

ON THE PATH TO END HOMELESSNESS FOR ALL

the way home

# “EVERYONE DESERVES A HOME.”



-Dorie  
U.S. NAVY

DORIE WANTS YOU TO KNOW that, whether Veteran or civilian, “everyone deserves a home.” Thanks to you, she was one of the 766 Veterans facing homelessness in Connecticut who moved into their own home in 2015. Dorie joined the U.S. Navy at 21-years-old. “It was the best thing I ever did,” she says. She served eight years in the Navy, and five years in the reserves before settling back into civilian life, getting married, and having two daughters. Unfortunately, Dorie’s life did not get easier. Her relationship with her husband was difficult. Then, her mother fell ill and she was asked to move to Georgia to take care of her. Dorie had to leave her two girls in Connecticut with her husband. She moved to Georgia to be the sole caregiver for her ailing mother who was suffering with dementia. Alone, without a support system, Dorie turned to cocaine to ease her stress. She was a “closet addict.” Twelve years later, when her mother passed away, Dorie realized she needed help. “When my mother died, I saw myself.” Dorie moved back to Connecticut and immediately sought help from the VA in West Haven. She attended the Substance Abuse Day Program at the VA’s Errera Center while living at Spooner House in Shelton. With financial assistance from Columbus House, she secured a place of her own in January, 2016, the day after graduating from the program. Aimee (pictured left), her Columbus House Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Case Manager, helped her settle in to her new apartment and secure a new bed and other household necessities. Dorie has reconnected with her daughters and is a proud grandmother. We could not share success stories like Dorie’s if not for the generosity of supporters like you. Thank you!



## A MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR, DR. JEANNE STEINER

I CURRENTLY SERVE AS THE BOARD CHAIR and find that this work fits well with both my professional and personal commitment to solving the issues

of homelessness. I am passionate about the work that Columbus House does on both a local level and its overriding mission to end homelessness on a statewide level. The leadership and staff are tireless advocates for policies and initiatives that address this societal issue at its root causes, while working with individuals to deliver person centered services that will meet the specific needs of those members of our community who are most vulnerable.

This is so apparent from the announcement this year that CT has ended homelessness among Veterans. Columbus House staff contributed to the work of the statewide workgroup that led the charge toward this goal. At the

same time, our dedicated staff was working with each Veteran who showed up on our doorsteps in need of housing and services. Whether it was through the shelter, in Harkness House (bridge housing), through our street outreach team or our Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, Veterans were provided with the support they needed to help them make the best choices about their future. These services will continue in place, ensuring that the time a Veteran spends experiencing homelessness is brief, helping keep us at “functional zero” across the state.

I am proud of Columbus House for being a part of such a remarkable accomplishment. It is because the staff are such dedicated, creative and resourceful people that they can reach such lofty goals. And it is with the contributions of our donors that we can support their hard work. Thank you for being a part of our vision of one day ending homelessness for all people.



# WE REACHED OUR GOAL!

A MESSAGE FROM ALISON CUNNINGHAM, COLUMBUS HOUSE CEO

IT WAS A BITTER COLD DAY IN FEBRUARY, 2016, when Governor Malloy invited advocates, non-profit, state and federal agency staff,


elected officials, and Veterans to the State Armory to hear the announcement that CT had become only the 2nd state in the country, just behind Virginia, to end Veteran homelessness. The smiles, tears and “Hoorays” came after several years of planning among myriad agencies to reach this goal. Under the keen and skillful leadership of Greg Berman, a Veteran himself who pulled together a mighty workgroup under the auspices of the Partnership for Strong Communities, we accomplished this very audacious goal. It took a fierce determination across a system of care, identifying new resources, creatively adjusting our old ways of providing services, collaborating with new partners and overcoming countless barriers to get there. And because of this, there were 766 Veterans housed in 2015. We reached our goal!

**What does “ending Veteran homelessness” really mean?** It does not mean that a Veteran will never become homeless again. It does mean that we’ve done a massive job of changing a system of care so that we can

more easily identify Veterans experiencing homelessness, and then move them quickly into housing and enroll them in appropriate services. We’ve gone from a system that could take years for a Veteran to move through to a system that helps Veterans end their homelessness within 90 days.

Columbus House has a robust department serving Veterans through shelter, housing and intensive support programs that include case management, income and entitlement support, housing search, legal assistance through our partners at the CT Veterans Legal Center, and homeless prevention assistance. We are proud to be a part of such a concerted effort to end Veteran homelessness and now to continue that work so that those who served our country will have safe, affordable housing and supports when they need it most.

Our work doesn’t end with the accomplishment of this goal. We will continue to provide housing and services for people who are homeless and, with your support, we will keep up the hard work to ensure that everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home. We will end homelessness, one person, one family at a time.

90 

days - the average amount of time it takes to move a Veteran out of homelessness now that we have intensive systems in place.

766 

Veterans were housed in 2015 thanks to the collaborative efforts with so many wonderful partners across the state.

547 

Veteran households were served through Columbus House’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families in 2016 with financial assistance, case management and connections to services to help them stay in safe, stable housing.



“I’VE DONE WHAT I THINK ARE SOME GOOD THINGS ALONG THE WAY IN MY LIFE.”

-Hershel U.S. AIR FORCE

UPON MEETING HERSHEL, a 73-year-old, two-tour Vietnam Veteran, you immediately recognize a very intelligent, articulate, driven, and compassionate man. His one bedroom apartment is spotless, though quite warm on this sweltering day in mid-July. Hershel is on a fixed-income and cannot afford air conditioning. In fact, not very long ago, Hershel was homeless. When asked to share his story he obliged with a mesmerizing account of his life.

Hershel graduated from Harding High School in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1960. He took college prep courses, four years of Latin, and worked full-time through his sophomore, junior, and senior years. He entered the U.S. Air Force after graduation. His entrance exam scores were impressive and he was invited to join the first generation of the National Security Agency.

*“You have to understand that America was a different place in 1960. So, for me to get top secret clearance, for me to get high level intelligence training as an African American guy, when it was a segregated society, that was a very meaningful accomplishment.”*

Hershel was stationed overseas and conducted intelligence work for 3 years. In 1965 he volunteered for duty in Vietnam. He served two tours. 1965-1966 and 1967-1968. Unfortunately, he did not escape unscathed. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates that 30% of Vietnam Veterans experienced PTSD in their lifetime. This number is significantly higher than those for Veterans of more recent wars. Moreover, only in this past decade has intensive government funding and focus on preventing and ending

# Because of YOU, we were able to serve over 600 Veterans like Hershel last year.

homelessness among Veterans been a priority. The odds that Hershel would be able to function normally after returning home weren't good. And the support that he would need wasn't there.

*“That period had a very profound effect on me, not all good. I am still dealing with some of the fallout. Sometimes I'm aware of it, sometimes I'm not. I had a very difficult time over the years, having problems with substances after Vietnam. My thinking is you don't go from a person that gets awarded a top secret clearance and an opportunity to work in intelligence, and then get so transformed – one end of the behavioral spectrum to the other end of the behavioral spectrum – without having been powerfully affected by some event or events. That event was my exposure to the Vietnam experience. You have to understand, also, that Americans were not as responsive to Vietnam Vets as they were to Iraqi or Afghanistan Vets. We were spat upon. We were not perceived to be good guys. We didn't get a lot of support – not any support at all. I'm just, after 40 years, beginning to receive some of the support I should have gotten 40 years ago. It's been difficult.”*

After Vietnam, Hershel went on to start a family. For some time, he was able to maintain himself, and not succumb to the effects of the war, by being a “work oriented person.” During this period he held a few positions that he is very proud of. He worked for the Bridgeport area Chamber of Commerce as Director of Information Systems; was the technical reports administrator working on the U.S. Army M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank engine; and was a planning officer for the New Haven based ex-offenders reintegration program Project M.O.R.E. As Hershel puts it, *“I've done what I think are some good things along the way in my life.”*

The effects of PTSD and his experience in Vietnam eventually caught up with Hershel. He really began struggling in 2009. After he had moved to Atlanta, the place of his birth, he started using drugs, became homeless, and was living in his car. He was with a girlfriend who “wasn't doing the right thing.”

As Hershel explains, while sometimes he would “crash and burn,” he was often able to pick himself up by immersing

himself in work. By 2013, through hard work and staying focused, Hershel was back on track. Still in Georgia, he was living in “a big house with a nice back yard. His daughter and two grandsons – “the apples of his heart” – were living with him. His daughter was just coming out of an abusive relationship. To Hershel's dismay, she made the decision to move back in with the boyfriend in Connecticut. Hershel was despondent.

Hershel followed his daughter and grandsons back to Connecticut in hopes to convince them to return to Georgia. He was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, people with whom he thought he would be able to stay with could not even support themselves. He was homeless again. *“Unfortunately, I began to deal with some friends that I knew were not necessarily doing the right thing. I found myself using [drugs] again.”*

Hershel's life spiraled out of control once more. He got into legal trouble and spent 2 years in prison. While in prison, a representative from the VA worked with him to set up a short-term housing placement for when he was released. In early 2015 Hershel left prison and was welcomed at Columbus House's Harkness House. Located in New Haven, Harkness House provides housing and support services for 14 male Veterans, connecting them to services, expanding their social and employment skills, and encouraging reconnection to their communities.

Hershel stayed at Harkness House for a little over 90 days while he awaited his U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program application to be approved. HUD-VASH is a partnership between HUD and the VA that combines HUD housing vouchers with supportive services from the VA in order to help Veterans and their families find and maintain housing. Columbus House partners with the VA, along with other Veteran service organizations, to provide a continuum of care that ensures the Veterans we serve are able to move into and remain in their own homes.

During his stay at Harkness House, Hershel worked with Kevin Paulin, Columbus House Homeless Veterans'



**“I THINK I DO A LOT OF POSITIVE STUFF. I HOPE I’M ABLE TO GET SOME OF THESE THINGS EXPOSED. I SORT OF MANAGE MY EXPECTATIONS, BUT I KEEP MY HOPES HIGH.”**

Hershel proudly displays a t-shirt design that he developed and hopes it will be used to help kids learn to avoid drug use. The inset shows one of the multiple front designs, where animals are able to engage in Olympic style sports because they are strong and drug-free.

Reintegration Program (HVRP) Employment Specialist, to find employment. Kevin connected Hershel with The WorkPlace, a Bridgeport based non-profit that specializes in all aspects of workforce development. Hershel enrolled in their Platform to Employment course. He completed the 5-week program that addresses the many employment barriers faced by those who have been out of the workforce long-term. He did so well that he received the Outstanding Graduate Award for the class.

Hershel also completed a month-long entrepreneurial training program with the Yale student-run Elmseed Enterprise Fund. He focused on creating a business strategy for a t-shirt project that he developed over the years. The shirt designs – “Champions of the Animal Kingdom” – feature animals doing Olympic style sports which are used to represent an anti-drug campaign geared towards youth. The t-shirt backs are printed with the slogan “Be a Champ, Not a Chump! Don’t Use Drugs!” Hershel hopes that he can find sponsors for the project so that the initiative can be used in schools. The shirts are expensive to produce, and it is difficult for him to move forward being on such a restricted income. *“I think I do a lot of positive stuff. I hope I’m able to get some of these things exposed. I sort of manage my expectations, but I keep my hopes high.”*

Hershel is still working with Columbus House Employment Specialists to find part-time work and to network to promote his t-shirt project. He was approved for his HUD-VASH housing voucher and moved into his new home this past summer. He proudly states, *“I moved in here from scratch. I*

*had nothing. Everything you see here I had to buy.”* Of his few possessions, one of the more notable is the gaming station that rests on his television stand. That, he explains with a grin, is for when his three daughters and eight grandchildren come to visit him.



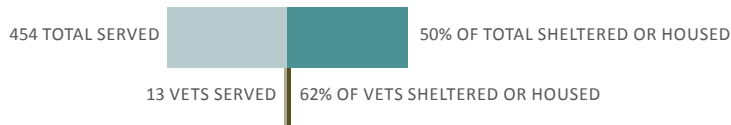
L-R Carl Reynolds, Columbus House Employment Services Coordinator; Hershel; and Kevin Paulin, Columbus House HVRP Employment Specialist, at The WorkPlace Platform to Employment graduation ceremony where Hershel received the Outstanding Graduate Award.

# Your support gets people into safe, stable housing and helps keep them housed.

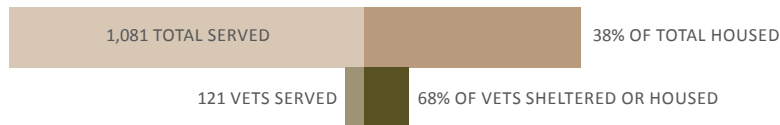
Columbus House is a non-profit organization that collaborates with numerous social service and government agencies to help those in the greatest need. We are not a government agency. Each year, Columbus House must apply for federal, state, and municipal grants, and there are no guarantees and no automatic renewals. Your support fills the financial gaps to help us serve close to 3,000 men, women, families with children, and Veterans each year.

## 2016 OUTCOMES

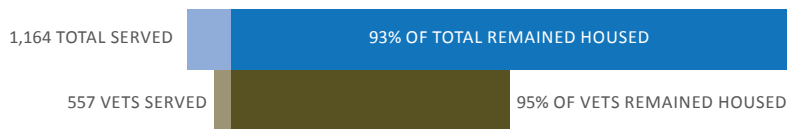
### OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT



### SHELTER SERVICES



### HOUSING SERVICES



## OUR SERVICES

**OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT** programs offer services to clients who are literally homeless by reaching out to them wherever they are living.

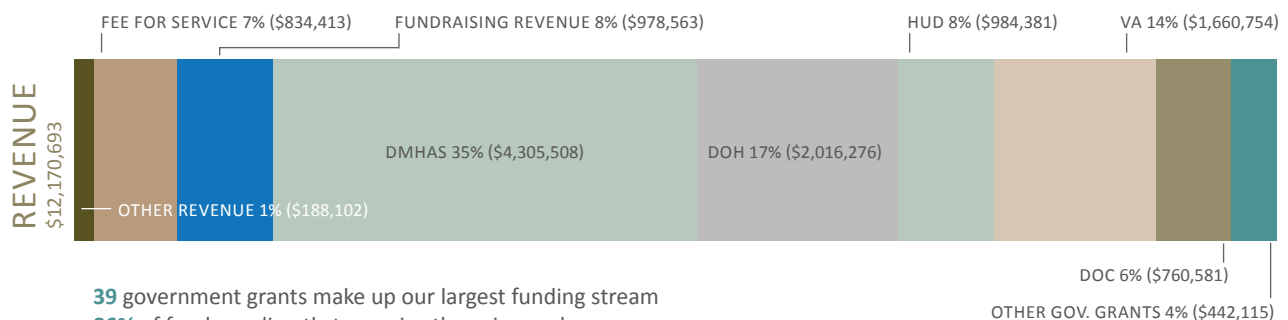
**SHELTER SERVICES** provide shelter and case management for women, men, Veterans, and families with children.

**HOUSING SERVICES** Columbus House staff work with clients to get them into housing and access the services they need to stay housed indefinitely.

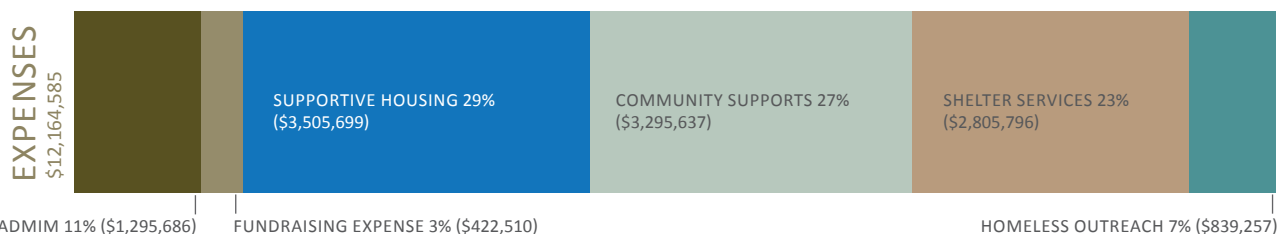
**VETERANS SERVICES** include a variety of programs and services for men and women who have served in the US military and are homeless or at-risk.

**INCOME & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES** help individuals and families increase their income through benefits counseling and employment services.

## 2016 FINANCIALS OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30th 2016 (AUDITED)



**39** government grants make up our largest funding stream  
**86%** of funds go directly to service those in need  
**8%** of our revenue comes from you, and makes our work possible by filling gaps in government funding



# VOLUNTEERS MAKE OU



HARKNESS HOUSE, A PROGRAM OF COLUMBUS HOUSE, provides housing and support services for up to 14 male Veterans; connecting them to services, expanding their social and employment skills, and encouraging reconnection to their communities.

The building consists of 4 apartments where Veterans can stay while working with case managers to receive the services they need to move out of homelessness and into their own apartment.

When visiting Harkness House, you will often encounter a familiar, friendly face working in the vegetable garden, tending to the landscaping, sitting in on a tenant meeting, or just chatting with one of the guys on the front porch.

Shortly after reading a newspaper account of the dedication and opening of Harkness House, Paul Cuozzo, Senior Ethics Officer for Sikorsky Aircraft, contacted Columbus House and offered not only his services, but those of his colleagues in Sikorsky's legal department. Sikorsky was in the process of centralizing their community service efforts and a focus on Veteran issues was a perfect fit with the services being provided at Harkness House.

Paul took the lead as facilitator and met with Columbus House staff to determine what was most needed by the guys at Harkness House. *"There are people in need and a whole resource at Sikorsky. I marry the two and make it work"* said Cuozzo. It started out with donations of books, DVD's and a couple of food drives. It grew to other needs and now includes donations of new bed sheets and bicycles. Paul began attending client meetings to get a sense of additional needs. He learned that many of the guys had legal questions on all sorts of issues that Paul's team at Sikorsky could help with. There were landlord disputes, custody issues, employment, and benefit issues. One of the guys even needed assistance with the legal papers from a business he had started.

According to Paul, *"It's the least I can do after all these guys have done over the years serving our country. I have never served,"* Paul said. *"This is my small way of giving back. The guys always thank me for what I do and I tell them, 'no, thank you for all that you have done.'"*

The living quarters for the guys were brand new in 2011 but the yard and grounds were in rough shape. Paul helped secure a financial contribution from Sikorsky to professionally

"I'M PLEASED ABOUT THE EFFORTS THAT COLUMBUS HOUSE AND OTHERS HAVE MADE TO HELP END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS OVER THE YEARS, BUT WE CAN'T STOP. WE NEED TO KEEP GOING OR WE WILL RETURN TO TRENDS THAT WE DON'T WANT."

-Paul

COLUMBUS HOUSE SUPPORTER  
AND VOLUNTEER



# R WORK TO END HOMELESSNESS POSSIBLE.

Each year Columbus House volunteers collect **thousands** of donations, give over **12,000** hours of their time, serve over **40,000** meals, offer **unmeasurable** companionship and camaraderie to those we serve, and much, much more.

landscape the property and to construct a raised-bed vegetable garden in the back yard. With the help of landscape architect Bailynn Hye, around 30 Sikorsky employees met at Harkness House and over the course of several hours transformed the grounds into a beautifully landscaped oasis. The idea was to give the guys a sense of pride in the grounds around the building and to provide a garden that they could tend to and grow their own vegetables.

An avid gardener himself, Paul says it is very therapeutic for him and he hopes that it can provide similar benefits to those residing at Harkness House.

Sometimes Paul will have short conversations with the guys in the garden. *“I know it helps them to have someone to talk to. I don’t pry or probe but will listen and if they want to share something I’ll be supportive. I’m very aware of whose presence I’m in and I respect that. These guys saw some tough stuff while serving; stuff that allows us the opportunity to have choices here in the US.”*

*“This garden isn’t about me. It’s about them feeling like it’s theirs. When they’re out here picking green beans, or tomatoes or watering the plants, it reinforces that it’s their garden. That’s a big deal. It’s great to get them to participate.”*

Wanting to do even more for homeless Veterans, Paul and his colleagues at Sikorsky came up with the idea of an annual benefit baseball game to raise awareness and funds for those serving homeless Veterans. The Homerun for Heroes concept emerged in 2011 and has grown every year raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for local organizations serving Veterans, including Columbus House. The Sikorsky team sells tickets, t-shirts, hats, and sponsorships.

Paul gathers with staff and Veterans in the lush back yard of Columbus House’s Harkness House that he and his colleagues helped to create for the men. He cherishes the moments that he gets to share with the Veterans in this welcoming environment.

According to Paul, *“All of these efforts are our way of giving back to Veterans who have done so much for us.”*

When Paul learned of the Governor’s announcement that CT was the 2nd state in the nation to end homelessness among Veterans he said, *“I’m pleased about the efforts that Columbus House and others have made to help end Veteran homelessness over the years, but we can’t stop. We need to keep going or we will return to trends that we don’t want. In a small way, I’m contributing to end Veteran homelessness and I’m proud to be part of it and proud to tell my children that I’m involved”.*

Paul told us, *“I still get chills and a good feeling. I get more out of volunteering here than I give.”*

We were happy to learn that Paul has no plans to stop volunteering at Harkness House. He recognizes that his help is still needed. He hopes to find someone who will take over for him at Sikorsky so that when he retires one day, the Sikorsky partnership will continue. He assured us that he will continue to drop by to tend to the gardens, chat with the guys, and lend his support wherever needed, even after he retires.



We gratefully acknowledge those donors who made contributions to Columbus House between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. **We could not do our work without you!**



## MATCHING GIFTS AND GRANTS FOR VOLUNTEERING

If you work for a company that has a matching gift program, your donation can be doubled, helping more people find a place to call home. Many companies will also match gifts for retirees and their spouses.

In an effort to encourage volunteerism, your company might also provide a grant to Columbus House as incentive.

Visit the "Get Involved" page of the Columbus House web site [www.columbushouse.org](http://www.columbushouse.org) to see if your employer offers a gift match or volunteer incentive grant.

## MANY THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS EVENT SPONSORS!



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Visit [www.columbushouse.org/events](http://www.columbushouse.org/events) for current events, sponsorship opportunities, and more!



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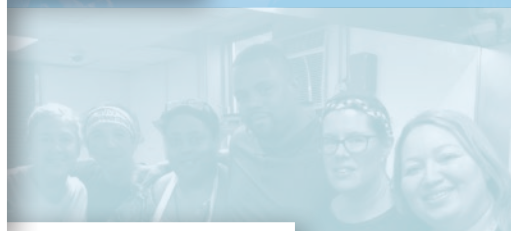
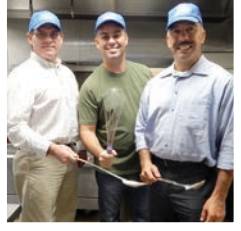
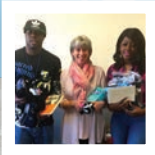
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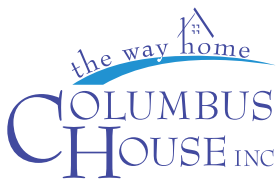
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## YOU GAVE JAMES HIS FREEDOM BACK



JAMES SERVED 6 YEARS IN THE MARINES and was honorably discharged. He had trouble reconnecting with civilian life after his service and ended up turning to drugs. *“That changed everything.”* James spent some time in prison. He literally lost the freedoms he had served to protect. After his second time in prison, James was homeless, but sober and ready for positive change. He was referred to Columbus House’s Harkness House for Veterans experiencing homelessness by his VA case worker. According to James, staying at Harkness House was *“just like being at home.”* After staying just a few months, James was approved for housing and moved into his own apartment. He is grateful to have his freedom back. Read more about James’ story at [www.columbushouse.org/james](http://www.columbushouse.org/james)

- James U.S. MARINE CORPS

LOOK INSIDE TO LEARN HOW YOU HELPED OTHERS,  
LIKE JAMES, MOVE OUT OF HOMELESSNESS.