

HOME FOR EVERY AMERICAN

COUNTY LEADERSHIP AWARD:

Hudson County NJ Executive Thomas DeGise

Partnership between government and business, and investment in Hudson County's residents have been hallmarks of the term of Hudson County, New Jersey County Executive Thomas DeGise, who first took office in 2002. In 2007, the County Executive devoted more than 20% of his State of the County address to the topic of ending chronic homelessness, noting: "If we look inside the numbers, we can gain an insight into how we might finally address this frustrating issue properly . . . our current, haphazard approach to dealing with chronic homelessness is shockingly expensive - and ineffective."

Partnering in Project Homeless Connect, embracing Housing First, planning for the use of SOAR for SSI, developing a Homeless Court, and increasing appropriate discharges to prevent homelessness were the goals set by the county partners when Hudson County unveiled its new 10-Year Plan in January 2008, to coincide with participation in the statewide New Jersey Project Homeless Connect event. Hudson County launched its 10-Year planning effort in late 2006. The planning effort, entitled *Keys to Ending Homelessness in Hudson County*, was led by the County Executive and co-chairs United Way of Hudson County President Dan Altilio, Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy, Goldman Sachs official Chandra Gibson, Newark Archdiocese Bishop Thomas Donato, and Bishop Thomas Robinson of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance.

County Executive DeGise - who has long been recognized in the community for his commitment on the issue of homelessness – also used his State of the County address to call on state officials to create a network of county-based trust funds to fight homelessness, calling it an approach that would be stable and cost effective combined with a Housing First strategy to reduce chronic homelessness significantly, and a means to improve dramatically government's ability to deal with this problem. Funding for the plan's development was provided by the United Way of Hudson County and through the Hudson County CDBG program.

Mr. DeGise has been honored by many community and civic organizations for his dedication to the issue of homelessness and for supporting the independence of individuals with disabilities.