



## OWN 2021 Makes History

After months of planning and preparation, pivoting and promoting, our tenth annual **One Winter Night** Event was an unforgettable experience and a resounding success!

When Executive Director **Rob Dalhaus III** took the stage at the **Venue CU** the evening of **February 5**, you could already sense it was going to be an exciting night. “We’ve known this event was going to look a little different tonight,” Rob exclaimed. “But I tell you, the energy around town, the energy in the room, the energy online, the donations coming in, have been absolutely amazing.”

Joined by emcees **Dan Church** from the Venue CU and **Clay Harrington** from the Vineyard Church, the focus of the evening, and its ultimate goal, was clear: “Throughout the night we are going to try to do everything we can to bring awareness to the needs of our friends on the street – our friends without an address – so we can raise as much funds as we can to continue to do what we do here at C-U at Home.”

Technology added a new twist this year as activities were live streamed on Facebook and YouTube (the event live stream can be viewed on our "C-U at Home" channel). Many remote “guest appearances” were integrated into the program throughout the night. The first face to appear on the big screen was no surprise. Ministry Founder **Melany Jackson** checked in from Colorado Springs to kick off our tenth One Winter Night program!

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“The idea was to offer folks, just like you, an experience, a loose idea, of what it might be like to not have a place to live,” Mel recalled. She shared memories and milestones, then remarked on the amazing progress the ministry has seen: “What started as a simple idea of housing our most vulnerable friends without an address has now grown into being a leading agency for the region that continues to thrive.”

Throughout the night, musical performances by **Jean-René Balekita, Jordan Pride, Lia Caton, Michael McAndrew, and Howard Page** were woven between presentations from ministry partners from across the community.

**Karen Pickard**, a volunteer at the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, described their mission succinctly: “We feed the hungry. We feed our fellow citizens. Daily Bread is a place I would like to call a family, a community.” When COVID closed indoor dining, they kept serving meals in disposable containers and sack lunches. “We never stopped cooking.”

**James Moreland** talked with Rob about his weekly "Hot Dog" meals for our friends and others at Westside Park in Champaign, Spring through Fall. James also leads a "Socks" outreach on many weekends, handing out socks on the streets in eight Midwestern cities. “I was brought up in a family that was known to give,” says. “It’s a need in me to serve. It’s fun to see how God moves.”



Some C-U at Home staff members shared during the evening as well. **Steven Harper** and **John Parks**, who oversee Housing and Outreach, talked about the challenges of daily ministry. “If I stay close to the people who I know are going to pour into me when I’m poured out,” John shared, “It gives me the wherewithal to come back tomorrow.” For Steven, accountability was key: “Checking in with people who care about me, who reach out to me, that keeps me on track.”

C-U at Home Chaplain **Wayne Wager** shared a message on two aspects of the Gospel brought to together in our ministry. “The Gospel of justice and peace is not separate from the Gospel of the cross,” he pointed out. “If there’s a big idea here tonight, it’s that these things must go together.” The complete Gospel, Wayne stressed, begins with personal redemption, but it is also manifest in society “being overwhelmed by the goodness of God, and setting things to right.”

**Andy Quarnstrom**, City of Champaign Township Supervisor, talked about the influences and experiences that inspired the "C-U at Work" program, a partnership between the Township and C-U at Home. “By employing homeless men and women, giving them a meal, providing them with dignity, camaraderie, and the opportunity for case management,” he noted, “You’re really doing something positive.”

# ONE WINTER NIGHT 2021 RECAP

Photos by Miike Heiniger



Our tenth annual community awareness event was a resounding success, thanks in no small part to the overwhelming generosity of so many people, churches, and businesses who stepped up in the midst of a pandemic to make it happen. Thanks to **The Venue C-U** for providing such a beautiful space for our Event HQ; **WCIA** for serving as our drive-up donation station and for their amazing event promotion; **downtown businesses** who allowed us to use of their parking lots, **local churches** and **WBGL** for serving as satellite locations, and for the dozens and dozens of **volunteers** and **box-dwellers** who came out in spite of the harsh, cold conditions !

## \$563,000 RAISED!!



156  
Participants  
94  
Business Sponsors

21  
Church Partners





## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Step into the **Phoenix Daytime Drop-in Center** on any given afternoon, and you'll hear a booming voice calling out announcements, reminders, and requests. "You're up next for the shower! Whose laundry needs to come out of that drier?! Please pull that mask up!"

That voice belongs to Phoenix Center Assistant **Russell Mann** (right photo) He's been around since near the beginning. As he recalls, "Melany [Jackson, founder of C-U at Home] asked me to oversee a number of volunteers to turn the old Phoenix Bar into a new place of grace." That project resulted in the very first Phoenix Drop-in Center, which opened in the summer of 2014.

Originally from California, Russ spent two years in the Navy serving as an aircraft handler on the U.S.S. Constellation. He also worked in the oil refining industry for a time. He came to Illinois in 2011, quickly connected with C-U at Home, and came on staff in October of 2019. On any given day, you'll find him helping behind the desk, keeping the showers and laundry running smoothly, handing out sack lunches, keeping track of supplies and donations.

"I understand the situation our friends find themselves in," he says, "Because I was once just like them." Breaking down walls can be challenging, he admits. "There are so many different personalities to deal with on any given day."

For Russ, it's all in a day's work. No two days are the same, but that's what keeps things interesting. One thing's for sure -- he's a good hand to have on deck!



## Ministry Focus: The Phoenix Daytime Drop-in Center

Beginning the morning after OWN 2021, with temperatures in the single digits, emergency warming hours began at our Phoenix Center. For two weeks straight, C-U at Home remained open 24-7 as overnight shelter hours gave way directly into Phoenix warming hours during one of the longest severe cold snaps in recent memory. It's been a challenging time for our friends and our staff alike.

Attendance at the Phoenix broke records as more folks than ever took refuge from the cold. Fortunately, local media attention and widespread compassion concern rallied support from the community as donations of food, blankets, warm clothing, and other essential items poured in.

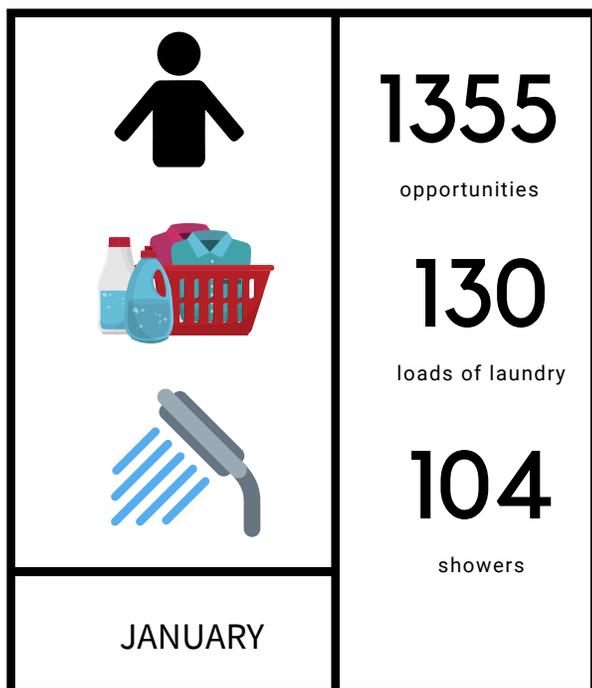
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All the basic services provided at the Phoenix – showers, laundry, visits by service providers, even haircuts – continued uninterrupted. As the snow accumulated, friends pitched in to clear sidewalks, mop floors, take out trash. Volunteers pitched in to help. Staff gave above and beyond the call of duty.

In the midst of all this, there’s still been much to celebrate. Several of our friends have recently been housed, and another dozen are somewhere in the process from completing paperwork to pending possibilities. With assistance from the Continuum of Service Providers to the Homeless and the Champaign Urbana Public Health Department, we were blessed with an on-site opportunity for our friends to receive the COVID vaccine. Dr. Ashok Jagasia and his staff continue to offer a monthly health clinic for our friends as well.

Of course, we are all looking forward to warmer weather and a return to “normal.” For now, keep our Phoenix Daytime Drop-In Center on your radar if you are looking for somewhere to give some love as a volunteer or through a donation.

## Phoenix Services Provided



## New Film Premieres at OWN 2021

**Phil Gioja** of Center Street Productions and **Dawn Broers**, Founder/Director of Fortitude Community Outreach were on hand for the premier of Phil’s new film, ***V for Vulnerable***.

Before the screening, Dawn shared the story of how Fortitude and C-U at Home first connected. She was contacted by Phil and Melany about using *The Phoenix, Hope is Rising* film as an educational resource for social workers.

“So here I am already feeling the call to do something in my community for the homeless,” she recalled. “When I saw the scenes of the street outreach in Champaign, that was it for me. That was exactly what we needed to do in our community [Kankakee].”

Dawn, Phil, and Rob participated in a Q & A session after the screening, “It’s not just about giving folks a place to stay or a roof over their head,” Phil noted. “There is opportunity for life change there, and we see it happen. I’m glad I was able to catch some of that in the film.”

Both films, along with Dawn's presentation and the Q & A, are on our YouTube channel Live Stream (search for "C-U at Home").

## A Word from Rob

"Grateful, honored, and humbled" - I have heard it said that we should all have an "attitude of gratitude." Even when things appear at their worst, there is always something for us to be grateful for.

When we launched our One Winter Night (OWN) 2021 season, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. COVID created anxiety about holding an event with a large gathering of people. With so many people losing their jobs in 2020, we were unsure how generous folks would be able to be this year.

As our staff and leadership team prayed about the ministry needs for 2021 and the gaps the community was asking us to fill, we knew our resources and faith had been stretched. Then this thought came to my mind, "if everyone does a little, massive impact would be felt."

I am SO grateful to report that by the grace of God and with the generous support of this amazing community, massive impact was indeed felt! Our OWN 2021 fundraising goal was not just reached, it was surpassed!

More importantly, it allows us to continue to provide and sustain the many resources we offer to our friends without an address.

On behalf of our staff, our board of directors, and most importantly, our friends, let me once again say, "Thank YOU!" We give all the glory to God but owe a lot of the credit to you, our faithful supporters. We couldn't do what we do without you!!

**In His Service,  
Rob Dalhaus III, Executive Director**



## Austin's Place Update

One of the highlights of this new year has been the relocation of Austin's Women's Shelter to its new home in the northwest section our main building. "C-U at Austin's Place" has it's own entrance at 504 N. Market Street. The new space houses an office, seven double rooms, a lounge area, restroom and shower facilities, and laundry.

Long-time Austin's Place board member **Kim Stanhope** (top left) helped guide this transition as a member of C-U at Home's Board of Directors.

Kim and **Kelli Kemper** (top right) have been with Austin's Place since the beginning, when the shelter opened in 2007 at Champaign's First United Methodist Church. They recalled their experiences in a video shared at OWN 2021.

The goal was always simply "to provide a safe and warm spot for women to stay," Kelli noted. "But there's no way we could have made it without the support of our volunteers." Kim agreed, also citing the "years of support from community partners" that helped along the way, especially through the pandemic and the transition to becoming part of C-U at Home.

"It's a beautiful space, it's a warm and inviting space," Kim said. "It's exactly what we need for women to feel safe and protected." Kelli added that it is also a bittersweet experience. "For so long it was such an important part of our lives."