TOGETHER
WE ARE
ENDING
HOMELESSNESS
CT ENDS CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS FOR VETERANS

GETTING TO FUNCTIONAL ZERO

THE 100 DAY CHALLENGE IS A SUCCESS!

ZERO: 2016

2015 HIGHLIGHTS
T
HE NEWS IS OUT! Connecticut is on the
path to end homelessness! The Point in Time
count shows that the number of people who are
homeless was down across the state in 2014. In August,
2015, the Governor announced that Connecticut is the
first state to end chronic homelessness for Veterans.
Our collective goal is to end all chronic homelessness
by the end of 2016, and we are well on our way to
achieving that goal thanks to state and federal funding,
strong political will, a fierce determination to get there,
and to you, our loyal supporters.

Some of you may be wondering what this means when
you see a shelter full of people while volunteering to
serve a meal, or when you see lots of people who
appear to be homeless hanging around the New
Haven Green, or when you just heard a report on the
news about the increase in youth homelessness.

Definitions are important in understanding our
goals. A person is “chronically homeless” if he/she
has been homeless for 12 consecutive months or
has had 4 episodes of homelessness over the past 3
years, AND has a disability, i.e. a chronic medical
condition, mental illness, long term substance use,
etc. Chronically homeless make up roughly 25% of
the total homeless population but use about 80% of
the resources, such as shelter beds, case management
services, emergency and institutional care. Malcolm
Gladwell’s Million Dollar Murray story published
several years ago in the New Yorker illustrated just how
quickly costs can add up for a person who cycles in and
out of shelter, jail, hospitals and other institutional care.
(http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/02/13/
million-dollar-murray)
“ZERO” DOES NOT MEAN THAT NO ONE WILL EVER BECOME HOMELESS AGAIN BUT DOES MEAN WE HAVE THE SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO HELP THEM MOVE OUT OF HOMELESSNESS QUICKLY.

In 2001, the Bush Administration announced a goal of ending chronic homelessness in the United States in ten years. In New Haven, Middletown and other areas of the state, we applauded that goal by creating our own “Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness.” These were broad, sweeping plans using the resources we had in place and building an advocacy agenda for more. We knew that the solution to ending chronic homelessness would depend on the development of more permanent supportive housing, that is housing with case management supports to help people maintain their housing and enhance their quality of life.

In 2010, the Obama Administration reaffirmed this goal and refined it, putting time lines on the goals to end chronic homelessness by 2017, to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015, to prevent and end family homelessness and youth homelessness by 2020, and to set the path to finally end all forms of homelessness. These goals were set within a comprehensive plan created by the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, and resources were committed to help us reach these new, ambitious goals.

These more recent federal commitments have resulted in increased resources dedicated to this population, particularly permanent supportive housing. The number of permanent supportive housing units has grown by 59 percent nationally since 2007. In the same time period, the number of chronically homeless individuals has decreased by 30 percent.

Following the path set by the federal government, our own state agency leaders, statewide coalitions and advocates created Opening Doors CT, a new statewide plan that defined our goals and identified the necessary resources. With committed support from state leadership, the number of permanent supportive housing units increased to over 3000 units across Connecticut in 2015. This increase along with other resources has helped us reduce the number of chronically homeless adults state-wide.

CT ENDS CHRONIC VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Connecticut is the first state in the country to end chronic homelessness among Veterans. Through extensive planning and additional resources, we have been able to ensure that Veterans who have had long or multiple episodes of homelessness are now housed with case management services. There were only 2 chronically homeless Veterans counted in New Haven in February, 2015, and by now, they are at home in their own apartments. The availability of permanent supportive housing through VASH (VA Supportive Housing) certificates has increased to a total of just over 700 units across the state. Columbus House services, in particular our Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, and our housing subsidies have supported efforts to reach this goal.

ZERO: 2016

Zero: 2016 is an initiative to end Veteran and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016. It is led nationally by Community Solutions and locally by the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC) and Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH).

In January, 2015, 40 Connecticut providers and 9 state and federal partners joined Governor Malloy in signing on to Zero: 2016. Communities across Connecticut are now collaborating and creating new strategies to reach the goals of this initiative. These unprecedented partnerships have better equipped providers to assess the needs of people experiencing homelessness and move people into permanent housing. In July, just six months after the launch of Zero: 2016, Connecticut
providers had housed 447 Veterans and 274 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.\(^2\)

**THE 100 DAY CHALLENGE IS A SUCCESS**

In New Haven, not only did we sign on to Zero: 2016, but we were the first community in the state to work with the Rapid Results Institute in the 100 Day Challenge to End Chronic Homelessness. Through that effort, we renovated the systems by which a person moves from homelessness to being housed, reducing the time it takes for a person to move on by removing barriers along the way. Our results are impressive.

There were only 78 chronically homeless single adults counted in February 2015, marking a significant reduction from our count of close to 200 when we started this focused effort in July, 2014. We are well on our way to achieving the goal of ending chronic homelessness among singles before the end of 2016.

This is great news and cause for real celebration! We’ve ended Veteran chronic homelessness and are closing in on the goal of Zero: 2016. But there is still more work ahead of us.

**GETTING TO FUNCTIONAL ZERO**

Our next and most daunting goal is to end family homelessness and create the path to ending all forms of homelessness. But until we end the war on poverty, there will always be people at risk of becoming homeless. The cost of living in New Haven is skyrocketing, and people who work at entry level jobs simply cannot keep up. They often have to choose between paying their rent and feeding their children or keeping their car running. These are tough choices for people living so close to the edge, and for some, those choices lead to losing their homes. So perhaps we cannot literally end homelessness. People will still show up at our doors seeking shelter. But what we can do is strive to get people out of homelessness more quickly. If we can get a person or family out of the shelter in 60 to 90 days, that’s a huge success. “Zero,” or “functional zero,” does not mean that no one will ever become homeless again; it means we will have the systems in place to help them move out of homelessness quickly.

Columbus House is committed to ending homelessness, whether it’s one person at a time or for the entire community. We will continue to offer emergency shelter as we have done since we opened the doors in 1982. But we will also continue to seek out new ways to deliver services and develop housing options so that people can get out of homelessness quickly. That’s our commitment to the people we serve and to you, the people who support us. ■

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\(^1\) National Alliance to End Homelessness, www.naeh.org

\(^2\) CT Coalition to End Homelessness. www.cceh.org

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**OUR NEXT AND MOST DAUNTING GOAL IS TO END FAMILY HOMELESSNESS.**
OVER 1,000 VOLUNTEERS FROM DOZENS OF COMMUNITY GROUPS SUPPORT OUR CLIENTS EACH YEAR

COLUMBUS HOUSE SERVES OVER 3,000 PEOPLE PER YEAR

18 CHURCHES AND SYNAGOGUES PROVIDE SHELTER FOR COLUMBUS HOUSE CLIENTS THROUGH ABRAHAM’S TENT EACH YEAR

VOLUNTEERS AND KITCHEN STAFF SERVE OVER 100,000 MEALS EACH YEAR

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

L-R: Student volunteers from Dwight Hall at Yale paint the fence at Recovery House; Columbus House Board members serve a meal at our New Haven shelter; Abraham’s Tent volunteers spend time with clients at Spring Glen Church, Quinnipiac University students help prepare a meal at our New Haven Shelter
CONNECTICUT IS BLESSED with many caring, smart and ambitious citizens who put their energy toward helping people in need and to making their communities stronger.

Speaking on behalf of the Columbus House Board of Directors, I know we all feel blessed to work with an organization at the center of much of that energy. On a regular basis we get to witness:

Community groups preparing dinner for our shelter residents virtually every night, without fail, for over 33 years.

Hundreds of volunteers from local congregations rallying every winter to host our shelter residents as part of the Abraham’s Tent project.

Dozens of volunteers in the 100 Day Challenge turning out to search the streets overnight and finally house some of the people who have been most challenging to serve.

Parades of workplace teams, students and other community groups showing up at our facilities, day after day, to do the painting, landscaping and repairs necessary to make homes.

Professionals of all kinds planting themselves at conference tables for countless hours to offer the evaluation, advice and organization necessary to make Columbus House succeed.

This tremendous outpouring of compassion and hard work is coordinated with a staff whose experience, training and dedication can’t be beat, and with a larger community of nonprofits and government agencies that gets better every year at coordinating services.

Together, you are reducing homelessness in Connecticut and putting a stop to it for some of the toughest cases. Take a breath and think about that for a minute. Look over the details in this report, and give yourself an “attaboy.” After generations of seeing this problem grow in communities around the state, you are turning the tide.

That’s happening because there’s something special about Columbus House. It effectively mixes the expert work of professional staff, the community volunteerism it was founded on and coordination with other state and community partners.

However, I also want you to look over this report and notice how much more we have to do. We’re steadily working our way back toward the roots of homelessness, and those roots are getting more difficult to pull up. But this community has shown it has the caring, the smarts and the ambition to do that hard work.

The original Board 33 years ago knew – and the Board today knows – that the community itself is the key to ending homelessness. No nonprofit agency can do it alone, and we count ourselves lucky to be working with you.

Thank you very much for joining this mission. We look forward to celebrating more success with you in the next year.

Robert McGuire
I HAVE LESS STRESS, I SMILE MORE, I
Joe Is a person who was deemed chronically homeless because of his history of being without "a place to call home" for so long and his disabling bouts with depression and anxiety. Joe wanted to share his story because he felt it would help others experiencing homelessness find hope. He proudly invited us to conduct an interview in his new apartment.

This is his story.

Joe grew up in Danbury with his mother, stepfather, brother and sister in an unstable household. Joe’s mom was in and out of the hospital, struggling with her own mental health issues. Joe still remembers the nightmares after visiting her. But even during that chaotic time, Joe made every attempt to lead a normal life. Joe fondly remembers his first job, at age 14, when he worked at a Community Action camp with young children. He remembers the excitement of his first $78 paycheck and of having money in his pocket. The experience fueled Joe’s determination and dreams for the future. Joe also enjoyed his days at Danbury High School. His goal was to become a State Trooper or Police Officer.

However, life at home continued to be difficult and confusing. Joe’s stepfather was hard on him and often told Joe to leave. At the age of 17, Joe became homeless after his stepfather kicked him out of the house for good.

A Home of his own and a smile on his face
Joe’s options were limited to staying with friends, living on the streets or in abandoned buildings. Joe secured a job that would pay enough for him to find a place to stay. He was able to pay friends to let him sleep on the couch or find other temporary arrangements. Even with full-time work, he could not afford his own apartment.

By the time Joe turned 18, he had a girlfriend and a baby girl to support. A full-time job and family responsibilities prevented him from returning to school. He desperately tried to support his small family, but without a stable home, his daughter was eventually taken away by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Joe deeply regrets missing out on those years of his daughter’s life. Joe and his girlfriend continued to live together and had two more daughters. The relationship ultimately ended and Joe found himself on the streets once again.

Joe had resisted doing drugs to this point, but the stress of losing his family, dropping out of school, trying to hold down a job, and being homeless finally got to him. He decided to just try the drugs his friends were using, hoping for a bit of relief, and maybe a little fun. “That night taking crack left me with a string through my life that from time to time ended me up being homeless, not being able to keep a job, not being able to go in the next day because you’re drained, tired, exhausted. It seemed all good at first, it seemed like you could manage everything, like you could make it, but eventually it takes a toll on you, and somewhere along the way you give up, and you begin to sink.”

Joe moved to another town, stayed with his sister for a while and worked odd jobs, but his drug use continued. When his sister asked him to leave, he stayed wherever he could – in shelters, with friends or on the streets. He got his meals at area soup kitchens.

Joe witnessed a lot of suffering and abuse while living on the streets. He knew the streets were dangerous, but he managed to avoid being a victim. “I get along with everybody. When I do have stuff, I share.” The worst part of being on the streets for Joe was being estranged from his family. “When a person is on the street, homeless, others don’t know what they’re going through, what they are acting on.”

The spring of 2011 marked a turning point in Joe’s life. He wanted to end the drug use, and he yearned to find a place to call home. He entered a residential recovery program in New Haven where he received temporary housing and support. Joe finally stopped using drugs.

Joe was in the program for 3 years and said he found his strength in God. “God was the one that helped me to get off drugs and open my eyes and see that there is no one really around to help you and you have to take the resources that you do get and use them wisely.”

Although the drug use ended, his struggles continued. After successfully completing the program, Joe still had no place to call home. He was hospitalized for depression several times and
ended up once again sleeping on a bench on the New Haven Green most nights.

In the summer of 2014, Joe entered Columbus House’s New Haven Emergency Shelter at the suggestion of a friend. That fall, Joe was one of 12 men selected to participate in Abraham’s Tent, an interfaith program where area religious organizations provide shelter, meals and fellowship for 12 Columbus House clients, for one week each, with support from Columbus House staff and hundreds of dedicated volunteers during the winter months.

“Abe’s Tent encouraged my faith more, reminded me to grab hold of God again, to not give up hope. I knew that God wanted to give me hope and a future.”

When Abraham’s Tent ended in March, Joe moved back to the Columbus House shelter where he continued working with his case manager to secure income and housing. Joe praises the case managers that helped him, Tasha, Donna, and Christine. “Case managers are great… They walked with me each step of the way, keeping me encouraged. At times I felt like giving up, at times I felt like it wasn’t going to happen, and they told me keep my head up, keep pressing forward. And before I knew it, they were like – you’re next on the list for housing, and I was so excited.”

A PLACE TO CALL HOME
Since Joe got his apartment, his life has changed dramatically. Most days, Joe wakes up as early as 4 am to read his Bible and sing hymns. He says it lifts his spirits and gets him through the rest of the day. He likes to read, write poetry, and has ideas to write stories.

Joe’s apartment is sparsely furnished and he wants to keep it simple. With Columbus House Welcome Kit funds, he went on a shopping spree with his case manager. He bought what he needed to make his new apartment feel like home – pots and pans, a few dishes, bath towels, bed linens and other necessities. Joe is so thankful to be in his own, affordable

JOE WAKES UP AS EARLY AS 4 AM EACH DAY TO READ THE BIBLE AND SING HYMNS. HE SAYS IT LIFTS HIS SPIRIT AND GETS HIM THROUGH THE REST OF THE DAY.
Sometimes,
I like to pretend,
I’m away from the office,
Out getting a bite to eat,
Or just taking some time
To cool off a bit.
But with no place
To return to
Those thoughts fade,
And soon again
It’s only you,
Watching people branch off
To their different destinations
While yet, you’re on this journey,
Hoping to find a home.

JOE WROTE THIS THANK YOU TO STAFF AT COLUMBUS HOUSE AFTER MOVING INTO HIS OWN HOME.
Joe likes to read, write poetry, and has ideas to write stories. He wrote “The Life of a Homeless Man” while living on the streets.

Yes, Joe can smile again, and he does so quite often. His smile radiates across the room. With his infectious positive attitude, he is making new friends at the church he recently joined. He has kept in touch with friends he made at Columbus House. During our visit, his neighbor phoned to see if he was free yet. She comes over for coffee every day. Joe explains that she supplies the coffee and Joe has the coffee pot. They enjoy each other’s company.

Joe has a sign in his living room that you can’t miss. It says “Pray for the Homeless.” Joe says, “I love the homeless people. I know what it is to be there. I don’t want to forget where I came from.” Joe’s message to others who are homeless: “You can make it. You will make it!”

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Columbus House offers a broad array of programs and services for individuals, families with children, and Veterans who are experiencing homelessness in Hartford, Middlesex, New Haven, and New London counties. All of our programs serve those experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness. Many of our programs also include services for special populations such as families with children, people living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS, disabilities, addictions, seniors, and Veterans.

Outreach and Engagement
Outreach and Engagement programs offer services to homeless and at risk of homelessness populations. Columbus House provides a range of services that may include case management, service linkage, crisis intervention, connection to housing opportunities, and transportation.

Shelter Services
Columbus House provides shelter for women, men, Veterans, and families. Shelter services include case management, including referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, employment training programs, education, health services, and housing.

Permanent Supportive Housing
Permanent Supportive Housing provides quality, affordable housing for individuals who may have few, if any, alternatives. To help people reach this goal, Columbus House supportive housing staff implement an array of support services assisting tenants in achieving needed residential stability and, whenever possible, necessary linkages with their families, and the community at large. The overall goal is to provide an environment that allows tenants to create a sense of real home to avoid returning to homelessness, increase employment readiness and opportunities, and enhance their financial position and personal well-being.

Mr. B spent 24 months in the US ARMY as a Material Storage and Handlings Specialist at Fort Stewart, GA. He was honorably discharged in 1980 after serving for 3 years. Mr. B put his military experience to good use and worked in various warehouse jobs for over 30 years. In 2012 he fell on hard times. Through no fault of his own (employer cut-backs) he lost his full-time job and subsequently his car. A friend referred Mr. B to Columbus House’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) because he was at risk of losing the room he was renting in Middletown. Andrew Black, SSVF Program Manager, worked with Mr. B to create a housing stabilization plan. He then reached out to Mr. B’s landlord to share the plan thereby assuring that Mr. B would avoid eviction. SSVF paid 5 months of Mr. B’s rent, allowing him more time to look for employment. He was connected to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) to apply for health care benefits and to the Connecticut Department of Social Services to increase his S.N.A.P (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) allowance. After several months of job applications and TEMP agency visits, Mr. B still had no prospects. Andrew and Mr. B submitted an application to the CT Veterans’ Home in Rocky Hill. The application was approved and in July, 2014, Mr. B moved into the home. He also secured full-time work at the hospital on the Rocky Hill campus — saving his money while getting his life together. During the VA’s September 2015 Stand Down event, Mr. B met with an attorney who assisted him in overcoming some past legal issues that were one of his most difficult obstacles to securing employment.
INCOME SECURITY
Income Security programs serve individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Columbus House services support those with disabilities or those at an economic disadvantage to retain and/or gain income. The goals of these programs are to reduce poverty, alleviate some of poverty’s adverse consequences, and/or enhance income security.

HOUSING SECURITY
Housing Security programs serve individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Columbus House services support those with disabilities or at an economic disadvantage to access housing and remain housed. The goals of our housing programs are to increase housing stability and eliminate a return to homelessness.

COLUMBUS HOUSE’S 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.

“MIDDLESEX FAMILY SHELTER STAFF WERE WELCOMING AND UNDERSTANDING TO OUR SITUATION. WE WERE ABLE TO SECURE AN APARTMENT AND FIND JOBS. THERE WERE LOTS OF DISTRACTIONS AND LOTS OF STRESS. BEING TOGETHER THROUGH THIS, WE WERE ABLE TO HELP EACH OTHER AND WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR DAUGHTER.”
“‘I’M NOT A GRANDMOTHER YET, AND I WANT TO BE ONE.’”
Jroneaur, Permanent Supportive Housing

“I’M SUCCESSFULLY IN MY APARTMENT AND I’M VERY HAPPY. I HAVE COLUMBUS HOUSE TO BE GRATEFUL TO, AND I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL.”
Maria, Permanent Supportive Housing

“It’s been a long time since I had the opportunity to be in the kitchen by myself and concentrating on my cooking.”
Mr. M, Permanent Supportive Housing

“The Employment and Enrichment Center helped me gain confidence and become a team player.”
Walter, Shelter

“Everything is positive about the EEC (Employment and Enrichment Center) and workfare programs. Columbus House staff help get people into jobs and become taxpaying citizens.”
Jeffrey, Shelter
2015 FINANCIALS

OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30TH 2015 (AUDITED)

**Revenue**

- **79%** Government Grants $9,029,249
- **7%** Fee for Service $741,601
- **11%** Fundraising $1,286,280
- **1%** Other Grants $117,396
- **2%** Other Revenue $252,250

**Expenses**

- **26%** Shelter Services $2,795,219
- **27%** Community Supports $3,002,655
- **26%** Supportive Housing $2,810,030
- **5%** Homeless Outreach $513,732
- **13%** General & Administration $1,440,527
- **3%** Fundraising $372,768

**Revenue** $11,426,776

**Expenses** $10,935,131
2015 SUPPORTERS

We gratefully acknowledge those donors who made contributions to Columbus House between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015. If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, please accept our apologies and notify the Development Office at 203-401-4400, ext. 131.

ABRAHAM'S TENT HOST SITES
BEKI: Congregation Beth El-Kesser Israel
Bethesda Lutheran Church
Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church
Church of the Holy Spirit
Church of the Redeemer
Congregation B’Nai Jacob
Congregation Mishkan Israel
First Presbyterian Church
Grace and St. Peter’s Episcopal Church
North Haven Congregational Church
Saint Mary Church
St. George Church
St. John’s Episcopal Church North Haven
St. Stephen’s Church
St. Therese Church
Temple Beth David of Cheshire
Temple Emanuel of Greater New Haven
The Episcopal Church of St. Paul & St. James
The Spring Glen Church
The Unitarian Society of New Haven
Trinity on the Green
United Church on the Green

BUSINESSES & COMPANIES
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Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana
Fusco Management Co., LLC
Gastroenterology Center of Connecticut
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Insure.net
L. H. Brenner, Inc.
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Raymond James Financial
Raymour and Flanigan
Regional Water Authority
Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation
Software
TD Charitable Foundation
The Stop & Shop Supermarket Company
Travelers Community Connections
United Technologies
Webster Bank
Yale-New Haven Hospital
Yale-New Haven Hospital Emergency Services

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Connecticut Mental Health Center Foundation
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Joanne Bailey
Douglas & Dorothy Baker
Mohammed Bala
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St. Aedan & St. Brendans Church - Community A
St. Frances Cabrini Parish
St. George Roman Catholic Church
St. Joseph of Armetha
St. Margaret's Roman Catholic Church
St. Mary Church
St. Paul & St. James Episcopal Church
St. Rita Church
St. Rita School - 2nd Grade Class
St. Therese Church
Stampin’ Up
Starbucks
Statue Cruises
Stomp
Sweet Times LLC.
Tau Xi omega of Alpha kappa Alpha Sorority
Sweet Times llC.
Stomp
Statue Cruises
Starbucks
St. Paul & St. James Episcopal Church
St. Margaret's Roman Catholic Church
St. George Roman Catholic Church
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Spring Glen Church
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Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History
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walmart
Vineyard Vines
Ursel's web
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2015 COLUMBUS HOUSE
ANNUAL REPORT
Copyright March 2016
Writing & Editing:
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Alison Cunningham
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Lisa Polizzo
Photography:
Ron Dunhill - cover, inside front cover, pg 15
Robert Lisak - pages 6-9
Kayla Knotts - page 3
Graphic Design:
Lisa Polizzo

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