

# HOMeward

SPRING 2019

## An artist you'll want to meet

Paint, sculpture, pastel—you name it. Ron Williams uses them all to express himself and relate to others. “God gave me this talent to help me make it in this world,” he says.

Homelessness nearly ruined his love of art. He had no private place to make art. People stole his work, cheated him and gave him false hope. “It took a lot away from who I am and what my art stands for,” Ron says. “I couldn’t do art for people because I couldn’t tolerate them.”

With the help of a few therapists at Health Care for the Homeless, Ron learned to set healthy boundaries and found the courage to reconnect with people and continue sharing his gift.

One of the ways he does this is through our spring Client Art Show. At his first show, he dropped off an oil painting. The next day, a fellow artist approached Ron with exciting news. “Man, you should have been here. They were going crazy over your painting! Everybody’s looking for you.”

Now, Ron comes to every art show. He confidently represents his art and talks with folks like you. “When I see my art making somebody happy, that’s when I’m happy,” he says. “And now, art helps me, too. If there’s something I don’t want to talk about, I can do a painting and it starts the conversation.”

And these days, there’s an important part of his healing that Ron can’t wait to talk about.



*You helped Ron reconnect with art—and the world around him.*

“I finally have my own house,” he says with a smile. “It’s a blessing to get to turn that key and go into my space. All my clothes are here, my kitchen, my living room, my own studio. Just to be able to say I’m going home... I’m at a loss for words.”



Enjoy Ron’s masterpieces (created in the comfort of his home) and other work from our Client Art Show.

[www.hchmd.org/galleries/2019-client-art-show](http://www.hchmd.org/galleries/2019-client-art-show)

# Helping youth find their voices



*Youth use their experience with homelessness to make a difference.*

**R**emember your early 20s? Perhaps you were looking for work or maybe you were in school—likely you were becoming independent for the first time.

“It’s difficult for anyone, even with a lot of resources, to figure out how to be an adult and look after yourself,” says therapist Meredith McHugh, LMSW.

Meredith offers therapy at Health Care for the Homeless and the Youth Empowered Society (YES), Baltimore City’s only drop-in center for homeless youth. She helps young

people are developing their sense of self. It’s a pivotal time,” Meredith explains.

Many young people from YES are developing into powerful advocates. Eleven youth joined us in Annapolis to candidly share their stories with legislators—using their lived experience to create a more just society for us all.

Is there a young person in your life who needs support finding their voice? Learn more about the resources at YES: [www.yesdropincenter.org](http://www.yesdropincenter.org)

people do the hard work of becoming adults when they have no place to call home.

“The youth I see each day have to focus on work, finding safe housing and even parenting—amidst trauma, racism and violated trust,” she says.

Many of the young people Meredith treats have aged out of foster care or are fleeing abusive homes; nearly all of them have been exposed to violence and forced to make adult decisions in order to survive.

She creates a safe place (maybe their first) to talk about what’s happening to them and to trade survival skills for healthy coping skills. “This is the age range when



## DONATE FOR MOM

This Mother’s Day, make sure women have a safe space for care and support during times of crisis.

[giving.hchmd.org/hope](http://giving.hchmd.org/hope)



## VOLUNTEER

Take your compassion to the next level. Assemble home starter kits, lend a hand at our client help desk or prep lunches for a support group.

[www.hchmd.org/volunteer](http://www.hchmd.org/volunteer)



## TAKE A TOUR

See our downtown clinic and the work you support in person. Tour starts at 9 a.m. on Thursday, May 16.

RSVP to [tours@hchmd.org](mailto:tours@hchmd.org)



*Our West Baltimore care team puts clients like Eugene at the center.*

## Health care made easy

**W**ouldn't it be great to go to a single office to get all of your basic health care needs met? No more calling around to different offices or trying to coordinate appointments all by yourself. This is our vision at Health Care for the Homeless.

Eugene experiences it every time he walks through the door of our West Baltimore clinic. His nurse, doctor, therapist, community health worker and medical assistant are all in the same place. "It's a brilliant group of people coming together for you," he says. "Each person showed me that there was somebody else here who could help."

In 2019 we are physically transforming our largest clinic (at 421 Fallsway). No more areas of the building dedicated to "behavioral health" or "adult medicine." Instead, cross-disciplinary "care teams" will sit together and function as a unit around their shared clients.

They will talk every day about the people they serve and how to serve them better. They will coordinate complex care and be available to answer questions when a client comes for a visit.

We know integrated care works—and we see it with people like Eugene. Today, he has a 9-5 job that he loves. He's housed and working on getting a car. "I'm getting away from my past and walking to a better future," he says. "What they do for me—wow. I wish they could do that for everybody."

Your health care should be designed around your needs. When health care providers work as a team, you get more time with them, better care and more support. Isn't that what we all want? Our clients deserve no less.

Meet Eugene and his care team here: [www.hchmd.org/videos/meet-eugene-and-his-team](http://www.hchmd.org/videos/meet-eugene-and-his-team)

## How can I help?

*Julia Felton gives a window into her work at the front desk.*

**Q: What do you do at Health Care for the Homeless?**

As a Client Access Associate, my job is to find out what people need, register them and direct them to care. We see 100 to 200 clients on a normal day at the downtown clinic. I also help set the tone. If I came to an organization and I was ignored or disrespected, I wouldn't come back. I have the chance to make sure clients have a healthy experience.

**Q: What does it take to be successful at your job?**

Compassion. Empathy. I'm motivated by the people we serve. I've been in a situation where my children and I have been homeless. I was never on the street, but I can relate. I want to see people become housed, healthy and mentally stable. I look forward to clients who come back and say, "You helped me a lot," or "This is a better day."

**Q: What is rewarding about your job?**

People come in feeling hopeless, helpless and emotionally distraught. I try to stay calm and build a good rapport. There was a client who used to yell at me every morning, and I'd just say "Hello." Then one day he said "Good morning" instead. I was ecstatic! Later, he told me that he lost his housing after he got hurt and couldn't play football anymore. He went from a man who used to yell at me to a man who wanted to sit and have a conversation. It was very touching.



Interested in joining a team that values dignity and authenticity? Take a look at open positions here: [www.hchmd.org/work-here](http://www.hchmd.org/work-here)

# The perfect gift for the perfect day



*Gabby and Dan share the love through their unique wedding registry.*

**G**abby Knighton and Dan Atzmon are counting down the days until their wedding in May.

But a kitchen full of china felt out of sync with Gabby and Dan's "creaky old rowhome" and the work they do in homeless and public service.

"To be honest, we're terrified of accumulating more stuff," Dan explains. Instead of a blender or a robot vacuum, Gabby and Dan are asking for donations to organizations

helping people without homes. And they both agreed that Health Care for the Homeless is on their list.

"In the last 10 years, we've seen firsthand that Health Care for the Homeless does not judge people and does not give up on people," Gabby says. "There are so many people who can say that Health Care for the Homeless saved their life or gave them some dignity in their final years."

While the couple jokingly agrees they'll accept delicious bottles of wine, Dan says, "We really can't think of a better gift from our loved ones than support for organizations that mean a lot to us."



## Sound like you?

Here are 3 easy ways to live your values:

- 1 Ask for donations rather than gifts for your special occasion
- 2 Give in honor of mom for Mother's Day
- 3 Consider putting Health Care for the Homeless in your will or estate plan

Find more at: [www.hchmd.org/more-ways-give](http://www.hchmd.org/more-ways-give)



## CHOCOLATE AFFAIR 2019: THE SWEETEST NIGHT

On Saturday, February 2, glamorous guests (like you!) joined presenting sponsor CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield in helping 1,000 neighbors rediscover hope and confidence. For Vanessa Morgan, that means celebrating two years sober. "I never knew I could be this happy," she says.

Laugh and cry along with Vanessa:

[www.hchmd.org/videos/my-past-not-my-future](http://www.hchmd.org/videos/my-past-not-my-future)



## ADVOCACY MATTERS!

This spring, we fought for and won...

- \$15/hour minimum wage
- Treatment for opioid use in Maryland jails
- Steps to get youth the housing they need

Read about our Maryland General Assembly session wins and how they improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness:

[www.hchmd.org/2019-legislative-session](http://www.hchmd.org/2019-legislative-session)