

A Solid Case of the Runs

Runner and 5K fundraiser Julia O'Connor is ready to rock in 2018.



Julia (middle) joins a group of friends every year to run and raise money for our annual 5K.

I'm a proud two-year member of the Rock Your Socks 5K team, *A Solid Case of the Runs*.

All credit for the punny team name goes to my social work friend and team captain, Kim Riopelle—your Supportive Housing Coordinator at Health Care for the Homeless.

Last November, I took a bus down from New Jersey just for the Rock Your Socks 5k. Decorated in glitter and poop emoji

stickers (we had to stick to our theme, after all), 32 of us came together at the Lake Montebello track—grad school friends, families with kids and new faces, too. Everyone was psyched to be there!

Like you, ending homelessness is a cause close to my heart. Years of working in homeless shelters opened my eyes to the hardships and injustice people face every day. I can't stand to see the disregard for our own citizens living on the street. It's heartbreaking and infuriating.

That's why I didn't just run the 5K that morning; I spent the weeks leading up encouraging friends to donate, too. Eight wonderful co-workers and friends got me to my personal goal of \$250. Together, my team raised a whopping \$6,000—earning us the top fundraising team trophy! The secret to my fundraising success? I added a picture to my 5K profile and posted on social media with a link to my personal fundraising page. My fundraising page was automatically set up when I signed up, so it was easy!

The night before the 5K, Kim gave me a coin that says, "Your kindness matters." I still have it on my shelf at home as a reminder that my small steps to create a more just world matter—and yours do, too.

Look for me at this year's Rock Your Socks 5K on Saturday, November 3!

Or better yet, join me in raising money to end homelessness here in Baltimore: giving.hchmd.org/5K

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HOMeward

SUMMER 2018

Back to school—when you don't have a home

Last summer, when Danielle tried to enroll her three children into school, it was a little like preparing for a long voyage: the documentation and registration forms, countless trips to the store for school supplies and, of course, vaccinations and physicals.

Even the most prepared of us can get tripped up by the process. "The school kept telling me I needed this or that and kept sending me away," Danielle said. "I didn't have a house or a car, so it was impossible."

Danielle moved to Baltimore a year ago so her son could get surgery for a rare disease. "We had been living in Delaware, but doctors didn't know how to help my son," Danielle says. "They referred us to a hospital here." After the surgery, she was broke. It wasn't long until she and her kids—ages 13, 6 and 5—were staying at a shelter.

By law, families experiencing homelessness can get assistance with expediting the registration process and can get help with transportation and school supplies. But most don't know they can ask for help.

Kids experiencing homelessness miss a lot of school and are often too stressed to concentrate. They're typically 3–6 months behind their classmates in learning. That's why it's so important for us to support them and their parents.

"Schools aren't well equipped to identify homelessness," Debbie Wilcox, LCSW-C, a social worker on our pediatrics and family medicine team explains. "I've met parents who don't have proof of residency or the resources needed to get their kids in school, so they just give up."

Danielle didn't know where to go for help, who to contact or when to push back. Luckily, the shelter where Danielle was staying encouraged her to call Debbie. Together, they took it one step at a time.

"Trying to meet all the requirements was emotionally



Getting little ones back in school when you don't have a home or car can feel impossible.

draining and very confusing," Danielle says. "But then Debbie called, and the school started working with us. If I didn't have Debbie, I don't know what I would have done."

Thanks to your support, Danielle's little ones started school on time last year. And when the first day back comes around this September, Danielle is ready.

Back to school checklist:

You can take the pressure off moms like Danielle.

- Uniforms
- Transportation
- Identification
- Proof of residency
- Vaccinations and physical exams
- School supplies

Donate today to help children start school on time.
www.hchmd.org/back-school

WORKPLACE GIVING | OCTOBER–DECEMBER



Give a little love with each pay check. Your pledge of \$25/month puts neighbors on the path to better health and housing.

- United Way of Central Maryland: #6322
- Baltimore City Employee United Way Campaign: #6322
- Maryland Charity Campaign: #521576404
- Combined Federal Campaign: #55079

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FALLSWAY TOUR

Thursday, August 16

Your chance to see our downtown clinic in action. Tour starts at 9 a.m. RSVP to cbauer@hchmd.org

OVERDOSE RESPONSE TRAINING

Friday, August 17

Get trained to use Naloxone, an overdose-reversing medication, at the SPARC Women's Center, 6:30–7:30 p.m.
www.hchmd.org/events/naloxone-training

ROCK YOUR SOCKS 5K

Saturday, November 3

Join Julia and team *Solid Case of the Runs* for our sock-rocking 5K at Lake Montebello. giving.hchmd.org/5K

You helped Ben and Mary turn their house into a home



Ben and Mary moved into their new place with almost nothing. Luckily, our supportive housing team was there to help.

Do you remember the last time you moved? The excitement, the stress? Buying new supplies and home goods, getting water and electricity turned on and leaving a familiar community is hard for all of us—even in the best of times.

Imagine navigating this transition with little money for necessities and no family or friends to help. That's what Ben and Mary are doing.

For three years, they lived in an emergency shelter with only a small locker to store their belongings. They put what they could in a storage unit. But when they moved into their new apartment this summer, they realized it wasn't much.

"It's difficult. We don't have much furniture and we've got all these new things to worry about—keeping up on your bills and keeping things clean," Ben says.

There was no couch. No shower curtain. No toilet paper. And many new responsibilities.

Together, we're helping clients like Ben and Mary navigate change. Your donations deliver necessities like kitchenware and bedding in a client's favorite color that help turn an apartment into a home.

"When we get someone placed into housing, there's a misconception that everything will fall into place," says Supportive Housing Coordinator Kim Riopelle, LCSW-C. "But there's so much more work involved."

The transition to housing can surface unexpected emotions—feelings of isolation, guilt over friends left behind or regrets about how they've handled life's challenges.

Mary and Ben have had more than their share of hardship, but housing is providing the foundation that allows them to heal.

"It's peaceful and quiet," says Mary. "We have a bird feeder outside and new kitchen curtains. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever had."



Anthony Williams uses art to educate people about K2, a synthetic marijuana that has resulted in overdoses for many of his friends.

Art as advocacy

Anthony is an artist. He writes, paints and dabbles in mixed-media.

After Anthony's friend Georgia died from a fentanyl overdose, an opioid often found in K2, he turned to artwork as a way to educate people about the drug's dangers.

Although it's illegal, some convenience stores sell K2, also called spice or fake weed, under the guise of "incense." Maybe you've seen the playful names like *Hi5* and *Blueberry* in gas stations or the empty wrappers on the sidewalk. Baltimore banned the sale of synthetic cannabinoids in 2016, but marketers change the ingredients quickly, making it hard to regulate. Despite the colorful cartoon designs on the outside, recent batches have been laced with blood thinners, rat poison and fentanyl.

Determined not to let his friend die in vain, Anthony started collecting K2 wrappers for an art piece. "It took me a year to put this together," Anthony says. "I just kept finding wrappers, and I wanted to do something about it."

In April, Anthony presented his artwork to more than a hundred people during our annual client art show.

Vice President of Medicine Adrienne Trustman says Anthony's advocacy and education-driven approach is spot on. "We've been seeing more K2-related overdoses at our clinics," Adrienne says. "People don't know how lethal it is. It's just heart wrenching."



Call 311

Help protect your loved ones: If you see a Baltimore City business selling K2, report it by calling 311.

Food as medicine

Director of Housing Services Lawanda Williams, LCSW-C talks food, diabetes and homelessness.

Q: At this year's National Health Care for the Homeless Conference, you presented on a panel titled *Managing Diabetes and Chronic Disease through a Social Determinants Lens*. What does that mean?

Social determinants are things that impact your health before you go to the doctor. Poverty, access to food and where you live are all examples. We know in Baltimore that the separation of two or three miles—like between Roland Park and Park Heights—can mean a 20-year difference in life expectancy.

Q: Why are you interested in diabetes?

My mother had diabetes. Even though she had resources, helping her navigate it was difficult. It made me think, how can people manage this with nowhere to store their food, no place to cook, no access to needles?

Q: What barriers do people face in accessing healthy food?

Many people get their food from local corner stores because the alternative is a five-mile cab ride away. Imagine shopping at a store where food is behind bulletproof glass. People staying in shelters have even fewer choices and no control over the food available.

Q: What solutions did you discuss at the conference?

Access to healthy food was a big one. We all need to think twice about the food we donate and what we as homeless service providers ask of the community. We should discuss heart-healthy food with churches, shelters and soup kitchens, to name a few.



Lawanda Williams connects clients with housing programs throughout Greater Baltimore.



DONATE

Give \$25 today and help people like Ben and Mary with necessities like bedding and towels for their new home.

giving.hchmd.org



VOLUNTEER

Sign up to canvass, cheer or run a water station! Whatever you do, you'll fit right in with the spirited volunteers that power our Rock Your Socks 5K.

www.hchmd.org/volunteer-us



ADVOCATE

Baltimore City residents: Contact your councilperson to urge them to vote for Bill 18-0221 to put money into the city's empty Affordable Housing Trust Fund!

www.hchmd.org