



## A Soldier's Courage

*How your generosity helped John, and his friend, Charile, finally find home.*

**JOHN IS A VIETNAM VETERAN** who suffers from Agent Orange symptoms from his time serving as an Air Force pilot. Back then, no one knew about the herbicide's devastating health effects. As a result of John's exposure to it, he suffered from weight and memory loss and respiratory problems. He also suffered from PTSD from his combat experiences. His health is further complicated by HIV, forcing him into the hospital for the smallest of sicknesses; something as simple as a cold is life-threatening for John.

**ALTHOUGH JOHN EXPERIENCES DIFFICULTY** discerning reality from make-believe at times, he has the biggest heart - not that he'd ever admit it to anyone. John's case manager, Sara, was introduced to him when she began working with Pathways to Housing DC's Veteran Housing First Team. When Sara's team first approached John with the offer of housing, he immediately declined and said, "No, give that to a veteran who really needs it." Sara was incredibly moved by John's kindness, but also knew how vulnerable he was. She knew that if John didn't get off the streets soon, he would die. As time went on, John continued to decline offers of housing, pointing to other vets he felt needed it more.

**ONE SUCH PERSON WAS JOHN'S FRIEND**, Charlie, a veteran who also suffered from severe mental health problems and was highly vulnerable. Like so many before him, Charlie initially was not interested in engaging with Pathways DC as he too had been made promises for housing in the past, all of which were

left unfulfilled. On days when Charlie resisted meeting with the Veteran Housing First Team, John would intervene, sitting between Charlie and Sara on a bench near George Washington University. John would put his hand on Charlie's shoulder and say, "Charlie, you need to talk to these guys." After many visits, and the encouragement from his friend, Charlie was ready to find home. During the process of helping Charlie move off the street, John realized how supportive and committed Pathways DC was to helping all people in need. He set aside his pride and finally asked Sara's team to help him find an apartment. A few weeks later, and a year from his first interaction with Pathways to Housing DC, John moved into his new apartment.

**JOHN WAS IMMEDIATELY CONNECTED** with a team and wrap-around support services to help him manage his mental and physical health. Since then, John's health has improved significantly - he looks stronger and he has finally put on weight. He loves walking everywhere (even though there is a bus stop directly outside his front door), he is eating better, taking his medications, and has reconnected with family. John has four daughters and one son who live all over the world. He was disconnected from them for over 20 years. Now, John has not just reconnected with them, but regularly texts and speaks to them over the phone. John is a completely different man from the time Sara first met him, as is his friend Charlie. To this day, whenever Sara sees John, he asks, "Is my buddy Charlie still in his apartment?" Sara's answer is always the same, "Just like you, John. He's got a home and he's doing great."

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*Because of your generosity, John, Charlie, and so many others have the dignity and stability of a home. Your compassion provides hope and enables the recovery of lives.*



# “A Conspiracy of Hope”

Christy's Corner

**Christy Respress, MSW**  
*Executive Director*

*“The alternative to despair is hope.”*

Pat Deegan

At Pathways to Housing DC there is a conspiracy happening. A conspiracy of hope. Pat Deegan is a well known psychologist, advocate in the mental health recovery movement, and a person who is vocal about her experience living with a mental illness. She encourages all of us working with people living with mental illnesses to create an environment where hope is at the center of everything we do. She challenges us to be

part of this “conspiracy of hope” because hope is the least tangible, yet most important, thing that people often lose. Without it, recovery is not possible.

At Pathways to Housing DC, we often meet people when they are at the lowest points in their lives. They have lost home, family, friends, jobs. They have often been told they may never recover from their mental illness or addiction.

They don't know where to turn for help or they have given up believing that they will find a way out of homelessness. How do you reignite that spark inside someone who has lost so much?

While the answer is different for each person, having a home is most often the first step that many people choose. When given that dignity and stability, along with support from their teams, people are able to start dreaming and hoping again. For some, that hope is to reconnect with the child they haven't seen in decades. For others, it's looking forward to walking into a church and being welcomed by their neighbors. And for many, it's finding a job and having a paycheck. Whatever it is, at Pathways to Housing DC we know that recovery and change start with hope and the belief that anything is possible. With each barrier broken, that ember of hope grows brighter until eventually it is a roaring fire of radical life change.

The faces on the next page epitomize the ideas of hope and recovery to the fullest. Though every person's journey is unique at Pathways to Housing DC we know that by listening to people, walking by side by side in caring, and knowing and believing in their potential and possibilities, we are participating in this conspiracy of hope.

## Community in Action



Blake Real Estate held a drive, collecting 100s of coats for the men and women that Pathways DC serves.



Steven, newly housed, receiving a welcome home basket of donated items assembled by volunteers.



We're truly thankful for the 40 Welcome Home baskets assembled by The Mayflower Hotel.



In December, businesses throughout the Golden Triangle BID gave over 1,000 household and clothing items for people in need!



Thank you to The Advisory Board Company for your enormous generosity this holiday season!



# They're Smiling Because of You!



These are just a few of the 91 people that you helped find a place to call home in 2016. Because of your generosity, and others like you, we are on track to permanently end homelessness for another 135 individuals this year - more than ever before!

## Our Greatest Needs

- Cleaning supplies (including laundry & dish detergent)
- Toilet Paper and Paper Towels
- Radios & TVs
- Pots & pans
- Gloves & hats
- Men's sweatpants

Visit [www.pathwaystohousingdc.org/our-wish-list](http://www.pathwaystohousingdc.org/our-wish-list) for a full list of our needs, including our Amazon Wish List (Amazon ships directly to us!)

## Volunteer Needs

Help assemble Welcome Home baskets at Pathways DC (Baskets benefit individuals moving from the streets and into apartments)

Volunteer for our monthly onsite Capital Market (Help consumers shop for groceries and household items)

*Interested in getting involved?  
Contact Kat Matus at (202) 674-8307  
or [kmatus@pathwaysdc.org](mailto:kmatus@pathwaysdc.org)*

## Meet Dave!

### Pathways DC Staff Spotlight

**Dave Johansen, mental health team Service Coordinator, tells us more about how, with your help, he's radically changing lives for the better.**

#### What's an average day look like for you?

Most days, I start in the field at 8am and visit 2-3 clients. These aren't just wellness checks, but an opportunity to deepen my relationship with each person while also helping them overcome barriers to their recovery. Every person's needs are different. For some, it may be helping them manage their mental illness. For others, it may be teaching them how to use a stove for the first time. For still others, it may be something as simple as just being a friend to talk to. After my morning visits, I come back to Pathways for a 12pm meeting. Then it's back in the field for 1-2 more home visits. My day is finished after I've written my field notes.

#### What are some challenges you face?

A lot of our clients have been homeless for many years and they've developed a hard, outer protective shell. We have to be equal parts compassionate and persistent to break through that shell. Ultimately, it's the relationships we build that matter the most in helping a person recover their lives.

#### What three words best describe your work at Pathways DC?

Wild. Challenging. Rewarding.

#### What's your favorite aspect of your job?

Honestly, I can't pick just one. First, I love working with my team and the rest of Pathways. They're a great group of people who are always willing to do what it takes to get the job done, even if it means a bit of self-sacrifice. Secondly, I like being at the crossroads of life for people. I work with people who are struggling and I get to be there and help them choose which path they take. I like the feeling of being there for people in need.

#### Any particularly memorable moments?

After months of little progress, one day a client opened up and shared with me, for the first time, her traumatic memories. This experience was validating for me. It showed me that I can develop someone's trust, be there for them, and really do this work in the way it needs to be done.

#### For anyone unfamiliar with our work, what would you want them to know about Pathways Housing DC?

With Pathways, the people who are normally invisible in society are front and center for us. We not only see them, but they're our mission.

## Winter 2017 Newsletter

### What's Inside:

- **Cover Story: A Soldier's Courage**
- **Christy's Corner: A Conspiracy of Hope**
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## Housing First Works!

Since 2004, we have  
**ended chronic  
homelessness**

for



**individuals**

**89% OF CLIENTS SERVED BY  
PATHWAYS DC STAY IN HOUSING**

Average annual savings per client  
using Housing First

**\$22,995**

OVER BEING HOMELESS

**\$36,500**

OVER JAIL

**\$296,275**

OVER PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALIZATION

