

the way home

news from Columbus House

A message from Alison Cunningham, Executive Director Your Support Makes Life Saving Programs Possible

Dear Friends,

The Columbus House Respite Program opened in October 2013 on the third floor of the main shelter building on the Boulevard. This small program includes 12 private rooms for people who are discharged from Yale-New Haven Hospital with needs for on-going nursing care in order to fully recuperate. For people who are homeless, there has been no place for them to find this respite until now.



A Respite Room on the third floor of our main shelter offers a safe place to recuperate for those leaving the hospital with no home to return to.



Nicole Cevoli, Patient Navigator for our Medical Respite Program, works with "John", a client who has been in the Respite Program for 3 weeks and is also a SIF client. John was assaulted while living on the street, resulting in three broken ribs, a punctured lung, and a 2 week hospital stay. "Thank God for these people," is his response when asked how he is feeling. His application for housing through the SIF program has been submitted while in Respite care. If approved, he will be able to begin looking for a safe place of his own.

Since October, we have served over 50 patients with conditions that range from diabetes, high blood pressure, broken bones and wound care. Patients are provided with visiting nursing services from local providers and are seen often by staff from Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center through their on-site clinic. The typical length of stay is 30 days, although some will stay longer as needed. People leave Respite returning to family, to the shelter or on to permanent housing.

In May, Mayor Toni Harp and Dr. Kelly Doran received the Respite Care Provider Network Award of Excellence for their role in developing our respite program. Both attended the National Healthcare for the Homeless conference in New Orleans and spoke passionately about the need for adequate healthcare and other services for people who are homeless.

Columbus House will be part of a national study of respite programs along with 4 other similar programs evaluating the efficacy of respite care for people who are homeless. This study, to start in early 2015, will be conducted by Brandeis University and the Respite Care Provider Network under the direction of Sabrina

Edgington. There are only 70 respite programs for people who are homeless in the country and this study will be an important step toward expanding these important programs.

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"I had pretty much given up"

from Sick and Living on the Streets to Housing and Improved Health

A Medical Respite and SIF success story by Betsy Branch, former Columbus House Senior Patient Navigator, SIF Program. Betsy recently moved on to a new position with Community Supportive Housing as a Program Manager. Congratulations Betsy!

James^{*} is an intelligent and compassionate 53-year-old with a sense of humor and substantial charm. He has worked for many years of his life and maintains close ties with his former girlfriend and her children. James is also an alcoholic, has a history of childhood trauma, has what appear to be significant (undiagnosed) mental health issues, and has been incarcerated.

LIVING ON THE STREETS

James lived on the streets, sleeping on park benches and in bus shelters, for about two years. He became known to New Haven's inter-agency Outreach and Engagement team and was identified as a potential Social Innovation Fund (SIF) client because of his vulnerability and medical history. Columbus House is one of several agencies in the state funded through SIF to provide housing and services to people who cycle in and out of hospital care and shelters.

FIVE *emergency department visits.*

80 DAYS *in the hospital.*

Medicaid paid \$147,000 for his care during that period.

Between January 2012 and January 2013, James had five emergency department visits and spent 80 days in the hospital as an inpatient, many of them in intensive care, for medical issues primarily related

to his drinking. Medicaid paid \$147,000 for his care during that period.

While homeless, James often stated that he intended to go to a primary care physician so that he could obtain the necessary paperwork to support his application for the state cash payment for people who have applied for disability. However, when he attempted to go for the required physical, he was told that he had to complete lab work first. For the lab work he had to be fasting – and sober. This was a barrier that he was unable to overcome, even with repeated offers of assistance from case managers, and it prevented him from accessing an income source for which he was eligible. It also discouraged him from accessing appropriate follow-up medical care, even after his repeated episodes of grave illnesses.

In early February 2013 James became eligible for the SIF program and was approved for housing. He told me, "I had pretty much given up."

WAITING FOR A HOME

James continued sleeping in the bus shelter during the process of finding housing, which was somewhat delayed by additional hospitalizations. When his apartment was close to being secured Columbus House was able to place him in a motel for several days while he waited. For the first time since I knew him he started getting a full night's sleep. Additionally, he finally agreed to go to a primary care appointment with me. While driving him to his appointment he stated that he was thinking about getting a job. He moved into his apartment four days later.

I was expecting him to vent his typical frustrations.

**INSTEAD, HE
TURNED TO ME
AND THANKED ME.**

A HOME OF HIS OWN: THE ROAD TO A HEALTHIER FUTURE

James finds many situations extremely stressful and he expressed his frustrations to me at every step of the housing process – from minor issues like the appearance of the motel room, to significant ones like the challenges of being housed with no income. Nevertheless, his overall stress level decreased substantially after being housed.

Once James moved into his apartment, his case manager helped him secure furniture. Our SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery Technical Assistance) case manager completed his Social Security Disability Insurance application which was approved, resulting in a substantial back payment. This allowed James to outfit his apartment with appliances and decorations.

Soon, James began attending primary care appointments. At first, his primary care provider was stern with him about the appointments that he had missed over the years. The doctor also confronted James about the need to quit drinking and smoking, which made him very uncomfortable. I encouraged James to "stick with it" and made sure that I accompanied him to his doctor visits. After a few visits, the doctor's tone *continued on bottom of next page...*

...continued from page 1

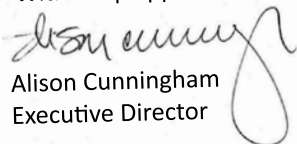
Your Support Makes Life Saving Programs Possible

In addition to the Respite program, Columbus House is one of several agencies in the state funded through the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) to provide housing and services to people who are frequent users of high cost institutional medical care. The SIF program starts with a data match that gives us the list of people who cycle in and out of hospital care and shelters. From this list staff find the identified client, not always easy to do, and begins the engagement process which ultimately leads to an offer of supportive housing. In partnership with AIDS Connecticut, The Partnership for Strong Communities, and other providers in the state, we know that when we focus on a person's healthcare, it has a direct and positive impact on their housing stability. With intensive wrap-around services for these clients who are often found living on the streets with a long history of homelessness, we support clients as they stop using the hospital's emergency department as their primary source of health care, and instead begin seeing a primary care physician on a regular basis. At the same time, now housed with case management support, clients are off the streets and stable for the first time in years.

We know that focused attention on particular populations such as those with intensive medical needs will help break cycles of homelessness. Respite and SIF will not only enhance people's health and reduce the costs of unnecessary emergency medical care but will contribute to their housing stability as they move from the streets and shelter into their own homes.

Ultimately, these are critical programs that will save the lives of people who are homeless. Your support of programs like Respite and SIF make this work possible. I hope you will consider making a contribution today so that we can continue to make a contribution to the health and safety of our most vulnerable clients.

With deep appreciation,


Alison Cunningham
Executive Director

VOLUNTEER

CORNER

Are you a Columbus House Kitchen Volunteer?



Thank you for all that you do to provide healthy, home cooked meals for those staying at our main and overflow shelters! In the next couple of weeks

you will be receiving our new Kitchen Procedures Guide full of tips and tools to help make your experience in the kitchen safer and more rewarding while helping Columbus House stay in compliance with local health ordinances. Thank you again!

Seeking volunteers for our Middlesex Family Shelter

We are looking for enthusiastic individuals to help create a welcoming atmosphere for families and guests in our main office area in Middletown. The Middlesex Family Shelter provides shelter and case management for over 50 families, including as many as 150 dependent children, from Middlesex County each year. Volunteer greeters will be the first point of contact for all visitors and families as they arrive for appointments with staff. The greeters will also check families in and out of our "Bright Space," a child-friendly play space and learning area. Hours are flexible Mon-Fri, 9am - 5pm. If you are interested or want to learn more about any of our volunteer opportunities, please contact Sheree at (203) 401-4400, x138 or sdimario@columbushouse.org. Thank you!

James' Story...continued from previous page

toward James was gentler, and I observed the two of them making attempts to meet one another halfway. Relationship-building can take time. In this situation, I think it is very unlikely that James would have returned after the first visit without having me as his "patient navigator."

One day, I mentioned to James that he had not been back to the hospital in quite some time. He straightened his shoulders and said, "That's because I'm taking my medicines every day." Afterward, in the car, I was expecting him to vent his typical frustrations. Instead, he turned to me and thanked me.

PRESENT DAY

A recent conversation with James' Columbus House case manager revealed that he is still housed and dedicated to maintaining his health. He is not fully sober, but his consumption has decreased significantly. James keeps his apartment neat and orderly and has reunited with his girlfriend. The two enjoy spending time at his apartment and grocery shopping on the weekends. ■

**names have been changed*



SAVE THE DATE!

SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

for the

SECOND ANNUAL

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Hon. W. Patrick Donlin Assembly #2459

GOLF TOURNAMENT

to be held at

**THE COUNTRY CLUB
OF WOODBRIDGE**

50 Woodfield Road, Woodbridge, CT

to benefit

**The Homefront for
Homeless Veterans**

(a program of Columbus House)

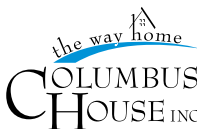
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for more info

www.wpatrickdonlin-2459.com or

contact **Ric Raffone: (203) 640-6482**

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JOIN US!
SATURDAY, AUGUST 30TH

**SIKORSKY'S 4TH ANNUAL
"HOMERUN FOR HEROES"
BLUEFISH BASEBALL GAME!**
**to support Connecticut Veterans
charities, including Columbus
House's Homefront initiative for
homeless Veterans!**

Connecticut has more than 300,000 military Veterans and many are in need of our help as they re-adjust to civilian life. A \$10 ticket to "Homerun for Heroes," sponsored by Sikorsky, United Technologies, and Teamsters Local 1150, supports Connecticut Veterans charities, including **Columbus House's Homefront initiative for homeless Veterans.**

Your \$10 ticket includes admission to the Bluefish game and features a helicopter fly-in, pre-game activities, on-field and between-inning events, and a post-game fireworks display. Festivities begin at 5pm at the Ballpark at Harbor Yard, 500 Main Street, Bridgeport.

To purchase tickets, please contact Deb Lennon at Deb.Lennon@sikorsky.com.