



TRANSFORMING LIVES

Spring 2025 Newsletter



Chrysalis Center

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

Volume 50, Issue 1

A Legacy of Care: 50 Years of Transforming Lives

Chrysalis Center is celebrating 50 years of making a difference! Since its founding in 1975, Chrysalis Center has been dedicated to providing critical resources to individuals and families facing homelessness, mental illness, food insecurity, and other barriers to stability. Over the decades, Chrysalis Center has expanded its services to include supportive housing, workforce development, and community wellness programs, transforming countless lives throughout Connecticut.

This milestone is an opportunity to reflect on the organization's impact, growth, and the partnerships that have made it all possible. It's also a time to look ahead and continue building a future where even more people have the support they need to thrive. With this momentum, Chrysalis Center is poised for even greater impact in the coming years. The focus remains on expanding services and deepening community relationships. Your dedication makes all our work possible.



Chrysalis Center believes that each person, regardless of their illness, disability or life circumstance, has strengths, skills and experiences to build on. We work to offer quality services that respect the dignity of each person and their cultural background. We offer hope and guidance as individuals make choices to rebuild their lives.



1975 - 2025

We invite you to stay connected with us on social media and through our email updates as we celebrate 50 years of impact! Stay tuned for exciting anniversary events, special stories, and ways to get involved throughout this milestone year.

Board Spotlight, Maisie Russell

A Dedicated Advocate for Chrysalis Center and a Leader at Travelers

Maisie Russell, an Assistant Vice President of Tax at Travelers, is a seasoned leader in both the business world and her community. With a career spanning years of impactful work, Maisie has also made significant contributions to Chrysalis Center.

Maisie was introduced to Chrysalis Center by then Board Chair, Carolyn Phillips. Carolyn invited Maisie to Chrysalis Center's signature fundraiser, the Butterfly Bash and after attending the event, which showcased the organization with client-centered videos, Maisie began her involvement with the organization as a volunteer and became an avid supporter.

In 2008, Maisie joined the Chrysalis Center Board of Directors. Over the years, she served three consecutive three-year Board terms, demonstrating her commitment to the organization and its mission. In 2013, Maisie was presented the "Distinguished Volunteer Award", in recognition of service and dedication to the organization. After taking a brief hiatus, Maisie returned to the board in 2022, where she continues to play a vital role. She has previously served as Board Treasurer and remains an active participant on the Finance Committee.

Maisie's contributions go beyond the boardroom. She has been a staunch advocate for the Freshplace food pantry program, dedicating her time and resources to the cause. She has organized numerous foods drives and volunteered and donated on many occasions, all aimed at helping those in need. In recognition of her outstanding service, Maisie was honored in September with a plaque erected in her name in the administrative wing on Chrysalis Center's campus. This tribute serves as a testament to her dedication and the positive impact she has made on the lives of countless individuals and families served by the organization.

Maisie Russell's leadership and her tireless commitment to Chrysalis Center are an inspiration to many, reflecting her deep commitment to both her profession and her community.



Maisie receiving her recognition plaque with CEO Sharon L. Castelli.



Volunteers from The Walker Group donated and helped sort and prepare toys for distribution.

Giving Thanks for the 2024 Toy Drive: Spreading Joy to Children in Need

A heartfelt "Thank you!" to all who participated in our 2024 Toy Drive! Thanks to your generosity, Chrysalis was able to distribute toys to 194 children whose families receive services from Chrysalis Center. We'd like to extend our gratitude to the following donors for making this year's Toy Drive possible:

- Barbara Hanson
- Toni Schnur
- CREC Aerospace Elementary School
- St. Peter Claver Parish
- St. Thomas & St. Timothy Parish
- The Walker Group
- Trinity Lutheran Church
- Y-Risk
- Yale University, Department of Anesthesiology

Client Spotlight, Albert

Learning the Virtue of Patience

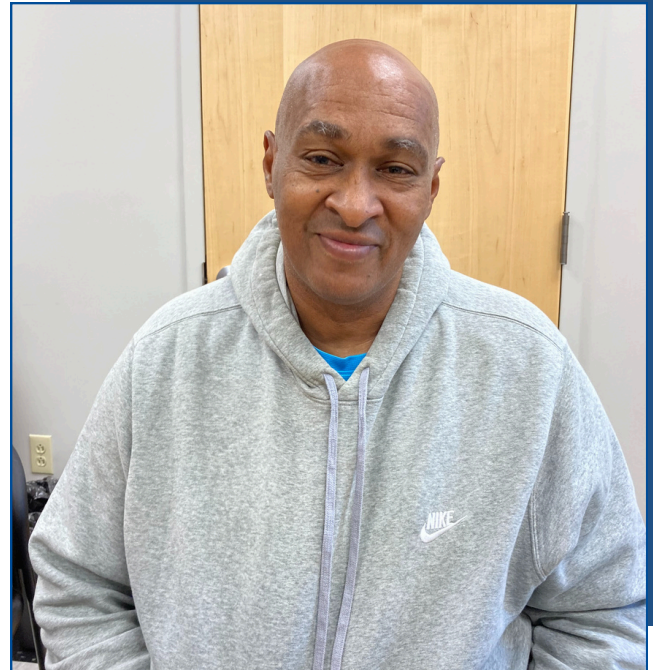
Albert

Community Transitional Services Program (CTS)

According to Albert, patience is one of the most valuable skills that he has learned during his time with Chrysalis Center. When Albert arrived in January of 2024, learning emotional regulation was one of his top priorities. With the guidance and support of Chrysalis Center staff, he has learned to identify triggering circumstances, implement strategies to deal with them, and successfully navigate situations in a thoughtful and calm manner. When asked for an example of a client who has made exemplary strides, Program Manager Joel Kirkland instantly suggested Albert.

Albert is seeing the benefits of his reflective and non-reactive lifestyle in a tangible way, as well. He is now the proud holder of a valid driver's license, something he had not had for 40 years, thanks to his Case Manager's assistance in navigating the DMV process. He was also able to obtain a bank account and has begun regularly putting money into his savings account. Albert is now a Certified Recovery Coach through CCAR (CT Community for Addiction Recovery) and just obtained a job in Bridgeport that will allow him to utilize his training. The successes Albert has experienced due to the skills he has learned with the help of Chrysalis have enabled him to tap into self-motivation, set short and long-term goals for himself, and realize that he can control his reactions.

"I wouldn't be as successful as I am now without Chrysalis."



Volunteer Spotlight

The Cigna Group

The Cigna Group started 2025 off with generosity of time and spirit! In January and February, volunteers helped with Freshplace unloading and organizing food donations. The Cigna Group also donated an assortment of furniture items, including dining sets, coffee tables, dressers, and a TV stand to Veterans in our care. In addition, they assembled 115 cleaning caddies for distribution to Veterans. Thank you Cigna Group!



Partnership Spotlight, Stephen and Sean Results Through Consistency

Stephen & Sean

Recovery & Empowerment Center (REC)

If you come to the Recovery & Empowerment Center on a Tuesday or Thursday, you will meet Sean, affectionately dubbed “The Mayor of the REC”. As soon as he catches your eye, he will greet you with a friendly “Hello!” and you will instantly notice the positive energy that he exudes. According to Stephen, a Chrysalis Center Health & Wellness Coach and Recovery & Support Specialist in the REC who works with Sean, “You know it’s going to be a good day when Sean shows up.”

Stephen and Sean started working together in September. Twice a week, Stephen, who holds a Master’s degree in Kinesiology and a Personal Trainer certification, coaches and encourages Sean through 60 minutes of exercises meant specifically to help him strengthen his lower body and core. Thanks to the purchase of a new piece of fitness equipment in May, Sean and Stephen can specifically work on strengthening Sean’s lower body. One of the most functional exercises Sean does involves utilizing pull up straps to help assist him in pulling up to standing from his wheelchair and then trying to maintain that standing position. Sean, who has Cerebral Palsy, was able to do two repetitions when he and Stephen first started. Now, he is up to 3 sets of 6 repetitions each, holding the standing position for 3 seconds at a time, with Stephen coaching and supporting him along the way. This takes physical and mental concentration on Sean’s part, but of the effort needed and the challenges life has thrown at him, he says, “I don’t let these things stop me. I work with Stephen and he gives me encouragement. We have a wonderful working relationship.”

The Recovery and Empowerment Center (REC), located on the main campus in Hartford, is a social rehabilitation program tailored to meet the needs of individuals experiencing major mental illness and substance use diagnosis by providing social support, peer engagement, advocacy, skill building and health and wellness activities. Chrysalis Center has a fitness center equipped with a variety of cardio and strength training equipment. REC members are able to access the space in order to work on improving their physical fitness and are also able to make appointments to work directly with Stephen to achieve their fitness goals.



Stephen coaching Sean through his sit-to-stand exercise using a recently purchased piece of fitness equipment.

Volunteer Spotlight

Jay Shiel : “Let’s Talk About It!”



Jay Shiel

Recovery and Empowerment Center (REC)

When Jay Shiel first applied to volunteer with Chrysalis almost a year ago, his intention was to run a Financial Literacy class for Chrysalis clients. When he learned there was a need for someone to teach a class about emotional regulation, however, his passion and inspiration were sparked and he quickly shifted gears. Today, “Let’s Talk About It!” is one of the REC’s most popular classes.

“Let’s Talk About It!” provides a safe space for REC members, empowering them to talk about their experiences and learn how to create positive change in their lives. Jay comes up with a lesson plan ahead of time with topics for the group to discuss including self-reflection, processing trauma, and celebrating small wins in recovery. He says that the best classes are the ones that don’t go according to plan, where the conversation is driven organically. Of his class participants, Jays says they are “doing the hardest work possible in facing their struggles head on.” With his support and encouragement, clients are learning to effectively manage their emotions and respond to situations in healthy fashion.

Recent “Let’s Talk About It!” Class Topics:

- **Embracing Growth Through Change –** Understanding that change is necessary for progress and how to lean into it.
- **Managing Expectations During Challenging Times –** Learning how to set realistic expectations and avoid frustration when things don’t go as planned.
- **How to Stay Cool When Everything’s Testing You –** Handling conflict, staying in control, and knowing when to engage vs. walk away.
- **The Hustler’s Mindset vs. The Survivor’s Mindset –** Moving from short-term reaction to long-term thinking.
- **Breaking the Cycle: Why We Keep Ending Up in the Same Situations –** Recognizing patterns and making different choices to get different results.

Chrysalis is incredibly grateful to Jay for his dedication and ongoing commitment to our participants.

Do you have a skill or talent you want to share?

Chrysalis is always seeking passionate volunteers to share their time and talents by teaching classes that empower our clients on their journey. Classes are scheduled based on the volunteer’s availability and can cover a variety of subjects including reading comprehension, cooking, health & wellness, sewing, computer literacy, and recovery programming.

Join us in making a difference! Please email Gabby at gjacunski@chrysaliscenterct.org for more information.

Empty Bowls, Endless Impact

March 26th, 2025

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 2025 Empty Bowls fundraising event! Chrysalis had an incredible turnout and with the help of supporters and donors, we raised crucial funds to further our mission of combatting hunger in our community. Your generosity and support make a meaningful impact.

Empty Bowls is part of an international grassroots effort to fight hunger. Chrysalis Center hosts this annual event to raise awareness about hunger and food insecurity while raising funds to support the Freshplace and La Cocina Culinary Arts Training program. These initiatives play a critical role in addressing food insecurity in Hartford's Upper Albany, Clay Arsenal, and Asylum Hill neighborhoods.

Guests had a choice of three assorted soups, accompanied by salad, all prepared by Chrysalis Center's La Cocina Culinary Arts students. Guests were encouraged to keep their handcrafted bowl as a reminder of the many empty bowls in the world.

Thank you to our 2025 Empty Bowls Sponsors: **Max Cares Foundation, Talcott Financial Group, and Price Chopper's Golub Foundation.** Thank you to all the artists who lovingly created bowls for this event and to **Camella's Cupboard, The Firestone Art Studio and Cafe, Gildersleeve Pottery Studio, The Lazy Potter, Summer Green Pottery, and Sunshine Ceramics** for their donations.

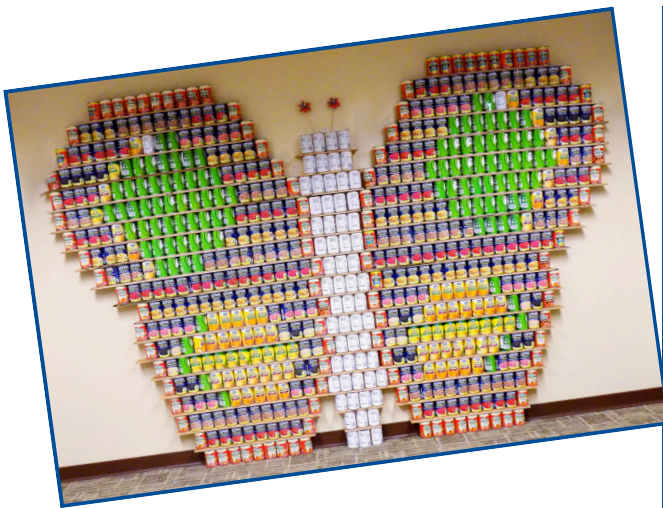


Zaida Hernandez & Angie Caruso, Directors



Staff Members of Whittlesey

Couldn't make it to Empty Bowls but still want to support our mission? Scan here to donate through our Birdies for Charity site and we'll receive a 15% bonus! Every dollar helps to make a difference!



Donation Creation: May 1st through June 30th

Join the movement to fight food insecurity with
Donation Creation!

Donation Creation is a unique and creative way to support those in need by hosting a nonperishable food drive. Work with friends, family members, colleagues, your church group, your school club, or on your own! Let your imagination run wild as you create a sculpture from the donated items. Make an impact and have fun doing it!

Stay tuned for more details, or reach out directly to Gabby at gjacunski@chrysaliscenterct.org

La Cocina Culinary Arts Training Program February 2025 Graduates



Chrysalis Center is proud to honor the most recent graduating class of the La Cocina Culinary Arts Training Program!

Through our partnership with Capital Workforce Partners, 10 students completed our five-week Culinary Arts Training Program. Students learned about topics that will be relevant to them as culinary professionals, such as food temperature safety, knife skills, and kitchen equipment training. During the final week of our program, students participated in classroom-style training, at the end of which they were required to pass two exams: ServSafe Food Handler and ServSafe Food Manager.



Berkowitz II Construction Continues: Advancing the Mission of Affordable Housing



Progress continues on the Berkowitz II in New Britain, the latest initiative by Chrysalis Center Housing Development Corporation (CCHDC) to provide affordable housing. The development, located on Main Street, will feature 28 two-bedroom townhouse-style homes. As of this past winter, front steps were completed, building footings were near completion, and plumbing and electrical work was ongoing. Berkowitz II is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2025.

YOUR DONATION TODAY WILL GO 15% FARTHER!

Donate via our Birdies For Charity page from now through June 22nd and Chrysalis Center will receive a 15% bonus on every dollar raised.

No additional cost to you, just extra impact for us!
Make a 115% difference.



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A legacy of care: 50 years of transforming lives

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Chrysalis Center is an Affirmative
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Funded in part by: DMHAS, DOC, DOH,
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and HUD

Chrysalis Center accepts MasterCard, Visa,
American Express and Discover. Please visit our website to donate
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or sponsor a fundraiser event.

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