

# Housing Matters



Cornerstone Community Housing is dedicated to assisting men experiencing homelessness, who want to change their lives, and to changing community attitudes toward homelessness.

---



Sheila & Bob at a previous anniversary

## 19 LOOKS GOOD ON HIM!

On October 9, Bob celebrated 19 years of sobriety. In all these years I have only missed one of his AA anniversary meetings. This year was the first Zoom meeting. Bob was the featured speaker, but everyone was engaged and celebrating. In a pink button-down shirt and tie, a pink bandana around his forehead, a ponytail, and beard down his chest, his appearance is as much of a paradox as he is. Bob is a recovering alcoholic. He has a grade school education, and a brain injury. He also has a sharp sense of humor, a willingness to help, and the desire to be sober.

I met Bob 22 years ago. Here is the back story.

**“Come to church with me and I’ll buy you all the drinks you want.”** That’s how Bob found his way to the church I was attending and into my life.

As he tells the story, ‘One morning I crawled out of my tent and saw a drinking buddy of mine who invited me to church. My first response was no thanks, but then he offered to buy me all the drinks I wanted after church. That changed my mind.’

I remember meeting Bob that first Sunday. Following church someone came up

Continued from page -1-

to me and said, “Sheila, he’s homeless”. And so, our “case management” sessions began. Earl’s Place was just opening and Bob, with my help, filled out an application. However, he did not follow up for a few years.

Bob lived in a tent behind a bar in Morrell Park, with his girlfriend, in jail, or on someone’s back porch. He did however, return to the church whenever he was able. One day I saw him at church and asked how he was doing. His response was “not good”. His girlfriend had kicked him out (once again). He had spent the night on someone’s porch. He was feeling hopeless. We talked. He didn’t see a point in living anymore. I told him that there are were lots of people who cared and would be deeply hurt if he was no longer a part of our lives.

He had reached a new low. I invited him to come to Earl’s Place on Monday and we would help him find a place to stay and treatment for his addiction. I even gave him my cell phone number and offered to pick him up in the morning. In the meantime, we found an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. I bought him a pack of cigarettes, and we said goodbye.

Monday morning came and went with no phone call. Then, much to my surprise, he showed up at Earl’s Place after walking from Morrell Park. He said, “Okay, I’m tired and I need help.” He went into detox, a recovery program, and then to Earl’s Place. After about a year, he moved to an apartment in Glen Burnie. Since then he says he has done more than he could have ever dreamed.

Thank you for providing opportunities for Bob, others who have been helped, and those who are yet to come. Together, we are changing lives.



## UPDATES



Michael celebrated his 80th birthday with us, COVID style. Dinner with his Earl’s Place family and drive-by wishes on the front steps.

Mark, Kenny, and Ronald obtained employment.

Frank, Jonathan G., Jonathan W., Theodore B., and Theodore M. made the move to permanent housing.

Frank is one of the men who moved recently. He is 30 and was addicted to substances since he was 15. He came to Earl’s Place very doubtful that he could or even wanted to be sober.

The stability he found here gave him an opportunity to follow through. Now he has had a chance to see what life is like sober.

On ways to improve the program he said, “I don’t think there is really anything you can do. Almost a feeling of love here, like you all would do anything for us. Almost like a home. Thank you so much for everything you have done for me”.

# What I Know Now...Behind the Scenes at CCH

Linda J. Emerick, CCH Volunteer, Donor,

I am going to be honest. My support of Cornerstone Community Housing began as an uninformed, unthinking, holiday-inspired act of generosity over 10 years ago. I saw a card on a church bulletin board asking for items for the residents of Earl's Place. That was the beginning. Fast forward several years. I am now a monthly donor (GEM), attend fund-raising events, and help Sheila in the Cornerstone Community Housing office with donation management entries once a week (online volunteering during COVID19). As my involvement has grown, I realize I have been the "student", learning about the issues of homelessness, addiction recovery, and the importance of non-profit organizations like CCH. Here are four things I have learned I would like to share with you, my fellow volunteers, donors, and donors-to-be.

## **Lesson #1. The men of Earl's Place and Prospect Place are the best teachers about the issues of homelessness.**

Many residents of Cornerstone Community Housing are among the hardest working, most dedicated men I know. I never before realized the incredible difficulties of recovering from homelessness and overcoming its causes—physical disabilities, unemployment, addiction, and more. Former and current residents' have shared their stories and I appreciate learning about their individual paths to independent living. At CCH, they have the structure, privacy, and safe environment needed to implement their individualized plans of action and goals. And there is clear evidence of their progress and successes: From the excitement of receiving a voter registration card to the successful completion of a community college program, from becoming a mentor for others in recovery to becoming employed after a long time out of the workforce, from finally getting the physical and

mental healthcare desperately needed, to re-connecting with family members after long periods of estrangement. These are just a few of the examples of the men's accomplishments.

## **Lesson #2 The staff and director of CCH are tireless and unwavering in their support of program residents and the fight against homelessness.**

It takes dedicated people to operate a non-profit and address homelessness in these times of underfunding, bias toward the homeless, and economic uncertainty. I often feel we donors and supporters do not really understand how difficult it is to run a successful program like CCH. Being on site, I have learned is the true extent of Sheila, Jim, Pam, Renard and the additional staff's duties and responsibilities. First, there is no typical day at Earl's Place or Prospect Place. In addition to fund raising and communicating with supporters like you and me, the staff deal with an unending list of responsibilities on a daily basis. Here's a *short* list of what I have seen them do on a *typical* day:

Create and maintain individualized case management plans for residents, pay bills and utilities, maintain financial and resident records, apply for grants, deal with government agencies, follow up on the residents' progress and needs, attend CCH board meetings, meet with former residents, visit churches and organizations, coordinate groups visiting Earl's Place or Prospect Place, hold group meetings with residents, and more.

Emergencies always arise so add these to their activities: Call in plumbers for water leaks, appear in court on a resident's behalf, rush a resident to a healthcare facility, wait for the fire inspectors, track down a resident's lost

documentation, implement COVID19 health and safety protocols for 29 residents and the staff...

You get the idea. It's overwhelming and the men of CCH appreciate everything they do.

### **Lesson #3. A steady income stream is critical for the programs of non-profits like CCH.**

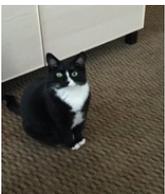
Sometimes we hate talking about money and fund-raising for non-profits. Here is something I have learned first-hand while volunteering in the CCH office—money is important and knowing what I know now, I am not ashamed to admit it. Financial support for transitional housing and housing for the homeless in general has become precarious. As Federal and State monies have shifted to Housing First programs or evaporated entirely, the core of funding for programs like CCH comes from grants and donations from supporters. Changes in the economy and changes in the focus of funding agencies means CCH is in a constant hunt for dollars annually. In the past, a lot of my personal donations to CCH were focused around-the-holidays and special appeals giving. Don't get me wrong—these donations are very important and greatly appreciated! Don't stop giving! However, a steady monthly income of funds for the day- to-day operations, facilities and utilities, and salaries of CCH are also very important. Having funds that can be counted on, month-to-month, year-to-year ensures consistent operations and even--just maybe--future expansion of services. "Steady monthly income stream" does not sound glamorous but it is vital. Yes, this is where I encourage you to become a GEM (Giving Every Month) and become part of that all important "monthly income stream".

### **Lesson #4. You, the CCH supporter, play a critical role in the fight against homelessness.**

The last thing I want to share with you is this: Please understand how much YOUR support and donations mean to the residents, staff, and volunteers of Earl's Place and Prospect Place. The men are amazed (and often surprised) when you participate in the annual dinner; show up for the Resolution Run on New Year's Day; adopt-a-resident at holiday time; pitch in for a newsletter or Father's Day appeal; offer special classes or events through your organization, club, or place of worship; and donate to keep CCH in business. They are amazed because your support shows they are important, you care, and their quest to overcome the hardships of homelessness matters. Thank you.

One more thing. A well-run non-profit needs a competent Office Cat. Sophie keeps things moving at Cornerstone Community Housing.

Sincerely, Linda



Sophie



Linda



**Earl's Place**  
1400 E. Lombard Street  
Baltimore, MD 21231  
410-522-0225

**Prospect Place**  
8720 Philadelphia Road  
Baltimore, MD 21237  
410-682-9660

**For more information,**  
visit us online at  
[cchbaltimore.org](http://cchbaltimore.org)  
[sheila@cchbaltimore.org](mailto:sheila@cchbaltimore.org)