

We Are CCU

Summer '24 Newsletter

In response to Christ's call to love our neighbors, Christian Churches United brings together local churches, community partners, and concerned neighbors to serve those facing homelessness, incarceration, and poverty through supportive programs and compassionate engagement.

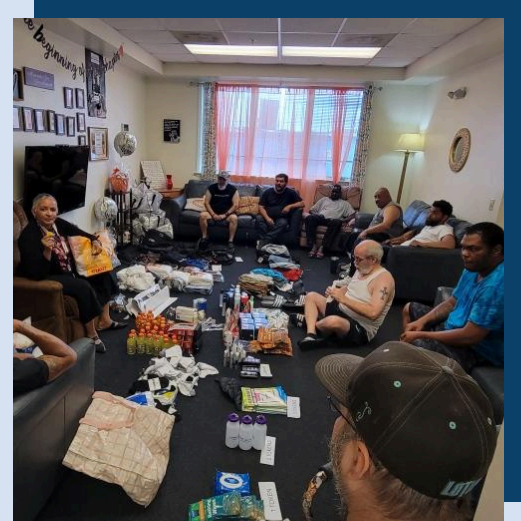
Thirsty for Community

Who do you lean on? Is it a small group from your church? Friends you met in kindergarten that have stuck together? Your high school friends? College group? Many of us could quickly and easily share who those people are, those individuals we lean on, we count on for community. These men and women we connect with are the ones who strengthen and encourage us. They are community for us, and they are a community who lifts us up and encourages us.

For the men at Susquehanna Harbor Safe Haven (SHSH), community has been harder to come by. Living on the street makes building a community difficult, at least with those who are a positive influence. The men learned, often out of necessity, how to manage things on their own. So, when they arrive at SHSH each of the men are invited to relearn how to rely on others. Whether those others are members of SHSH staff, one another or volunteers who come share their own stories.

Just a few months ago the men at SHSH began to gather on Thursday nights to discuss any and all areas of their lives. And it has been a transformative experience. "I've witnessed the men 'grow' through their challenges. They become open to new things. Even the individuals that don't quite feel ready to 'open up' initially, they eventually drop down their walls, build trust and join their peers in working on improving their lives," says Nicole Jones, Case Management Assistant at SHSH. These times are intended to challenge, encourage, and strengthen the men. They are meant to provide the men, not only with encouragement from one another, but also from guests who come to share their own stories. The stories of struggle and overcoming set the table for the men to let down their guards and engage with one another as well as the guests.

Vladimir Beauflis came to share his own experiences and what he found was hungry and thirsty men. "They were thirsty. Thirsty for community and communication and encouragement at the gatherings."



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Thirsty continued...

Daran Sawyers came one night expecting to sit and be a part of the conversation and ended up sharing his own story of struggle and overcoming. “These men care about doing better. They need encouragement that they can do better.” He not only found men willing to grow, willing to see themselves as overcomers; but he found men who had a willingness to be transparent and share. Both Daran and Vladimir shared about the kindness that was shared between the men, and the positivity that they experienced when they were with the men. Nicole Jones echoed this in her observations of the men on a daily basis, “Some of the men are helping each other with their chores and sharing their belongings. I hadn’t seen that as much prior to our groups and programs.”



The ultimate goal for the men who come to SHSH is to find the support and strength they need to be able to move out onto their own when they are ready. In the last few months, men like Alfred and Paul (pictured above) have moved out into their own apartments, but they are not on their own. As we all know, we never get to that next step in our lives on our own. There are staff and men at SHSH cheering Alfred and Paul on. And Paul and Alfred are cheering them on.

The gift of community that we can offer one another does more than provide us with friendship, it provides us with strength, encouragement, and others we can lean on when things get hard. Community like that, is more like family.

When you give to CCU you provide strength and encouragement for the men at Susquehanna Harbor Safe Haven. You become a part of the community that they lean on. You become a part of their family. Give online at www.ccuahbg.org/barnabas



Different, but still United in Love

On Friday, September 27th our annual United in Love Banquet takes on a *new* identity at the Rose Lehrman Theater at Harrisburg Area Community College. We are partnering with Sankofa African American Theater Company (SAATC) in connecting the Harrisburg community to the realities of poverty and homelessness here in Harrisburg. There is a power in artistic presentations that can extend beyond what is conveyed through facts and information. Viewers are transported into another’s reality and are invited to recognize themselves within the performers on a stage. If we are to truly make a significant impact in the current housing crisis, we all need to be able to see ourselves in the most vulnerable. When we connect with the struggle and suffering of another, that is when we can begin to think creatively about ways to overcome the challenges of homelessness and poverty.

We want to invite you to join us for **Echoes of Hope, a United in Love Event** for a wonderful night with live music, food, a silent auction and a performance by the incredible performers of Sankofa African American Theatre Company. You can purchase your tickets on our website (www.ccuahbg.org) or by scanning the QR code on the opposite page. If you have questions, contact Nick Mucci, Director of Development at nmucci@ccuahbg.org.

Better Together

We are better together. What is happening over at Susquehanna Harbor Safe Haven makes that abundantly clear. It would be easy to take a look at our fractured world and any one of us could end up looking further inward towards safety and comfort. However, we know that is not the solution! The solution is each of us seeking to find ways to give ourselves away in service of others. “The commitment of volunteers to CCU brings community to those who feel they have none,” shares Leah Payne, HELP Program Manager. This is what Nesha Hubbard does.

Volunteer Opportunities

- **Laundry Angels Support First Sat. of every Month**
- **Overnight Shelters Expanded overnight shelter season.**
- **Event Teams. Enjoy creating purposeful gatherings. We want to do that with you!**

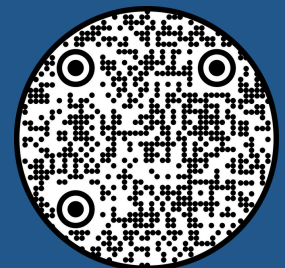
“If I were homeless or in need of any help or resources, I’d want people to assist in getting me back on my feet, so I just do it because I can,” she shared with us. Nesha volunteers with Christian Churches United in numerous ways! She collects items for Welcome Home Kits and the Winter Overnight Shelters and also volunteers at the Women’s Overnight Shelter. She is a part of the planning team for this fall’s United in Love event, Echoes of Hope. At 6:30 am on June 3rd, she was at Sunset Golf Course helping put hole signs around the course. “I enjoy the fact that I am not limited in my volunteering abilities. I am able to assist in many different ways at different facilities.” Nesha is one of many volunteers who give of their time and energy to be an encouragement to the men and women CCU journeys with and this also encourages the staff of CCU. Volunteers are vital to the work of Christian Churches United. It is the church in action!

There are multiple opportunities for you to serve with CCU and we invite you to visit our website to see the different ways and fill out a volunteer form. There are also some specific volunteer opportunities for you to consider.

Christian Churches United is not just the programs of the organization. It is not just the staff of the organization. It is Nesha. It is Beth. It is Jaymie. It is Jamar. It is all of us. We are CCU!

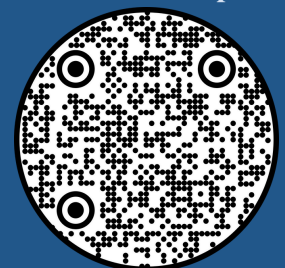
Upcoming Events

- 08.26 - Legacy Gifting Seminar with Thrivent Financial at Christ Presbyterian
- 09.05 - Member Church Zoom - Contact Nick Mucci for details, nmucci@ccuhbg.org
- 09.27 - Echoes of Hope | A United in Love Event at Rose Lehrman Theatre
- 10.08 - Pastor’s Appreciation Luncheon with Thrivent Financial
- 10.26 - Neighbor 2 Neighbor: How Faith Communities Can Help Address Homelessness
- 12.03 - Giving Tuesday Joy Ride
- 12.15 - Joy to the Burg Concert at The Englewood in Hershey



Volunteer Form

Register for Echoes of Hope



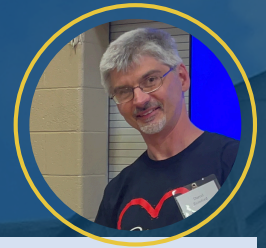
Echoes of Hope

A United in Love Event
September 27th, Rose Lehrman Theatre
5:30pm - 9:00pm

Featuring Performances by

presented by

A Note from the Executive Director



CCU is excited about the opportunities that the coming year brings for us as we partner with you to walk with those in need. Our Strategic Plan focuses on building our capacity to give dynamic community leadership in supporting those dealing with homelessness, poverty, and incarceration. We are being stretched with the opportunity to convert our Overnight Shelter for Women and Non-Binary Individuals into a year-round program. We are in the final hiring stages for a new Prison Chaplain/Re-Entry Coordinator to help guide our Prison Action Committee. And we are thrilled to partner with Leadership Harrisburg Area to improve our volunteer management and engagement.

We move forward with these exciting developments even as we anticipate the challenge in needing to support those in the current PennDOT encampment in relocating sometime in the summer of 2025. We have a great team of staff in place to support individuals, but really struggle to find places that are affordable for them to move into, that will accept them with the challenges they carry from lives filled with trauma.

In all these things, we invite you to consider how you and your congregation might take a step forward in your partnership with CCU. Do you know a landlord who would be willing to work with us to help house someone currently without a home? Could you refer someone looking to walk with those in need to one of the opportunities to join our staff or be a volunteer? Would you take the step to join our Matthew 25:40 team and become a monthly donor? We hope to see you at our Echoes of Hope event in September and look forward to having you join us on our journey as CCU in the year ahead!

www.ccuhb.org/jobs

JOIN OUR TEAM!

www.ccuhb.org | 717.230.9550



#WeAreCCU

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