



Christ
House

HEALING AND HOPE FOR HOMELESS PERSONS

VOLUME XXXIII, NO. 4 | FALL 2018

Day by Day



Tracey M. Gantt MSN, RN, APHN-BC guides patients in a discussion about smoking cessation.

Breaking the Cycle through Health Promotion

Our health promotion class builds health literacy and empowers patients to break the cycle of homelessness.

"I hear these terms, tar and nicotine, being thrown around. But what exactly are tar and nicotine?"

"I want to know why it feels so good to smoke a cigarette."

"Is the tobacco that is grown in the fields the same tobacco in cigarettes?"

On a recent Friday morning at Christ House, while most of D.C. geared up for the weekend, a group of patients in the living room engaged in an animated

discussion about smoking. Tracey Gantt, a public health nurse from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, stood in the middle of the circle and responded to comments to guide the conversation. Over the course of an hour, the attendees asked more probing questions, shared experiences, and gained new knowledge during their exploration of smoking cessation, the week's chosen topic.

Meeting the Need for Health Literacy

Since 2014, Christ House has offered a weekly health promotion class to patients and staff with the goal of advancing health literacy. We invite different presenters to lead discussions on a wide variety of health literacy topics pertinent to our patients.

"You learn a lot about what causes illnesses, and what you can do on your own to prevent something from getting worse"



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.

Recent Health Promotion Class Topics

- Frostbite
- Hypothermia
- Cold vs. Flu
- Exercise and Stretching
- Diabetes

Continued

Health literacy is a person's ability to understand basic health information and make appropriate health decisions. According to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, persons experiencing homelessness are generally more likely to have low health literacy as a result of their lack of access to health education or support in navigating the health system. Our health promotion class seeks to equip our patients, an especially vulnerable population, with the tools to successfully manage their health both during and after their stay at Christ House.

One of our core values at Christ House is to provide comprehensive health care that goes beyond simply treating the physical ailments of our patients. Therefore, our medical team must approach each patient's care from several angles, such as treating acute and chronic diseases, addressing mental health, and thoroughly teaching patients how to best manage their health conditions. Over the years, our nursing staff saw a need for further education, after struggling to adequately educate patients in the limited one-on-one

time they had with them. They often found themselves covering the same common topics, which left insufficient time to explain more complex issues specific to each patient. As a result, our health promotion class was formed to increase the accessibility of basic health literacy information to our patients.

The class has evolved to engage more health professionals from outside of Christ House in order to expose patients to a greater diversity of information. Public health professionals, nurses, medical students, and of course, Christ House medical staff members, have all lent their perspectives while teaching the class.

A Patient-Driven Class

The health promotion class is largely discussion-based and driven by the interests of the participants. Our staff often chooses future class topics based on issues that arise in previous class discussions with the intention of continuing the conversation. Frostbite, smoking cessation, heart disease, exercise, and medication management are all examples of topics that have

been featured in the past year.

Edward, a current Christ House patient who has been attending the health promotion classes for about six months, enjoys learning from the informative speakers and discussions in class.

"You learn a lot about what causes illnesses, and what you can do on your own to prevent something from getting worse," said Edward. "It's a good program."

The class benefits Christ House staff as well as patients. Jed Barton, our Clinical Manager, tries to attend health promotion every week, as he finds that it offers everyone something to learn. "The information is always interesting, and health literacy is so important," said Jed. "Part of our mission is to help people become more self-sufficient, and this class is definitely a part of that."

By creating a platform for open discussion of health issues in our health promotion class, Christ House promotes health literacy and empowers its patients to break the cycle of homelessness.



A staff member discusses nutrition with a patient.

Welcome Our Newest Year-Long Volunteer



Please join us in welcoming Evelyn Walker, our Activities Coordinator, who joined us in August as the newest addition to our lovely team of Year-Long Volunteers! She comes to us after studying graphic design at Chowan University in North Carolina. Evelyn is responsible for planning patient activities such as trips to museums, baseball games, movies, and walks around the neighborhood. These activities are essential to fostering holistic recovery and building community among our patients.

Evelyn enjoys being a part of the Christ House community and the creative challenge of her position.

When asked to comment on her method for choosing activities, she said, "I always think, 'What would I want to do if I were a patient here?'" Her desire to plan events that are both interesting and accessible to our patients drives her to think "outside the box."

Since she started in August, Evelyn has led a trip to the African American Civil War Museum, taken patients to see the beautiful street art around the Adams Morgan area, and even convinced a Kairos Program member to teach a drumming class to patients. Engaging activities such as these enrich the lives of our patients and cultivate the healing of both mind and body.

We are so grateful to have Evelyn and the rest of our Year-Long Volunteers!



Our patients enjoyed a recent trip to the African American Civil War Museum.

Farewell to Jean



After over 25 years of service, Jean Adams, our beloved arts volunteer, retired from her weekly commitment at Christ House. Since the 1990s, Jean's strong belief in the therapeutic power of art has helped her guide our patients in creative self-expression.

We will miss her dearly and wish her the best of luck in the future!



Artwork by a Christ House patient



Support Christ House with a Tax-Free Gift from your IRA!

If you are 70 ½ years or older, you can make a tax-free charitable gift from your individual retirement account (IRA) directly to Christ House. Supporting Christ House in this way can help satisfy your annual required minimum distribution requirement without paying taxes on the funds.

Contact your IRA plan administrator to complete the gift, and feel free to reach out to Sarah Katz, Director of Development, at sarah.katz@christhouse.org with any questions.



Labor Day Cookout

We celebrated Labor Day this year with tie-dye, ping-pong, and tons of food! It was a sweltering day, but that didn't stop our patients from feasting on ribs, potato salad, barbecue chicken, and many other delicious dishes. We are so grateful to our amazing kitchen staff, volunteers, and donors for making this event possible!



Only 2 Weeks Left!

There are only **2 weeks** left in our Fall Matching Challenge!

Until **October 31st**, every donation will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$200,000, by a group of generous Christ House partners.

Hurry and donate now to double the impact of your gift before the challenge ends!

Please visit our website to maximize your impact by donating during the Fall Matching Challenge:

www.christhouse.org/donate

1 + 1 = 2x the impact!

FALL MATCHING CHALLENGE

The Advance #381215
Advancing hope in Christ's name

www.christhouse.org
Return Service Requested
CFC #34256 | UW #8385



1717 Columbia Road, NW
Washington, DC 20009

Christ House

