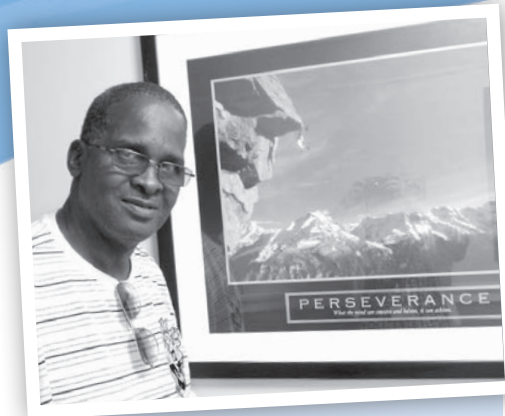


# the way home

news from Columbus House



*"I have never been this happy in my life. A few years back I didn't feel I had a lot of things to look forward too." - John*

## Thanks to your support, people like John and families like Sophie's have renewed hope

**T**HREE MONTHS AGO JOHN AWOKED in his bed at the sober house where he was living to find his foot severely infected. He was frightened, assumed it was caused by his diabetes, and was rushed to the emergency room at Yale New Haven Hospital. John was admitted to the hospital and treated for a very dangerous condition.

Once, an athlete with a promising football career, John endured many injuries over the years. His knees are bad, his hip has been replaced, and he now walks with a cane. It was after his hip replacement that he became addicted to Percocet, ultimately leading to his living at the sober house—where he admittedly faced many temptations.

The staff at Yale discovered that it was old football injuries—not his diabetes—that caused the infection. John would need

a safe, stable place to recover and a nurse to help him take care of his foot. The sober house was not an ideal living arrangement for John. With too many flights of stairs, and too many temptations, John needed a better alternative. His doctors recommended Columbus House's Respite Program, a partnership with Yale that offers a safe place to recuperate for those who have no home to go to when discharged from the hospital.

Somewhat reluctantly, John agreed. "I didn't know what I was getting myself in to." He had always known Columbus House as 'just a shelter.' Much to his relief, that is no longer the case.

John recuperated in one of 12 Medical Respite rooms in Columbus House's New Haven Shelter for three months. A visiting nurse assisted him in healing his foot. John

*continued on page 2*

## Columbus House acquires Wallingford Emergency Shelter

We have exciting news to share with our friends and colleagues! The Wallingford Emergency Shelter is now a program of Columbus House, Inc.

**L**ast year, in an effort to significantly improve both the breadth and sustainability of services to current and future clients, the Wallingford Emergency Shelter (WES) board began developing a 5-year plan called WES2020. During this process, the WES board concluded that they might achieve their goals more efficiently if they could join forces with a like-minded organization with a depth of services already in place. The WES board concluded that they needed to gain advice from a recognized state-wide leader in homeless services and housing. Their search brought them to Columbus House.

After a year of careful consideration on the part of both organizations, the two have agreed to join together to address the issues of homelessness in Wallingford. As of July 2016, the Wallingford Emergency

Shelter is now a program of Columbus House, Inc. (CHI). Under our umbrella of services, WES will continue to operate an emergency shelter for adults as well as a family shelter located in two townhouses that can accommodate up to four families with children. The WES mission aligns seamlessly with that of Columbus House whose mission is "To serve people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by providing shelter and housing and by fostering their personal growth and independence."

Like Columbus House, WES relies on a dedicated volunteer force to assist with shelter operations and meal service and a loyal group of donors to support their work. With added resources from Columbus House and your continued involvement, we will be in a better position to help even more



(l-r) Matt Cammarota, WES Board President; Cynthia Fox, CHI Chief Financial Officer, Shannon Ramsby, CHI Director of Human Resources; Alison Cunningham, CHI Executive Director

of our Wallingford neighbors move out of homelessness and into their own homes.

More information will be provided in the future, but for now we felt it would be helpful to provide answers to some questions that you may have.

*continued on page 3*

# Double Your Donation! Employer Gift Match



**Not sure if your employer participates? Go to our web site and use the handy search box.**

**[www.columbushouse.org/match](http://www.columbushouse.org/match) *It's Quick! It's Easy! It's Free!***

**D**id you know that many employers offer a Matching Gift program that matches charitable contributions by their employees, board members, spouses, and even retirees? Others offer Volunteer Incentive Grants to charities based on a qualifying employee's volunteer hours.

You could double or even triple the impact of your gift and add thousands of additional dollars to our mission of getting people housed if your employer participates!

Here are just a few employers who will match your gift to Columbus House: Aetna, Alexion, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, Covidien, GE, People's United, Pfizer, Pitney Bowes, Regional Water Authority, United Health, United Illuminating, United Technologies, Verizon, Wells Fargo, and many, many more!

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to call our Matching Gift expert at (203) 401-4400 x131 or [cyun@columbushouse.org](mailto:cyun@columbushouse.org) Thank you for making a difference!

**...renewed hope** *continued from page 1*

also worked intensively on his recovery with his case manager. Now, fully healed, John is in a longer term program at the shelter while he works with a housing specialist to find a safe place to call home. In the future he hopes to give back by volunteering and also to find part-time employment. "I just want to thank the program. I don't know how long it existed, but I hope it exists for a long time!"

Columbus House's Medical Respite Program is approaching its three year anniversary. Data for the program shows a 50% decrease in the hospital admission rate for clients, like John, in the 12 months after Respite compared to the 12 months before Respite. This decrease in expensive medical care is, in part, due to better health, connection with a primary care provider for preventative medicine, and more stable housing.

**S**OPHIE, A YOUNG MOTHER OF FOUR, has experienced more trauma than many endure in a lifetime. Sophie was abused by a family member as a child. By her late teens, she was in yet another abusive relationship. When Sophie had her third child, she mustered the courage to flee to Connecticut with her children, where she planned to stay with family. Unfortunately, her living arrangements didn't work out, and she found herself, once again in another abusive relationship. Sophie became pregnant with her fourth child. She was desperate to break the cycle of abuse and



*"I can smile now. I feel safer knowing that my children and I can sleep in a comfortable environment where we can get the help we need to be hopeful for our future." -Sophie*

find safety for herself and her children. She began "couch surfing" from one friend's sofa to another's. Sophie and her children were literally homeless.

In January, 2016, Sophie feared she would be out in the cold with her children.

She called 2-1-1, the statewide hot-line for housing and services. The call center connected Sophie with Columbus House's Middlesex Family Shelter. She and her children were swiftly moved into one of the seven family units at the shelter. Over the last seven months, their lives changed dramatically. Their case manager connected them with multiple local service providers to help them gain stability and structure in their lives. Sophie and her children meet regularly with a therapist. Sophie is working to recover from years of trauma and abuse. She is motivated to build a more healthy relationship with her children, and looks forward to a safe, bright future with them.

Sophie's application for supportive housing is pending. It is hopeful that she and her children will soon move into their own home. The support network of providers, which her case manager helped to build, will continue to work with Sophie and her children once they are housed to ensure that the family continues to thrive.

According to the Point-In-Time Count, on a single night in January 2016, 449 families with 831 children were experiencing homelessness in Connecticut. One of these families was Sophie's. With continued support from people like you, and intensive services like those Sophie and her children received at Columbus House's Middlesex Family Shelter, we can look forward to the day that no family in Connecticut is without a home. ■

## Rich Wilson explains why he keeps coming back

*"I want to work to make someone's day a little bit better."*

Eternal optimist, naïve, and open hearted. These are words you might have used if you had met me when I was a young man just starting my family. I believed that with a good work ethic and a positive attitude life would turn out ok.

One night, staying late at my second job, I heard the chime ring announcing a customer had entered the small retail furniture shop. A woman in her late 60's stood in front of me. I'm not sure why, perhaps we wore the same exhausted expression, but I felt a connection with her. She explained that her seven-year-old granddaughter had no bed and had to sleep on the floor. She shared with me how important it was to her that



Rich Wilson, 2nd from left, and his colleagues from Verizon serve a meal at Columbus House's New Haven Shelter

her granddaughter had a proper bed for the start of school despite the family's limited budget. She added that the little girl would be happy with any kind of a bed, regardless of its condition. As she spoke, my mind jumped to the custom upholstered pink headboard I had made a few weeks earlier. To me, that headboard was what every little girl would want. Within minutes, I was loading it in the back of the woman's

car with a brand new mattress. I never mentioned the cost of the bed set and she didn't ask. My only payment was her extra tight embrace and the warm smile she wore as she pulled out of the driveway.

As I returned to my work, I was feeling proud of myself for doing such a good deed. Then, from upstairs, I hear, "What did you sell?" It was my boss, who is also my father. He stated sternly that my willingness to give showed my moral character; however, I needed to use better judgment in the amount I give. Then, my father wanted to know how I intended to pay for the merchandise I just gave away.

A few days passed, and my father called me into his office. With tears in his eyes, he gestured for me to sit down. I immediately thought the worst. He handed me a letter that had just arrived and asked me to read it.

*Mr. Wilson, Thank you so much for the pink bed. I prayed to God that I would get a pink bed. Thank you for the best gift ever. I am so thankful for the gift. Thanks again. P.S. my favorite color is pink. Love, Callie*

Just like the interaction I had with Callie's grandmother, the look on my father's face said more than any words could have expressed. This story reflects the connection I feel when interacting with the staff and guests at Columbus House. Our common bond is trust. The one thing that keeps me coming back is the tireless search for finding opportunities to help people like Callie's grandmother. I want to work to make someone's day a little bit better.

Today, I am proud to work for Verizon Wireless in Wallingford, CT. Verizon provides



Middiree Gibbs, Verizon Employee, offers resume writing skills to a student in Columbus House's Employment and Enrichment Center

the platform for me to extend volunteer opportunities to the call center employees. We have created a strong, positive office culture thanks in part to our efforts in the local community. Our center, lead by Director Robert Sadler, is committed to this initiative. Teams volunteer serving meals monthly at Columbus House. Sheree DiMario, Columbus House Volunteer Coordinator, makes the experience easy to organize. My colleagues often express that their experience at Columbus House inspires them to look for more ways to support their local communities. Our relationship with Columbus House has grown and our Recruiting Team is now providing interview and resume writing classes to clients who are seeking employment.

As good corporate citizens we are encouraged by the effort, flexibility, and support Columbus House provides to people in need. We are excited to learn about Columbus House's acquisition of the Wallingford Emergency Shelter. The enhanced services, and professional, caring staff, will surely provide families and individuals in Wallingford the very best experience. On behalf of the Verizon team, we wish Columbus House much success in this new venture. ■

### Columbus House Acquires Wallingford Emergency Shelter *continued from page 1*

**What is WES's history?** In 1986, faith communities of Wallingford joined to provide aid for those experiencing homelessness. Volunteers worked to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, and kindness.

**Why did WES seek to be acquired by CHI?** While it is the goal of WES to help individuals find permanent housing and be self-sufficient, they felt that there was more they could do. Without the help from an experienced agency like Columbus House, it would take WES several years to improve existing programs and create new ones.

**What value does CHI bring to those experiencing homelessness in Wallingford?** Through our experienced, professional staff, WES clients will have access to a broad array of services and housing, decreasing their length of stay in the shelter system and maximizing their opportunities for recovery and independence.

**How will the new entity be managed? What will it be called?** All WES operations will be managed by Columbus House staff. The

entity will be called "Wallingford Emergency Shelter – a Program of Columbus House."

**How will the new entity be governed?** All WES operations will be governed by the Columbus House Board of Directors. CHI will reserve 2 seats on its' board for representatives from Wallingford who will come from the current WES Board. Also, a newly formed WES Advisory Committee will assist with building awareness and fundraising and will act as a liaison to the CHI board and staff.

**Will there be an opportunity to get to know WES better?** Prior to the re-opening of the shelter for single adults in November, we will host an open house where you will be invited to learn more about the array of services being offered to the Wallingford community.

With your continued support, Columbus House is poised to help even more people throughout the region break the cycle of homelessness and quickly secure a place to call home. ■

# SAVE THE DATE!

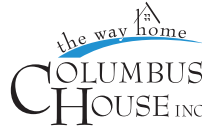
## **AUGUST 20, 2016** **SIKORSKY'S 6TH ANNUAL** **"HOMERUN FOR HEROES"** **BLUEFISH BASEBALL GAME!**

Supports Connecticut Veterans charities, including Columbus House's Homefront initiative for homeless Veterans!

## **SEPTEMBER 11, 2016** **THE 4TH ANNUAL** **KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS** **GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Hon. W. Patrick Donlin Assembly #2459  
Held at The Country Club of Woodbridge, 50 Woodfield Road, Woodbridge, CT. Benefits The Homefront for Homeless Veterans (a program of Columbus House) and other charitable causes. Contact Ric Raffone at (203) 640-6482 for more info.

For more info about these events and more, stay tuned at [www.columbushouse.org/events](http://www.columbushouse.org/events)



P.O. Box 7093  
586 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard  
New Haven, CT 06519

*Serving Hartford, Middlesex, New Haven, & New London counties*

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 13  
New Haven, CT

### Address Service Requested

Help us reduce our postage costs!  
If you receive more than one copy or are listed incorrectly, let us know.  
Call (203) 401-4400, ext. 131 or email [info@columbushouse.org](mailto:info@columbushouse.org).

### Stay Connected!

[facebook.com/columbushouseinc](https://facebook.com/columbushouseinc)

[@ColumbusHouseCT](https://twitter.com/ColumbusHouseCT)

## YOU have helped renew hope in the lives of many!



---

**How do you give people like John and families like Sophie's renewed hope?**

---

---

**How will Columbus House help more of our Wallingford neighbors into their own homes?**

---

---

**What inspires our volunteers?**

---

---

**Will your employer match your support to help end homelessness?**

---

**Find out how you have helped inside!**