



Newsletter September 2018

Celebrating 20 Years of rebuilding lives

Vision: Formerly homeless seniors will obtain and sustain safe, appropriate, and affordable housing.

Mission: To empower older men and women who are homeless to restore their lives and to live independently.

We do this by providing transitional housing, case management, counseling support, and life skills enhancement tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of each resident.

Values: Empowerment, respect, resiliency, client self-determination, and self-advocacy.

Beliefs: Homelessness is a solvable problem. Decent and affordable housing is a basic right. With guidance and support, older men and women who are homeless can and will have the strength and skills to rebuild their lives.

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Could you rebuild your life in your late 50's or 60's?

Not an easy task, for sure, but Renewal House residents do just that. Significant trauma and loss are generally found on an individual's path to Renewal House. The first weeks after admission is a time of decompression, when the healing begins and the ability to look at the future starts to emerge. Goals are set and the work begins!

So far this year, two residents have achieved their goals of securing employment and are saving for housing. Another resident has completed health care certificate programs at Naugatuck Valley Community College and is preparing for a job search. The kitchen table at the house is often home to residents studying for exams or taking online courses to learn computer-aided design or to improve English language proficiency.

Courage, Persistence, Success!

"Upon my reflection of my time at Renewal House, I think back with great gratitude and thanks!! Being given the space and time to showcase my various talents for rebuilding my professional life, always reaching for the stars and beyond, like rivers that flow meandering around great and small obstacles in life's path and journey – all in the classroom we call 'life's adventures'." - Renewal House resident

The New Face of Homelessness

Did you that many older adults over 60 are becoming homeless for the first time in Connecticut? The following circumstances can precipitate a spiral down to homelessness:

- Loss of wealth through online or phone scams
- Adult caregivers of parents displaced after the death of the parent
- Physical or mental health problems or lack of healthcare
- Job loss
- Lack of income. Social Security payments and cash assistance are often below the federal poverty level of \$1,005.00 per month.
- Lack of affordable housing and long wait lists for public housing
- Foreclosures
- Divorce or death of spouse

Programs like Renewal House bridge the gap between homelessness, offering a safe, affordable homelike environment where older adults can pursue vocational goals and independent housing.

- Valerie O'Rourke

2018 Breakfast—Event Sponsors

Carl Bailey, Jr.
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Newtown Savings Bank

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Georgia Carrington
Fairfield County Bank

Peggy Katkocin
Carolyn Marston
Savings Bank of Danbury

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St Rose of Lima, Newtown

State of CT - DSS, Danbury
United Methodist Church,
Danbury
Carolina Vera



Doug Hensal and Carolina Vera of Newtown Savings Bank present a generous donation to Renewal House.



Graduate Murdina Wright delivers a message of hope and inspiration.



Supporters filled the room at WCSU's Student Center.



Long-time Renewal House supporters, Jean Edwards and Loretta Sampson are always there when needed.

It Takes a Village

It takes a village to raise a child is an African proverb that means it takes an entire community of different people interacting in order for a child to experience and grow in a safe environment.

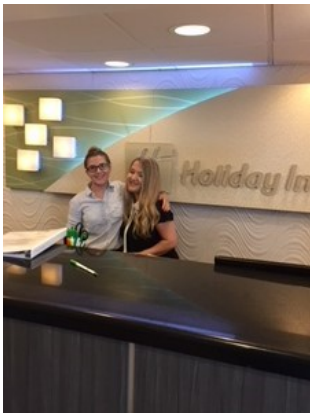
It also takes a village for programs like Renewal House to thrive, to empower older men and women to restore their lives and move on to healthy, sustained independent living.

In this newsletter, you will see just some of the members of Renewal House's village.

We are grateful to each and every one of them!



A Peaceful Sleep!



With thanks to our friends at Holiday Inn in Danbury for their generous donations of pillows and bed linens!



Building the Local Economy, Supporting the Community

Networking is a great way to build businesses and careers. It's also a great way to bring new supporters to Renewal House. Recently, we were introduced to the Danbury chapter of Business Network International (BNI). M.A.D. Hatters BNI devoted a day of volunteer services to Renewal House – and did they work! Rain fell and they keep working...gardens prepared for plantings, new storage cabinets assembled, painting completed. Thank you, M.A.D. Hatters!

The Bridge Babes is a group of educators that have gotten together for over 20 years to enjoy each other's company during a game of cards, hiking, skiing, kayaking, eating, and the list goes on. Our group started when we joined together to take an adult education class to learn to play bridge. Since then we have loved our times together sharing in fun and games.

Above all we share the passion of helping others and each other. Recently we joined in the March for Our Life in Torrington, and over the years have supported Julia's Wings Foundation and other local causes. In addition, we have been dedicated coaches and volunteers for Special Olympics over many years.

The passion of helping others is one of the reasons the Bridge Babes support the Renewal House. We believe in your program of support to homeless seniors and your mission to provide residents a safe home as they gain the skills and knowledge they need to work toward healthy, stable, independent living.

As educators, we strongly believe in life-long learning and the importance of empowering others to be independent. For that reason, the Bridge Babes are proud supporters of Renewal House.

Adele S. Johnson
Educational Surrogate

I LOVE BRIDGE



Philanthropists in Our Midst

Have you ever heard the term “planned gift”? Did you think that planned giving is only for those who enjoy enormous wealth?

A **planned gift** is a contribution that is arranged in the present and allocated at a future date – during an Individual’s lifetime or at death. It is a way to support non-profits that enable individuals to make larger gifts than they could make from ordinary income.

We are grateful to be supported by individuals who have named Renewal House in their wills, others who have donated appreciated stocks or directed required 401K distributions to Renewal House.

Most planned gifts come from individuals who are not wealthy but who have been loyal supporters for years.

If you are considering or can consider making a planned gift to Renewal House in the form of a bequest, a beneficiary designation or some other form, our Executive Director, Janice Wiggins, would be pleased to speak with you. All conversations will be strictly confidential.

Renewal House Appreciates Recent Grants

City of Danbury
Congregational Church of New Fairfield
First Congregational Church, Danbury
Lawrence and Natalie Portell Foundation
Newtown Congregational Church
People’s United Community Foundation
Peter and Carmen L Buck Foundation
Town of Ridgefield

A Planned Gift and a Vision for the Future

I first heard of Shelter of the Cross, now Renewal House, when one of our parishioners had lost her home and was welcomed there on Aaron Samuels Blvd. She was soon a part of the programs to help her get back on her feet and on to a place of her own. Before long I found myself in charge of our church Outreach Committee and more involved with places that we try to support.

Somehow, I ended up as part of the committee planning the Shelter’s fundraising breakfast and I was “hooked”. The commitment of those who were past and present board members, their enthusiasm at meetings and the joy of sharing a laugh was infectious. I found that I looked forward to the early morning meetings and hearing the stories of the success of the residents. Being invited to potlucks where I met some of the residents and graduates as well as volunteers and board members was most enlightening. I continue to look forward to visiting with current residents and hearing about their activities and achievements.

As I think of years ahead, I hope there will be many of those involved who will consider making even some small planned gift, as I will, to be sure that Renewal House stands firm. Perhaps in the years ahead there will be enough to have another residence for more seniors who find themselves in need of a place to become part of as they are helped to get back on their feet. It has been an honor for me to have become part of the Board.

- Georgia Carrington

As we reflect upon 20 years of Renewal House, supporters share their stories of how they got involved.

My first interaction with Renewal House was meeting a few board members when getting together for a meeting here at Savings Bank of Danbury. I was invited to a night of Jazz by Bob Peckham, a Renewal House board member and my colleague at the bank. This is where I learned all of the good things Renewal House does. I then offered to help in the organization of the breakfast silent auction items for a few years. My relationship grew from there. I’ve had the opportunity to spend time in the house as well as interview prospective applicants. Each of their stories touched my heart and made it real to me how many people need help. My son Wilson also now helps with the annual breakfast and, as a family, we find ways to support the local food pantries, coat drives and toy collection. There are so many in need. Renewal House does a big part in helping those who are accepted. My involvement helped me realize that I can also do a little more in other ways. Today, I am pleased to continue to serve—now as a Renewal House board member.

- Linda Wagner