



# Day by Day

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

## CHANGING DRESSINGS, CHANGING LIVES

*Our nursing team rebuilds lives through compassionate health care*

The foundation for our patients' recovery at Christ House is the care they receive from our nursing staff. From admission to discharge, the nurses offer 24/7 presence and diligent attention.

The nursing team includes nursing assistants, registered nurses, and nurse practitioners.

Nurse practitioners conduct patient assessments and determine an individualized care plan according to the needs and goals of each patient. Registered nurses are responsible for overall management of patient care. A few of their responsibilities include administering medications, doing bloodwork, navigating insurance issues, administering treatments, and managing symptoms and treatment issues as they arise. Nursing assistants carry out direct patient care and support the RNs by assisting with hygiene, clothing and linens,



*A few members of the nursing staff ready for their shift. L-R: Hannah, year-long volunteer RN; Lawrence, Kairos Program member NA; Evangeline, NA; Alyssa, RN; Pierce, year-long volunteer NA*

caring for wounds, monitoring vital signs, and other tasks necessary to care for the patient's daily needs.

In addition to these duties that are typical in most clinical settings,

our nursing team also addresses the unique needs of the homeless population.

They teach patients to manage their medical conditions and build healthy habits. An important part of this education includes sitting down with each patient to explain the purpose of their medication and how to take it.

When necessary, our nursing staff also accompanies patients to their outside appointments. Because of the complexity of the health care system and the cognitive limitations of some of our patients, it can be beneficial for a staff member to explain procedures and provide reassurance to the patient and to relay important information back to our nursing staff.

Additionally, since we treat a disproportionately high number of patients with mental illness and cognitive impairments, our nursing staff must pay extra attention to ensure a safe environment for staff and patients alike. The team is sensitive to each patient's ability and need and provides individual attention as necessary.

Hospitality is a central, organization-wide value at Christ House. Since the nursing team interacts most frequently with patients, they intentionally work to make each patient feel welcome, comfortable, and at home.

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**"It is so rewarding to see our patients transform during their stay here."**

**- Michelle, RN**

*Continued*

Another marker of our nursing unit is the longevity of our staff. Turnover is common in the health care field and especially in positions that require direct service to at-risk populations. However, seventy percent of our nursing staff have worked at Christ House for longer than five years (including three staff who have served for over 15 years, and three who have served for over 25 years!). This continuity ensures stability in the care we provide and is evidence of the staff's commitment to the individuals we serve.

Three of our nursing assistants are members of the Kairos Program. As former Christ House patients, they can identify with the patients and are an encouraging example of how patients can transition into a healthy and stable life.

One nurse, Michelle, explained that while there are difficulties when dealing with mental illness, she truly enjoys working with those who have experienced

homelessness. Since our patients' stays are longer than in other settings, staff and patients have the opportunity to build meaningful



relationships.

Michelle expressed, "It is so rewarding to see our patients transform during their stay here.

Often times a patient will arrive very mistrustful and unsure. After we bring some stability to their medical condition and show that

we care for and respect them, they begin to soften in their demeanor and trust the staff and the process."

Another nurse reflects, "There are hard days, of course. But we have a lot of good days. We have fun with the patients; we

joke around and genuinely enjoy each other's company, which makes the environment light-hearted and healing for both the staff and patients."

"Our integrative approach to care is our biggest strength," explains Mary Jordan, Clinical Director. "It means that we provide expert medical care in addition to creating a therapeutic and supportive environment that is conducive to the ultimate goal of holistic healing."

## LEAVE A LEGACY OF HEALING & HOPE

Many donors who contribute to Christ House regularly also choose to leave a legacy of second chances and compassionate health care for the homeless. Do you want to do the same? A bequest makes a huge difference in the lives of our patients, and helps to ensure that Christ House will be able to continue to provide health care and holistic support services.



"Naming Christ House in my will allows me to give the gift of new life to people experiencing homelessness."

- Janet

A bequest can be a specific sum, a percentage of your estate, or the remainder of your estate after expenses and gifts to loved ones. You can find examples of how to name Christ House as a full or partial beneficiary of your estate at: [christhouse.org/donate/ways-give](http://christhouse.org/donate/ways-give). If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Katz, Director of Development, at [sarah.katz@christhouse.org](mailto:sarah.katz@christhouse.org).



# STUDENTS LEARN THROUGH SERVICE

Christ House depends on the goodness of thousands of volunteers to fulfill its mission. While most of our volunteers serve regularly working in the kitchen or answering phones, we also welcome students who come from near and far to learn about our work and help with special projects.

Some students seek out Christ House to fulfill a graduation requirement for community service and some come with campus organizations for a service-learning spring break in Washington, DC. This year's spring break brought over 100 students through our doors.

We give all new volunteers an informational tour of Christ House, including a look into our history and a time to ask questions. Then, they are assigned to a project. This spring break, several groups helped to clean apartments and other areas at Kairos House. One group that comes every year brought groceries and prepared lunch. One student repaired the hymnals we use on Sundays and some students shredded old documents. Spring break students are also to thank for most of the gardens planted at Christ House and Kairos House. Students usually join the patients for lunch and fellowship, as well.

Each year, we welcome medical and nursing students who want to learn how Christ House provides health care for our homeless patients. We offer the usual tour and explanation of our work as well as the chance to speak with a case manager and someone from the medical staff. We sometimes also have time for a special conversation with members of the Kairos Program. These educational experiences offer a broader view of what health care for homeless persons looks like on the personal and day-to-day level.

Seminary students also see value in volunteering at Christ House. We currently have groups serving with us from Wesley United Methodist Seminary and Theological College of Catholic University. They are interested in both hands-on projects as well as "ministry of presence" opportunities in which they can interact with patients or assist with Wednesday evening prayer.

The volunteer office attempts to give as many people as possible a chance to volunteer and learn about Christ House. We usually have a project in need of willing bodies and able hands. If you or your group is looking for a volunteer opportunity, contact us at [volunteers@christhouse.org](mailto:volunteers@christhouse.org); you may be just who we need.

## In 2015, Christ House volunteers included:

40 Kairos members,  
67 meal groups,  
2,843 individual volunteers,  
15 year-long volunteers,  
and 55 work groups...  
who volunteered for a total of  
**39,550 hours!**



# MEMORIAL DAY BBQ

Join patients, staff, volunteers, and the larger Christ House community for food, fun and games!

**Monday, May 30th  
12:30 pm**

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Jack Reiffer at jack.reiffer@christhouse.org or call us at (202) 328-1100 by May 24th.



# HAPPY 75TH BIRTHDAY TO:



**Allen Goetcheus**  
*Co-founder & President*



**Abraham Pedemonte**  
*Maintenance Coordinator*

# SUMMER CLOTHING NEEDS

As spring arrives, it's time to stock our clothing closet with warm weather clothing! Will you help us?

We are in need of the following new or gently used clothing items:

- slip-on shower shoes
- short-sleeved shirts (especially new, plain shirts)
- tennis shoes
- pants
- undershirts (2XL)
- underwear (new only, 2XL)
- jeans (especially sizes 30-26)
- sweatpants

You can drop off your donations at Christ House, or mail them. Questions? Call us at 202-328-1100 or email development@christhouse.org. Thank you for taking the time to support Christ House!



**christhouse.org**  
 RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED  
**CFC #34256 • UW #8385**  
**#381215**



**CHRIST HOUSE**  
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