Maria, Jeffrey and Walter have just graduated from Workfare, a new program at Columbus House. Workfare is a six- to eight-week “hands-on” job training course at our facilities, which prepares individuals for Food Service or Custodial Trade employment. Jeffrey is already working at a bakery. He says, “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.”

Maria has good news too – she moves in this month to her new home! Maria has been homeless for a year and a half, losing her home through foreclosure. A friend referred Maria to Columbus House where she stayed in the shelter, worked with a case manager, and completed the EEC and the Workfare programs. As she puts it, “When you’re a housewife for 26 years, you know how to cook. The programs taught me what to do to get a job and I got experience. Now when I go for a job, I can present my certificate, and get more than an entry level job.”

Columbus House Managers train and mentor the Workfare students. Camille Franchi, Food Service Manager, and James Harris, Facility Manager, provide the instruction and guidance for the Food Service and Custodial Trade programs using the best practices in each field. As graduates of Workfare, Maria, Jeffrey and Walter have the opportunity to secure a job that pays more than minimum wage, and that is above an entry level position.

CT is the first state in the US to end chronic homelessness among Veterans!

by Alison Cunningham, Executive Director

On August 27, 2015, Governor Dannel P. Malloy announced that the State of Connecticut has been designated by the federal government as being the first state in the nation to have ended chronic homelessness among veterans. This is indeed noteworthy and gives cause for great celebration!

Chronically homeless Veterans are those that have been homeless for an extended period of time and may have a mental health or physical disability. Because of their chronic status, they are eligible for permanent supportive housing, which is housing that comes with case management services attached to help people maintain their housing and enhance their quality of life. Through the efforts of non-profits across Connecticut, supported by state and federal funding, nearly 300 Veterans previously experiencing chronic homelessness have been permanently housed. This is great news as we continue toward the goal of ending homelessness for all Veterans by the end of 2015.

Columbus House is proud to be a part of this work across the state. We serve Veterans in our shelters, in our transitional housing programs and in our permanent supportive housing sites and we have a robust SSVF program (Support Services for Veteran Families) that provides case management, employment and income specialists and housing support to over 300 Veterans annually. Our efforts, in partnership with other agencies in CT, are providing solutions to this crisis of Veteran homelessness.

Our work continues and with your help, we can continue to address and end homelessness for all people in Connecticut.
Joseph finds the home he was hoping for

"You can make it. You will make it."

Abraham’s Tent is a Columbus House program in partnership with faith-based organizations throughout Greater New Haven that provides shelter during the coldest months for twelve adult men experiencing homelessness. Joseph, one of the participants, wrote the poem in the sidebar on the left. He and Stanley were featured in a documentary produced by students at Quinnipiac University, called "Haven," over the course of the winter.

Stanley had attained employment and housing toward the end of the program. For Joseph, it took several more weeks. Recently, we received a very touching, hand-written letter from Joseph, (at right) thanking the case managers and other Columbus House staff who worked with him, and giving us a small snapshot into his life in his new apartment. ■

Stay tuned at www.columbushouse.org, and on Facebook and Twitter, for more information on the release of Quinnipiac University film students’ “Haven.”

My day started at 7:08 on a bus out to Stop & Shop, Ferraro’s, Shoprite, and Home Depot. Now the night air sets in and my day comes to a close.

I want to say “thank you” to everyone at Columbus House. I am very grateful and I love my new apartment.

I’m waiting for my potatoes to get done so I can have mashed potatoes and pork chops with Brussels sprouts.

Thank you and hugs out to Tasha, Christine, Donna, and Camille and kitchen crew. Now, as I lay my head to rest, ‘Jesus bless Columbus House I pray.’

Amen.

Joseph White

Local teen has mission to inspire children to pursue their education by Teddi Stanley

I sit in the large white van and look out on my surroundings. I see modest houses attached two together, large trees, and small yards. No trampolines or large swing sets in these yards. The van soon turns onto the road where Columbus House’s Middlesex Family Shelter is located. Upon my entering the neighborhood, a young girl waves energetically to me and hops on her small pink bike. As if our van is a ship being guided into port, the little girl leads us into the correct driveway, all along bursting with excitement. “Did you know I’m getting my new backpack today!?” she boasts to me as I get out of the van. “I already have one but I’m gettin’ another one ‘cause mine is too small and isn’t gonna’ hold everything I need! I am in first grade this year so I need a big kid backpack!” The girl is eventually presented with her brand new blue backpack, her favorite color. The bag is bursting with everything a young student might need for school. She jumps onto her bike with backpack securely fastened to her shoulders and races away, all the while yelling to mom across the way that her backpack is here at last.

My name is Teddi Stanley. For four years, since seventh grade, I have been organizing a backpack and school supplies drive at Saint George Roman Catholic Church. Initially, I started the drive with an aim to supply students with materials for school. As the drive has developed over the past few years, I have continued to work towards inspiring students to pursue an education. Thanks to the generous spirit of the Saint George parishioners, this year the drive supported seven organizations, including Columbus House’s Middlesex Family Shelter and Support Services for Veteran Families programs. In total, the drive supplied nearly 200 backpacks to children in need from grades pre-k through high school. Every bag was fully equipped with age-appropriate materials and customized to each student’s individual needs. This year was especially exciting because I was able to work first-hand with community social workers, gaining a deeper understanding of the valuable work they do in their communities.

School can be a stressful time. With school comes homework, tests, essays, projects, and numerous other assignments. What if you had no organized way to carry supplies to school each day; or if you had to rely on a paper bag that was sure to tear under the weight of all the books? What if you were assigned an essay and had no pen or paper to write it with; or no calculator to complete a math assignment for homework? It is understandable that, without the necessary supplies, students might lose the hope of pursuing an education. Therefore, it is my mission to supply as many students as possible with school supplies. In doing this, I hope that I am also inspiring them to pursue an education. ■

Interested in running a drive to help those experiencing homelessness? Please visit www.columbushouse.org/get-involved

The Life of a Homeless Man

by Joseph White

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.
From homeless and using drugs to a home of her own – Jroneaur’s life makes a “whole 360”

“I’m no longer using and I feel safe.”

Jroneaur – homeless, using drugs, and sleeping in abandoned buildings – had lost touch with her children, and lost faith in humanity. As she explains, “I’ve been trying my whole life to get away from a controlling situation. I thought they were trying to do for me, but they weren’t.”

Willona, a Columbus House case manager, met Jroneaur in December 2014. It became clear to Willona that Jroneaur was chronically homeless* and a fit for Permanent Supportive Housing. Utilizing the “Housing First” model, Columbus House follows the premise that if you give a home to someone who has been chronically homeless without regard to their sobriety or commitment to services, they are actually more likely to regain independence and wellbeing. They are also much less likely to return to the streets or to the shelters.

Willona secured a new Permanent Supportive Housing unit in a complex that Columbus House was renovating at the time, and where she would be the case manager for future tenants. Jroneaur moved in during the winter of 2015.

According to Jroneaur, once in her apartment, “life changed dramatically – a whole 360. I was using (drugs) and now I’m no longer using and I feel safe. So no program, just God and my apartment… giving me the ability…”

Jroneaur says she now feels safe. If someone is at her door, she can decide to let them in or not. “I finally stand up to those trying to bring me down. God knows your heart. You have to get to be His and then He sends someone else to help you. That’s what you guys did.”

Willona has become Jroneaur’s trusted partner in helping her to set goals. Jroneaur says, “She’s earned my trust. I love my case manager. I open up to her now…If it weren’t for her I wouldn’t be where I am now. Sometimes I forget that I’m working on goals, and I say to Willona, ‘Guess what happened?’ And she says, ‘Don’t you know this is one of your goals?’”

Jroneaur has many goals now. She has stopped using drugs for over a month, is working to reunite with her children, and hopes to obtain her driver’s license.

In the future, Jroneaur wants to help other women who are in the situation that she was in. She says, “You got to help yourself first, got to do the footwork. I want to be able to share my story with other women…tell them to keep trying and don’t give up.”

When asked what makes people change, Jroneaur said she could only speak for herself. She says she asked herself, “Do you want to live or die? I’m not a grandmother yet and I want to be one.” And, with that statement, she is grinning ear to ear.

Welcome Kits give people like Maria, Joseph, and Jroneaur a warm welcome when moving into their new homes. Most of those we serve have very limited income and often need help with basic household necessities once they secure housing. By funding a Welcome Kit, you can help provide these necessities and give a warm welcome to all those moving into permanent homes this fall.

To fund a Welcome Kit online, go to www.columbushouse.org/welcomekits, or, contact sdimario@columbushouse.org or 203-401-4400 x138 for more ways to help.

Workfare continued from page 1

As a prerequisite, clients in Workfare also complete a rigorous 90-hour EEC Program that includes instruction in computers, math, reading, resume writing, interviewing skills, wellness, and more. Maria graduated from EEC in March this year, and Jeffrey and Walter in August.

Each EEC and Workfare graduate receives a certificate to show employers they have successfully completed the trainings. After graduation, Columbus House job search counselors are available to help with all aspects of the job search and to lend moral support where needed. Clients can also join the “Jobs Club” meetings every Tuesday and Thursday, to share tips on securing employment and their successes and challenges, and to support each other as they look for work.

Workfare is part of the Columbus House continuum of services that supports those experiencing homelessness to become more independent, obtain stable full-time employment, and secure permanent, affordable housing.

*Chronic homelessness is defined as someone who has a disabling condition and has been homeless for 1 year or more, or 4 times in the past 3 years
SAVE THE DATE!

DECEMBER 3, 2015

COLUMBUS HOUSE ANNUAL MEETING

at New Haven Lawn Club
193 Whitney Ave | New Haven, CT

7:30-9:00 AM

Join us as we celebrate YOU and all who make Columbus House possible

Recipients of the 2015 John S. Martinez Community Service Award will be announced

Sponsorships available

For more info, please contact (203) 401-4400 ext. 131 or cyun@columbushouse.org and stay tuned at www.columbushouse.org/annualmeeting

complimentary breakfast buffet

YOU have helped create positive change in the lives of many!

How are people learning new skills to help find employment?

What does it feel like to have a home after years of living on the streets?

How is one teen inspiring children in need to pursue their education?

How has Connecticut ended chronic homelessness among Veterans?

Find out how you have helped inside!