



## Christmas Blessings

“I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time.”

So says Fred, the nephew of Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. And so it is, and we are always blessed by the outpouring of love showered upon our friends and this place during the Christmas season.

The “charitable, pleasant times” began when we were selected by the **Orange Krush** at UIUC to be the recipient of \$500 raised in their annual “Shooting for a Cause” Knockout Tournament (photo on p. 6). Then another student group, the **Illinois Stamps Scholars**, teamed up with **Kung Fu Tea** for a fundraiser that brought in even more donations for OWN 2022 (Stamps Scholars will also participate in the event!).

Volunteers from **Windsor Road Christian Church** descended up our building early in the month and put up beautiful Christmas decorations and trees bursting with seasonal ornamentation (photos on p. 5). WRCC Outreach Ministry Director **Michelle Santiago** came away from that morning with an amazing story of God’s grace and provision.

“As we finish decorating the space, a young ‘friend’ comes to the shelter with his dog. He’s visibly in distress looking for help for himself and his dog,” she related. “We drive to the train station to buy him a ticket home and share that this was no accident. That God loves him, sees him, and cares about all the details of his life. We prayed for healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in his family.”

But wait, there’s more! The dog needed a new home, which he found – you guessed it – with Michelle and her family! *(continued on p. 4)*

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## OWN 2022 is Seven Weeks Away!

One Winter Night 2022 is right around the corner! On **Friday, February 4**, fundraising Box Dwellers, volunteers and support staff, local musicians and speakers, all will descend on the sidewalks of downtown Champaign and at The Venue CU, our Event Headquarters!

We are thrilled to have Illini football legend, BTN analyst, and local realtor **J Leman** serving as our event co-emcee this year, along with Venue CU's **Dan Church!** All the night's presentations, music, and activities will be live streamed again this year on our Facebook page and YouTube Channel.

Two documentary films featuring our founding and ministry, "The Phoenix: Hope is Rising" (2016) and "V for Vulnerable" (which premiered at last year's event), will also be shown during the night.

In addition to the "main event" downtown, many people will be participating at satellite locations, including WBGL, Trinity Community Fellowship in Farmer City, a yet-to-be determined Mahomet site, and – exciting news! – on the Main Quad at the University of Illinois! Other church locations are in the works (contact us if your church would like to be involved), and it's also possible to participate remotely again this year.



Photo by Mike Heineger

**How can you be involved in OWN 2022?** In a lot of ways! A simple click below will take you to our website for more information.

- Be a fund-raising Box Dweller (or support one!)
- Be a Business Sponsor (or secure one!)
- Be a Volunteer (there are many ways to serve!)

**Donations** can be made **online** directly at our Event Page, by **texting** OWN to **50155**, or by **mail** to **PO Box 8816, Champaign, 61826**. We look forward to seeing many of you on event night either downtown or at one of our satellite locations. **OWN** is an unforgettable experience that will change your life, along with the lives of the friends without an address that we serve!

**Our Goal -- \$500,000!**



Late in November, Melissa Courtwright joined us as our new Executive Director. It's been a long time coming, and we are thrilled to have Melissa on the team!

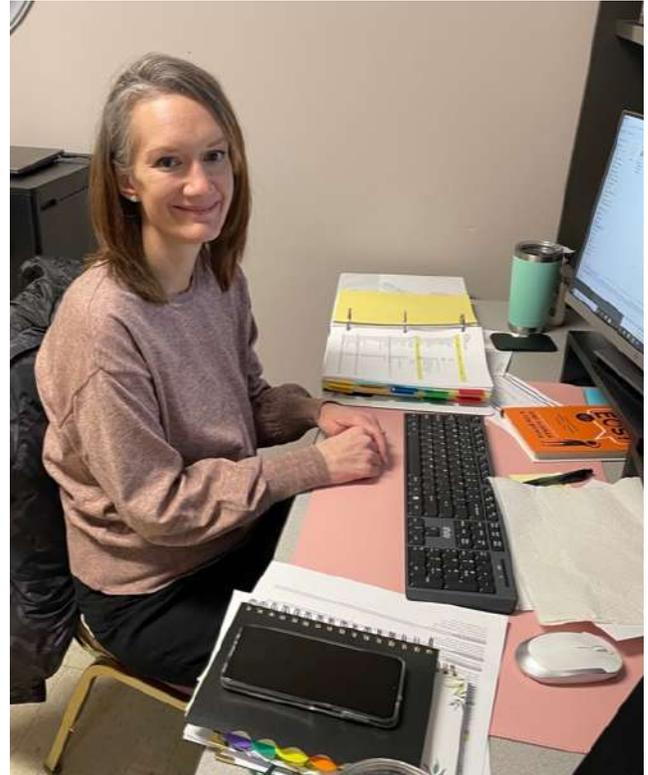
Melissa is originally from Westville, but has lived in several different states over the years. Her family came back to this area 4 years ago, and she now resides in Georgetown with her husband of 16 years and three rambunctious boys.

After graduating from Johnson University in Tennessee with a double-major in Bible and Counseling, Melissa earned a graduate degree in Gerontology from Eastern Illinois University. She comes to us after serving as Director of Quality Assurance at CRIS Healthy Aging Center.

"I have spent most of my career working with adults with disabilities and those over 60," she says. "I have served that population in a variety of ways, including working with caregivers and grandparents raising grandchildren. Much of my work has been with adults with disabilities and older adults who are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation."

Melissa has definitely hit the ground running here, meeting with team members and community partners, as well as jumping right into planning meetings for our low-barrier winter emergency shelters. After a whirlwind first few weeks, she's beginning to hit her stride.

"I am looking forward to continuing to work with a staff, and in an agency that is willing to serve a vulnerable population," she notes. "C-U at Home's



commitment to show grace and empower people to take next steps toward wholeness and healing align with my values and passion to serve."

In her "down time," Melissa enjoys being with her family, reading, and being outdoors when the weather is nice. Her three boys "definitely keeps us busy," she adds.

We are so pleased to have Melissa on board to lead the team and be the "glue" that holds day-to-day operations together. It was well worth the wait to get just the right person to help us move into the next phase of our mission to serve our friends without an address!



## Community Partnerships

### Emergency Shelters To Open

After many weeks of planning meetings, potential site walk-throughs, staffing interviews, and much more, we are getting close to opening day for two new low-barrier emergency winter shelters in downtown Champaign!

Planning for the shelters has been a collaborative effort involving C-U at Home, the City of Champaign, the City of Urbana, Cunningham Township, the Champaign County Board, and the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission. Operational costs will be offset by funds provided by each, and staffing will be provided and overseen by C-U at Home.

"We are definitely looking at what are the best options so everyone can have shelter for the winter," Executive Director Melissa Courtwright recently told [WICS news](#) reporter Evan Hensley. "I think that homelessness is a community issue . . . [and] I feel really thankful the community is willing to address that."

Pending approval by the City of Champaign, the shelters are expected to be located at New Covenant Fellowship (for men) and First Presbyterian Church (for women). They will be open mid-December through mid-April, with an official opening date soon to be established.

C-U at Home's existing shelters currently serve approximately 35 men and seven women in a drug-and- alcohol-free environment. The new facilities will serve anyone in need of shelter, regardless of personal circumstances.

"The humane thing to do is making sure everybody has a place to stay," Community Outreach and Development Director Rob Dalhaus recently told [News-Gazette](#) reporter Debra Pressy.

### Christmas Blessings (from p. 1)

"Once again," she says, "I go to serve our friends without an address and leave this place receiving so much more than I gave."

On December 11, friends staying in our men's and women's overnight shelters were blessed by a Christmas meal served up by **Dustin Brown** and the Jesus House. And on Christmas Eve, volunteer and supporter **Nancy Allen** will be providing pizza for the shelter residents!

As nephew Fred concludes, "I believe that [Christmas] has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, 'God bless it!'" So do we!



**Atlanta Mission**, a homelessness ministry in Georgia, posted this reminder of "[The Realities of Homelessness at Christmas.](#)"

"When people face homelessness, Christmas is typically far from their minds. They're not worrying about what gifts to buy for their loved ones. They're not making travel plans to see their families. And they're certainly not struggling to find the perfect decorations and lights to decorate their homes.

"The realities of homelessness at Christmas are harsh and typically not something we think about, especially when we get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season. But it's something we should all be aware of.

"Be aware of those facing homelessness in your community this season. We hope you feel encouraged to help them experience joy this season — even by something as simple as offering a blanket, warm meal, or conversation."



**Thank you, WRCC!**



## Business Partnerships

Throughout the month of November, [Good Vibes Sound](#) in Champaign celebrated their 50th Anniversary with a special promotion that also raised funds for three local organizations: Empty Tomb, Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, and us! Below, Rob receives a check for nearly \$2000 from owner **Steve Suderman**. "Good Vibes," indeed! We appreciate your support!



## Orange Krush Donation

At the Illini-Notre Dame Men's Basketball game on November 29, Rob was down on the floor at halftime, right in front of the Pep Band, to pick up this \$500 check from members of the Orange Krush! To make things even better, the Illini beat the Fighting Irish, 82-72! Go Illini!

### A Word from Rob



"It's the most wonderful time of the year!"

These words ring out over the radio waves and streaming playlists millions of times during the month of December. Across our community, the United States and the world, friends and families gather to celebrate the Christmas season. But Christmas goes so much deeper than presents, a fancy tree, and jolly ol' Saint Nick. I'll never forget the first time I heard a pastor share that Jesus came into this world as homeless.

The imagery struck me as I reflected on this idea that on the night Mary gave birth to Jesus, they were without a "home" -- a dwelling to shield them from the elements. The night that would change the course of history connected to the most humble of beginnings.

I pray that during this most wonderful time of the year we remember those in our community who are without a home. I encourage us all to remember that that man or woman we see on the street is a man or woman loved by Jesus and someone worthy of love and compassion. When we begin to see our friends on the street the way Jesus sees them, we will truly know why this season is the most wonderful time of the year.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

**In His Service, Rob Dalhaus III**