

# the way home



Thank *you* for helping Andrew, an Air Force Veteran, and his family get back on their feet!

## What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

**A**FTER SERVING IN THE AIR FORCE for 17 years, Andrew never thought he would have to revisit that question.

Stationed in England, he had fallen in love with his future wife. Together, they were happily raising four children. They had no warning that their lives would be turned upside down.

Andrew was deployed to Afghanistan. He injured his hip and the PTSD he believed he had conquered resurfaced. He was medically evacuated out of Afghanistan. When he reached England, he was given the devastating news that he would be medically discharged

from military service. At the time, Andrew was only three years away from retirement, or making rank and advancing his career.

He tried to stay positive, planned to attend school, get a civilian job and relocate his family. But, due to illness, Andrew could not continue with his education. He was unable to get his family to the US, and didn't qualify for a work visa in England because of his medical status. "I was sent away from England, I was sent away from them [my family]... I didn't have a job, and I didn't have school, and I just sank into a bottomless pit of depression."

*Andrew's story is continued on page 2*

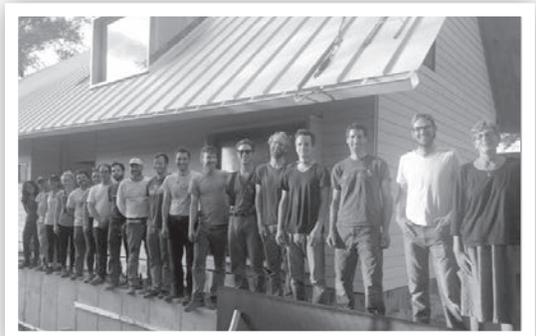
## HOMELESS:HOUSED

**C**OLUMBUS HOUSE has partnered with the Jim Vlock Building Project Studio at Yale in an ambitious housing initiative. First-year graduate students of the Yale School of Architecture are working with Columbus House staff and clients, as well as city authorities and neighborhood groups, on HOMELESS:HOUSED – an innovative collaboration to design, prefabricate and assemble five two-unit homes. One house will be built each year for the next five years – each accommodating a small family and an individual, and are designed specifically for those who experienced homelessness.

The student-designed homes can be replicated and inhabited for decades to come, ensuring the continuation of our mission to provide shelter and housing while fostering personal growth and independence. Students work with Columbus House and the community to maximize their knowledge of the issues

surrounding homelessness, in order for their designs to have the greatest impact on those who will call it home. Upon this project's completion, Columbus House will own five houses with family and individual units for the formerly homeless.

The first home is almost complete! You can make a real difference and secure housing for other families and individuals by joining this movement and partaking in HOMELESS:HOUSED. To learn more about this important endeavor, view videos and photographs, media coverage, and to find out how you can help, visit [www.columbushouse.org/homelesshoused](http://www.columbushouse.org/homelesshoused), or contact John Brooks, Chief Development Officer, at 203-401-4400 ext. 108 or [jbrooks@columbushouse.org](mailto:jbrooks@columbushouse.org). Your support will help pave the way for the future of affordable housing, and keep Columbus House at the forefront of providing solutions to ending homelessness. ■



(Top) First-year Yale architecture students completed their part of the first home in our HOMELESS:HOUSED building initiative in mid August, 2017.

(Bottom) Mayor Toni Harp spoke at an open house to celebrate the construction of the first home on Monday, October 2, 2017.

After staying with family in Florida, Andrew lived mostly in his truck for close to two years. He was struggling to overcome his depression and find a way to reunite with his family. He decided to return to Connecticut, his home state. He believed he could find work here with the skills he learned in the Air Force.

When Andrew got to Connecticut, things were a little better. He stayed with his father in a small two-bedroom apartment, and his wife and children were finally able to move here at the end of October, 2016. But their troubles weren't over.

With a large family living in a two-bedroom apartment, Andrew's father was threatened with eviction. Andrew's pension and disability finally came in, so the family bounced from hotel to hotel, spending their days looking for a place they could call home. Unfortunately, the money ran out, and Andrew was desperate, "There's only so far you can go on a pension."

Andrew was in contact with the VA, who connected him to Columbus House. He and his family were housed at our Wallingford Emergency Shelter (WES), where one of the four family units is



Andrew received a Triumph Award for "displaying the courage, commitment, and resolve to improve his quality of life while being a positive influence for others" from our partner, the WorkPlace. He was nominated by his Columbus House employment specialist, Kevin Paulin (left).

reserved for Veterans and their families. At WES, intensive case management services are offered to help families move into housing quickly. The expected length of stay is just 90 days.

Right before Thanksgiving, Andrew and his family moved in. "It was a two bedroom unit and we made due...it was warm, it was shelter, it wasn't in my truck. We were able to cook and go shopping, take care of things. The kids were finally able to go to school. It was a welcome break."

Andrew began networking for employment with the help of the VA and Columbus House's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Employment Specialist, Kevin Paulin. Thanks to Andrew's determination and Kevin's professional connections, Andrew landed the job he had traveled to Connecticut to find.

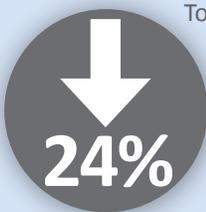
All the pieces were finally coming back together. As Andrew put it, "The last two years, from the time I retired until the time I got up to the Wallingford [Emergency] Shelter has been a mess of a journey." After receiving help from Columbus House, "there are still a lot of obstacles, but they are easier to manage at this point."

We were lucky to meet Andrew's wife and youngest daughter during our interview. When asked how the older children were adjusting to life in the US, Andrew stated, "There's definitely culture shock involved, but for the most part, they're enjoying it." Andrew beams with pride for his youngest daughter, who hardly sat still during our time together; "She has the same eye coordination that I have - you can throw a ball at her and she'll catch it." ■

# Did you know?



Alison Cunningham, Columbus House CEO, received the Barbara Geller Career Achievement Award for her tireless advocacy and efforts to end homelessness in our state! The award was bestowed by the Partnership for Strong Communities. Read Alison's acceptance speech at [columbushouse.org/pscaward](http://columbushouse.org/pscaward)



Together, with you and our partners across the state, we achieved a 24% reduction in homelessness in CT in just 3 years! How did we do it? Find out at [columbushouse.org/down24](http://columbushouse.org/down24)



You could double or even triple the impact of your gift to Columbus House. Does your employer participate in a Matching Gift program? Find out at [columbushouse.org/match](http://columbushouse.org/match) or contact our Matching Gift expert at 203-401-4400 x131 or [pphonyothee@columbushouse.org](mailto:pphonyothee@columbushouse.org)

## YOUR IRA

Are you at least 70 ½ years old? Do you have an IRA, are required to take a minimum distribution (RMD) for 2017, and don't need the funds? You (and your spouse) may be eligible to make a penalty-free "qualified charitable distribution" to Columbus House of up to \$100,000! Learn more at [columbushouse.org/legacy](http://columbushouse.org/legacy)



Many clients who move into permanent homes don't have the means to provide for the most basic necessities. Show your support with a Welcome Kit! Find out how you can make a real difference at [columbushouse.org/welcomekits](http://columbushouse.org/welcomekits)



## SPOTLIGHT ON GIVING:

### Interview with Jamie McLynn, Columbus House Monthly Donor

*"I was impressed by Columbus House's programs, and the range of people served - from children to Veterans."*

Columbus House relies on contributions to keep our important work going. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight some special members of our caring community, those who have decided to give a financial contribution, every month, automatically. We thank our monthly donors for having the insight to give Columbus House a reliable revenue stream for which we can provide services to those experiencing homelessness.

**How long have you been in the New Haven area?** I moved to New Haven from Atlanta, GA, a little over three years ago.

**What is your background? Hobbies?** I work for a local nonprofit that serves seriously ill children and their families. My job involves a lot of play - I get to have fun everyday! Outside of work, I love to travel, hike, and have Netflix marathons with my husband, Ryan. We got married last July.

**How did you first learn about Columbus House?** As simple as this sounds, I found Columbus House through Google! Being new in town, I wasn't familiar with local organizations, so I did a quick search. I was impressed by Columbus House's

programs, and the range of people served - from children to Veterans.

**What motivates you to support our mission?** When I first moved to New Haven, one of the first things I noticed was its homeless population. Rather than giving my spare change, I sought out an organization that would make a targeted, effective impact on the problem of homelessness in my new city.

**What are your thoughts on the impact of our work?** I can think of two specific times I was especially thankful for the impact Columbus House has: First, my first winter in New Haven was brutal. The weather was terrible and (as a southerner) I felt totally unprepared and miserable. Wondering how my homeless neighbors dealt with winter gave me some perspective but also concerned me greatly. I was relieved when I learned that Columbus House has seasonal shelters and targeted efforts during the coldest months of the year. Second, I remember when Governor Malloy announced an end to chronic homelessness for Veterans in Connecticut. I was so proud that Columbus House played a role in that effort.

You can help Columbus House with a reliable revenue stream by joining Jamie in monthly giving. Monthly gifts provide shelter, meals and services to our clients. Contact 203-401-4400 x131 or [pphonyothee@columbushouse.org](mailto:pphonyothee@columbushouse.org)

**You started making (automatic) monthly donations in 2014 - what prompted you to make this commitment?** Working for a nonprofit has taught me the power of a monthly gift. It allows Columbus House to plan ahead and be efficient with its resources. It's important to me that I make this regular contribution to my community.

**Any thoughts for existing supporters on making automatic monthly gifts?** It's easy! My gift is automatically charged to my credit card every month - one less item on my to do list!

**May we mention your recent nuptials?** Sure! ■

## Thank you for Taking Care of our Vets!

Veterans at Columbus House benefited from two grassroots fundraisers over the summer months. In July, the Orange Congregational Church held, for the 10th year, the "Higher Ground Golf Tournament" at Orange Hills Country Club (top), and Sikorsky, Lockheed Martin and Teamsters Local 1150 sponsored the 7th "Homerun for Heroes Bridgeport Bluefish Baseball Game" held in August at The Ballpark at Harbor Yard (bottom). Thank you to everyone who participated and supported our local Veterans! ■



# SAVE THE DATE!

## November 28, 2017 GIVING TUESDAY

How will you help end homelessness this holiday season? Join us in this international day of holiday giving and help us kick-off our Homeless for the Holidays campaign.

## December 7, 2017 ANNUAL MEETING

Join us as we celebrate YOU and all who make Columbus House possible!

## March 18, 2018 CHOCOLATE TO THE RESCUE

Experience the region's finest chocolate while helping families with children experiencing homelessness. This event benefits our Middlesex Family Shelter.

Learn more and stay tuned at [www.columbushouse.org/events](http://www.columbushouse.org/events)  
Contact 203-401-4400 x131 or [pphonyohee@columbushouse.org](mailto:pphonyohee@columbushouse.org) with questions regarding these events.

[www.columbushouse.org](http://www.columbushouse.org)

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## BEFORE: AFTER



## HOMELESS: HOUSED



**INSIDE:** Read Andrew's story, learn about our exciting new affordable housing initiative, HOMELESS:HOUSED, and more!