



Day by Day

The mission of Christ House is to provide comprehensive and compassionate health care to sick and homeless men from the District of Columbia, and to assist them in addressing the critical issues to help them break the cycle of homelessness.

ENTERING THE 'GOLDEN YEARS' WHILE HOMELESS

How we help patients meet the challenges of aging

Charles was 70 years old when he came to Christ House. Remarkably, he had been living on the streets with hypertension, cancer, diabetes, incontinence, and dementia.

When he visited a walk-in clinic, the doctor quickly realized that he was too vulnerable to continue without medical support. The doctor, one of our former year-long volunteers, referred him to Christ House.

Many of our patients are, like Charles, faced with the toll that age and homelessness takes on their minds and bodies. Last year, more than 75% of our patients were at least 50 years old and over 30% were 60 years old or older. The age of homeless persons across the country has been on the rise and with it, further strain on agencies and clinics hoping to meet the needs of an aging population.

Homeless persons experience the negative effects of aging at a younger age and higher rate than the general population. In part, this is the result of going months or years without preventative treatment which can control and even eliminate common health problems. Premature aging can

also be a consequence of ignoring or mismanaging conditions such as hepatitis C or osteoarthritis. Additionally, substance abuse and lack of basic self-care, including getting sufficient sleep and proper nutrition, can cause significant damage to the body.

By the time our older patients are admitted, nearly all are dealing with two or more chronic conditions simultaneously. Chronic conditions such as COPD, diabetes, or mental illness can make treatment of newer or urgent issues more complicated.

Fast Facts

- 75% of our patients are 50 years old or older
- the age of the homeless population is increasing across the country

Other complications include the loss of mobility, hearing, or vision that ordinarily comes with age. Even more concerning are conditions related to the loss of cognitive abilities such as demen-

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A Christ House nurse washes a diabetic patient's feet to make sure they are clean and clear of debris that can cause dangerous infections.

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tia. With this, our patients sometimes have difficulty grasping the nature or gravity of their medical conditions. And, like their housed peers, they can have difficulty accepting the idea of a permanent care arrangement.

Independent living is rarely an option for our older patients who need help managing medications, completing basic activities of daily living, and getting around safely. Our case managers work especially hard to find adequate placement for these individuals as they are more vulnerable to assault or theft on the streets, shelters, and even by family and friends.

Nursing homes or assisted living facilities are usually the best options for these men. Unfortunately, there are challenges to being admitted.

Due to limited space in D.C.'s nursing homes, we most often have to place patients in neighboring states. This extra step requires that we obtain special approval from Medicaid. The admissions process can be further delayed for



A Christ House nurse helps an elderly patient with his walker.

patients with a history of mental illness who are required to complete a special screening process. Additional complications can arise when a patient does not have a complete medical history, as many formerly homeless individuals do not.

Thankfully, we have developed

good relationships with several facilities in the area who continue to take in our patients. However, placements are not always available when we need them. Our case management office often has to call, week after week, to ask if a bed has opened up. During this extended waiting process, the only viable option to maintain a patient's health is usually to keep them with us until a placement opens.

While Charles was here, we made significant strides toward stabilizing his health. We monitored his blood-sugar levels, took him to outside appointments, and helped with his activities of daily living - bathing, toileting, and getting around safely.

We were able to connect Charles with his family who intended to secure long-term care on his behalf.

Men like Charles shouldn't have to struggle to simply survive on the streets. With your support, we will continue to come alongside the most vulnerable to offer healing and hope.

HELP US BEAT THE HEAT

Last summer, the 20-year-old chiller at Kairos House became unrepairable. This chiller is a crucial component of the air conditioning system. Providing an environment with regulated temperatures and well-circulated air is essential for the men who live there, many of whom have respiratory conditions and half of whom are over 60 years old.

The good news is that we were able to install a new unit earlier this year that is much more energy efficient and works beautifully! However, this brought about an unanticipated deficit of over \$100,000 to the budget.

We invite you to "Beat the Heat" by joining our efforts to keep Kairos House cool this summer! Please note "Beat the Heat" on your donation envelope or through your online donation. We are thankful for your generous gifts to help keep our residents cool and healthy!



The new chiller was lifted by crane to the Kairos House roof.

CHRIST HOUSE LEADERS RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARDS

In June, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council held their annual conference in Washington, D.C. Several of our staff attended the gathering to learn and share strategies with providers from all across the country. Our very own Dr. Janelle Goetcheus and Mary Jordan were honored at the conference.

Philip W. Brickner National Leadership Award

Dr. Janelle Goetcheus, Christ House Co-Founder and Medical Director, received the Council's most prestigious honor, the Philip W. Brickner National Leadership Award. This award recognizes individuals who have significantly strengthened service and/or advocacy that addresses the health status of people without homes.

The Kairos Program Leadership Board helped to nominate Dr. Goetcheus. The following is an excerpt from their letter:

"Dr. Goetcheus is a fierce advocate for the homeless. She will stop at nothing to reach the most vulnerable, most addicted, and those with the most dire medical needs.... [She] goes into the trenches to find the most vulnerable. It is no wonder the people closest to her have called her 'The Mother Teresa of Washington.'"



Dr. Goetcheus with Rev. Allen Goetcheus and the Kairos Program Leadership Board after receiving her award.

Local Hero Award for Distinguished Service

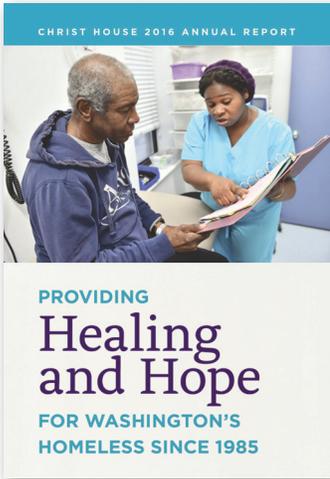
Mary Jordan, Christ House Clinical Director, received the Local Hero Award for Distinguished Service. Mary began as a nurse at Christ House in 1986 and has served faithfully on our medical team ever since. Mary is known by staff and patients alike to put her heart and soul into her work. Christ House is a more gracious and effective organization under her leadership.

The following is an excerpt from Mary's nomination letter, written by one of her former patients:

"Mary advocated for me for months until I got what I needed. She took me in, as she does for everyone, and made me feel like a real person - not like a piece of trash.... If we had more places like Christ House, there would be less sick and homeless people. Mary took time for me personally and reassured me that things would be ok.... Mary Jordan is a great person to have in your corner."



Mary Jordan with her award.



HOT OFF THE PRESS

Visit our website to view our 2016 Annual Report. You'll find:

- our year-in-review
- a special story
- recognition for our major donors and volunteers

MEET YOLANDA



We're excited to introduce Yolanda Gule as our new Director of Volunteers!

Be sure to say hello next time you're at Christ House and visit our blog to get to know her better.

JOB OPENINGS

We are seeking full-time and part-time nurses to join our dedicated clinical staff and to be part of the transformative work of Christ House.



www.christhouse.org/about/jobs

LET'S GO SHOPPING

Purchase and ship items from our Amazon Wish List to support the work of Christ House conveniently from your computer.



Find our wish list at:
www.christhouse.org/donate/inkind

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