



Following Heartstrings

A donor spotlight on Mark and Julia Roberts



Julia (far left) and Mark (2nd from right) helping in the kitchen in 2001

Mark first came to Christ House as the Patient Activities Coordinator in 1996. After completing a year of volunteer service, he joined our staff as the Coordinator of Volunteers. Julia first heard of Christ House’s Year Long Volunteer program from a mentor. Once she graduated from American University, she became Christ House’s Food Service Assistant where Mark and Julie’s paths crossed for the first time. Three years later, they were married.

Mark and Julia recall their time at Christ House fondly, sharing that they met many of their lifelong friends through Christ House. Mark worked closely with

the case managers and found it very educational. He remembers, “learning so much about the spectrum of care Christ House was providing” and feeling deeply involved in the efforts of holistic healing. He reflects on what he learned from working with our patients by saying, “We’re all broken in our own ways. It’s easy to look at patients and see how they’ve been broken – racism, addiction, medical problems, poverty...We are all broken, though. Christ House is a place where we all come to grips with things. Patients heal bones, heal emotions, and learn that they are a valued member of this community.”

Julia describes Christ House as “what I needed when I needed it.” She recalls struggling emotionally her senior year of college after losing someone close to her. When she told a friend about the opportunity available at Christ House, her friend remarked, “Sounds like there are some heartstrings there.” At school, Julia had focused on law enforcement and criminal justice. The more she was exposed to social work, the more she felt called to work with people at risk. She now works as a federal probation officer helping individuals coming out of incarceration. Occasionally she’ll come across a case where an individual has experienced real brokenness, reminding her of her time at Christ House and wishing there were a similar organization that she could connect individuals to where she now works.

Being at Christ House when the program was only in its 15th year of operation had a lasting impression on Julia. “It was all still new – the founders all worked there and seeing that what they started is still going... we want to keep it going. We feel a direct connection to the founders and their story.” Mark and Julia recounted their feelings of being cared for by



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.

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the community and shared a memory of current Executive Director Mary Jordan comforting other YLVs during a difficult time, “Mary Jordan came over after – she was there at 11pm to sit with them. She had two young kids at home and had worked a full day but she took the time to make sure we were all alright.”

Mark and Julia now live in Pennsylvania with their daughter. They have been financial contributors to Christ House for over 20 years and continue to feel deeply connected to the mission. During their time at Christ House, Mark and Julia not only played a role in the healing process of our patients, but they were also able to find each other. “Christ House helped shape who

both of us are” Mark shares, “We can’t give back what it has given to us. But we’re giving back what we can.”

Support healing and hope when you give to Christ House.



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christhouse.networkforgood.com

COVID-19 Vaccines

Christ House leadership works to grant access to the vaccine for eligible patients and staff

As of February, many staff have received both doses of the Moderna vaccine, or are scheduled to receive their second dose shortly. Over the past few weeks, Christ House clinical staff has been meeting with patients individually to review how the vaccine works and most importantly, to answer any questions a patient might have about the vaccine. “This way,” says Mary Jordan, Executive Director and Nurse Practitioner, “patients are prepared once the vaccine is available to them.”

Christ House is following the district’s protocol for vaccine distribution. Connecting patients with vaccines has required a high degree of patience and coordination amongst shelters, Unity Health Care workers, and the DC Government. The perseverance of the staff has already opened the door for many patients and Kairos members to receive their vaccines. Christ House has also extended patients’ stays when needed so that they are able to receive the second dose of the

vaccine. “I didn’t feel a thing. No bad reaction, I’m glad I took it. I recommend everybody take it,” one patient shared. For Mary Jordan, the most important impact of receiving the vaccine is the ability to continue to treat patients: “We are fortunate – it gives us a degree of protection to keep working with patients coming through our doors.” In looking ahead into 2021, she shares, “I’m hopeful because we’ve contained any outbreak, we’re effectively working to get staff and patients immunized, we’re doing daily surveillance and weekly testing of patients and Kairos members. We, as healthcare workers, all feel more hopeful now that there’s a vaccine available.”

People experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 when living in congregate settings such as shelters. Practicing hygiene and accessing PPE also present challenges to this population, increasing the risk of transmission. Ensuring the homeless population has access to vaccines quickly can help reduce the spread of the



A group of Christ House patients who have received their COVID-19 vaccines

A Note from Executive Chef Miri Jung

Supporting Christ House through Resource Stewardship

During my time at Christ House, I have learned many things serving our patients and working with volunteers and donors. From the start, I faced the challenge of figuring out what our department could do to better exemplify our mission of providing dignified care through holistic healing from the inside out. My first priority was to implement more nutritious meals because this helps heal our patients' bodies. This required changing our focus from microwavable and canned foods to wholesome, fresh or frozen ingredients like fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grain

carbohydrates -- Food that is just plain and simple, nutritious.

Another challenge I have come across is a misunderstanding of how Christ House operates, which I try to clearly communicate when I am able. We are first and foremost a medical facility which operates similarly to a hospital in regards to our adherence to dietary guidelines. Due to these guidelines, we do not function like a food pantry or a soup kitchen. We do not distribute individual food items, but rather we feed our patients three meals a day every single

day of the year. Our four-member kitchen staff cooks most meals from scratch for patients and staff totaling to about fifty people per meal. I want to acknowledge the incredible support of all our volunteers and donors, and share a tip of how you can best help our kitchen needs by using Resource Stewardship. If you want to donate an item that is not listed on our website, you can call, email, or ask our front desk if we have a need for that item. One of our volunteers uses her pick-up truck to pick up leftover food from local restaurants and grocery stores around DC. She contacts me via text anytime she has food and asks if we have a need for it. This coordination helps us receive exactly what ingredients we need, in the right quantity, when we need it. The coordination between this volunteer and me is a perfect example of Resource Stewardship: the appropriate allocation of resources.

One of the greatest joys of my role as the Executive Chef is being able to watch the change that takes place when an individual is provided with the proper food their body needs to heal. Witnessing a patient regain their strength and personality through consistent and nutritious meals is one of the many transformations your support makes possible. If you would like to consider donating food or learning more about our current needs, please feel free to reach me at miri.jung@christhouse.org. Thank you!



To leave Christ House in your will is to leave behind a legacy of healing and hope.

Your contribution will help us to continue providing compassionate and comprehensive care for the many homeless men in DC in need of a place to recover.

Although not a requirement by law, we appreciate being notified when Christ House is included in your will. If you have any questions or comments, please contact: Lydia Olsen, Director of Development & Communications, at Lydia.Olsen@christhouse.org or (202) 328-1100.

Introducing: Christ House's Ambassador Program

Christ House is seeking individuals who are passionate about our mission of providing health care for men experiencing homelessness in DC who want to take their support one step further. Christ House Ambassadors spread healing and hope by offering their time and gifts as fundraisers, volunteers, and advocates of Christ House patients.

To learn more and apply, visit: christhouse.org/christ-house-ambassador-program/

For questions about the Ambassador Program, reach out to: kira.venturini@christhouse.org

Ambassadors
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