



Solutions

30 YEARS OF FINDING SOLUTIONS TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Columbus House, Inc. Annual Report 2012



Spring blooms at Cedar Hill Apartments on State Street, a collaborative effort between Columbus House and Home, Inc. that offers permanent supportive housing for 25 single adults. *Dawn* is a resident here. You can read her story on page 14.



Our commitment is to end homelessness – chronic homelessness and homelessness among Veterans in five years, and family homelessness in ten.

SOLUTIONS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THIRTY YEARS AGO WHEN WE OPENED THE DOORS OF THE FIRST EMERGENCY SHELTER THAT COLUMBUS HOUSE WOULD STILL EXIST IN 2012? How could we have known then that the numbers of individuals who are homeless would continue to increase and that families would end up on the steps of our shelters? Did we know then that an entire “industry” would be built around the response to the crisis of homelessness across this country?

From a meager beginning in a small shelter with beds for 34 people a night, Columbus House has expanded over the past thirty years to include myriad solutions to end this crisis of homelessness. On the following pages you will see a time-line which gives you a snap-shot of the various housing opportunities we have developed over the years. Emergency shelters, transitional programs and permanent supportive housing are all critical elements of our work.

Solutions include an array of services attached to these housing options. From the shelters, our case managers work to help clients find the best possible solution so that individuals and families can leave their homelessness far behind. Health care, treatment for mental illness or substance abuse, employment and income support, and, of course, housing are the key elements to helping folks move on toward independence. Today, Columbus House supports close to 200 people in communities across the state who live in their own apartments with case management services to help them stay housed.

Our commitment is to end homelessness – chronic homelessness and homelessness among Veterans in five years, and family homelessness in ten. Today, there is the political will at all levels of government to accomplish this goal. Today, there is funding available to support key efforts that will help us realize this vision. With a single pointed focus on achieving these goals, we will get there. *continued on the next page...*

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A Message from the Executive Director...continued from page 1

We know what the solutions are...we can end homelessness
in our lifetimes. *Thank you for joining us in our mission.*

And we are not alone. From local coalitions to statewide campaigns and national advocacy groups, Columbus House partners with numerous agencies, councils and committees to enhance our work and bring us closer to our goals. Locally, we engage the faith community through meal serving groups and Abraham's Tent to help us provide the very basic needs of the people we serve. Our efforts take us into local colleges and universities and various businesses to help open doors to employment for those ready to return to work. We collaborate with health care providers to find the best solutions for people whose chronic conditions require a unique response. Our work with the VA gives us great pride in knowing that we help serve those who served our country.

Please read the stories of Gwen, Mark and Dawn and hopefully you will come to understand the role that Columbus House played in helping them end their own crisis of homelessness. Their brave hearts will inspire you. Their dedication to restoring their own lives will give you hope. It is their stories and countless others like them that help us maintain our commitment to the work that we do every day.

We know what the solutions are...we can end homelessness in our lifetimes. Thank you for joining us in our mission.

Sincerely,


Alison Cunningham
Executive Director

"It seems like just yesterday..."



We are proud
of the work
accomplished
over the past
3 decades and
look forward
to continuing
on the path
of ending
homelessness.

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

DEAR FRIENDS,

It seems like just yesterday that we were packing up at 200 Columbus Avenue to move to our "new" home at 586 Ella Grasso Boulevard. That was ten years ago, though, and that new building has served us well, providing shelter and services for thousands of men and women who were homeless.

We know that shelter is not the end of the road for people who are homeless, but instead, there are solutions to this crisis and in this Annual Report you will read about three people who, with our help, moved on with their lives. Our work at Columbus House is to help people write their own stories, to create their own paths to recovery and independence. Gwen, Mark and Dawn have done just that and are well on their way.

Solutions take on many forms. For some, it is simply a bed for a single night. For others, it is permanent supportive housing with support from a trusted case manager. Still others need help rethinking work in an economy where jobs are hard to find. Whatever the case, our staff are committed to helping each client find the solutions that work for them.

It seems like just yesterday when we opened the shelter at 200 Columbus Ave, but that was 30 years ago. We are proud of the work accomplished over the past 3 decades and look forward to continuing on the path of ending homelessness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dave Canestri".

Dave Canestri, Chair, Board of Directors

A close-up portrait of a Black woman with short, curly blonde hair. She has a gentle expression and is looking slightly to the right. Her skin is dark brown with visible freckles and some minor blemishes. She is wearing a dark-colored top with a colorful floral pattern. The background is a solid, warm orange-brown color.

I didn't
know
they
really
cared.

"I didn't think I had the will to survive."

GWEN...IN THE SHELTER

My kids, they didn't want to see their mother intoxicated or messing with drugs. It's embarrassing to them, to their friends and to me. I knew I needed help. I came to Columbus House last November. I'd always been aware of it but it's *different than I thought it would be.*

GWEN'S WORLD CAME CRASHING DOWN AFTER SHE LOST HER JOB IN 2010. For eight years, she had been living in Stamford and working in Greenwich as a housekeeper. She spent a lot of time at Laurel House, a private, non-profit social service center that helps people with mental illness. But after she lost her job, she lost her apartment. Then she lost her pocketbook with all her identification.

It was like identity theft. It was like I didn't exist anymore. I had no birth certificate, no license, no social security card. I turned to drugs and alcohol and that made everything worse. I bounced around from place to place, including a shelter in Stamford. I finally decided to come home.

Gwen had grown up in New Haven. After she graduated from high school, she joined the Army Reserves, and was stationed at Fort McClellan in Alabama for 18 months. It was a good experience. She was discharged in 1979, and had her first child in 1982. She has three children, two sons and a daughter.

My kids, they didn't want to see their mother intoxicated or messing with drugs. It's embarrassing to them, to their friends and to me. I knew I needed help. I came to Columbus House last November. I'd always been aware of it but it's different than I thought it would be.

I didn't know how the program worked until I got here. Really I imagined it would be like a flophouse. But I was amazed and surprised. It's not a flophouse at all. It's like a retreat. I didn't know they really cared.

Columbus House's emergency shelter cares for over 80 women and men, 365 nights a year, and provides housing, health services, entitlement and employment assistance and case management services, including referrals to mental health and substance abuse programs. Initially, Gwen struggled with her commitment to change. She spoke with one of Columbus House's outreach workers.

I had known Brother Kenny for many years. He told me that I had good credentials but I needed to decide what I wanted. I gave it about three



Reading serves a therapeutic purpose for Gwen. She is grateful for the selection of books, donated by Columbus House supporters, at the shelter.

days and went back to him and said I wanted to go to a recovery program in Stonington and get my act together.

Gwen did just that and returned to Columbus House in July, finally ready to work hard at changing her life. She has a case manager, applied for and is receiving entitlements such as food stamps, medical care, and medication for her bipolar disorder. She's replacing her lost identification documents and looking for a housekeeping job. Supportive housing is her next goal.

Things are starting to fall into place. Columbus House gives me structure. When I have structure in my life, I do better. I do well when I don't have idle time, when I'm working or with my family, or attending meetings. I go to church on Sundays when I

can. I do whatever I'm told – help with a meal, clean the bathroom. I know that it's time to give back.

Gwen is close to her kids again. She sees a lot of her 6-year-old grandson Nasir, who loves to go to McDonalds' with her. She has another grandchild on the way. She attributes her success to the staff at Columbus House.

I didn't think I had the will to survive this but they showed me that no matter what I'm going through, they're here for me. That means a lot.

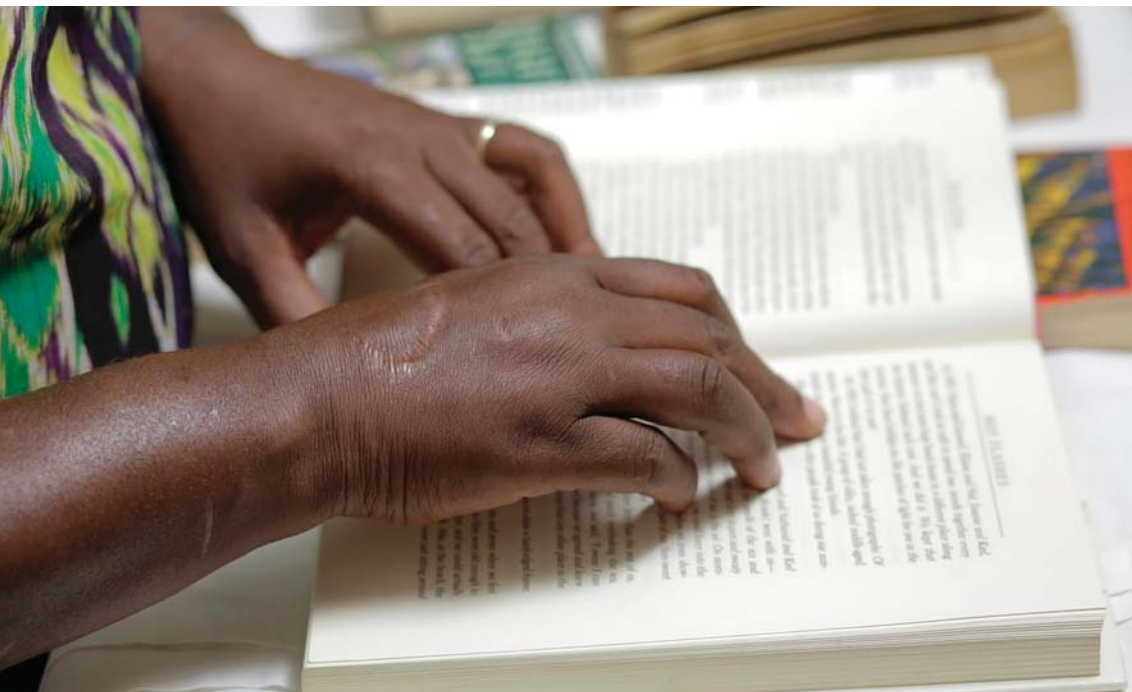
Gwen's long-term goals are to get a place, get a job, maybe go back to school, and save some money. She tends to keep to herself, especially, when it comes to what she calls

“matters of the heart.” Still she agreed to share her story for Columbus House.

I'm telling my story even though I'm shaking inside because I thought it would be good for people who don't understand what we go through and how hard it is to get back on your feet. The average person sometimes gets sidetracked, lost. Life throws a curve ball and sometimes you don't know how to jump over that hurdle or crawl under that barbed wire fence, so you get hung up on it.

People may wonder what it's like to be homeless. We're not bad. Some of us have been beaten or had bad luck or problems. But we don't want people to feel sorry for us. We want to be part of society again, working, having a place to live. Some of us need a little extra support, that's all.

I am grateful right now. Columbus House opened a door and let me walk through. That door was closed to me before. Columbus House helps people who want to *help themselves*.



Gwen knows she can't afford to take a step backwards. But she feels like if she stays connected to Columbus House, she will have someone to go to if she needs to. She believes she can get back everything she lost if she continues to devote her time and energy to positive things.

I'm 52 years old and there's a lot of life in me. There are a lot of things that I haven't accomplished that I want to do. I want to do things right, so I can help them help me. I am grateful right now. Columbus House opened a door and let me walk through. That door was closed to me before. Columbus House helps people who want to help themselves. ●

"Nowhere to go. Nobody to talk to."

MARK...IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

ABOUT 12 PERCENT OF THE CLIENTS AT COLUMBUS HOUSE ARE VETERANS – IN THE EMERGENCY SHELTER, IN TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS AND IN PERMANENT HOUSING. The sad truth is some are still on the streets. Not long ago, one of those was Mark, who now lives in an old Victorian home on Davenport Avenue owned by Columbus House. Harkness House, as it is called, provides transitional housing and support for up to 14 male veterans.

In November 2011, Mark moved to New Haven from North Carolina, where he'd lived for 26 years. He had heard that the VA hospitals in Connecticut offered excellent services and he knew he had serious mental health and substance abuse issues. He wanted help.

I joined the Navy when I was 18 and spent a year on the USS Goldsboro, a guided missile destroyer stationed in Hawaii. It was 1976. I'm dealing with some post traumatic stress from events from when I was in the Navy. These events cut my

Naval career short and continue to affect me to this day.

Mark, though well educated and both musically and dramatically talented, struggled with addiction for most of his life. His military experience exacerbated his problems. Then after back surgery seven years ago, he became addicted to the pain medication Vicodin. That got him back to an old cocaine habit.

I almost believe I was predestined to be an addict. Even as a kid. My dad and mom were both alcoholics. And once you get heavy into addiction, you lose everything. Your job, your family, your home. And then you're out on the street. Nowhere to go. Nobody to talk to. It's a very lonely place.

Shortly after he moved to Connecticut, the friends he'd been staying with threw him out because of his cocaine use.

I don't blame them. My friend brought me to the VA Medical Center in West Haven. I stayed there for two days. It was scary but it was a good thing. After being at the West Have VA Hospital I went

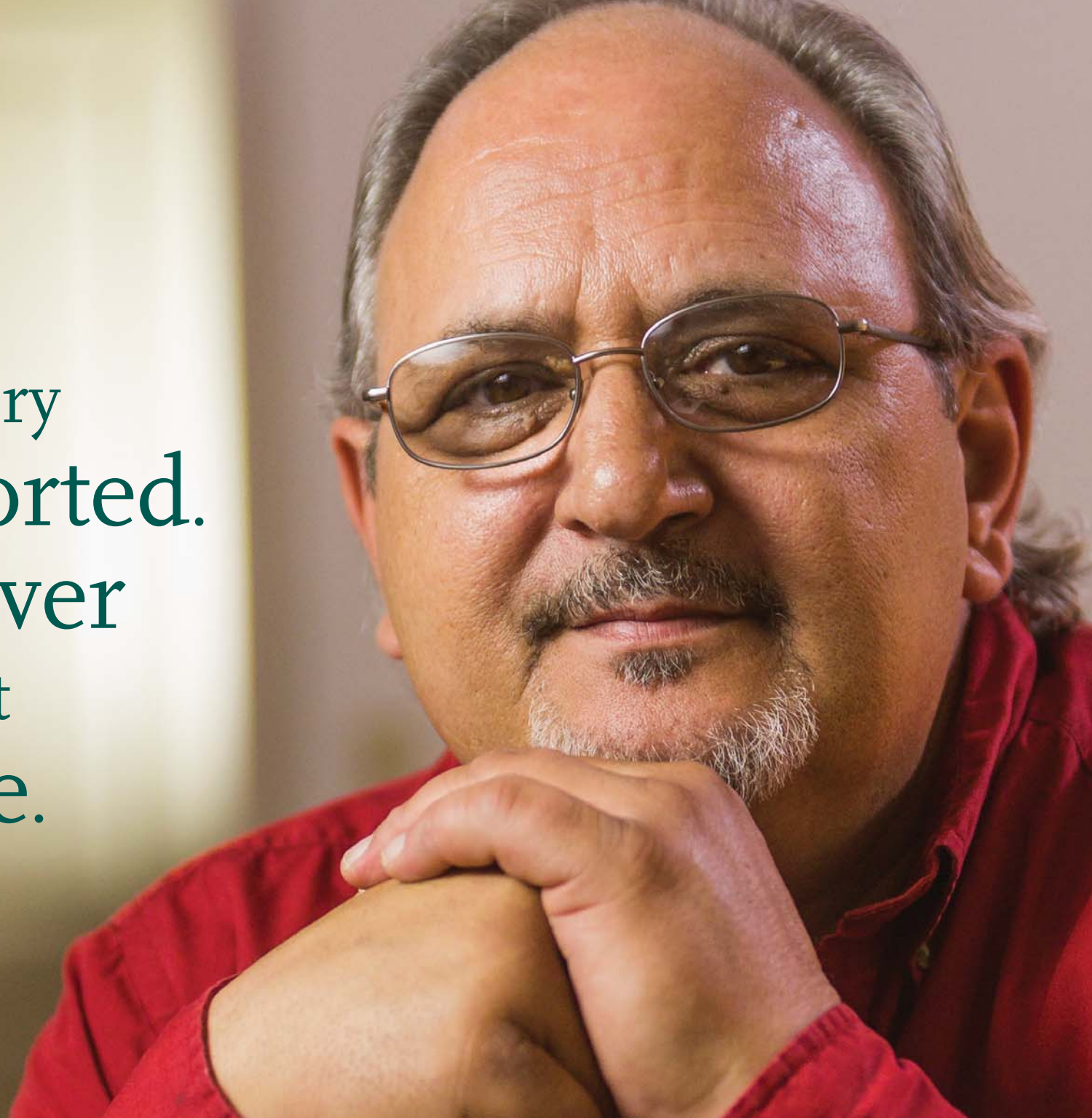
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And once you get heavy into addiction, you lose everything. Your job, your family, your home.

And then you're out on the street. Nowhere to go.

Nobody to talk to. It's a very lonely place.

I feel very
supported.
I've never
had that
before.





Something I value about Columbus House is that they really care, I see it in all the people I've met. A big part of my recovery has been being with people who really follow through. Columbus House staff do that.

They integrate everything. They know it's the combination of housing and counseling and treatment programs and goal setting. *With all that in place, you can't lose, if you're willing.*

to a detox program for nine days at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. I learned about Harkness House through the VA Medical Center.

But before Mark could move into Harkness House, he needed to be addiction-free for 60 days. He was admitted to First Steps, an inpatient day substance abuse program at the VA. His VA clinician told him about availability at the Beth El Shelter in Milford and his psychologist told him about Harkness House. He moved into Beth El and continued his treatment every day at the VA – therapy, addiction programs, support groups, PTSD group, classes.

The most sobriety I've had in 30 years was 67 days. I had been in and out of rehab since 1982. It's not easy to admit that. I was lost in my addiction. I was full of shame and embarrassment.

Mark managed to stay clean and sober for 60 days. The VA referred him to Columbus House. He was interviewed and admitted to Harkness House by Bill Augustine, who became his case manager.

I had been homeless for about 16 months of the past three years. I hated the shelter life, though I was grateful that I had someplace to live. When I first came to the Harkness House apartment, it was like heaven. Everyone was very hospitable. The staff pay real close attention to you and take you step by step. I feel very supported. I've never had that before.

The goals at Harkness House are to provide stable housing for veterans, increase access to services, expand social and employment skills, grow self-determination, and encourage reconnection to their communities. Mark meets with his case manager weekly. They have worked out a service plan with his short-term and long-term goals. Mark continues his treatment at the VA. He's been working to increase his physical activity level by walking. He enjoys art projects, particularly abstract coloring.

I'm right on the heels of six months sobriety now. Six months might not seem like a big deal to most people, but to me it's huge. That says a lot about



the programs at the VA and Columbus House. Something I value about Columbus House is that they really care, I see it in all the people I've met. A big part of my recovery has been being with people who really follow through. Columbus House staff do that.

Mark believes that addiction and mental health issues are the source of most of the homelessness in the U.S. Mark is on a road to recovery but the process of finding solutions is not quick or easy. He still has a ways to go.

They say that the definition of addiction is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. You go around and around until you can't do it anymore. But finally I feel like I'm on the right road. I believe I can have a meaningful life again. And Columbus House will have played a big role. Not just because they provide shelter but because they provide more. They integrate everything. They know it's the combination of housing and counseling and treatment programs and goal setting. With all that in place, you can't lose, if you're willing. ●

30 YEARS OF FINDING SOLUTIONS

EMERGENCY SHELTERS

1981 Shelter doors open on 200 Columbus Avenue. Capacity: 34. Funders: Downtown Cooperative Ministry, Dwight Hall at Yale, City of New Haven. Founding ED: Cynthia DeLouise.

1986 First overflow shelter opens in the Marchigian Club. The overflow continues today with 75 beds for men between November & April.

2002 Completed construction of new shelter on the Boulevard, with 81 shelter beds, 20 transitional beds, and enhanced services.



STREET OUTREACH TEAM

1992 Street Outreach team launched in collaboration with CMHC, Hill Health Center. The Outreach & Engagement team continues today with additional partners: The Connection, Easter Seals Goodwill Industries, APT Foundation, Marrakech, CMHC & Cornell Scott Hill Health Center.



TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS

1995 First transitional program opens: Davenport House, with 15 beds for men. Sojourner's Place for 16 women opens in 2001. Harkness House opens in 2010, with 14 beds for Veterans.



NS TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING



1998 Cedar Hill, first permanent supportive housing site opened in collaboration with HOME Inc. – 25 apartments with case management support on-site. We now have 200 people housed in permanent supportive housing in New Haven, Waterbury and Middletown.

2005 Legion woods opens with 20 units, 11 of which are for Veterans.



2008 Whalley terrace opens with 22 units for elderly who are homeless.

2009 FUSE – scattered site, permanent supportive housing, for people moving in and out of jail/shelters – 26 units in New Haven, 10 in Waterbury.



2005-2012 Added 150 scattered site units with HOPWA, HUD, DMHAS and other funding.

2011 Sojourners Place converted to permanent supportive housing with single rooms for 9 women.

FAMILY SERVICES

2010 We took over management of Middlesex Family Shelter, which now includes emergency shelter, transitional programs and permanent supportive housing for families with children.





They saw
something
in me that
I didn't.

"Don't go down that road."

DAWN...IN PERMANENT, SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

All my life I felt like something was missing.

I tried to fill that void with drugs and alcohol. Whiskey. Crack. Cocaine.

It was awful. I wasn't meant to live like that. I lost myself for a few years.

PEOPLE THINK HOMELESSNESS IS LIKE A DISEASE. Don't go near them – they're homeless. But we're not so different. We might be in a shelter and they live in a house. But in this economy, a lot of them, they're just a paycheck away from homelessness.

Dawn did not have an easy life. She grew up, an only child, with her mother and grandparents in Ansonia. Her mother and her grandmother both suffered from mental illness. Her grandfather was blind and was an alcoholic.

My grandfather would take me to the bar when I was a kid. The bartender would give me a Shirley Temple and some quarters to play the videogames. I must have been 5 or 6 years old. I'd say, Papa let's go to the bar.

Despite some learning disabilities, she liked school and was good at sports, playing basketball and softball in high school until she broke her leg. She quit school in 11th grade and got a job at Friendly's. When she was about 17, she started drinking but it did not become a serious problem until she was in her 20s.

All my life I felt like something was missing. I tried to fill that void with drugs and alcohol. Whiskey. Crack. Cocaine. It was awful. I wasn't meant to live like that. I lost myself for a few years.

In 2006, Dawn tried to break her drug and alcohol addictions in a sober house in Terryville. But most of the people who lived there were still "using," and it wasn't long before she relapsed. She was homeless. She was despondent.

I wanted to hurt myself. A friend dropped me off at Waterbury Hospital. They got me stable. They said, Do you really want to die? I said, No I just have a drug and alcohol problem that I want to get rid of. They kept me overnight and in the morning they suggested I go to Columbus House. I took the bus from Waterbury to New Haven and it let me off right at Columbus House. There were a bunch of people lining up at the door so I got in line. I was scared to death.

Dawn was in the emergency shelter for a few months, working on her problems with a case manager. Eventually she moved to Sojourner's

*Now Dawn is back
at Cedar Hill in her
own apartment. It
is furnished simply,
a crucifix of her
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wall. Tea towels in
the kitchen read,
Faith, Hope, Love.*



I went back to
Columbus House a
couple of times.
I would pick myself
up and start all over
again. But I never
gave up on myself.
*And Columbus House
never gave up on me.*

Place on Howard Avenue, one of Columbus House's transitional housing sites for women. There she and other homeless single women received supervised, temporary housing and help with substance abuse problems, mental health issues and life skills training. For the first time in years, she was even able to hold a job, working at a local McDonald's.

I was also taking mentorship training classes at Columbus House. I learned a lot about having mentors and being a mentor. I became a mentor at Village of Power on Dixwell Avenue, helping other women with substance abuse problems. I got involved with Fellowship Place. I go there a lot and it's been a big help.

In 2010, Dawn moved into her own apartment – permanent supportive housing at Cedar Hill on State Street, another housing site managed by Columbus House. Although she had gotten her life together, she was involved in an unhealthy relationship. Her partner lured her back to the world of drugs and alcohol. She gave up her apartment at Cedar Hill and moved in with her partner. Dawn had been sober for four years; her partner for six years. They both relapsed.

My partner would take me back, then throw me out. I went back to Columbus House a couple of times. I would pick myself up and start all over again. But I never gave up on myself. And Columbus House never gave up on me. They saw something in me that I didn't. It took me long

enough, but I think I'm there now.

In July 2011, Dawn's mother died and she went back to using drugs and alcohol. Once again, she turned to Columbus House. Once again, they took her back.

I've learned lessons from my life. Like when Columbus House said, That's it – we're not helping you no more. That's when I turned my life around. Columbus House got me the help I needed and finally I was ready.

Now Dawn is back at Cedar Hill in her own apartment. It is furnished simply, a crucifix of her mother's on the wall. Tea towels in the kitchen read, Faith, Hope, Love.

Every morning this woodpecker wakes me up at 5:30 or 6 o'clock. I pull my kitchen chair over to the window and look out at the day. I say good morning to the woodpecker. I have my coffee and I watch the trains. I talk to God. It's nice to have a home. But I wouldn't be here right now if it weren't for Columbus House.

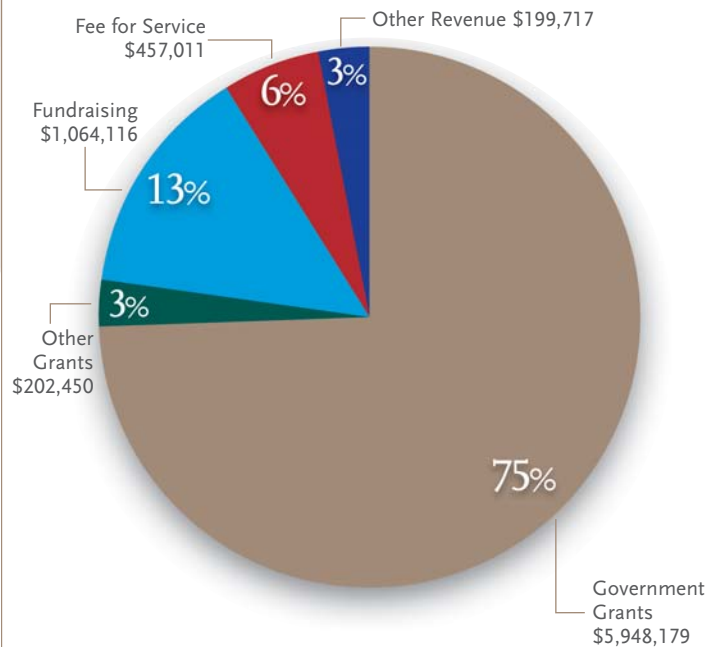
Dawn is still fragile. She has had more than one second chance. But she is determined that this time she will succeed.

I'm trying to fill my life with positive energy. If I could reach one person with my message, I'd be very happy. I'd say, Don't go down that road. Reach out. Talk. Get yourself help. But you've got to want to change yourself. ●

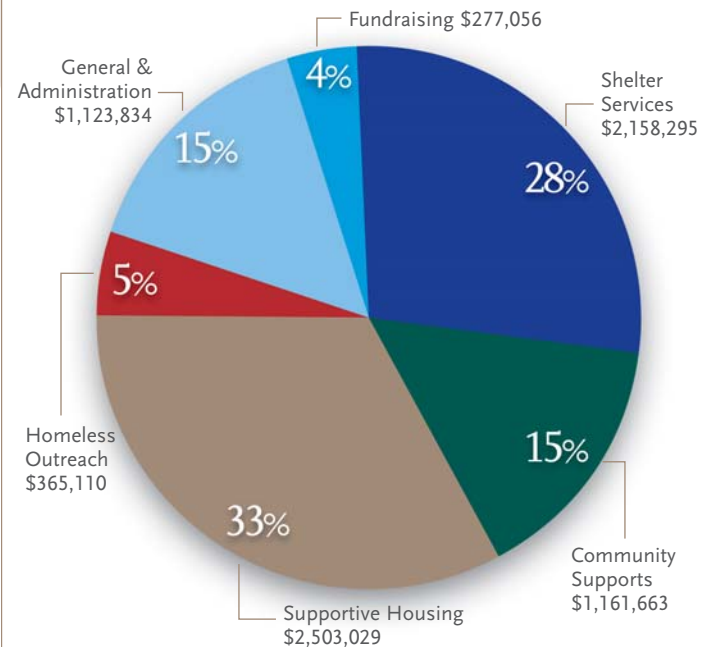
OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30TH 2012 (UNAUDITED)

REVENUE – \$7,871,472



EXPENSES – \$7,588,987



2012 SUPPORTERS

We gratefully acknowledge those donors who made contributions to Columbus House between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, please accept our apologies and notify the Development Office at 203-401-4400, ext. 138.

ABRAHAM'S TENT HOST SITES

Beulah Heights First Pentecostal Church
Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church
Church of the Holy Spirit
Church of the Redeemer
Church on the Rock
Congregation Mishkan Israel
Grace and St. Peter's Episcopal Church
First and Summerfield United Methodist Church
First Baptist Church of Branford
First Presbyterian Church
North Haven Congregational Church
Spring Glenn Church
St Mary Roman Catholic Church
St. John's Episcopal Church
Trinity Episcopal Church on the Green, New Haven
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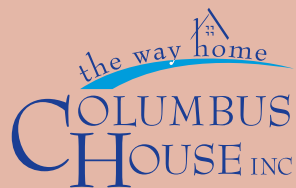
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To serve people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, by providing shelter and housing and by fostering their personal growth and independence.



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