

CU at Home

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C-U at Home's Phoenix Drop-In Center is easy to get to. It is located at 70 East Washington Street near downtown Champaign. Their hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 12 pm to 5 pm; their phone number is 217-819-4569, and the point of contact person is coordinator Cheryl Lehman.

In 2011, Melany Jackson founded C-U at Home, which had a history of helping those in need (Cu At Home, n.d.). She earned her Master of Divinity in Kansas City, where she ministered a couple of hours each week to the people of downtown (Cu At Home, n.d.). Locally, she served at Salt & Light, a ministry dedicated to helping those in need with basic food and clothing (Cu At Home, n.d.). She served with the Canteen Run, a ministry of Partnering Against Homelessness, and The Salvation Army (Cu At Home, n.d.). From those opportunities, she decided to start C-U at Home, the parent unit of The Phoenix Drop-in Center.

C-U at Home's Phoenix Drop-In Center is a non-profit, faith-based homelessness ministry (Cu At Home, n.d.) with six full-time employees, ten part-time employees, and 100% community-funded. They made it a priority not to accept any state or federal funds, through community dollars, they can stay true to their mission which is "C-U at Home engages and mobilizes our community to house and support the most vulnerable homeless on their journey of healing and restoration" (Cu At Home, n.d.).

The Development and Community Outreach director, Rob Dalhaus III, states that C-U at Home's goal and purpose in the community goes far beyond the mission statement. Every day, they work to develop close, lasting relationships with our "friends without an address" (Cu At Home, n.d.). They make a conscious and intentional effort not to refer to those they serve as "homeless" due to the severely negative stereotype associated with that term and strive to break down the barriers put up by society by relating to our friends (Cu At Home, n.d.).

The Phoenix Daytime Center provides services for friends without an address in Champaign County, and the number of people served differs each year. There are no criteria or fees to use the Phoenix Daytime Drop-in Center. The services offered are shower, washer, dryer, computers, internet, phone, case management, local resources, and a job board (Cu At Home, n.d.).

CU at Home is also a men's shelter that provides a place to stay as long as they are drug and alcohol-free. The men's shelter is on a first-come, first-serve basis. In order to qualify to stay at the shelter, you must be a resident of Champaign county for at least 30 days. CU at Home offers interviews Monday through Friday from 2–4 pm for shelter placement. Additionally, there are emergency shelters where people can drop in between 7:30 pm and 7:00 am on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Women's emergency shelter is located at First Presbyterian (302 W. Church Champaign), and the Men's emergency shelter is located at New Covenant Fellowship (142 W. White, Champaign).

C-U at Home's Phoenix Daytime Center could use community monetary donations to help the facility run properly and to meet its goal of becoming a 24-hour shelter that provides stability for friends that utilize the center (Cu At Home, n.d.). They also need hand warmers, disposable ponchos, packages of underwear, Tylenol, fingernail clippers, snacks, and drinks such as bottled water or Gatorade.

Community members can also volunteer by being a friend of the Phoenix and simply hanging out, volunteering as drivers and riders as part of the Transportation Ministry, being a Professional Case Manager, helping residents through transitional housing, or providing spiritual advice by providing encouragement and wisdom (Cu At Home, n.d.).

C-U at Home helps serve the vulnerable population of Champaign County. Our service impacted the organization by showing our friends without an address that people do care about them and that people are willing to donate their time to help others out. Our group stepped out of their comfort zone and developed relationships with our friends by spending time, playing games, talking to them, and learning about their stories, struggles, and future goals.

C-U at home impacts nursing in different ways, such as preventing diseases, screening, and promoting independence. The organization prevents diseases before they occur; homeless populations are exposed to infectious diseases like tuberculosis, STDs, and weather-related health issues. Providing shelter to the homeless prevents them from getting preventable diseases. The C-U at home organizes screening once each month and a job fair. The screening focuses on

infectious diseases like STDs. The job fair helps those who could work find a job and afford rent. Having a place to spend the night improves sleep quality and reduces the risk of chronic illnesses. The C-U at home makes positive health-related changes for homeless populations and improves their overall quality of life.

According to Caldwell et al. (2018), caring for vulnerable and marginalized populations is the central practice of professional nursing and Christian service. The homeless shelter provides housing and a comprehensive physical and mental health program; unfortunately, spiritual needs and God's transforming power are often missed during homeless services. The nurse works with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities. Nurses develop programs that prevent illness, restore health, and alleviate suffering. Additionally, nurses play a big impact making a significant difference in the lives of homeless individuals. There are numerous strategies to end homelessness, including hope, healing, and transformation in their lives. Therefore, helping the homeless meet needs such as food, shelter, and employment will decrease the incidence of homelessness (Caldwell et al., 2018)

References

Caldwell, R., Meraz, R., & Sweeney, R. (2018). Homeless no more: A Christ-centered, comprehensive homeless recovery program. *Journal of Christian Nursing, 35(4)*, 228-233. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CNJ.0000000000000446>

Cu At Home. CU at Home. (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2022, from <https://www.cuathome.us/>