



Christ
House

HEALING AND HOPE FOR HOMELESS PERSONS

VOLUME XXXVI, NO. 2 | SPRING 2021

Day by Day

Patient Outreach: Making patients feel safe and heard

There are many ways a patient can become connected with Christ House. Some patients are referred from shelters or local hospitals, some have family or friends who call asking about available beds, and others come to us through patient outreach. "Outreach for us is trying to connect with homeless persons wherever they are, in any way we can - in an outreach van, on the street, in the park. It's important to be where the people are," says Co-Founder and Medical Director Dr. Janelle Goetcheus.

Patient outreach is crucial because many people experiencing homelessness are hesitant to see a health care provider or to stay in a shelter, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Goetcheus explains, "Some have had negative experiences with health care providers in the past or have often just gone to the emergency room when they had an acute need. There has been a history of medical experimentation on the Black community as well, and this is another reason for distrust."



Dr. Goetcheus (left) pictured with a patient on Christ House's medical respite floor

Additionally, due to barriers such as the lack of a phone or transportation, scheduling an appointment with a doctor can be challenging for someone who is unhoused. For all of these reasons, people experiencing homelessness often have not established a relationship with a

health care provider whom they can trust. This is why reaching out to individuals to see if they could benefit from the services at Christ House can make all the difference.

While outreach looks different right now due to the pandemic, Dr. Goetcheus is still committed



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 critical issues to help them break the cycle of homelessness.

to connecting those in need with our care. “Right now it’s limited – I’m going to a drop-in center downtown in the Unity Health Care Van. Outside of a church downtown there’s a drop-in center where people are given boxed lunches. We have the van parked there for people to get on and receive health care. We find folks who have been out of care and persons having had strokes because of untreated hypertension. One recent gentleman who came on the van was only forty years old and had already had a stroke, heart attack, and suffered with heart failure. His medications had been stolen so he had been without medications for over a week. There were also two persons recently with multiple sclerosis trying to manage on the street, and persons with uncontrolled diabetes and kidney failure. Some have mental illnesses and need to be reconnected to case management and psychiatry.”

The partnerships Christ House has with providers, shelters, and hospitals across the city create reciprocal relationships. When a patient comes to Christ House, many unnecessary emergency visits and hospitalizations are spared – a major cost savings for the city. Simultaneously, Christ House is providing the patient with the comprehensive and compassionate health care needed to recover.

Some examples of outreach settings are community kitchens, church programs, shelters, a tent in a park, or an encampment. While the cold of winter presents the most health

hazards for people experiencing homelessness, the warmer weather can also aggravate people’s health conditions. “There are folks who struggle with asthma and other significant lung problems,” Dr. Goetcheus says of the challenges presented by warmer weather as she prepares for the months ahead.

As the city has begun to open up again, Christ House’s Clinical Services Assistant Daniel McInerney has been accompanying Dr. Goetcheus to clinics in local churches and community centers to assist Dr. Goetcheus and the patients. Daniel believes it is important for healthcare workers to cut through any barriers their patients might be facing and “meet people where they are in the community.” Working with Dr. Goetcheus, he shares,

“Patients consistently leave their appointments looking more relaxed and hopeful...[they] still face a lot of challenges, but they seem to leave their interactions knowing where to go next to get the help they need. Dr. Goetcheus typically begins conversations by introducing herself and asking patients how she can help. She listens very attentively and offers compassion and empathy. I think those qualities make most people feel safe and heard.”

Dr. Goetcheus has been leading Christ House’s outreach efforts since 1985. She recently helped connect Dominick, who was

formerly staying in a local shelter and experiencing severe hip pain, to Christ House. Dr. Goetcheus encouraged him to come to Christ House so that our staff could evaluate his hip and connect him with proper care. In addition to his need for a hip replacement, our clinical staff found that he had high blood pressure and high cholesterol. “I remember she asked me a lot of questions. What can I help you with, what are your needs,” says Dominick of his first meeting with Dr. Goetcheus. “She always seems concerned about getting you healthy. She listens to you, and she hears you.”

Since Dominick first arrived at Christ House, our nursing staff has provided him with proper medication, our case managers have worked to obtain his birth certificate and ID (something Dominick had tried to access for years), and our kitchen staff has provided three nutritious meals each day. Dominick says that if it weren’t for Dr. Goetcheus and Christ House,

“I don’t know where...or even if...I would be. I got my hope back up.”

As Christ House continues to navigate the challenges of the pandemic, we remain deeply grateful for our staff and community partners for connecting people in need with compassionate and comprehensive health care. Patient outreach is a crucial aspect of our work which helps patients like Dominick find healing and hope.

Poetry in the Park

Celebrating National Poetry Month with Haikus

In honor of National Poetry Month this April, Christ House would like to showcase poems written by our community. Poetry offers individuals an avenue for self-expression and

creativity, which can assist in overall mental health and recovery. As with all patient activities, poetry also builds self-esteem and can help foster a sense of community and support.

On a sunny day this April, patients took a walk to a local park and learned about haikus, Japanese poems which feature a 5-7-5 syllable count. Here are some of the poems written:

**A trip to the moon
I will be there very soon –
I am there, it's June.**

-Gary

**I can be myself
It's hard being someone else
So just be yourself**

-Anonymous

**Smell flowers in bloom.
We're not confined to a room,
It is over soon.**

-Larry



Monthly Donor Spotlight: Erica

Christ House could not function without the generous support of our community. With the wavering state of our country over the past year and so much uncertainty, the commitment of our monthly donors has truly helped carry us through it all. Christ House's Circle of Healers represents a particularly loyal and dedicated group of Christ House supporters for whom we are deeply grateful.

Joining the Circle of Healers makes giving easier for donors as well. Monthly donors choose

what day to be charged each month, can update payment information in their account at any time, and receive an annual giving statement at the end of each year.

When asked why she chose to sign up for monthly contributions, Erica shared, "I joined the Circle of Healers because I believe in the work of Christ House, and I know how important donations are to the work. When I worked at Christ House a decade ago, I saw how many individuals gave and how

treasured each donation was - large and small, recurring and occasional. I saw the budget, and I saw the people the budget affected each day. The difference is real, significant, and enduring. When I give, I get to be a part of that."



**Scan here or visit our website
to learn more about monthly
giving to Christ House**

Save the Date: May 19th

Do More 24 is a fundraiser which convenes the region's nonprofit community to engage donors, partners and volunteers in an effort to do more throughout the National Capital Area – all in 24 hours.

To learn more and join Christ House's fundraising team, visit:

DoMore24.org/ChristHouse



**Do More for
our community**

DoMore24.org/ChristHouse

Donor Survey

We want to hear from you! As we begin planning for the year ahead, Christ House will benefit from hearing your input regarding communication, donation, and overall engagement preferences. We truly value your input and hope you can take a few minutes to complete our anonymous survey.

***Please consider sharing your thoughts by taking our survey
between now and May 31st!***



**Scan here to take our donor
survey, which can also be
found on our website!**



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