



Christian Community Action, Inc.
HELP • HOUSING • HOPE



In memory of Helen Wilson, a regular volunteer at CCA who brought a nurturing and compassionate presence

A Little Goes a Long Way

Potlucks are a beautiful concept. I recently hosted one with a group of friends, unsure if my humble contribution—coffee and coffee cake—would be enough. But soon, others arrived: one friend brought cherries and fresh flowers, another brought vegan donuts and bagels, and yet another came with an egg casserole and another, homemade punch. Those who couldn't bring a dish blessed us simply with their presence. Before we knew it, we had a feast.

That experience reminded me of a passage I've been reflecting on—when Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with a young boy's small offering of 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. It's a powerful picture: when we offer what we have, no matter how small, it can be multiplied to meet the needs of many.

This newsletter is filled with stories of people—CCA staff, volunteers, and community partners—who are doing just that. Whether it's our Family Coaches walking with one family at a time and ultimately helping 15 families exit shelter in the past 6 months, or a 14-year-old young lady who collected more than 150 sets of sheets for our residents, each contribution matters.

Interestingly, the term potluck came into use during the Great Depression—a time when people pooled what little they had so that the food would go further. Today, as we face new challenges and increasing needs locally and globally, let's continue that legacy. By sharing our time, talent, and resources—and placing them in the right hands—we can trust that they'll be used to meet the needs of many.

Charmain Yun
Executive Director

A Chance to Succeed

Aaron's Story



The New HOPE (Higher Opportunities, Purpose and Expectations) Housing Program is a comprehensive Moving to Work Program in partnership with Elm City Communities. By providing stable, affordable housing along with structured support services, the program enables families to make positive changes and work toward independence.

Aaron grew up in and around New Haven—his old elementary school is just a few blocks away from New HOPE. He worked hard during his twenties, often holding two factory jobs at once and working up to 70 hours a week. His life changed a few years ago when he gained full custody of his now 9-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son. Aaron had always been part of their lives, but becoming their full-time caregiver brought both joy and new challenges. Without childcare, he couldn't keep either of his jobs. He soon fell behind on rent and eventually had to leave his apartment to stay with family. When that arrangement started to put his relative's housing at risk, Aaron called 211 for help.

This June, Aaron moved into New HOPE after being at CCA's Hillside Family Shelter for four months. Since joining the program, he decided to enroll in the plumbing program at Porter and Chester Institute and is on track to graduate in May of 2026, then begin a 4-year paid apprenticeship that will lead to a plumbing license. Aaron has been surprised by how much he enjoys the plumbing trade. "It's become something I'm interested in since entering the shelter. It's a career," he said. "I don't want to keep working dead-end jobs or working a lot of hours or working two jobs."

Despite all of the challenges he has faced, Aaron stays hopeful. "It was a lot that I've been through, but I never got down or discouraged because I knew it was going to get better somehow... plus, I have my kids, so I can't do that... I know God's going to make it right. He'll make a way for me."

These days, Aaron enjoys his plumbing program and everyday moments with his kids. They love juicing fruits together, going to the park, visiting Funz, and watching movies—whatever sounds fun that day. In five years, Aaron hopes to become a Master Plumber, the highest level of expertise in plumbing, and to own a home with a backyard where his kids can play.

When asked what he wants to share with anyone who might read his story, Aaron said: **"Being in New HOPE gives me a chance to thrive and strive for better... New HOPE has helped me go from being homeless to giving me a chance to succeed."**

To keep friends informed and involved in CCA's work, quarterly newsletters—February, May and November are sent out via email and in August via print. If you do not receive CCA's email newsletters, email cca@ccahelping.org or call 203-777-7848 to be added.

FROM the FRONTLINES

CCA's Executive Team

CCA has been building a strong leadership team over the past year—meet the group responsible for driving CCA's mission forward:



Photo credit: Mary Tyrrell

From left to right: Charmain Yun, Shellina Toure, Sean Campbell, John Bruzinski

Charmain Yun Executive Director

Charmain is inspired by Micah 4:4, "Everyone will sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one will make them afraid" for how it speaks of a community where all people are safe and thriving in their own space. She provides leadership by supporting staff in carrying out CCA's mission and connecting with partners and community members. Since joining CCA in 2020, Charmain has held roles as the Landlord Engagement Specialist and Director of Administration and Planning. She holds a Sociology degree from Yale and a Master's in Social Work from the University of Connecticut. What she enjoys about working at CCA is being alongside a diverse and dedicated staff, witnessing families move toward a better place, collaborating with partners and seeing kids all the time.

Shellina Toure Director of Housing and Resident Services

Shellina's commitment to working with people experiencing homelessness is unwavering, evidenced by her 37-year tenure at CCA. She oversees the work of the Family Coaches, Housing Intake Coordinator and Landlord Engagement Specialist to support families in their transition from CCA's housing programs to permanent housing and co-chairs the CAN Family Work Group for the Greater New Haven area. Shellina holds a degree in Human Services from Springfield College and a Master's in Social Work from Fordham University, where she became a licensed advanced-level social worker in 2023. She believes deeply in CCA's mission, finds joy in helping families build stability and independence through safe, secure housing and enjoys spending time with her family.

Sean Campbell Senior Director of Programs

Sean brings a range of experience in direct service leadership, including a former role as the Director of Children's Services at the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Services and a Master's in Education. Sean joined CCA's team in 2016 and now oversees program operations, supervises program directors, cultivates partnerships, and writes grant applications. Beyond his professional role, Sean enjoys spending time with his two daughters and teaching spin classes.

John Bruzinski Director of Operations and Administration

John has always had a passion for helping others grow through teaching and mentoring. He joined CCA in the summer of 2024 to oversee building operations and administrative expenses. John brings over 30 years of experience in the for-profit sector, including leadership roles at Hewlett-Packard and Energy Electronics. He holds a degree in Computer Engineering from Syracuse University and a Master's in Business Administration with a focus in Finance from the University of Bridgeport. Outside of work, John enjoys sprint triathlons, golfing, traveling, and spending time with his friends and family.

The Cortright Family

The Cortright family first got involved with CCA through their church, Bethesda Lutheran in New Haven. Hear from Clara (20) about what it's like to volunteer alongside her parents, Dan and Linda:

Linda gardening at New HOPE



Dan and Clara at the New HOPE Community BBQ



Playing Cornhole at Family Day

To get our volunteer opportunities, fill out the Volunteer Interest Form on our website: ccahelping.org

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

How are you involved with CCA, individually and as a family?

The first time we volunteered with CCA was by donating canned goods to the food pantry, then assembling Thanksgiving baskets. As a family, we continue to do both of those things and my father tutors and provides childcare for kids while their parents attend meetings with CCA, and my mother has assisted with cleaning/turning over apartments. The two of them also put together a garden at New HOPE. This summer, I am interning as the Digital Media and Communications Intern, and we've volunteered together at the New HOPE Community BBQ and ARISE Family Day.

What is it like from your perspective to volunteer alongside your parents?

My parents started to become more involved at CCA after I left for college, so I had only heard stories without knowing much about the community. Coming home and seeing them participate inspired me to do the same. It reminded me that the people we are close to never stop influencing us. Even if our perspectives sometimes differ, it's good to keep in mind that we aren't just helping others; we are setting examples for those around us to do the same. Overall, it makes volunteering more personal and impactful.

"I wanted to give back because I recognized how much I was helped in a time of need"

SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

Asia works as a Resident Advisor and Peer Mentor for first year students

Asia at CCA's shelter 7 years ago



Asia's family resided in CCA's Hillside Family Shelter while she was a freshman at Hill Regional Career High School. She remembers playing outside with some of the other kids in shelter and feeling grateful for small ways CCA helped her family, like providing school supplies for Back to School and a skateboard for Christmas.

In March of this year, Asia reached out to CCA to coordinate a menstrual product drive with the Psi Omicron Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), with whom she serves as Vice President. This July, she and her friends dropped off more than 75 products to be distributed in our Hillside Family Shelter. Thinking back to her time at CCA, she said she "wanted to give back because [she] recognized how much [she] was helped in a time of need."

Now, Asia is a rising senior at SCSU completing her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Management. In the future, she hopes to obtain a Master's degree in Counselor Education and Student Affairs and continue to work with students.



Psi Omicron Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. at SCSU

More Summer Highlights:



Finding Our Voices Teen Girls' Group

Face Painting and Bounce House at the New HOPE Community BBQ



6-session series on Black Maternal Health

VOX Youth Volunteering



Ice cream sundaes at our ARISE Family Day



Mothers and Others For Justice—along with Room for All—were proud to host the Dream Different New Haven Bus Tour, a unique way to see the current state of housing in New Haven, from housing developments to vacant lots across the city. Read the New Haven Independent's article [here](#):



DONOR to DONOR

We are grateful for the many ways donors financially support the work at CCA. Here are two meaningful ways that some of CCA's supporters are choosing to give. Please consider:

Monthly Donations

Monthly giving provides steady, reliable support that helps CCA plan ahead and respond quickly to urgent needs. To set up a monthly donation, visit cchelping.org/donate and check the box "show my support by making this a recurring donation" and select "monthly" from the dropdown menu.

"It was an easy decision for my husband Tyler and I to help fund an organization striving to make known Jesus's love through meeting tangible needs in the city."

-Tyler and Megan Dickey

Stock Donations

Stock donations help CCA diversify funding sources and increase resilience to economic fluctuations. They also allow supporters to give efficiently and give more, without impacting immediate cash flow and while avoiding capital gains taxes. CCA is now able to accept stock donations through Fidelity. If you are interested in giving a stock donation, email John (jbuzinski@cchelping.org) or Charmain (cyun@cchelping.org)

"Donating stock has allowed us to support CCA's extraordinary work more meaningfully and efficiently."

-Choi family

CCA's 60th Anniversary is in two years! Calling anyone who wants to be part of the celebration planning who 1) has been served by CCA or 2) has been a part of the historical fabric of CCA. Please email Anna (ahartshorne@cchelping.org) or Charmain (cyun@cchelping.org)!

Impact: January-June 2025

- 46 families housed
- 15 families exited to permanent housing
- 31 individuals using employment services
- 320 bags of food distributed
- 1,175 diapers distributed

Hear from a mom who exited shelter this year:

Before CCA I was homeless with two small children. After my husband passed away, I lost my house, car and job of 20 years and it just left me in a dire position... I felt as though all hope was lost and almost gave up... CCA was a stepping stone that helped me get back on my feet and on with living. I am so grateful for CCA and the Hillside Family Shelter because I don't know where I would be if I never received that call. CCA is the gift that kept on giving and I will never forget how my family and I were saved by their help and resources.

Hear from guests of our food pantry:

Gracias a todos los que nos ayudan a soportar nuestras familias. Dios los bendiga. (Thank you to everyone who helps us support our families. God bless you.)

Gracias por todo lo que hacen de ayudar a mi familia de 8 personas todos los meses mi comprita. Gracias. (Thank you for everything you do to help my family of 8 people every month. Thank you.)

These numbers and stories are the result of the hard work of the families we serve and CCA staff, some of whom are pictured here: (L to R) Housing Team, Building Superintendents, and Neighborhood Services Advocate (middle)



Connect With Us!



Saturday, October 25th
3:00-6:00pm
Dixwell Community "Q" House,
197 Dixwell Ave.

Join us for dinner, a dynamic Future Career Fashion Showcase, and powerful testimonies at this year's Homeless to Boldness to celebrate resilience and create tangible pathways toward stability for families in our programs. Purchase your ticket here:



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Online at ccahelping.org/donate,
or send checks to 168 Davenport
Ave. New Haven, CT 06519



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