



*Rebuilding older lives by restoring independence. One life at a time.*

## NEWSLETTER

### VISION

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

### MISSION

Renewal House provides transitional housing, case management, counseling and life skills enhancement to older men and women who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless so they may be empowered to restore their lives.

### GOALS

To transition displaced seniors to independent living in safe, legal, affordable housing and to support them, as needed in maintaining independence.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Empowerment • Respect • Resiliency • Client Self Advocacy & Self Determination

**“Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach.”**

**- Clarissa Pinkola Estes**

## Renewal House Expands Services to Graduates

During the past few years of pandemic restrictions, we noticed the negative impact isolation has had on both residents and program graduates. In many cases, this negative impact on both physical and mental health persists because of the continuing need for caution as well as COVID-related fears and habits that have, in many cases, become ingrained.

Almost 100% of Renewal House graduates live alone in subsidized senior housing with few or no services on site. Most graduates have no personal transportation, no computers, no wifi, no cable television services. During winter months, many graduates become quite isolated.

Maintaining regular socialization is essential to maintaining healthy, stable lives – a critical component of the Renewal House mission. Establishing the habits and connections needed to combat isolation is a priority in the work that Renewal House does with both residents and graduates.

### Research Documents the Negative Impact of Isolation

- 50% increase in the incidents of dementia
  - 30% increase in strokes
- 29% increase in the incidents of heart attacks

To address these concerns, Renewal House has established a new part-time position of Graduate Services Facilitator to enhance our outreach to graduates. Johnnie Lee Smith, a Renewal House graduate has assumed this role. One of her first priorities has been to work with individual graduates to identify community resources and events that are most relevant them. Look for updates on this work in the coming months!

## Congratulations! A Mission Accomplished!

**Murdina Wright, a 2016 graduate of Renewal House  
Master of Fine Arts—Creative Nonfiction and Poetry  
Western CT State University—May 2022**

A member of the Renewal House Board of Directors since 2019, Murdina is a person who sets ambitious goals for her personal and professional development. She used the many Renewal House program resources available to her as she worked to re-establish her life and move forward.

- Opportunities for skills update and career training
- The graduate food pantry to assist in managing expenses
- Ever-present counseling and support to guide her journey

Her poetry reflects her capacity for introspection as well as her insight into the human spirit and the human condition. We can't wait to see what's next on her incredible journey!



### I WOULD CRY LESS

if I had known how  
sweet the joy at conflict's  
end  
of difficulty cornered and I  
escaped  
of ill fate reversed  
how big the hunch is on the  
back of want  
I would cry less

*-Murdina Wright*



Enhancing daily living skills is an important component of the Renewal House program—that includes meal planning and preparation. For some residents, that means learning some basic skills, like using a crockpot to prepare meatballs for a sandwich. For others, it's sharing their talent by preparing foods that connect them to culture, like this Indian feast prepared by a current resident.

Hosting events that bring graduates and current residents together is a Renewal House tradition. These events:

- Give current residents hope that there is life and opportunity beyond the homelessness they have experienced
- Give graduates opportunities for social engagement so important for stable, healthy lives

We thank the Jewish Federation of Western CT for helping to support our recent graduate picnic, including a rousing game of corn toss that brought out competitive spirits, smiles, and laughter!



*Celebrating 20 years of rebuilding lives*

Visit our website:  
[renewalhousedanbury.org](http://renewalhousedanbury.org)

## We are grateful for the support of many dedicated and generous volunteers

On June 9th, we held our first in-person fundraiser since 2020. The event was organized by a team of long-time Renewal House volunteers who were determined to make this a fun-filled event.

- Bill Gemmell
- Adele and John Johnson
- MJ and Jeff Dix
- Amy Warner

Brew & Renew, held at Housatonic Valley Brewery, was fun and so much more. The event raised funds to support the Renewal House program and the 100+ attendees have not stopped talking about looking forward to a repeat in 2023!



### Little People Learning Center Federal Road, Danbury

Little People Learning Center has been a wonderful community supporter of Renewal House for many years. Donating packages of personal care items, winter gloves and hats, food, and so many things to remind residents and graduates that others care.

Recently, our Executive Director was invited to be a guest reader. An exceptional opportunity to experience the work of an organization committed to children and families and to the Danbury community.

Thank you Little People Learning Center for all you do to contribute to our community!



Keep up with all the latest Renewal House news

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[renewalhousedanbury.org](http://renewalhousedanbury.org)



## With thanks for grants awarded in the first half of 2022

- Bedoukian Research
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- Fairfield County's Community Foundation
- Georgetown Lions
- Jewish Federation of Western Connecticut
- Lawrence J Portell and Natalie S Portell Foundation
- Newtown Lions Club
- Newtown Savings Bank Foundation
- Peter & Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation
- Ridgefield Thrift Shop
- Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, Southbury—Mustard Seed Fund
- Savings Bank of Danbury Foundation
- Town of Ridgefield
- Womans Club of Danbury/New Fairfield

## With thanks to Brew & Renew sponsors

### Lead Event Sponsors

Georgia Carrington  
Kent Green LLC

### Patrons

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Savings Bank of Danbury  
Union Savings Bank  
Carolina Vera  
Linda Wagner  
Janice Wiggins

### Table Sponsor

New Milford Counseling Center

**And enduring gratitude to individual donors,  
civic organizations and faith communities -**

**Your contributions support  
more than 50% of Renewal House program expenses**

**You can make a secure online contribution conveniently at**

**[www.renewalhousedanbury.org](http://www.renewalhousedanbury.org)**

**Your support restores lives!**

*Celebrating 20 years of rebuilding lives*

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