



We're Back!

The long-awaited return to regular hours at our **Phoenix Daytime Center** on August 10 couldn't have come at a better time! That week featured the first heat advisories of the summer with highs in the 90s and heavy humidity. Several severe thunderstorms rolled through C-U as well, allowing us to truly be a "shelter from the storm" for our friends without an address.

Cedar Edward King, our new Case Manager, had just joined our team, and **Cheryl Lehman** took up her duties as our new Phoenix Coordinator the following Monday (*more inside*). Our men's and women's overnight shelters returned to full operations on Monday, August 16, as well.

Shelter and Phoenix Coordinators are using our new MissionTracker data collection system to do early intakes for those needing shelter, allowing some of our friends to return to the shelter prior to the August 16 full reopening. The system also helps us keep better records of the services we provide in the Phoenix each day, and to who.

Our "Restoration Celebration" on August 20 was a huge success! Dozens of supporters, community partners, and friends attended. The afternoon celebration featured live music from **Jordan Pride** and friend **Kaci**, food and drinks provided by **ESS Clean**, and ongoing tours of our improved facilities.

Turn the page for pictures from the event!

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Restoration Celebration



Staff serving up a Phoenix feast!



Rob kicks things off with Jordan and Kaci



Manning the grill



Connecting with friends (above) and showing off our new resource center (right)



WE'RE BACK!



After months of searching and countless hours sifting through applications and conducting interviews, two key positions in our organization were finally filled in July! **Cedar Edward King** joined the staff as our new Case Manager on August 9, and **Cheryl Lehman** came on board as our new Phoenix Coordinator on August 16.

Cedar (right) worked as an addiction counselor at the Hour House in Charleston for over 4 years before coming to us. Originally from northern Michigan, he moved with his family to this area shortly before his high school years, which took place in Paxton. He holds a degree in Ministry from Lincoln Christian University and was on staff at Paxton Church of Christ for ten years.

As a Case Manager, Cedar spends time with friends, helping them identify their life goals and connecting them to “community services on every single level imaginable” -- medical/mental health care, social services, housing, even access to basic items like clothing or other personal needs. He also helps with intakes for those seeking space in our shelters.

“Most people (we serve) want to become independent and self-sufficient,” Cedar explains. “Nobody really wants to stay here forever. I want to be able to use my skills, experience, and faith to help our friends achieve their goals.”

In his free time, Cedar “loves nature and listening to music.” He enjoys biking, hiking, bluegrass music, and he plays the mandolin!



“I can make a decent sound on it,” he admits. Looks like we may have a new performer on stage when **OWN 2022** rolls around next February!



Cheryl Lehman (pictured top of next page) is a life-long Champaign County resident, originally from St. Joseph, and currently living in Urbana. She’s been a regular volunteer at The Phoenix since it opened its doors and even helped paint at the first location on Neil Street in downtown!

A U of I alum, Cheryl holds a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's in teaching English as a Second Language.

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Cheryl and husband Chris have been married for 21 years and have two children. “I love spending time with them--especially traveling,” she says. Hobbies include reading great literature and practicing tae kwon do. With Cheryl on board, we’re all set in the sophistication and self-defense departments!

On task with MissionTracker

Cheryl and Cedar, along with Thomas, our Men's Shelter Coordinator, and other staff members, have been through a lot of training over the past month to learn how to use **MissionTracker**, our new data management system.

This amazing tool is helping us gather information about those we serve in order to better assess their immediate needs, provide the services to meet those needs, help them set long-term goals, and ultimately guide them through a 3-phase program toward success in life!

MissionTracker helps staff to be better connected through a daily log and a myriad of reports that track services provided and progress made by those we serve. The intake interview places someone in the system and sets their program in motion. An id card is created that allows access to services, and the path to progress begins!

She’s most recently been working as an ESL teacher at Parkland College and has also worked for her alma mater.

“I have made several friends at The Phoenix over the years,” Cheryl shares. “I’m looking forward to being able to spend a lot more time with them, building new relationships and facilitating more connections between the community and our friends without addresses.”

Cheryl has also been a key leader at One Winter Night for the past few years, and she headed up our **OWN 2021** drive-up donation station at the **WCIA** backlot, which was a huge success! Nothing like spending hours outside on a cold February night to demonstrate your dedication to the cause!

As Phoenix Coordinator, Cheryl leads the day-to-day operations of our drop-in center, coordinates with volunteers, and develops programs that connect our friends and the community. She loves working in our refurbished Phoenix space and notes “I’m really enjoying being part of the team!”



Cheryl conducts an intake with help from our Operations Associate, Chloe Hanson



Lifebridge, a Boston-area homelessness ministry, took a look at “**The Startling Dangers of Homelessness**” in a [March 2020 blog post](#).

Homelessness, they write, presents “unique risks” for individuals that, while varied based on a person’s location and age, add even more pressure to an already stressful existence.

“Homelessness presents a variety of challenges that can be tremendously tough for people to overcome. And while much of the homeless community throughout the United States face similar challenges, there are also dangers that vary based on a number of factors.”

The **three primary factors** are physical and verbal harassment; theft and vandalism; and mental health. Citing a study reported in [the Guardian](#), the blog post noted, “Roughly six in ten homeless individuals claim to have been verbally harassed, and one in three homeless individuals claims to have been physically assaulted at some point.”

Although homeless individuals obviously have fewer personal possessions than most folks, what they do have is dearly held, and any loss is devastating. In addition, people on the streets also have little means of recourse or restitution for their loss.

The link between mental health and homelessness is well-documented, but mental health issues “can also be exacerbated” by homelessness. “Becoming homeless can be a shocking, detrimental, and traumatic experience

for anyone,” the piece observes, “And the exact type of situation that can trigger underlying mental illnesses.”

One of the most important functions of both our **overnight shelters** and **Phoenix Daytime Drop-in Center** is to provide a “safe haven” for our friends without an address. Our **street outreach team** works hard to help the most vulnerable folks on the street into more stable and secure circumstances, and our **education and advocacy** efforts help raise community awareness of our friends’ vulnerability and unique needs.

It takes a dedicated team of staff, volunteers, community partners -- and generous supporters like you -- to make all this happen. Go to our website, [cuathome.us](#), to learn more about how you can help by volunteering, joining our team, or making a donation.

Business Partnership

If you’ve ever been out to our **One Winter Night** event, you’ve experienced what a blessing it is to have **Rental City** as one of our generous OWN Business Sponsors! Propane heaters? *Check*. Portable overhead lighting? *Check*.

Rental City was also a big help with our CU Pork Chop Shop at the County Fair this summer, providing the grill and – most importantly! – the large air circulating fans that made it bearable on those hot days!

Need it? Rent it – at [Rental City!](#)



A Word from . . . *Aleta*

Gratitude is the expression of appreciation for what one has. It is a recognition of value independent of monetary worth.

The last three months have seen a flurry of activity at C-U at Home. While some of our services took a necessary pause, our 'behind the scenes' work ramped up. Staff worked tirelessly to make improvements to both the physical facility as well as the policies and procedures that drive the day-to-day operations allowing us to best serve our friends. *And that has been good.*

But... the lifeline of our ministry is the day-to-day interactions with our friends without addresses. Those interactions are where we find our purpose, and those relationships are the motivation for everything else that we do. To say that it feels good to be "back to normal" would be an understatement.

Normal, though? The friends who have returned to stay in the shelter would argue that it is anything but normal. Rather than being kept up many nights as a fight broke out or being awakened by sirens as EMTs arrived to attend to someone who had overdosed, our friends are coming into the shelter and mingling with our staff and one another before laying down in their bed for a peaceful night's sleep. They are appreciating the transformed environment, and are feeling empowered to take the steps they need to in order to help themselves "out" of the shelter. In the words of two of the friends I had a chance to catch up with last night... "we are so grateful".

I, too, am so grateful! I am grateful for the opportunity to pause and "reset" so that we can continue to provide the highest quality, sustainable service to our friends, I am grateful for the supportive community that has wrapped around us and provided much needed encouragement, and most of all I am so very grateful for buzzing activity in the building again now that our friends are back and things are "back to normal"!



C-U at the Fair!

It was great to be back at the **Champaign County Fair** during the last ten days of July, where we sold over **750 pork chop sandwiches** along with chips and cold drinks! Despite the heat and a few major downpours, the **C-U Pork Chop Shop** was a big success and a wonderful opportunity to participate in such an iconic local summer institution.

Thanks to all the staff members, volunteers, and the guys from our **C-U at Work** crew (who did most of the grilling!), whose hard work made everything possible. Special thanks to our good friend **Doug Beckett**, who did much of the organization and daily scheduling that made things run smoothly. We will C-U at the Fair next summer!

