Dear Friends,

25 years ago, when Columbus House opened its doors at 200 Columbus Avenue, the work of ending homelessness was a focused, straightforward task. In the early 1980’s, we were established to take care of the homeless problem, get people off the streets, keep the public nuisances to a minimum. In those days, this seemed like a manageable task and, with an estimate of only 250 homeless people in New Haven, we were up for the challenge.

Today, it’s a very different situation. In last year’s homeless count conducted by the Continuum of Care, we found over 1,300 people homeless on that single day, with an estimated 4,000 people annually. This count included adults and children, often children who have been abandoned by their families, living alone or with other children on the streets. Today there are more homeless women than ever before. Twenty-five years ago, a woman seeking shelter was a rare occurrence, but not so today.

On any given night in the shelter on the Boulevard, there will be numerous cots set up to accommodate the greater number coming to us for shelter. And the people we see are more compromised by complex mental health needs, long histories of substance abuse and multiple health problems. Today, we are confronted more than ever before with the lack of affordable housing.

Homelessness remains a crisis in our communities and across the country. For Columbus House, this means that we continue with our commitment to provide housing and services for people throughout the Greater New Haven community. Each year, we increase our capacity to provide permanent supportive housing, from the first 25 units at Cedar Hill in 1997, to new housing such as Legion Woods and our new scattered site units. We continue to expand our programs to address issues of homelessness in new and innovative ways, working with partner agencies across the City to offer comprehensive services. Our advocacy efforts are aimed toward policy changes at the local, state and federal levels for the creation of affordable housing and other policies that can help in the efforts to end homelessness. Columbus House remains true to its mission: to provide shelter and housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless through shelter and housing and by fostering their personal growth and independence.

For the past 25 years, we have enjoyed the support of you, our donors. We invite you to continue the journey with us, to help us in our work to end this crisis in our midst.

Thank you.

Alison Cunningham
Executive Director
The history of Columbus House: Transition for men and women – Transition for a shelter

It began with the local churches who saw an unmet need in New Haven—homeless men and women on the Green, the streets, in abandoned buildings and in churches—wherever they could find shelter. In 1982, the Downtown Cooperative Ministry, a local coalition of churches, was the sponsoring body that helped establish Columbus House—the first private shelter in Connecticut.

The shelter was the brainchild of Cynthia DeLouise, founding Executive Director, members of the Downtown Cooperative Ministry and the City of New Haven. Sacred Heart Church on Columbus Avenue agreed to lease their empty convent for a nominal fee, and the cost to renovate the building was made possible through gifts from Center Church on the Green, Trinity Episcopal Church, United Church on the Green and Christ Church in New Haven, as well as grants from the City of New Haven and local individuals and groups. The initial funding to operate the shelter came from the state of Connecticut and the City of New Haven, with an annual budget of just over $250,000 that supported a small staff of five very committed individuals.

Columbus House, or “New Haven’s Emergency Night Shelter” opened at 200 Columbus Avenue with 35 beds in November of 1982. The first client to walk through the door was a 19-year-old woman who was dropped off by the Milford Red Cross. At that time, a Yale University student intern working for Columbus House conducted research and

1982: opened Columbus House Emergency Shelter, Nov 1, with 35 beds
First staff: Cynthia DeLouise, ED; Lee Ferry, Program Director; Aida Garcia, Community Resource Coordinator; Howard McCarthy, House Manager; Stephany Avren, Administrative Assistant

1982: Incorporated as Columbus House, Inc
estimated that New Haven had between 250 and 400 people who were homeless.

In the first two years, Columbus House served more than 1,000 individuals, totaling over 32,000 admissions. Nearly all the beds were filled by men. In the fall of 1984, Columbus House added more beds and designated 16 for women and 32 for men. Clients were admitted on a first-come, first-served basis, and during the cold weather, there were often people turned away at night for lack of beds.

It didn't take long for Columbus House to realize that simply providing overnight shelter and meals – “two hots and a cot” was the expression in those days – was not enough. “As the numbers and need of the homeless grow each day, Columbus House has responded by initiating a referral/counseling program to help individuals making a positive step in their lives,” said Cynthia DeLouise in 1984. “These efforts may be made toward independent living, alcohol or drug treatment, medical care, psychiatric assistance and any other referral a guest may want to pursue.”

From its earliest days, Columbus House relied on volunteers and on philanthropy to survive. Janet Spinner, a Columbus House board member who chaired the
Volunteer Committee, developed a model program for medical advocacy. An organized meal-serving program was established, as local churches and families volunteered nearly every night to provide and prepare the evening meal for the 48 men and women. Some of these meal-serving groups have been with Columbus House since the beginning. We opened a clothes closet in that first shelter building, where donated clothing was sorted, sized and folded or hung so that volunteers could easily find what the guests needed.

Volunteers also provided medical care, dental care, legal advice and spiritual
guidance. They brought gifts for the holidays, sent birthday cakes each month, and provided staff with support and love to keep doing the work. Other volunteers served on the Board of Directors. Still others organized fund-raising events to help out.

By 1985, the Columbus House shelter was full and more and more people were being turned away to the streets. In response to this crisis, housing advocates pushed the courts to demand housing and won the case for housing.

As a result of this decision, the City of New Haven agreed to open temporary emergency housing for the “overflow” clients of the local shelters. The City awarded Columbus House the contract to operate the newly-mandated “Annex,” a winter shelter (for men only) located in the basement of the Marchigian club on Cedar Street. Columbus House continues to operate the city’s Overflow Shelter, now located in the basement of South Central Rehabilitation Center on Cedar Street and open from late fall to early spring.
By 1988, Columbus House had formalized its continuum-of-care philosophy by identifying the different needs of three groups of clients – 1) those who needed immediate emergency food and shelter; 2) those who needed transitional services, were employed or employable and would benefit from case management and a guaranteed bed; and 3) those who had some control over their environment and were capable of self-sufficiency but lacked safe affordable housing.

In 1990, Columbus House began its 90 day length-of-stay program: clients who agreed to work with a case manager to help them identify and address the issues that led to their homelessness were then guaranteed a bed for up to three months, rather than having to wait in the first-come, first-served line each evening. This policy proved to be a powerful incentive to get clients into the counseling, treatment programs, and support services they needed.

Many clients were physically or mentally ill; others had alcohol and substance abuse disorders. Some were poor and undereducated, or had “bad” records. They were lonely, frightened and disenfranchised. Most wanted to turn their lives around when they came through the doors of the shelter the first time. What Columbus House realized early on was that mere emergency shelter might keep homeless people alive, but it would not begin to end the problem of homelessness.
Columbus House took advantage of funding from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health in 1991 to help its clients with mental illness. Through the Gateway Program, counselors visited Columbus House and other New Haven shelters to provide outreach and community-based mental health care services to prolonged mentally ill clients. After the clients improved enough to move out of the shelter system, the program continued to provide follow up care and life skills support for up to two more years.

Columbus House case managers were slowly but surely successful in finding housing for many of its clients – often independent housing in the community. But within a few months, many of these recently housed clients turned up again at the shelter doors.

What was causing this trend? The clients were not ready to become householders, and they did not have the skills or support to maintain their housing. Columbus House recognized that these clients needed additional services in order to remain housed. From this understanding came the desire to create long-term housing with support services.

So, in 1992, Columbus House took another major step in broadening its mission with the purchase of a house on Davenport Avenue that could house men who had progressed beyond what the emergency shelter could offer them, though were not quite ready for a totally independent living arrangement. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provided a $1.2 million grant to renovate the building and fund portions of the operations for the first five years.

The beautifully renovated 150-year-old Victorian House, opened in 1995, would provide transitional, supervised living where up to 15 men could stay for up to 2 years in order to establish their lives before attempting to live independently. The staff provided individualized case management and training – from literacy work to job interviewing skills, employment services and financial counseling – to help the men return to independent living.

The house remains a haven for people who are homeless in need of transitional housing and services.

1988: march for the homeless with Jesse Jackson in Washington, D.C.

1990: AA & NA Groups held on-site at the shelter
By the fall of 1993, homelessness had become a burgeoning crisis across the country. There were an estimated 1,875 homeless adults annually in New Haven but only 135 beds for them through several shelters in the City. The arrival of homeless people in New Haven and other Connecticut cities coincided, to a large extent, with the closing of state hospitals for the mentally ill. In 1982, there were 6,000 occupied psychiatric beds in Connecticut. In 1993, there were about 300.

In 1994, Columbus House agreed to participate in a five-year federally funded research project called Access to Community Care and Essential Service (ACCESS). The ACCESS grant supported two additional case workers for the shelter and a mobile crisis outreachvan to reach out to the most seriously disenfranchised homeless people in the city – people with severe mental illness who were living on the streets, too ill to find their way into the shelter – with the goal of moving them into treatment and housing. This pilot program – in collaboration with the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC), Hill Health Center, Marrakech and the Consultation Center – was one of the first street outreach programs in the country and served over 100 people annually. The program continues to this day, now known as the Outreach and Engagement Team, funded by the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Around the time Davenport House opened, Columbus House began a
discussion with the Corporation for Supportive Housing and other housing advocates about the possibility of providing a similar supportive living arrangement, but in a permanent housing site. For some clients, in order to maintain their housing in the community, they need supportive services to help them for the long haul, not just for the 2 years that a transitional program allowed.

Columbus House was chosen to participate in a pilot project that would test the viability of permanent housing with case management services on-site. In partnership with HOME, INC, we created Cedar Hill Apartments, with 25 efficiency apartments for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The building, which opened in December 1997, is owned and managed by HOME, INC., and Columbus House provides case management services on-site, 5 days a week. These services include money management, relapse prevention, nutrition and health seminars, transportation assistance, crisis intervention, daily living skills training and other interventions and training, all designed to help the tenant maintain his/her apartment.

Cedar Hill, one of 16 pilot sites in the state, has proven to be a success in every way. Formerly homeless individuals are staying housed with fewer incidents requiring costly emergency services, with a higher quality of life. Since the mid-90’s, permanent...
supportive housing has gained acceptance across the country as one of the more viable solutions to ending homelessness. Columbus House and HOME, INC. continue to partner in the creation of additional housing sites like Cedar Hill and will open a second site in 2008.

In 1996, Columbus House was awarded a HUD grant, in collaboration with 8 agencies in New Haven, to form the Supportive Housing Project. This project provides wrap-around services from housing to social and vocational rehabilitation for men and women who are homeless. As a result of this new funding, Columbus House opened Sojourner’s Place in 2001, a 16-bed transitional house for homeless single women. The program focuses on gender specific services that address issues of trauma and abuse, mental illness and substance abuse, and life skills training.

Columbus House has long understood that housing is just one part of the solution to ending homelessness. Each of Columbus House, Inc.’s housing components includes case management services. The emergency shelter has several specific areas of services – mental health, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, trauma/abuse.

As people who are homeless move toward recovery and independence, they often look

April 1995: Davenport House opened (HUD funded Transitional Housing Program for 15 men)

May 13-20, 1996: Columbus House Awareness Week announced by Mayor DeStefano. Includes fundraising events and awareness campaign.
for opportunities to give back and help others find their way. Columbus House offers two training programs – the Citizen’s Community Enhancement Program and the Mentor Program – that help meet this need.

The Citizens Project, launched in 1996, offers a leadership program that trains formerly homeless individuals to participate on boards and committees for social service agencies; in May 2001, the program held its first leadership graduation for homeless clients who had completed their leadership training.

The Mentor Project implemented in 2002, trains people in early recovery to become mentors in social service agencies across New Haven and actively engage with others who are homeless or at risk, helping them take positive steps toward treatment and recovery from substance abuse.

In 1997, Columbus House received an unusual invitation. The Yale University lead program was interested in contracting with us to manage their Lead Safe Home on Davenport Avenue, which provided temporary emergency housing to families of children who had been diagnosed with lead poisoning and were receiving treatment at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Columbus House agreed to manage the property for 10 years, in exchange for ownership of the house at the end of the contract.

1996: Citizen’s Project launched

December 1997: Cedar Hill Apartments opened; 25 apartments in permanent supportive housing site, in partnership with HOME, INC.

1997: open
Lead Safe House
Leaving 200 Columbus Avenue

At its Columbus Avenue site – which had been constructed in the 19th century as part of Sacred Heart’s trio of buildings: a church, a convent and a school – the shelter had both age and character. The shelter had a feeling of warmth and history in its very structure. The floor boards creaked, the stair railings were smooth with age but the brick was as strong and enduring as it had been for over a century.

But the size, the age and the layout of the building limited its uses and raised safety concerns. Columbus House’s bed capacity had increased to 52, but it was never enough. Columbus House was ready to grow and move. The right locations would allow the organization to expand services, serve more clients and provide a more appropriate environment for people trying to transition from homelessness to independent living.

Finding a new location in New Haven proved to be a daunting task. The site needed to be on a bus line, not too far removed from downtown, near critical services – and most of all, the neighborhood had to be willing to accept it. After an exhaustive search throughout the City of New Haven, in 2001 a new site was selected on the Boulevard in the former Connecticut School of Electronics building.

We launched our first Capital Campaign to raise over $3 million to launch the new building and the state of Connecticut provided an additional $3.7 in bond funds. We broke ground in November, 2001 and were ready to move in in September, 2002.

With 101 beds, the new building doubled the capacity of the old shelter building, which had 52 beds. The new building is three times the size of the Columbus Avenue shelter, housing all case management and administrative offices. But most important, the new building is well designed and constructed, clean, well lit, safe and accessible – giving the clients, staff and volunteers a much-needed feeling of pride and respect.
June 1998: Named Alison Cunningham Executive Director.

1999:
published
As I Sat on the Green, stories, poems and art by and about people who are homeless

January 2001: opened
Sojourner’s Place (HUD grant); women’s transitional program for homeless single women who are dually diagnosed with mental illness/substance abuse

May 2001: first Leadership Graduation, training people who are homeless to participate on boards and committees of local service agencies

July 2001: Columbus House receives $3.75 million in State bond funds for the construction of the new shelter at 86 Ella Grasso Boulevard

October, 2002: moved to 86 Blvd, housing 101 beds, case management and administrative offices. Double the capacity of the old shelter building.

2002: Implemented the Mentor Project for those people in recovery who are trained to mentor others who are in early recovery.

2003: Annual Meeting that launches first John S Martinez Community Service award given to Paul Bailey, Charlotte Hitchcock, Chris Peterson, Mark O’Hagan and Marjorie Shansky for their tireless efforts toward the new building.
By early 2005, the homeless count revealed that New Haven had 1,100 homeless people on any given night, and approximately 4,000 annually. Columbus House had doubled in size, but the needs continued to increase. To keep pace with this growing number, we increased services through various state and federal grants, and continued to work in collaboration with many of the social service agencies in the City to provide comprehensive wrap-around services for the most difficult to reach clients.

Over the years, as its mission grew more far-reaching, Columbus House became more complex. To help pay for the increasing number of services and housing it was offering homeless people, Columbus House applied for and received numerous grants. Its operating budget depended on grants from the State Departments of Social Services (DSS), Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD), SAMHSA, Federal Emergency Management Assistance (FEMA), the City of New Haven as well as client fees and charitable donations.

**January 2005:** Homeless Count reveals 1,100 people who are homeless on any given night, approximately 4,000 annually.

**July 2005:** Awarded State funded Building Bridges grant for work with inmates at Gates Correctional Institute who are coming back to New Haven.

**July 2005:** Awarded Federal SAMHSA grant to work with women who are homeless through mentor engagement and case management services.
Affordable Housing is a Myth, as Most Rents Are Out of Reach of the Working Poor

As Columbus House approaches its 25th anniversary, there are mixed feelings about the silver milestone. It is a crime that there is even a need in this country for a shelter for people who are homeless. It is unconscionable that people are hungry or are living in the woods in make-shift tents or that people seek refuge under bridges. But 33,000 people are homeless in Connecticut, and approximately 2,000 of them are living in New Haven. In our own shelter, we doubled our capacity from 52 to 101 beds in an effort to keep up with the demand. Wouldn’t it be more of a cause for celebration if we had been able to simply close the shelter because there was no more need for it?

“When Columbus House was first envisioned by our founding board, we thought being without a home was a temporary phenomenon,” said Marleen Cenotti, chair of the Board of Directors from 1996-2003. “Now we understand that the root causes of homelessness are far more complex. Many people lead fragile lives, reeling from the devastation of substance abuse and often from mental illness. And affordable housing is a myth, as most rents are out of reach of the working poor. Columbus House has been a haven for countless people with shattered lives. It has also been heralded as a national model for both the quality and scope of all of its programs.”

Over the past 25 years, Columbus House has made an incredible journey from a makeshift, emergency-based subsistence to being a well-respected member of the community with a permanent home of its own. The history of Columbus House mirrors that of many of its clients – from simple, crisis-driven survival to independent and productive living.

Today, in 2006, Columbus House is still very much alive, providing shelter and housing for over 250 people each night of the year through a continuum of services that helps people who are homeless find the path to recovery.

“Our history tells the story of how a person can move from a life of homelessness to one of independence and success,” said executive director Alison Cunningham. “The milestones we have achieved are the result of a better understanding of the needs of those we serve. What once seemed to be a logical and somewhat simple, if not naïve, solution to homelessness through a shelter bed and the provision of basic needs has now become a much larger, more complex solution that ranges from street outreach to permanent supportive housing, with intensive support service throughout.”

Columbus House is more than just a shelter. It is an incredible story of survival.
Message from the chairman of the board

Dear Friends,

In November 1982, Columbus House provided shelter for its first person in need, a 19-year-old homeless woman from Milford who needed housing and food. That young woman needed a safe place to stay, but she was also in need of hope, dignity and respect.

In 2007, Columbus House will mark its 25th year of providing services for the homeless of the greater New Haven region. This milestone gives us an opportunity to recognize Columbus House for the many programs and services it has provided. For those individuals who want to become self reliant and productive members of our communities, Columbus House gives them the support to reach their goals. In addition to shelter and food, our services now also include case management, and both transitional and permanent supportive housing.

Columbus House has already joined both state and federal initiatives in our joint goal to end homelessness, and we hope to educate the greater New Haven region about this new, expanded mission. This endeavor will be accomplished by insuring there’s an increase in the housing stock throughout Greater New Haven so that no woman or man will ever be in need of an overnight shelter. During our year-long 25th year recognition activities, you will be hearing about this ambitious but reachable goal.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I ask that you join Columbus House in recognizing its past 25 years of providing hope, dignity, and respect but, most important, in understanding its future goals to end homelessness as we now know it.

Sincerely,

Joe Pajor
Chair, Board of Directors
Columbus House, Inc.

Statement of Operating Revenue & Expenses
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2006 (UNAUDITED)

Operating Revenue

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Grants for Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Fees &amp; Rents</td>
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<td>Other Fees &amp; Rent</td>
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<td>Fundraising, excl Capital Campaign</td>
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<td>Investment &amp; Interest Income</td>
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<td>Other Revenue</td>
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<td>Total Operating Revenue</td>
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Operating Expenses

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<td>Food, Food Supplies &amp; Service</td>
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<td>Rent &amp; Mortgage Interest Expens</td>
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<td>Other Occupancy Expenses</td>
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<td>Depreciation Exp-Bldgs &amp; Improv</td>
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<td>Staff Travel, Training, &amp; Recruitment</td>
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<td>Promotion Materials &amp; Services</td>
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<td>Total Operating Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Operating Revenue (Expense)</td>
<td>10,397</td>
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We gratefully acknowledge these donors who made contributions to Columbus House, Inc. between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006. If we have inadvertently omitted or mis-spelled your name, please accept our apologies and notify the Development Office at 203-401-4400, ext. 106.

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