget—they were asked to form the NY Giant's gauntlet as the team entered the field! It was truly an exceptional day and we are incredibly grateful to the New York Giants organization for their support and inspiration.

HMI: NJ EVENTS



On Thursday, May 19th, the Hetrick-Martin Institute: New Jersey honored some of New Jersey's leading LGBTQ advocates and leaders at its 5th Annual Spring Soiree at Maize Restaurant in Newark. Three honorees were singled out for their extraordinary work: (1) actor, author and activist, Alan Cumming; (2) The Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund; and (3) The Verizon Foundation.

Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, another staunch supporter of HMI: NJ, attended the Soiree as a special guest. His remarks reinforced the city's commitment to our mission and energized us all. I think all would agree that it was a truly remarkable evening, during which we had the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication put forth by each of our honorees. The event was a huge success! Thanks to you, we exceeded our goal by raising more than \$100,000 to support LGBTQ youth in New Jersey!

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our event sponsors: Horizon, Verizon, BASF, PNC Bank, Kivvit, MINI, First Energy, GO Magazine, EDGE Media Network, Jeff Spelman & Ivan Lo, Thomas Krever, Dr. Ashawnda Fleming, Bari Mattes and Wes Powell. Thank you also to our hosts: Rolando Bobadilla, Lauren Craig, Esq., Chris Hillman, John Olguin, Jeff Spelman, and Dan Zanella.

As a new addition to our charitable events, we held our first annual Summer Solstice: The Jersey Shore Affair on Saturday, June 18th, at The Watermark in Asbury Park. As it turned out, the event took place the weekend following the tragedy at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. Thus, instead of celebrating the start of summer, we decided to celebrate life. Guests enjoyed food and libations on a beautiful summer day as we gathered to raise money for LGBTQ youth. A portion of the proceeds was given to Equality Florida to support the families of the Pulse nightclub victims.



NJ TRAINING INSTITUTE

HMI:NJ was awarded a grant from The Frances L. & Edwin L. Cummings Memorial Fund to conduct LGBTQ training sessions for youth-serving professionals (at no cost to them). The most widely requested training is our LGBTQ 101 training program, which introduces participants to the nature and reality of LGBTQ youth, including their day-to-day challenges. In particular, by engaging in the program's signature seminar, "Suspending the Rules: Creating a SAFE Environment for LGBTQ Youth," attendees walk away with a better understanding of gender identity and gender expression and how those dynamics relate to sexual orientation. HMI: NJ offers the training each week onsite—but we are also able to provide a variety of sessions at your agency as well. If you are interested in training, please contact us.

ESSEX COUNTY HONORS HMI: NEW JERSEY'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In July 2016, Essex County Executive, Joseph DiVincenzo, the Essex County LGBTQ Advisory Board, and the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders awarded Dr. Ashawnda Fleming the Essex County Pride of Essex Award at their annual LGBTQ Pride Celebration. Dr. Fleming was recognized because of her tireless efforts on behalf of LGBTQ youth throughout the county. She was in great company with the other two event honorees: C.J. Prince, Executive Director of North Jersey Pride, Inc.; and Brian McGovern, Executive Director of the North Jersey Community Research Initiative.

Dr. Fleming was humbled and deeply moved by this gesture. In her acceptance speech she stated: "I accept this award on behalf of the Hetrick Martin Institute—but it is not really about me—it is about the work of the agency and the legacy of service left by Dr. Damien Martin and Dr. Emery Hetrick."

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Thank you to the students of Troy University in Alabama for donating the design work on this report.