



hope is
rising

One REAL Winter Night!

For the first time in its 11-year history, there was some real concern that our annual **One Winter Night** community awareness and fundraising event would not take place on **Friday, February 4**, as scheduled!

Forecasts of a severe winter storm bringing heavy snow mid-week, to be followed Friday night by temperatures well below zero, set in motion a series of last-minute adjustments to ensure the safety and security of everyone participating. Downtown Box Dwellers gathered in the parking lot behind our Event Headquarters, **The Venue CU**, where they had quick and easy access to warmth and assistance.

Those planning to participate at **WBGL** joined the downtown group at "Camp Venue." Remote sites at **Stratford Park Bible Chapel** (Champaign), **Trinity Community Fellowship** (Farmer City), and **Trinity Christian School** (Shorewood) proceeded as scheduled. Nearly **100 Box Dwellers** participated in OWN 2022 at these locations! It was amazing to see so many people not just still willing to stay involved, but actually excited to do so!

"OWN on the Quad" was a great success, with **87 students** participating despite the weather! Members of the **Orange Krush, Health of the Homeless, Illini Life, Illinois Stamps Scholars**, and **Volunteer Illini** were involved, and students from **RST classes** helped plan and implement the Quad event.

Gina Lee-Olukoya from the Office of Student Engagement provided amazing leadership that brought everything together!

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J Leman and Gina Lee-Olukoya on the Quad

“We actually thought a couple of days ago, well, it’s not going to happen,” Gina remarked during a remote check-in from the Quad. “But here we are, and we’re all in!”

Back at Event Headquarters, emcees **Dan Church** and **J Leman** brought enthusiasm and energy to the night’s activities, which featured musical performances by **Jean-Rene Balekita**, **Lia Caton**, **Jordan Pride**, the **Vineyard Worship Team**, and **Isaac Hanson**.

Throughout the evening, J’s periodic check-ins from “Camp Venue,” the Quad, and other satellite locations captured the experiences of participants, volunteers, and leaders (view the entire evening’s program at our [YouTube Channel](#)).

Event Night at **The Venue CU** kicked off with a welcome from C-U at Home leaders **Melissa Courtwright** and **Rob Dalhaus**, followed by an appreciation for Rob’s 5+ years of service to our organization (see page 6).

"While this is my first One Winter Night," Melissa noted, "we want to acknowledge that this is Rob's last. He's the one who puts this all together, and C-U at Home is going to greatly miss him."

Presentations throughout the evening from a wide range of community partners shed light on the important work being done to meet the needs of the vulnerable population we all serve.

Presenters included **Karen Pickard** (Daily Bread Soup Kitchen), **Breaden Blecher** (City of Urbana), **Danielle Chynoweth** (Cunningham Township), **Nicole Bridges Musumeci** (Prosperity Gardens), and **Jason Fisher** (Canteen Run), and others.

Also presenting were good friends of our ministry **Wayne Wager** (“Why we help the homeless”) and **Ruth Moore** (“You don’t know what you don’t know until you know it”). C-U at Home staff members **Cheryl Lehman**, **Cedar King**, and **Russ Mann** (pictured below) also took the stage to share stories from their daily work experiences.

As emcee **J Leman** proclaimed in one of his remote check-ins from the UIUC Quad, “In spite of the weather, One Winter Night marches on!” By Saturday morning, over **\$375,000** in donations had come in from our generous community and the fundraising efforts of our faithful Box Dwellers!

The **WCIA** drive-thru donation event, postponed to February 10, along with additional donations that came in over the two weeks after the event, brought our fundraising total to **\$445,000!**

Let's give the last word to **Rob**, whose enthusiasm for **One Winter Night** knows no bounds!

"I just want to say thank you for everyone who has prayed for C-U at Home, supported us with your dollars or your time, for just loving this ministry and giving us the opportunity to fill these gaps in our community. I'm really excited for the next chapter for Melissa and the C-U at Home team!"



ONE WINTER NIGHT 2022 RECAP

Photos by [Mike Heiniger Photography](#).



We are truly blessed and grateful to everyone who helped make **OWN 2022** a success: donors, participants, volunteers, sponsors, and our amazing host, **The Venue CU!** With your generous support, we will continue to provide essential services to our friends without an address throughout the year -- shelter, security, case management, outreach, and advocacy – always striving to bring grace, hope, and dignity to their lives. **THANK YOU!**

\$445,000 RAISED!!



185

Participants

88

Business Sponsors

22

Church Partners





In late December of last year we took a big step, in collaboration with a number of other community partners*, to open two new low barrier emergency winter shelters for men and women in downtown Champaign. Oversight of these new shelters required someone with particular skills to work with this specific population.

We are pleased to welcome that special someone, Victoria Costello (right), to our staff as Manager of the new emergency shelters. She brings not only a strong skill set to the position, but also a big heart and a lot of enthusiasm!

Victoria comes to us from . . . well, all over! Originally from St. Louis, MO, she's lived in NJ, PA, VA, and then moved back to St. Louis to complete a BA in clinical psychology from Saint Louis University in 2018. She arrived in C-U in August of 2021. Her work experience is as wide-reaching as her travels!

"I have experience working as a registered behavioral technician for children on the Autism spectrum," she explains, "and I became a mental health professional (MHP) as a recovery specialist working with adults experiencing mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders. As a recovery specialist, I provided case management, taught independent living skills, and facilitated group therapy in a transitional housing program."

Victoria summed up her motivation for working in this field with a well-known Ghandi quote: "Be the change you wish to see in the world." She enjoys watching the people she works with grow and reach their full potential right before her eyes.



"Witnessing all of the victories won by clients is a major highlight of my work," she says, "but regardless of where someone may be in their journey, clinicians can never work harder than their clients."

During off-hours, Victoria spends her time with "The Dude," a rescue dog she describes as "my ultimate sidekick!" She also enjoys experimenting with makeup artistry, travel, live music, art in all of its forms, and coffee.

We are blessed to have such a gifted and compassionate person join our team to head up this new project!

*The low barrier emergency winter shelters are a collaboration between 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. Space for the shelters has been generously provided by First Presbyterian Church of Champaign and New Covenant Fellowship.



Click [HERE](#) to view slideshow

Real Life Stories, Real Life Impact

Phoenix Daytime Drop-in Center

When Tom began staying at our men's shelter, his outlook on life seemed rather bleak. Then one day, he came into our Phoenix Center with something that looked very much like hope in his eyes! He told us he was heading to a job interview. We told him we'd be praying for him, and he responded with a most sincere "thank you." When he returned, he was so excited show us a letter with a job offer from a local moving company!

C-U Men's Shelter

When health issues left Steve unable to work, and a series of misfortunes left him homeless, he found refuge at our Men's Shelter. But he still wanted to contribute, not just receive, so he volunteered to take charge of daily cleaning and sanitizing. He also helped out during the day by answering phones and sorting mail. With our assistance, Steve eventually made his way through the process of finding housing and moved into his own apartment. He was so grateful to have found a place to stay and work through that time of transition.

Austin's Place Women's Shelter

Sandra came to us in need of some help getting back on her feet. After we admitted her into our women's shelter, she spent time making friends, creating art, participating wholeheartedly in our Creative Writing and Poetry workshop, and just being a generally

positive presence. After a while, she came in to tell us that she'd gotten a place of her own, but she wanted to know if she could still come back and visit, adding, "I've made some good friends here, and that Poetry Workshop was dope!"

Transitional Housing

Kara came out of rehab, entered our housing program, and settled in at our women's sober-living residence. She had two big goals: to stay sober, and to work toward recovering custody of her children. She found work and completed all of the requirements to have her children returned. After five months in our program, Kara moved into our family house, and one month later her children joined her there. She remained employed, stayed sober, and has recently returned to her hometown -- with her children -- after having found work and a place to live there!



Our Women's Transitional House

*Thank
you!*

To our **OWN 2022 Business Sponsors!** Click [HERE](#) to see a complete list of sponsors, and please consider contacting them when you have need of the services they offer!

A Message from Melissa

It's an exciting time for me to be a part of C-U at Home! As we move past the activity and challenges of OWN 2022, we are also asking, "What's next?"

We are in the middle of a strategic planning process, that's what! This means we are holding on to all the wonderful, beautiful parts of our organization while embracing the principles of Ecclesiastes as we move forward. One of those principles is change.

First, Ecclesiastes tells us (Ch 3 v1), "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." Next, we're told (Ch 12 v13) to hold fast to our faith in the midst of change: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."

Our faith, our love for God and others, gives meaning to our pursuit for change. Our faith informs how we will plan and prepare for this next season-which will be just that, a season. There will always be another, a next season, a time for change.

Our hope is that this season of change, guided by our faith, will produce good fruit. Stay tuned in the days and weeks ahead as we firm up our strategic plan and ask you to faithfully walk alongside us. I look forward to sharing this amazing journey with you!

**All the Best,
Melissa Courtwright,
Executive Director**



Melissa & Rob share the stage at OWN 2022

Farewell to long-time leader

Rob Dalhaus III joined the C-U at Home team as Managing Director in 2016, and he served as Executive Director from 2018 through 2021. He has spent the past seven months as Director of Community Outreach and Development.

During his years of leadership, our ministry and the essential services we provide to the most vulnerable homeless in our community have expanded greatly, touching innumerable lives.

Major developments that Rob oversaw include the integration of Austin's Place women's shelter into the C-U at Home organization (2019), initiation of year-round sheltering for men and women (2020), and Austin's Place's move to renovated quarters at our main Washington/Market Street location.

This appreciation slideshow from **OWN 2022** was a most fitting setting to say farewell to the man who "lived for OWN!" Click [HERE](#) to view.

