



**Chrysalis
Center**

Getting Help...Getting Better...Giving Back.

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Fall 2024 Newsletter

Volume 49, Issue 3

Living with HIV/AIDS: Progress, Challenges, and Support at Chrysalis Center

Over the past few decades, the landscape of HIV/AIDS has dramatically changed. Once considered a life-threatening diagnosis, advancements in medical treatment have transformed HIV/AIDS into a manageable chronic condition for many. With proper care and medication, individuals living with HIV can now lead long, healthy lives, reducing the virus to undetectable levels and preventing its transmission.

However, the journey of living with HIV continues to be accompanied by challenges; both physical and emotional. Stigma, discrimination, and the complexities of managing ongoing healthcare are still very much a part of the reality for many. That's why at Chrysalis Center, we remain committed to providing comprehensive support through Community Health and Housing Services and St. Philip House programs



In Connecticut, nearly 20,000 individuals are living with HIV, with new diagnoses occurring each year. Despite the advancements in treatment, there are still areas of concern, including disparities in care among different communities. The State has made significant strides in reducing transmission rates and improving access to treatment, but ongoing efforts are needed to address barriers to care and support those affected by the virus. Help Chrysalis continue these efforts by supporting our programs or through any State organization working to combat HIV/AIDS and provide care to those in need.



Recognizing Anthony "Tony" Brown: A Champion for Those in Need

Anthony D. Brown, affectionately known as "Tony," has spent over three decades dedicated to helping those in need, leaving an indelible impression on the lives of countless individuals through his work in human services.

Tony's extensive career spans 30 years, including 11 years working in the Emergency Shelter System and over 28 years with Chrysalis Center as a Community Case Manager. His commitment to serving vulnerable populations has been unwavering, particularly in his work with individuals experiencing homelessness and those living with HIV/AIDS.

In 1995, Tony played a pivotal role in the Chrysalis Center's participation in the State of Connecticut's initial Supportive Housing Demonstration Program. Through his outreach and case management efforts, he helped transition individuals and low-income families into the newly rehabilitated Hudson View Commons Supportive Housing Program. Two years later, as part of the Chrysalis Center's first HUD/HOPWA contract, Tony continued his impactful work, assisting individuals living with HIV/AIDS who were homeless or at risk of homelessness to transition into independent living.

Tony's advocacy extends beyond his direct work with clients. In 1994, he joined the board of Save Our Homeless People Association, a grassroots organization focused on advocating for the homeless, and in 1996, he served on the Board of Directors of The Open Hearth, a shelter and transitional living facility for men in Hartford, CT. His dedication to addressing housing needs was recognized in 2009 when he received the Catherine Kennedy Award from the Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition (now AIDS CT, a division of Advancing CT Together) for his outstanding work on behalf of the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. In 2024, Tony was honored with the prestigious Carol E. Walter "Think, Be, Lead Change Award" for his continued commitment to advocacy and leadership in the fight to end homelessness.

Client Spotlight:

Jessica: A Story of Courage and Transformation

Chrysalis Center's mission is to transform lives, and Jessica Star's remarkable journey is a powerful testament to that belief. Jessica's story is one of immense hardship, incredible resilience, and ultimate triumph.

Jessica was born in Norwalk, but from a young age, she faced a world that refused to acknowledge her true self. Misplaced in a body that didn't match her identity, she endured relentless discrimination and abuse. Her early years were marked by being sent to a detransition facility and navigating the harsh realities of the State foster system. Homeless and vulnerable, Jessica faced unimaginable challenges, struggling to find the support and safety she needed.

For years, Jessica lived as a man, a survival tactic to cope with a world that wouldn't accept her. Despite the internal conflict, she pursued her passion for classic cars, attending mechanical school and working in a car shop. This provided a temporary sense of stability and a respite from her inner struggles. Jessica managed to build a semblance of a stable life, saving money, securing a home, and obtaining health insurance. With these achievements, she was finally able to transition and become her true self.

However, life threw another curveball when she incurred an injury that left her disabled. Jessica then faced the devastating news of an HIV diagnosis and was placed in an abusive home environment. The struggles seemed endless until a call to 211 provided a lifeline, helping her escape that abusive situation.

In 2020, Jessica's path crossed with Chrysalis Center, and everything began to change. With the support of her case manager, Tony, Jessica received crucial help: finding stable housing, accessing medical treatment, and obtaining her Social Security benefits. Jessica describes this turning point as a profound relief, saying, "The weight on my shoulders was relieved."

Today, Jessica, despite her tumultuous past, radiates happiness and hope. She finds joy in the small things, like riding her E-Bike along the riverfront trail, and she's aspiring to become a video blogger. Her reason for sharing her story is clear: ***"Because if people are more educated, they will be less cruel."***

Jessica's journey is a testament to the power of perseverance, the importance of community support, and the transformative impact of compassion. Her story reflects the very heart of Chrysalis Center's mission, to provide vital resources and support that empower individuals to overcome adversity and build brighter futures. Jessica's journey reminds us all of the possibility of change and the role we can play in extending kindness and understanding to those on their path to healing.



HIV/AIDS awareness is not just about understanding the virus; it's about embracing compassion, breaking barriers, and empowering everyone to live with hope and dignity.

For support and resources:

CALL / TEXT: 988

CHAT: <https://988lifeline.org/>

More Information: <https://health.ct.gov/>

**Support
our
Mission**



Empowering Our Mission With New Leadership: Meet the Visionaries Joining Our Board

We are excited to introduce our newest Board Members, whose diverse expertise and dedication will be instrumental in guiding Chrysalis Center's mission forward.

Kimalee Williams

Kimalee joins the Chrysalis Center Board with a remarkable background as the CEO of Faith Asset Management, bringing over 25 years of experience in property management, and real estate development. A seasoned small business owner, Kimalee has also played a vital role in shaping future leaders as a board member of the advisory committee to Goodwin College's Business Department in East Hartford. Kimalee's extensive experience is further enriched by her leadership roles as the Audit Committee Chair and Vice Chair of Member Services for the National Association of Housing Cooperative, as well as President of the Cooperative Housing Association of New England (CHANE).



Steve Erickson

Steve is a retired partner from Whittlesey, where his extensive experience in finance and real estate development was paired with a deep commitment to nonprofit organizations. His focus on affordable housing and social services, combined with his expertise in board governance, makes him an invaluable asset to Chrysalis Center. Steve's leadership extends beyond his professional career, as he continues to serve as a board member of Windsor Federal Bank, Treasurer of Friends of Northwest Park, and head of the investment committee of the Windsor Library Association, among other roles.



Aleena Durant

Aleena is a service-oriented leader with a passion for customer service and community support. As the owner of Wet Paint Creations, a beauty consultancy, Aleena has honed her skills in problem-solving and team leadership. Her commitment to youth and family well-being is evident through her work as a Court-Appointed Guardian Ad Litem for Children in Placement and her certification in Youth Mental Health First Aid. Aleena's unique blend of business acumen and dedication to mental health advocacy will be a valuable addition to the Chrysalis Center Board.



Please join us in welcoming Kimalee, Steve, and Aleena to the Chrysalis Center family!



"This project prioritizes seniors aging in place."

-Sharon L. Castelli

Exciting Update: HEARRT House Project Progress

Chrysalis Center Housing Development Corporation (CCHDC) is pleased to provide an update on HEARRT House formerly known as St. Philip House in Plainville. Rehabilitation construction for this important project commenced in March 2024 and is on track to be completed by the end of 2024.

HEARRT House will offer 8 single-bedroom units designed to accommodate individuals aged 50 and older who have increased medical needs and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The facility will feature a community space, providing a welcoming environment for social interaction, as well as office and convening space to support both residents and staff.

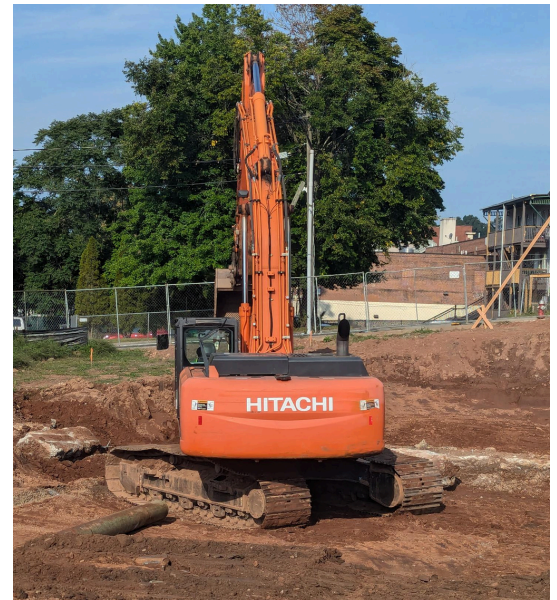
Residents will be referred to HEARRT House through the Coordinated Access Network (CAN), ensuring that those who need help the most have access to this vital resource.

Berkowitz II Construction Begins: Laying the Foundation for Affordable Housing

CCHDC is excited to announce that construction has officially begun on Berkowitz II, the latest housing development project at 608 Main Street, New Britain. The foundation has been laid, marking the first major step in bringing this project to life. This new development, adjacent to The Berkowitz, will feature 28 two-bedroom townhouse units, providing affordable housing for families across different income levels.

CCHDC is working diligently to advance this project as quickly as possible. Berkowitz II will not only enhance the "Little Poland" neighborhood but also serve as a gateway to the New Britain Downtown Business District, contributing to a vibrant and inclusive community.

Stay tuned for more updates as CCHDC continues to make strides in providing safe and affordable housing in New Britain and throughout Connecticut.



From Left to Right: Anastacia Woolcock, Senator Richard Blumenthal and Sharon L. Castelli

New Federal Housing Rules Bring Hope to Low-Income Veterans

Chrysalis Center is thrilled to share an important update from a recent press conference held by Senator Richard Blumenthal, Sharon Castelli, CEO of Chrysalis Center, and Anastacia Woolcock, Director of Housing at Journey Home. During the event, Senator Blumenthal announced significant developments in federal housing rules aimed at improving affordable housing programs for low-income veterans.

Sharon Castelli, alongside Senator Blumenthal and Ms. Woolcock, delivered compelling remarks about the urgent need for these changes. They emphasized the vital role these new regulations will play in providing essential support to veterans who have served our country and are now facing housing insecurity. Sharon stressed the importance of collaboration between government and nonprofit organizations in addressing the housing crisis for veterans, a key issue Chrysalis Center continues to tackle through its programs and services.

Fresh Food Fresh Start

THANK YOU
\$10,000 +
5000 pounds of food
GOAL ACHIEVED



Fresh Food Fresh Start: A Success Beyond Expectations

Chrysalis is excited to share the incredible results of the Fresh Food Fresh Start campaign, which was launched on June 11th, 2024, to support Chrysalis Center's Freshplace food pantry. Thanks to the generous contributions from our community, not only did the campaign achieve its goals, but surpassed them! Together, we raised an astounding \$13,019 and collected over 5,639 pounds of non-perishable food, ensuring that Freshplace clients have access to monthly groceries.

Food insecurity remains a pressing issue in Hartford and across Connecticut. Did you know that 1 in 9 people in Connecticut struggle with hunger? In Hartford alone, nearly 25% of residents are food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Campaigns like Fresh Food Fresh Start are critical in the fight to alleviate hunger and provide support to those in need.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made this campaign a success. Your contributions have made a tangible difference in the lives of many families. But this work is far from over.

Stay tuned for the launch of our "Be a Hunger Hero" campaign! This new initiative will allow you to adopt a family and help provide them with monthly supplies of food. The goal is to ensure that every family in the Freshplace program is covered, and we believe that with your support, we can make this happen. This campaign is open to everyone: individuals, families, small businesses, corporations, churches, community leaders, everyone can **Be A Hunger Hero**.

Together, with your help we can continue to make a difference and ensure that no one in our community goes hungry. Thank you for your ongoing support, and Chrysalis looks forward to having you join in this vital mission.



DONATE TODAY!



"Creativity takes courage, and every craft project is a unique expression of who we are and what we love."

HENRI MATISSE

Fuel Creativity, Empower Recovery: Help Us Provide Handcraft Materials

At the Recovery and Empowerment Center (REC), art plays a crucial role in the healing process. Through creativity, clients find new ways to express their emotions, build confidence, and connect with others on their recovery journey. The power of art goes beyond the finished piece; it helps foster resilience, self-discovery, and a sense of empowerment.

Chrysalis needs your help to provide the handcraft materials that make this possible. With your support, clients will surprise us with the incredible art they create, showing how transformative creativity can be in recovery. Every donation of materials, big or small, makes a real impact in their lives.

Thank you for being a part of this journey toward healing, recovery, and empowerment! Through the QR code, you can further support Chrysalis by donating much-needed art supplies to help us continue making a difference.



Dedication in Action: How Dennis Dell'Accio Makes a Lasting Impact Through Volunteerism

Meet Dennis Dell'Accio, a retired professional whose dedication to volunteering is truly inspiring. After retiring four years ago, Dennis faced the challenge of filling his time with meaningful activities. With no interest in golf and a limited number of hobbies, he decided to explore various volunteer opportunities. It didn't take long for Dennis to recognize the significant need for volunteers in his community.

Today, Dennis proudly refers to himself as a "professional volunteer," dedicating 4-5 days a week to various causes. His commitment extends far beyond his involvement with Chrysalis Center. Dennis serves as a Crew Leader for Habitat for Humanity, where he facilitates playhouse builds, an impressive 54 were completed last year alone.

At Chrysalis Center, Dennis plays a crucial role in supporting Freshplace by assisting with food pick-ups and diligently watering and caring for the Food Forest and Railway Gardens alongside Chrysalis' Urban Farmer. His methodical yet flexible approach to volunteering involves planning his activities 1-2 weeks in advance, enjoying the physical work that keeps him active and engaged.

Dennis' tireless efforts and unwavering commitment make a significant impact on the programs and the lives of those we serve. Chrysalis is incredibly grateful for his invaluable contributions and the example of service he sets.



Thank you, Dennis, for your dedication and for making a real difference in our community

A Season of Growth at the Food Forest at Cosgrove Commons

This year has been a period of significant growth for Chrysalis Center's Food Forest at Cosgrove Commons. In early spring, Chrysalis urban farmer Sean introduced 10 mushroom logs, generously donated along with supplies. These logs have been inoculating, a process where the Shiitake mycelium take over the logs. It is anticipated the first harvest of mushrooms will be in late fall or early spring.

Thanks to two large volunteer groups, the 30 raised garden beds were completely reorganized. Wider walkways were created and fully mulched, providing easier access and more stable footing. This season, the Chrysalis urban farmer, together with volunteers, planted 15 different types of annual vegetables and 18 varieties of herbs, including garlic, zucchini, cherry tomatoes, potatoes, green beans, rosemary, basil, lemongrass, and sage.

Significant progress was made with a NRCS grant for alley cropping. Twenty new fruit trees were planted, including apples, peaches, pears, Asian pears, cherries, and plums, along with seven varieties of blueberries and pumpkins interplanted between the fruit trees. This layout will help extend the harvesting season and maximize yield.

Chrysalis' efforts to support pollinators included weeding and mulching the border with a crop of flowering shrubs and grasses, which provide essential habitats. Our urban farmer has also begun preparing a new pollinator garden, aimed at attracting pollinators throughout the seasons to enhance our vegetable harvests.

The continued support from our volunteers, donors, and community partners has been crucial to these developments, and we are excited about the future of the Food Forest at Cosgrove Commons!





The Season of Giving: How You Can Help Our Community This Winter:



Help Chrysalis Bring Warmth to a Family's Table This Thanksgiving

As the holiday season approaches, many families in our community won't have the blessing of a warm Thanksgiving dinner. With your help, we can change that. Chrysalis Center is hosting our annual Turkey Drive, and we need your support to make sure every family we serve has a meal to share.

You can donate a turkey or contribute the resources for us to purchase one. Together, we can bring hope, warmth, and a holiday meal to those who need it most. Your generosity will make all the difference.

More Information: lserrano@chrysaliscenterct.org / 860.263.4418

Spread Kindness and Make a Difference!

As the holidays approach and the cold weather sets in, many in our community face the harsh reality of homelessness and hunger. The winter months are particularly difficult for those without shelter, making warm clothing a necessity. You can make a difference by donating new winter coats, hats, and gloves to help keep those in need warm.

It's also heartbreaking when parents can't provide a holiday meal or gift for their children during Thanksgiving and Christmas. This year, we're working to ensure no family goes without, but we need your support. You can help by donating through our website, providing gift cards, organizing toy drives, or dropping off toys and turkeys.

Every act of kindness counts and can bring warmth and hope to those struggling during this season. Thank you for helping us make the holidays brighter for our community!



DONATE



255 Homestead Avenue,
Hartford, CT 06112

DROP OFF



Phone: 860-263-4418
lserrano@chrysaliscenterct.org

CONTACT US



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Fostering Diversity in the Workplace

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and HUD

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please visit: www.chrysaliscenterct.org

Get Social with Chrysalis Center!



Thursday, October 17th



6:00 PM to 8:00 PM



The Society Room of Hartford
31 Pratt Street, Hartford, CT 06103



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