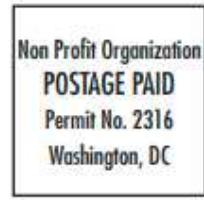




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## Newsletter Spring 2023

### A Survivor's Fresh Perspective

Yolanda Marshall is a survivor learning that a supportive health community can change your mind, body, and life. For Yolanda, the toll of heart disease has led her to experience several heart attacks, each one taking a significant physical and emotional toll. However, with the help of a new healthcare provider and the support of therapists and patient navigators, she is able to make better health decisions and live her life to the fullest.



The moment I came to Community of Hope it felt familiar," recalls Yolanda. "I met the doctors and nurses, and they were so friendly and really kind." Here, Yolanda connected with Dr. Akite Daniel, who Yolanda credits for helping her get her health back on track and manage her illness. After years of treating heart disease, she feels like this is the first time a doctor cared about her as a person.

One big shift is in her medication management. Yolanda has had many medications over the years and admittedly forgets which one she's taken and which one she hasn't. She and her doctor worked together to get bubble medication packs to be packaged by individual dose to help her manage and adhere to a medication regimen. Additionally, this has been Yolanda first experience with patient navigators who call in-between visits to check on any needs that she may have.

*(Yolanda's story continues on page 3)*

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### SAVE THE DATE!

Night of Hope  
**BOLD ACTIONS TOGETHER**



Join us October 5, 2023 for  
at the Potomac View Terrace  
2215 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, DC

### Ready, set... volunteer!



Volunteers play games and do crafts with families during our Fam-Club at The Triumph. Bring co-workers, community groups, friends, and family to bring kids joy together! Email [volunteer@cohdc.org](mailto:volunteer@cohdc.org) for more information.

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### From The Desk of Kelly Sweeney McShane



Dear Friends,

I can't believe it's already spring! I'm loving the blooming flowers, brighter days, and pandemic's end. And yet. Families are still struggling and worried about more challenging times ahead. Inflation is high. Emergency rental assistance funds in DC are depleted because the need was so high. Benefits to access food are being reduced. For those living in poverty or close to the edge, just one challenge could be too much and so many families we serve are facing these challenges simultaneously.

At Community of Hope, we are here for those in our community who are in need. And we continue to adapt our services to meet the needs. I'm encouraged that even as challenges mount, so do friends like you. Thank you being hope for our community.

Keep reading to learn more about Zlena, the mom served in our Family Success Center, as just one example of a household we supported. We are also launching additional supports for people experiencing homelessness a new nutrition resource for pregnant people and families with young children, and interventions for people managing chronic diseases.

Community of Hope remains centered on our mission and adapting in times of great change. I'm excited to share that, after a few years of pandemic-restrictions, in 2022, we saw the number of patients accessing our healthcare surge to 14,400 people, our housing programs supported 1,427 families and individuals, and our Family Success Center supported another 1,000 people. This means that thousands of people knew where to turn for hope. With your support, we will continue to care for these families and more in the year ahead.

*Kelly*  
President and CEO

Caring for Families. Improving Lives. Leading Change.

If you do not wish to receive this publication in the future, please email [development@cohdc.org](mailto:development@cohdc.org) or call 202.407.7747.

# Hope Happenings

## Now Offering Women, Infant, and Children (WIC)!

We've partnered with DC Health to now offer WIC! WIC provides nutritious foods with monthly food package benefits for pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to 5 years old—who meet income requirements. WIC also prevents nutrition-related health problems by providing pregnant women and new mothers with improved access to healthcare, nutrition education and breastfeeding support. We will be offering at three centers on the eastern side of DC and reaching current patients and the community—over 2,000 people a year! Visit here to learn more about Community of Hope's WIC program.



## Teaming Up to Address Chronic Disease

On behalf of our patients, Community of Hope is giving thanks for our partner, Direct Relief. Since 2021, Direct Relief's Fund for Health Equity has provided grants to advance our team-based strategies to enhance preventative services for patients with chronic diseases. With their most recent two-year grant, we'll have more capacity to ensure patients make their appointments and have more resources to address barriers to care. Patients are already seeing more controlled hypertension and diabetes and with the next grant underway, they'll have fewer hospital visits and continued improved symptoms. Direct Relief's support did not stop there and last year, they stocked our medicines and supplies with over \$175,000 in in-kind donations. Thank you for partnering on so many levels.

## Birthing Justice

In January, Community of Hope hosted a screening of Women in the Room Productions' documentary, Birthing Justice, which tells the story of the crisis faced by Black mothers, birthing people, their children and the solutions needed to transform the maternal care system. A special thank you to our panelists DC Councilmember Christina Henderson; Ebony Marcelle, Directory of Midwifery; Abayea Pelt, Senior Director of Maternal and Child Health; Monique N. Matthews, Director/Co-Writer of Birthing Justice, Jasmine Bihm; DrPH, MPH, Division Chief for Perinatal and Infant Health, DC Health; and Ryan Palmer, Executive Director, Horning Family Foundation, Panel Moderator. Special thanks to Linda Wilson and Dominique Young-Smith at the Fund II Foundation for their sponsorship and deep commitment to advancing social change. The documentary will begin streaming in April during Black Maternal Health Week on PBS.



## A Safe Place For Refugees

Now over a year into the war in Ukraine, DC is becoming home to many Ukrainian refugees. As the refugee health provider for DC, Community of Hope has the privilege of serving this growing community—now the largest group of refugees in our health promotion program. We offer not only health education, screenings, immunizations, and care coordination but also social events for Ukrainian patients to meet other refugees, explore the city, and do activities together. The group recently met at 'D Light Cafe', a Ukrainian-owned café, where they found foods to remind them of their home country. The group decided to name themselves, "Sunflower" (sonyashnyk), which is Ukraine's national flower and has been used as a symbol of resistance against recent invasions.

# The Cycle of Good

Life can be unpredictable, and sometimes it can take just one moment to turn everything upside down. That's what happened to Zlena Addison, a hard-working mom who had always prided herself on her helping others. If someone needed a ride, connection to a community service, or just a listening ear—Zlena was the one to call.



All this changed when Zlena got hurt on her job. After losing a case management job due to a program closing, she worked two jobs in security and sorting mail. One day at work, she injured her leg. She needed weeks of rest and physical therapy to recover fully. Due to the physical nature of both jobs, she was unable to keep them as she took the time to heal. Without work, she worried that she wouldn't be able to pay her bills and support her family.

After six months out of work, she was in a "dark place" as making ends meet was starting to take its toll. "That was some of the hardest times of my life because I have three children and I want to make sure I can maintain a stable life for them," says Zlena. She talked to her doctor about some of her recent struggles, who referred her to Community of Hope's Bellevue Family Success Center.

The Bellevue Family Success Center at Community of Hope is a one-stop shop for families and residents living in the Bellevue neighborhood or surrounding DC neighborhoods to get access to resources and services to thrive.

With housing secured, Zlena was able to make another important step toward stability by finding sustainable employment. She participated in the Family Success Center's Let's Get It job program, where she revamped her resume and gained job seeking advice. Serendipitously, with her new resume and skills, Zlena landed a job as a DC Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) case worker—the same program that provided her rental assistance.

Imagine Takeithia's surprise, when she reached out to ERAP to assist with another client who ERAP and was greeted by Zlena. Takeithia was able to provide a warm handoff between her new client and Zlena who provided immediate and high-quality support.

Over the months of support, Zlena sees Takeithia as more of a sister than anything. "I can call her for emotional support, job coaching, or to talk about my dreams," says Zlena. "She's currently connecting me to resources like grant writing so I can work on my own nonprofit."

Zlena is excited to get back to helping others in more ways than one. She is currently creating a nonprofit to host events, family fun nights, support seniors, and be a place to people to come out and build community for those that don't always get recognized. And it's a family affair—Zlena's 10-year old daughter has also started a movement to help children in her elementary school.

"It feels great to always know you're never alone," says Zlena. "And now I get to make sure that people feel that way too."

## Continued from front: A Survivor's Fresh Perspective

As Yolanda started to work on her physical health, she was also referred to a counselor to work on emotional wellness. "What people don't realize is when you go through devastating heart attacks, it starts to mess with your head," says Yolanda. "Dr. Daniel saw and got me hooked up with my therapist Renata Powell."

Yolanda is grateful for a space to work through her complex feelings after her heart attacks as recovering can be overwhelming as you try to understand what happened and what's next. "Miss Renata let's me cry, curse, and scream if I need, but I never have to worry about feeling judged or mistreated," says Yolanda.

Today, Yolanda is proud of herself and the progress she's making and so are those in her health community. Dr. Akite says, "It's been a pleasure to witness Ms. Marshall take charge if her health and overcome some real challenges. She's learned a great deal about how to manage her conditions and I'm truly impressed with the progress she has made."

With the support of her new health community, Yolanda feels like she's starting a new chapter in life.

"Right now, I'm supposed to be dead, but now I have help to help me get my [blood pressure] numbers in order," says Yolanda. "It makes a difference to have a doctor that genuinely cares about me and I wouldn't trade it for the world."

## Housing Matters!



A special thank you to our homelessness prevention team for serving 704 families with 95% not entering shelter!

The Homelessness Prevention Program, through expert case management and mediation services, helps families stay stably housed and allows them to remain connected to their natural systems of family and community.