

# the way home

News from  
COLUMBUS HOUSE  
Spring 2021

## Together, We Are Mighty

What We Learned from the Pandemic,  
by Margaret Middleton, CEO

Amidst the suffering and sacrifice of the last 15 months, there have also been discoveries and opportunities. At Columbus House, we have been grateful to seize the moment to provide a level of care that was never possible before, and many of our clients are thriving.

Early in the pandemic, we successfully moved everyone out of the congregate shelter and into hotel rooms. Except for a brief period in August, we haven't left. At one point this winter Columbus House supported almost 200 people in New Haven and Middletown hotels. I felt grateful for  
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Margaret, CEO, advocating for homeless services to be included in the American Rescue Plan Act budget at the Connecticut Capitol on May 18



Celeste, Case Manager

James worked with his father at their family-run insurance business and had a good life with his wife and three kids. When James' father passed away unexpectedly, it took a huge emotional toll. He struggled to keep the family business afloat and turned to drugs to cope. While dealing with the failing business, his wife was diagnosed with cancer – this was James' tipping point. His drug use escalated, he ended up having to declare bankruptcy and lost the business and his home. His wife recovered,

## Your Support Changes Lives

Celeste Helped James Realize He Matters

“Please, never stop calling. You're it in this lonely world.”

but divorced him, and he lost contact with his children. James was living on the streets and in shelters for three years. With the assistance of Columbus House, he received a housing voucher. This is when Celeste (pictured), a case manager on our Permanent Supportive Housing team stepped in.

James was reluctant to receive services, but Celeste was not deterred. She persisted with her outreach, and over time, James started to respond. The day James got an ID from the DMV was a proud one, and he had an epiphany: the steps he was taking were improving his life, and he could do more. He finally believed what Celeste always

told him, “You matter.” From that day on he reached out to Celeste for assistance. She encouraged and helped him to put his life back together. There were setbacks – the pandemic hit and James lost his food stamps – but Celeste was always there.

With Celeste's help, James gained employment at Amazon and has already received recognition for his exemplary service. He is working towards independence – paying bills and rebuilding relationships with his kids. Early on, James asked Celeste to “Please, never stop calling. You're it in this lonely world.” Now, James is the one who calls Celeste to share his progress. ■



Raymond, a client at the New Haven hotel, was featured in news coverage about the hotel experience: [www.columbushouse.org/news](http://www.columbushouse.org/news)

keep people alive this winter – we helped them change their lives.

We know how to end homelessness. Given the means we helped seven times as many people move into permanent housing in Middletown than ever before. For Columbus House, the last year has been a challenge, but the true challenge lies ahead. We have seen the promised land! We know what it feels like to have the resources necessary to give people what they need to live independently. How can we go back to yoga mats on the floor?

“...the hotels showed transformational change is possible when our society gives people the basic necessities they need to thrive.”

the relative dignity, privacy and autonomy hotel rooms provided. However, we are finding that the hotels provided much more; the hotels showed transformational change is possible when our society gives people the basic necessities they need to thrive.

The Warming Center Columbus House runs in Middletown exemplifies what is achievable when we have adequate funding. For two years prior to the pandemic, Columbus House ran the Warming Center in church basements on the barest of budgets. The accommodations consisted of yoga mats on the floor and a hot drink,

and was open only at night during the coldest months. Our mission was basic and critical: to keep people from freezing to death. There was no funding for case management or other skilled services that would help people overcome barriers to stable housing. We felt accomplished if we engaged with clients enough to help a handful move out of homelessness. Thanks to federal funding to keep people safe from COVID, we ran the Warming Center this year out of a local hotel. Instead of 5, we helped 16 people move into permanent housing with another 20 currently matched with housing supports and ready to move once an apartment is secured. We didn't just

Your support of Columbus House proves that you have the will to end homelessness in your community. Please tell your legislators, your councilmembers, your kid's teacher, your neighbors and your colleagues that ending homelessness is your number one priority. The pandemic has proven that with adequate funding we can move our neighbors out of homelessness and on to a better life.

Columbus House is only as strong as the community that pushes us, guides us and supports us in our daily work. Together we are mighty and together we will end homelessness. Thank you for your support. ■

At a press conference in April, Margaret discusses the success in housing people at hotels during the pandemic



## Noteworthy News Briefs

“It fills me with joy when I see that my compassion for helping others is increasing our guests’ well being.”  
– Charisse, center photo (l) with Daisha (r), both Residential Supervisors at the seasonal Middletown Warming Center



Over 540 households have moved into affordable apartments since the pandemic started - including 152 Veteran households! Thank you for your support and for helping them begin a life of independence.



Thanks to COVID-related funding, we are providing shelter, food and emergency services for 120 individuals at the hotel in New Haven – 39 more people than we accommodate under normal circumstances.



In addition to their annual “Be Kind, Leave Your Food Behind” drive, Quinnipiac University students donated their unused meal points through “Tap Out Hunger” which resulted in Columbus House receiving \$21,000 to purchase food for our clients!

## HOMELESS:HOUSED Fifth and Final Home Underway



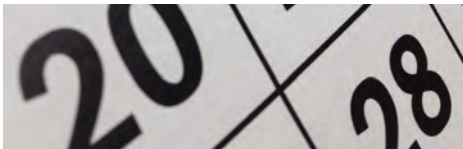
Watch a live tour of the 4th house online at [www.columbushouse.org/homelesshoused](http://www.columbushouse.org/homelesshoused)

Our partnership with the Yale School of Architecture Jim Vlock Building Project is in its fifth and final year and we’re proud to announce that construction is underway. The student designed home will result in a single family, homeownership property with a Veteran preference. The chosen design – Peak House – is described by the students who created it as “...a place where transformations begin, Peak House mediates defined and flexible spaces

to comfortably accommodate the new homeowner in the near term and the needs of a growing, multi-generational family in the long term.”

The dedication of the students and professors at Yale School of Architecture coupled with your generous support will soon culminate in ten units of new permanent, affordable, sustainable homes built on formerly vacant lots throughout New Haven. ■

Images: Yale Building Project 2021, follow the project on Instagram @yalebuildingproject2021



## Save the Dates!

July 23, 2021

### OCC Columbus House Scramble

Orange Congregational Church Golf Tournament

September 18, 2021

### Homerun for Heroes

Presented by Sikorsky, Lockheed Martin, and Teamsters Local 1150

December 2, 2021

### Columbus House Annual Meeting

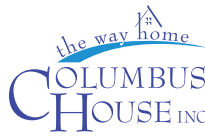
Stay tuned for more details!

For the most up-to-date information on these and other events, visit [www.columbushouse.org/events](http://www.columbushouse.org/events)

## Looking To Volunteer?

There are still plenty of ways to help during the pandemic! Visit [www.columbushouse.org/volunteer](http://www.columbushouse.org/volunteer) to learn more.

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



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Guests picked up chocolate samplers for Chocolate to the Rescue and Serving for Columbus House participants gathered at New Haven Health & Racquet

## Spring Efforts Raised Close to \$40,000



Scan on your smartphone to watch the Chocolate to the Rescue video!

Chocolate to the Rescue raised \$12,424 for the Middlesex Family Shelter. Serving for Columbus House raised \$8,227. Additionally, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven's annual Great Give raised \$18,310 to support our work to end homelessness. Columbus House extends our deepest gratitude to all who made these events a great success!

## June is Leave a Legacy Month

Commit to Columbus House's future by leaving a gift through your will, life insurance or retirement plan. Legacy gifts ensure that your desire to help people move out of homelessness continues long into the future.

Contact John Brooks, Chief Development Officer, at 203-401-4400 ext. 108 for info on how to make a legacy gift.

**Inside: What We Learned From the Pandemic, James's Story, & more!**