



Changing Lives

When people think of **C-U at Home** today, the first thing that comes to mind is most likely our overnight shelters, Phoenix Daytime Center, or perhaps our One Winter Night event. But from nearly the beginning, the original “heart” of our ministry was transitional housing, and it still plays a significant role in the life-changing work we do.

On Labor Day in early September, John moved into **Alchemy House**, our men’s transitional residence. After a lifetime of alcohol abuse, he’d been through the Pavilion’s “New Choice” rehab program. At their recommendation, he applied to our transitional housing program.

“My counselors there said this would be a good fit for me,” John shared. “They called it ‘the Cadillac’ of transitional programs.”

John grew up in southern Missouri and spent six years in the Marines after high school. He’s worked all over the Midwest since, mostly in construction or manufacturing. He never thought his drinking was a problem.

“I’ve always been a drinker,” he admitted, “But I always showed up for work. I had to go to work to pay for my alcohol!”

As he headed into his sixties, however, his family started to challenge him about his drinking habit. With their encouragement, he traveled from his home in Danville to seek help at the Pavilion. When he got here, he learned he’d have to wait one more day to get into their program. He spent that entire night in West Side Park in downtown Champaign.

“I knew if I went home, I’d never come back,” he recalled. “I sat on a bench, looked over at the liquor store on the corner, and asked God to get me through the night.”

Continued on page 4 . . .

Inside . . .

2 . . . One Winter Night 2022

3 . . . Spotlight on Staff

5 . . . Focus on Ministry

6 . . . A Word From Rob

Plus! Business Partners

DHM Memorial

A Fond Farewell



Our 11th annual community awareness and fundraising event, **One Winter Night**, may still be a few months away (Friday, Feb. 4, 2022), but planning and preparation for the event is already in full swing! We're excited to be back on the streets and sidewalks of downtown Champaign!

For the second year in a row, Event Headquarters will be at **The Venue CU at 51 E. Main Street, Champaign**. This amazing space will serve as the staging area for participants and volunteers to check-in, and local speakers and musicians will also be on stage there throughout the night.

Dan Church, who also served as co-emcee of the event last February, said he and his team "hope to be overwhelmed" by the number of people who participate in person this time around.

"We cannot wait to see firsthand the incredible outpouring of generosity and support that our friends at C-U at Home will experience during this upcoming One Winter Night season. We look forward to a powerful event that will lead to many lives positively impacted and a community transformed in a great way! C-U at Home is truly a blessing to our community."



Participants brave the winter cold as they sleep on the streets in cardboard boxes to get a firsthand experience of what it might be like to be homeless and have no resources available such as those we provide here. Funds raised through sponsorships support C-U at Home's ongoing efforts to provide shelter and other essential services for the most vulnerable homeless.

Local businesses and organizations can also lend their support as **Business Sponsors**, with participation levels ranging from Bronze (\$100) to Event (\$10,000+) sponsorships.



In addition to being socially distanced on downtown sidewalks, participants can also gather at churches, their homes, or even virtually. Now is the time to **register for the event** and begin securing sponsors! We will set up a personal fundraising page for you to share with family, friends, co-workers, employers, or other business contacts.

If you'd like to have Rob visit your church to share about our mission and ministry, please contact him at **rob@cuathome.us**. "Church Tour" spots are filling up, so be sure to get on the schedule as soon as possible!

Watch for ongoing news and updates on our Facebook page and in our weekly email updates. Please spread the word and help us make **OWN 2022** our best event ever!



For more than a decade, **Austin's Place** served as the only emergency shelter for single women in Champaign County. Over the years, first at its original home in **First United Methodist Church** (Champaign) and more recently at **New Covenant Fellowship**, hundreds of women have been blessed by the ministry of Austin's Place.

Austin's Place became a part of C-U at Home in June 2020. The shelter moved to our main location, with a separate entrance facing **Market Street**, in January 2021. Its dorm-style rooms can accommodate up to 14 women and are augmented by a lounge area, shower and bathroom facilities, and a staff office.

Our trained, professional staff provide a safe and healthy atmosphere for women in need of shelter. They also guide them toward other local services, help them navigate life's challenges, or simply listen and pray. Let's meet the amazing women who serve at Austin's Place each night!

Chloe Hanson, who has been on staff as Operations Associate since August 2020, recently moved into the new position of Women's Shelter Coordinator.

"I'm excited to step into this new role," she shared, "because it allows me to minister to these women and see lives change. My goal is to maintain a safe and peaceful environment for them."

Kari Grady is the staff veteran, having worked at the shelter for 15 months. She has a background in the medical field and joined our team so she could "serve a bigger purpose" with her work. It's been one of the biggest blessings in her professional life.

"I wanted to do something that had purpose and meaning," she shared. "Jesus wants to meet people where they're at, and that's what we do."

Our two newest staff members, **Torie Thoman** and **Allison Williford-Burgund**, have only been on board since late September, but they each have very personal experiences that make this work a perfect fit for them.

Torie is currently a Social Work student at UIUC. Public service has always been a passion, and she's worked with the elderly population and

Continued on the next page . . .



(L-R) Chloe, Torie, Kari, Alley, Allison

children with learning and behavioral difficulties, as well as representing disadvantaged students at her previous academic institution.

“Continuing to advocate for people, no matter what sector of Social Work that might be, is my life purpose,” she explained. “It is a blessing to not only have the opportunity to continue my service through Austin’s Place, but further participate in God’s work with such wonderful colleagues!”

Allison understands more than most what makes her job so important: she actually spent time in a shelter with her mother and siblings when she was young.

“I know what it’s like to be where [our friends] are at, and that really helps me empathize,” she shared. “This work gives me the opportunity to give back.”

Part-timer **Alley Billman** has been with us for around a year. In addition to filling in at AP as needed, Alley started her own business last November, **Alley B Photography!**

“I’ve been slowly pursuing my photography for years now and finally decided to take the plunge,” she related. “I was looking for a place where I could volunteer, and I also needed a part-time job while building up my business. Working at Austin’s Place offered me the best of both worlds!”

Torie shared a motivating scripture that perfectly expresses the sense of mission all these amazing women share:

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

(Proverbs 31:8-9)



Business Partnerships

We have been blessed to have the support of **Dave & Harry Locksmiths** as OWN Business Sponsors since 2018 and as “Hope Givers,” with annual donations that sustain year-round sheltering and the other essential services we provide to those in need. They are always quick to respond to whatever security needs we have.

Dave & Harry’s is well known in our community for their professional locksmithing, quality workmanship, responsiveness to clients' needs, and a commitment to education and emerging technologies. We appreciate their generous support and are proud to have them as partners in our mission.

Dave & Harry's: "Locksmiths you can trust."

Changing Lives (from page 1)

As John heads into his third month of sobriety, he credits his success to “the good people at C-U at Home who want you to do well.”

The structure of the program, which includes regular attendance at recovery meetings, ongoing counseling, and weekly meetings with our transitional housing team and his spiritual advisor, have been a great help, he noted.

John just started a new job and will soon move to the next “step up” in our program, which will help prepare him to live independently again. What does the future hold for him?

“I want to find work and live a good life,” he said. “I plan to make the most of the rest of what life I have to enjoy!”

Focus on Ministry

There's been a steady flow of volunteers, friends, and activities "in the house" since regular hours and services resumed at our **Phoenix Daytime Drop-In Center** in the middle of August!

An average of 37 people/day stopped in at the Phoenix during operating hours for August and September. We've been blessed to have numerous volunteers helping out nearly every day, including a particularly large number of students from UIUC! What happens during the afternoons around here?

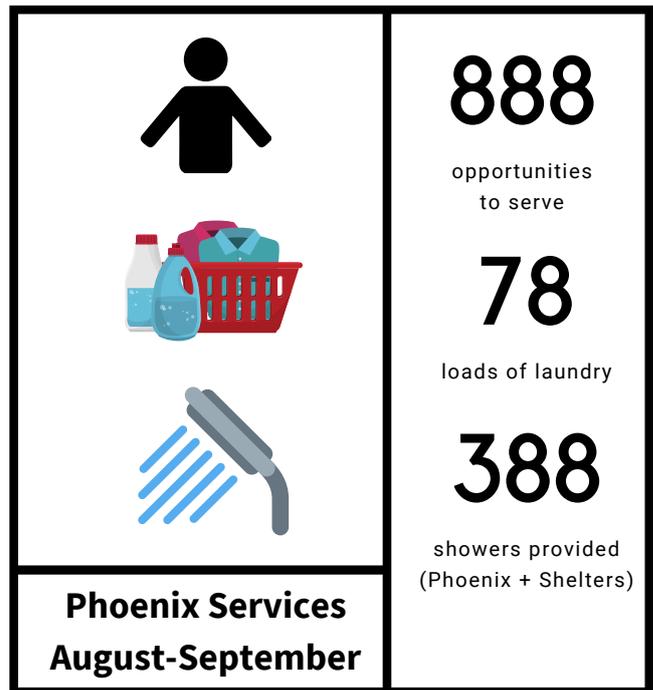
Puzzles, card games, and chess. Shelter intakes and case management sessions. Weekly Bible studies. Arts and crafts. Snacks and sack lunches. Laundry and showers. Phones charged and mail picked up. Notary services provided by volunteer Joy George and our newly-minted in-house notary, Phoenix Assistant **Russell Mann**. Weekly tele-clinics and monthly visits by **Dr. Ashok Jagasia**.

Starting last week, something brand new kicked off on Phoenix Fridays! Grad students from UIUC began a bi-weekly creative writing workshop for our friends interested in poetry and other forms of written expression!

"The atmosphere at the Phoenix has never been better," says **Cheryl Lehman**, our Phoenix Coordinator. "I look around and see friends--both with and without addresses--helping each other out, joking around, and pitching in to keep the place clean. It's a real joy to be a part of this community."

When asked how he would describe the "feel" of things at the Phoenix, Russ summed it up in a single word: "Peaceful."

The Phoenix has always been a place of love, grace, and hope for our friends without an address. It's also now becoming a place of progress. A place of rest and refuge. A place where lives are being changed.



Resource Center Dedicated

This month we dedicated our new Resource Center in the Phoenix Center to the memory of **Dustin Heye Mennenga**, whose untimely passing early this year was sad news to learn. Memorials sent our way on his behalf helped fund the computers and desks for the room.

Dustin's parents, **Dave and Rita**, along with family friend **Mark Chellberg** (pictured below), stopped by recently to see the **DHM Memorial Resource Center** first-hand.

The new facility has already been a great blessing to our friends in need of computer access to look for work, housing, and other social services. It will always serve as a reminder of hope for a better life for those who benefit from its availability.



A Word from Rob

"Hope." This word has always astounded me because for such a short word, it carries an immense amount of power.

We can hope our sports team wins or hope that a boy or girl we like will text us back or we can hope that the new car we just bought will last until we can pass it down to our children.

Here at C-U at Home, we get to see "hope" displayed in different ways each and every day. As staff, we get to remind our friends on the street that there is hope for better things to come their way.

When they come into the Phoenix, we offer them hope through companionship, encouraging them that they are not alone. When they come into the shelters at night, beat down from the struggles of the day, we are able to offer the safety and security of a good night's sleep.

You see friends, "hope" can take many forms, and providing that reassurance to our friends that they are not alone could be that boost someone needs to believe in themselves and make a positive change.

Today, I "hope" you get the chance to have a positive impact on someone's life!

Matthew 25:40

**In His Service,
Rob Dalhaus III
Community Outreach &
Development Director**



A Fond Farewell . . .

Since our last newsletter, we've said goodbye to two beloved staff whose dedicated service to our friends without addresses will be greatly missed.

Managing Director **Aleta Keith** began working for us in January 2019 and played a crucial role in helping our organization manage the transition to year-round emergency sheltering during the COVID pandemic. She also oversaw the major transformations at our men's and women's shelters and our Phoenix Daytime Drop-in Center that made them into the amazing places of grace and hope they've come to be.

When our shelter staffing shortages were most critical, Aleta spent many long hours filling in at the shelters in addition to the responsibilities of her "day job." She was also a big "behind-the-scenes" presence for our annual One Winter Night events over the past several years.

Housing and Outreach Associate **John Parks** joined our staff in the summer of 2020. His selfless dedication to ground-level street outreach, helping people move from rehab into our transitional housing program, and guiding them toward success blessed so many lives.

It was a true joy to work alongside such dedicated colleagues, and we pray for God's best as they move to new opportunities for service.

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."