



# HOMeward

FALL 2018

## Celebrating a year at home

In her first few weeks as a Therapist Case Manager at Health Care for the Homeless, Lakeesha Griffin helped 12 people sign leases and move into Sojourner Place, a supportive housing partnership with Episcopal Housing Corporation.

Before Sojourner Place, Silas (right) and 11 other renters spent years living on the street, in shelters or in abandoned houses. And Lakeesha watched as they got their very own keys. She saw the look on their faces as they each opened their doors to reveal fully furnished apartments, complete with food and cleaning supplies donated by community members like you. They were finally home.



*Silas is one of 11 residents ready for a second year at Sojourner Place.*

Over the past year, newly-housed residents have been able to focus on the things that matter to all of us: family, health and work. Lakeesha says, "Some residents are considering part-time jobs like mowing lawns, and they've been able to reengage with loved ones."

Like Silas, Jenna\* is celebrating a year at home with support from our housing services program. Two years ago, she was living in a car, separated from her children. Now, safely in her apartment, she is managing her bipolar disorder, has reunited with her two daughters and just got a full-time job at a Baltimore City hospital. With housing and the services she needs, her life has done a 180.

With your support, we're working to open the door to housing—and change—for significantly more people. As you read this, 47 more clients are settling into new homes, four therapist case managers and peer advocates will be

joining our housing team to support their transition, and new housing partnerships are on the near horizon.

These recently housed clients are making big moves in their own lives. And providers like Lakeesha and people like you are with them every step of the way.

*\*For privacy reasons, Jenna is an alias.*

**heartbeat.**

Join 70+ monthly givers to build a future without homelessness.  
[giving.hchmd.org/heartbeat](https://giving.hchmd.org/heartbeat)

# Chris's message to his legislators—and you

Smile! You are helping change the course of people's lives through dental care.

Chris Mehl, client and advocate, testified to the Maryland General Assembly this year about the quality dental care he receives thanks to you. Here is what he said to our elected officials in Annapolis:

“ Thank you for this opportunity to tell you about myself and what the Health Care for the Homeless dental care program has meant to me. I come to you from a spiritual recovery program based in Baltimore, where I have lived since June 2016. I went through a difficult period following a divorce and failed business in 2009 that made me aware that I needed to make a change in my life. After entering my recovery program, I was in desperate need of dental care. One of my counselors advised me to connect with Health Care for Homeless. The caring and warm staff were conscientious and attentive over the course of over a dozen appointments, culminating in a new smile that has changed my life.

When I started my care, I had no confidence in myself because of my dental needs. After concluding my dental care, I gained back my sense of self-worth as a person. I have since been to school for a change of career, graduating from All-State with a CDL license, which has started me on a trucking career with one of the premier trucking companies in the country. The dental program at Health Care for the Homeless has been an integral part of my rebirth—gaining not only a good job, but also the gift of loving myself and being a productive part of my community. I cannot thank Health Care for the Homeless enough for giving me my life back. ”

Chris is just one of 1,400 people who benefited from our dental care last year. Chris saw a dentist at our West Baltimore clinic. Thanks to you, we also operate dental suites at our downtown clinic and Our Daily Bread Employment Center. These are the only spots in Maryland where any person experiencing homelessness can get dental care regardless of insurance or ability to pay.



*Clients, staff and folks like you rallied for adult dental benefits in 2018.*



## DONATE

On November 27, every #GivingTOOTHday gift gives clients like Chris the dental care they desperately need.

[giving.hchmd.org/givingtoothday](http://giving.hchmd.org/givingtoothday)



## VOLUNTEER

You can make a night on the street a bit more manageable for our neighbors without homes. Assemble and donate survival kits this winter.

[www.hchmd.org/fulfill-our-wishlist](http://www.hchmd.org/fulfill-our-wishlist)



## CONNECT

Want more stories about the lives you change every day? Subscribe to our email list.

[www.hchmd.org/email-signup](http://www.hchmd.org/email-signup)



Jackie is a role model for all of us working to keep our diabetes in check.

## Health over honey buns

**J**ackie is one of the regulars at the Wednesday diabetes classes that nurse Shailah Bevans teaches with therapist Ebony Hicks in our West Baltimore clinic. At 49, Jackie has an open and kind face—one that doesn't readily reveal the trauma she experienced as a young woman or the hard work of single-handedly raising nine kids.

Diabetes shouldn't lead to amputation in your 40s or 50s. But as you can imagine, people without homes face an uphill struggle when it comes to accessing healthy food, information about diabetes and even something as simple as shoes to protect against infection.

Shailah says, "Almost everyone in our weekly diabetes class knows someone who has lost a toe, foot or leg. Poorly managed diabetes can get to that extreme."

Two years after Jackie's youngest son was born, she was diagnosed with diabetes. "The doctor I was seeing really scared me," Jackie said. "He told me my kidneys were failing. I was in a lot of pain."

With so much at stake, Jackie did what many diabetics do: she took a hard look at her diet and tried to make a change.

She says, "It was a challenge in the beginning. There are still times I go into the junk food aisle, and I swear the food is talking to me!" Honey buns and chocolate milk were a particularly tough goodbye.

Fortunately, Jackie had just moved out of her daughter's house and into a home of her own. She had the advantage of a kitchen to cook in, a refrigerator to store fresh food and the ongoing support of therapists and nurses to champion her progress.

"Jackie has lost dramatic weight and really has just changed her whole world," Ebony says with admiration. "She's a walking testimony that if you change your diet, you can manage this."

Jackie is a rock star, and the best part is she's not alone. An impressive 70% of our clients have overcome barriers to get their diabetes under control this year.

## Don't like it? Vote!

*Client and advocate Bill Price talks voter registration*

**Q: Why did you get into advocacy?**

I never believed that I'd be homeless. I felt like other people, that it was their fault they were homeless. But then my family couldn't pay the water bill and taxes on our house so we lost it. I had to pick up what I could and find shelter.

No one should ever experience a day of homelessness; it's affected me in more ways than I could ever imagine. That's why I started advocating for other people. It gives me hope.

**Q: How long have you been an advocate?**

Since 2013, after coming to Health Care for the Homeless.

**Q: You use voter registration as an extension of your advocacy. Please explain.**

Voter registration is the truest form of reform. Not enough people experiencing homelessness are registered or vote. People say, "I don't vote because I don't believe that my vote counts." It's a slow process. But we can change stigma and how people treat us by exercising our right to vote. We don't like what someone's doing? We vote them out! The more we vote, the more we can convey our need for housing, health care and respect.

**Q: Any favorite moments?**

Some people hug me and thank me. That makes it all worthwhile. I've registered 1,500 people to vote, but I don't want my star in the lights. If I register you to vote, just vote!

Follow Bill's lead and vote on November 6. Find your polling place.



<https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/where.html>

# We're not so different, you and I



*Kara gears up for her third Constellation Day of Service.*

**K**ara Nelson signed up to volunteer as a way to get to know her Constellation coworkers better. But after helping nearly 200 people get warm coats and hearing their stories, Kara walked away with an entirely new understanding of homelessness.

“It changed the stereotypes that I had in my head about what someone experiencing homelessness looks like

or how they got there. I met people who lost jobs, got divorced or didn't have family they could turn to for help,” Kara said. “I realized that it very easily could have been me.”

When Kara was in high school, her parents split up—and her mom was suddenly supporting three kids on her own and without an income.

“My mom had been a stay-at-home mom for 21 years. We were fortunate that my grandparents were able to help and that she found a job fast. If you don't have family to help you, you can see how the domino effect starts. I never thought about it before, but I always had someone I knew who would help.”

This fall, Kara is coming back for her third straight Constellation Day of Service at our downtown clinic. And this time, she's using her own experience to recruit coworkers.

Explore how homelessness affects us all. Invite Health Care for the Homeless to talk in your workplace or community gatherings:  
[www.hchmd.org/invite-us-your-community](http://www.hchmd.org/invite-us-your-community)



## HOMELESS PERSONS' MEMORIAL DAY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21

Join us at McKeldin Square to honor our neighbors without homes who died in 2018. 5:30-7:30 p.m.

RSVP to [memorialday@hchmd.org](mailto:memorialday@hchmd.org)

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### ROCK YOUR SOCKS 5K

Saturday, November 3

Join 400+ neighbors at Lake Montebello for a morning of wild socks and doing good. Day-of registration available.  
[giving.hchmd.org/5K](http://giving.hchmd.org/5K)

### FALLSWAY TOUR

Thursday, November 15

Your chance to see our downtown clinic in action. Tour starts at 9 a.m. RSVP to [cbauer@hchmd.org](mailto:cbauer@hchmd.org)

### CHOCOLATE AFFAIR

Saturday, February 2

Save the date (and your appetite) for a lively evening to end homelessness, featuring inspired cuisine from Baltimore's top chefs. Tickets at [chocolateaffair.org](http://chocolateaffair.org) or call 443-703-1345.