

# 1982 Mission

**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.**

# 1982



## Shelter Doors Open

at 200 Columbus Avenue, our  
original location in New Haven.

- Located in former Sacred Heart convent
- Cynthia DeLouise is first Executive Director (3rd from left in top right photo)
- 52 beds for single adults
- Guests often ate on staircase because the dining room was so small
- **Volunteers** cooked and served meals, organized a clothing closet, provided medical & dental care, legal advice, and much more



*Volunteer meal servers in the original shelter kitchen*



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# 1986



## First Men's Seasonal Overflow Shelter

- First Overflow Shelter located inside the Marchegian Club on Cedar Street in New Haven
- Serves up to **75 men** during **November – April**
- In 2022, the Overflow moved to the main Columbus House campus on Ella T. Grasso Boulevard in New Haven (below)



*Volunteers like Kingdom Love Center Ministries (L) and Moe and Dennis (R) are just a few of the many who have taken on serving regular meals at the Overflow during the winter months*

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# 1992



## Outreach & Engagement

In collaboration with partners, teams of Columbus House Case Managers begin serving those who are living on the streets.



*Outreach & Engagement Case Manager, Teresa, helped Maurice move from a rat infested hole in the ground to his own apartment*



Scan to read Maurice's story



## Transitional Living

Columbus House implements first Transitional Living Program, Davenport House (now Recovery House), to help prepare clients for permanent housing & independent living.



*Quinnipiac University students and guests create a garden at Recovery House*

# 1995

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# 1998



## First Supportive Housing Site

Columbus House begins offering case management in the newly-opened Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) site, Cedar Hill (right).

- Additional Supportive Housing sites would follow over the years
- We serve close to **150 people** in congregate housing sites



*"My kids are proud of me."  
- Debra*

Scan to read  
Debra's story



*L-R: An apartment at Val Macri in New Haven, a window at Peterson Properties in Middletown, a resident from Sojourner's Place in New Haven - all are Columbus House PSH properties*

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# 2002



## New Shelter at 586 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard

Construction is completed on our main shelter in New Haven doubling our capacity to serve single adults.

Upon opening, the shelter featured:

- 101 beds
- 6 programs
- New commercial kitchen
- An expansive, well-lit, safe, accessible & dignified space



(L) Young volunteers in the new kitchen,  
(R) students sealing the driveway in 2013



Scan to take a (pre-pandemic)  
tour of the Shelter

Thousands of invaluable volunteers support our mission. See them in action – follow #WeLoveCHVolunteers on Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter!



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# 2005



## Housing First

Columbus House officially adopts a "Housing First" policy, thereby committing to the belief that everyone deserves a home.



*Volunteers have donated thousands of Welcome Kits to help people get started in their new homes*



## Housing First Transformed Isaac's Life

*"I was looked at as this homeless, starving, drug addict, robber...you can feel it, you can feel the indifference. And they knew nothing about me other than the fact that I was homeless." - Isaac*



After 14 years of living on the streets, Isaac, untrusting of the shelter system, **moved directly into his own place** with the help of his Columbus House Case Manager.



Scan to read Isaac's story

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# 2005



## Scattered Site Housing

Columbus House case managers begin serving Permanent Supportive Housing clients living in "scattered site" apartments.

- Individual apartments are owned by private landlords
- Clients are encouraged to **reintegrate** into the broader community
- We serve around **250 people** with Case Management in scattered site housing

*"Case Managers are great... They walked with me each step of the way, keeping me encouraged." - Joe*



Scan to learn more about Joe



*"I feel like there is more out there for me and I'm just going to keep pushing." - Rena*

Scan to read Rena's story



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# 2010



## Middlesex Family Shelter

Located in Middletown, The Middlesex Family Shelter becomes a program of Columbus House with enhanced services to help families move toward permanent housing.

- Comprised of **four buildings** with seven townhouses to serve approximately **20 families** each year
- Located on a cul-de-sac in a quiet neighborhood



Scan to tour a townhouse at the Middlesex Family Shelter



*From providing school supplies to keeping the grounds tidy - and everything in between - Columbus House volunteers make a great impact for families staying at our shelters*

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# 2011



## Rapid Re-housing

- Helps people move directly from homelessness into permanent, independent housing by providing short-term financial assistance (initial rent, security deposits, and/or utility assistance)
- Part of the "Housing First" approach recognizing that people are better able to access services when they are housed



*Rapid Re-Housing was key to our success moving people into safe homes at the onset of the pandemic. Left, Columbus House Case Manager, Katy (front), with Amanda who quickly moved out of homelessness during the pandemic. Learn more at [columbushouse.org/covid](http://columbushouse.org/covid)*



## Pathways to Independence

This program integrates services for clients, including benefits counseling, employment, financial literacy, behavioral health, and housing.

During the first 6 months of program implementation:

- **70 people found employment**
- **54 people found housing**

*Below, Carl, Columbus House Employment and Benefits Manager, speaks to graduates of an employment readiness program in 2014*



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# 2013



## Medical Respite

Columbus House opens the **first Medical Respite Program for people experiencing homelessness in Connecticut** in our New Haven Shelter.

- Recuperative care for people who are homeless and exiting Yale New-Haven Hospital and the West Haven VA Hospital
- 12 private rooms, visiting nurses, 24-hour supervision, referrals to healthcare providers, transportation, and case management
- **Lowers public healthcare costs** by reducing unnecessary hospitalizations



*"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*

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# 2013



## Veteran Services Expanded

As part of the nationwide effort to end Veteran homelessness, Columbus House expands dramatically to serve over **350 Veterans** and their families through **Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)**.

- Financial assistance, Rapid Re-Housing, and benefit & employment counseling for 90-days
- Serves New Haven, Middlesex, & New London counties



*"I get more out of volunteering here than I give." - Paul*



*"[Harkness House is] just like being at home."  
- James, U.S. Marines*



Columbus House has always served Veterans across all programs. Harkness House, opened in 2011 in New Haven, offers housing and support for 14 male Veterans.



*"Everyone deserves a home."  
- Dorie, U.S. Navy  
(pictured, center right)*

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# 2015



## Connecticut Ends Chronic Homelessness for Veterans

Federal government announces that Connecticut is the **first state in the country** to end "chronic" homelessness among Veterans. Columbus House and its many partners contributed to this milestone.



Columbus House renovated Shepherd Home on the CT Valley Hospital Campus in Middletown in 2019. Shepherd Home provides **32 units of permanent supportive housing** for Veterans experiencing homelessness.



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# 2016



## The Wallingford Emergency Shelter

The Wallingford Emergency Shelter (WES) provides beds, meals, and case management for families with children year-round and single adults during the cold winter months.



*Top to bottom: Family units at WES, inside a family unit, supporters outside the winter shelter*



*Clockwise from top: Emarie with her dog in her own apartment after moving out of WES; Andrew, a Veteran, and his family stayed in the WES family shelter and now have their own place; volunteers at WES*



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# 2017



## HOMELESS:HOUSED Building Initiative

A 5-year initiative with Yale School of Architecture's Jim Vlock Building Project begins, providing 5 buildings with 11 units of affordable housing designed specifically for those who have experienced homelessness (the project went so well it is now in its sixth year).

*Below: houses 1, 2, 3, & 5; right top: Alison Cunningham with Yale students and staff in 2nd house; right bottom: Margaret Middleton and students at the 4th house*



*Dawn and Roberta of the North Madison Congregational Church Garden Rescue Team sprucing up the gardens at the first home*



Scan to learn more about HOMELESS:HOUSED

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# 2018



## CARF Accreditation



Supportive Services  
for Veteran  
Families/Rapid  
Re-Housing



Permanent  
Supportive  
Housing



Medical  
Respite

Three Columbus House programs receive a three year accreditation from The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for demonstrating international standards for program quality and accountability. In 2021 these programs were reaccruited.



Scan to learn more about  
our CARF Accreditation



## ctcandata.org Launched

Columbus House and partners launch this website to enhance data transparency and accessibility to Connecticut's Coordinated Access Network (CAN).



*The CAN helps streamline the process for people experiencing homelessness to access area resources (visit 2-1-1.org for more info)*

Scan to see  
ctcandata.org



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# 2019



## Alison Says Farewell

Alison Cunningham, Columbus House's leader for over 21 years, says farewell.



Scan to learn more about our  
the Alison Cunningham Growth  
and Independence Fund



## New CEO!

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Margaret Middleton** accepts position as Columbus House's new CEO. Margaret served on our Board for 8 years, from 2010-2018, and was the Co-founder & Executive Director of The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center.



*Margaret, serving a meal while on the Columbus House Board of Directors in 2012*

# 2020

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# 2020



## COVID-19

- Columbus House moves all emergency shelter & warming center guests to **hotel rooms** by April 6
- A **drop-in center** is set-up outside our New Haven Shelter to safely serve more people
- Our housing team develops a Rapid Exit Approach, **housing 700+ people** by May 2022



*Thanks to thousands of volunteers and supporters, we continued our work throughout the pandemic*



## Guests Return

Guests begin returning to the New Haven Shelter on April 1 with an upgraded HVAC system, reconfigured spaces for social distancing, staggered schedules, enhanced cleaning & more.

# 2022

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# 2022 Mission

As part of a strategic plan, Columbus House adopted this revised mission statement to better reflect the scope of our work:

**To serve people experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk by providing life-saving outreach, shelter and housing and by fostering their personal growth and independence. We advocate for and create affordable housing to end homelessness in our communities.**