



# INN *sight*

The Healing Newsletter of St. Christopher's Inn - Restoring hope, dignity and lives since 1909.

*Wishing You A Merry Christmas And A Happy New Year!*



*With gratitude,  
Fr. Dennis Polanco, the staff of St. Christopher's Inn,  
and the Brothers Christopher*

**Winter 2025**

*A holistic and integrated approach to recovery with Franciscan hospitality.*

# 2025: A Year of Hope and Healing – Thanks to YOU!

Because of your generosity, 2025 was a year of remarkable progress at St. Christopher's Inn. This year, we launched innovative therapeutic groups, expanded our outreach to connect with more community partners, and enhanced our holistic healing program through the opening of Brother Benny's Bakery and upgrades to San Damiano Farm. Our new refrigerated food truck, along with these initiatives, has helped us provide nutritious meals and life-changing vocational opportunities for our Brothers Christopher. Each of these milestones represents more than just progress – they are lifelines for men seeking hope and healing.

Your support made it possible for over 550 men to receive life-saving care, more than 100,000 meals to be served with dignity, and thousands of hours of spiritual guidance to be offered. Our community came together in powerful ways: from the inspiring Be the Bridge Walk for Recovery and the Luke M. Johnson Memorial Softball Tournament to the ongoing dedication of our Alumni Association and Circle of Hope donors. **Every achievement, every story of recovery, is a direct result of your kindness and belief in our mission.** From all of us at St. Christopher's Inn, **thank you for changing lives—one Brother Christopher at a time.**

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## Welcome Dr. Sarah Ruback, Our New Chief Operating Officer

In October, we were pleased to welcome Dr. Sarah Ruback Ed.D., as our new Chief Operating Officer.

Dr. Ruback brings an extensive, well-rounded, knowledge of nonprofit management to her new role at the Inn. She has a proven track record of advocating for vulnerable populations. Most recently, she provided leadership and vision to another human service agency named St. Christopher's Inc. where she served youth receiving residential mental health treatment.

"I am excited to join the dynamic team at St. Christopher's Inn, the healing ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. I've been impressed with not only the level of care, but the mission-driven principle that guides that care, namely, that our Brothers Christopher are good men, worthy of love and respect. Healing starts from that place. My on-boarding has been very hands on spending a "day in the life" of our exceptional staff and the Brothers Christopher. It has been a unique opportunity to get a sense of the deep work and commitment that everyone contributes to the mission and treatment of the Brothers Christopher, while honoring and advancing the vision of the Friars of the Atonement."



welcome

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# Circle of Hope: Sustainable Work of Healing

We are grateful to our **Circle of Hope** donors who offer us sustainable revenue through their monthly gifts. It's income we can rely on as we make programming and operating decisions throughout the year. No matter the size, each monthly gift offers hope. Thomas and Susan R. have been **Circle of Hope** supporters for 12 years. Here's what they have to say about their experience of giving,

"Nearly 12 years ago one of our sons entered the Inn for treatment. On the way in, he met two Brothers Christopher about to depart after completing treatment. They assured him that the Inn was like no place else he had ever been and that he would do well there if he did the work.

Their assurance was both welcome and prophetic.

A few months later our son emerged a happy, healthy, focused, and grateful young man and remains so today. The life-changing help he received is a blessing to all in our family. Ever since, we have made a fixed monthly donation because we know that assistance on which the Inn can depend helps it to plan its programming and operations. When we can, we supplement those donations.

*"May God bless the Friars, the staff at the Inn, and all the Brothers Christopher who come through its doors seeking a better life."*

We remain grateful to Thomas and Susan and all our **Circle of Hope** donors. If you feel inspired to give monthly, visit the Circle of Hope on our website.



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## SUPPORT THE LIFE-SAVING MINISTRIES OF ST. CHRISTOPHER'S INN.

The Circle of Hope is a monthly giving program that supports the work of St. Christopher's Inn. Monthly giving provides a predictable and reliable source of income to fuel our mission of recovery by helping us plan and budget for programs and new initiatives. **Circle of Hope members help to sustain the work at the Inn.**

- Join the Circle of Hope with your monthly gift to support our Brothers Christopher.
- Give the gift of hope from your donor advised fund, IRA, or appreciated securities.



To get started visit Circle of Hope at [www.stchristophersinn.org/circle-of-hope](http://www.stchristophersinn.org/circle-of-hope) or call Audrey Warn, Mission Support at 845-424-2142 or email [awarn@atonementfriars.org](mailto:awarn@atonementfriars.org).



# Upgrades and Openings: Healing Happens All Around Us

Thanks to the generous support of so many who partner with us to make healing happen, 2025 saw the opening of Brother Benny's Bakery, a significant upgrade to San Damiano Farm and the purchase of a new refrigerated truck. The bakery, the farm, and our food service department are all vital parts of our holistic healing program, offering vocational, educational and psychosocial opportunities to discover new talents, boost self-confidence and enhance relational skills which can all be eroded by substance use.

Brother Benny's Bakery opened in February thanks to the support of the Peter and Henry Block Foundation. With the guidance of local chef and restaurateur Evan Lisokos, men learn the art of baking plus a whole lot more—an introduction to the business side of food service, increased self-esteem and team building are just some of the benefits of this initiative.

Thanks to the generosity of the Jane Nuhn Charitable Trust and the Sexauer Foundation, San Damiano Farm received a new pergola and fencing providing outdoor workspaces and protection for the flower and vegetable beds. The Farm welcomes hundreds of visitors at its weekly farmers markets and supplies produce to local restaurants while introducing Brothers Christopher to planting, cultivating and retail skills.



The purchase of a refrigerated food truck through the kindness the Joseph A. and Dorothy A. Salat Charitable Fund, allows us to rescue food from food banks throughout the Hudson Valley ensuring our Brothers Christopher receive the nutrition they need to heal.

## Special Delivery!

Pritchard Industries sent 40 assorted pies to the Inn to give our Brothers Christopher some Thanksgiving cheer! Pritchard Industries and the Pritchard family have been longtime, loyal partners of St. Christopher's Inn, believing in and supporting our mission of hope and healing.



# St. Christopher's Inn Alumni Association (SCIAA): Continued Healing and Support

Motivated by their gratitude for all the ways the Inn has helped rebuild their lives, members of the St. Christopher's Inn Alumni Association (SCIAA) support our Brothers Christopher in so many ways, not the least of which is the ongoing connections they forge with our Brothers Christopher as they progress through the program, returning to families and communities. Led by an independent Board of Directors chaired by Guy Gonzalez, members of SCIAA volunteer their time, talent and treasure. They host regular 12-step meetings at the Inn, fireside chats and other social events that foster the relationships that strengthen recovery over time.

Every August, approximately 500 current Brothers Christopher, alumni, family and friends converge on Graymoor to celebrate the Inn with an all day picnic beginning with a remembrance ceremony at our Memorial Wall, and including a 12-step meeting, a Mass and day of food, fun and fellowship. SCIAA also organizes an annual golf outing to benefit the Inn and solicits a "Sponsor a Bed" fundraiser through their website for men entering our transitional living opportunity, San Damiano House.

SCIAA's network reach is wide. They even host a closed Facebook group to continue fostering those vital connections even in the digital space. We are extremely grateful to SCIAA members who remain a consistent lifeline to our Brothers Christopher and one another as they all grow in their recovery.

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## 2025 Be the Bridge: Walk for Recovery— A Walk to Remember

Nearly 400 people came together in September to celebrate National Recovery Month and support the mission of St. Christopher's Inn. Every step taken was a step toward hope, healing and transformation. This year's Grand Marshals were Laura and Theresa Timmons. They were honored for their faith, strength and resilience as Theresa battles back from a devastating car accident. She led the way at this year's Walk, taking some of her first inspirational steps since the accident. It was a great event which raised much needed funds for our lifesaving mission.

We were happy to partner with New Era Creative Space, a local nonprofit that seeks to build stronger communities through creative arts. Its two aspiring filmmakers, Zia Foxhall and Ghandi Mendoza created this film. To see more photos and to watch the video scan the QR code or visit us at [StChristophersinn.org/Be-The-Bridge](https://StChristophersinn.org/Be-The-Bridge)





# Multiply Your Impact with Bunching

## What Is Bunching?

Bunching is a tax-smart strategy that allows you to combine multiple years of your charitable gifts into one tax year. You will maximize your deduction in the first year, then take the standard deduction in the following years – while still supporting our mission!

GIVING EACH YEAR  
\$10,000  
for 3 years

GIVING WITH  
BUNCHING  
\$30,000  
in 1 year

## Other Ways to Give Annually

Even if you bunch gifts, you can continue helping the men of St. Christopher's Inn every year through:

**Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs):** Recommend annual grants to sustain our work while still enjoying the tax benefits of bunching. Ready to make your DAF gift? Visit [StChristophersInn.org/DAF](https://StChristophersInn.org/DAF) or scan the QR code.

**IRA Giving:** If you're 70½ or older, you can make a gift directly from your IRA to St. Christopher's Inn through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). This may satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution and reduce your taxable income – all while supporting our life-changing mission.



To learn more, consult your financial advisor or contact us at: [SCIspecialgifts@StChristophersInn.org](mailto:SCIspecialgifts@StChristophersInn.org) or call (845) 424-2142

**PLAN AHEAD AND BUNCH EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR!**

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## Holy Mountain Franciscan Retreat Center

The Holy Mountain Franciscan Retreat Center welcomed over 1,200 guests this year, serving as a place for spiritual renewal, healing, and connection with God, especially during the Jubilee Year of Hope.



Throughout 2025, the retreat center hosted a diverse array of retreats designed to cater to various spiritual needs and preferences. These included contemplative retreats focused on meditation and silence, workshops on eco-spirituality and the Franciscan commitment to creation care, as well as family-centered retreats that fostered bonding through shared faith experiences. Additionally, there were specialized retreats for young adults exploring their faith journeys, healing retreats aimed at personal growth and wellness, recovery retreats, and liturgical retreats that deepened participants' understanding of the sacraments. Each offering is grounded with Franciscan values. The retreats provide a chance to reflect, rejuvenate, and deepen our relationship with God, with ourselves and with others.

# Play Ball! Remembering Their Son and Helping the Inn



Every August for the past five years, over 200 people from across Long Island, NY gather for the Luke M. Johnson Memorial Softball Tournament—a day of competition, camaraderie and helping St. Christopher’s Inn! It’s a fun day of community and friendship, but organizers, Luke and Shirley Johnson, say “It was born out of our broken hearts. When we lost our son, Luke, we just needed someplace to put our grief, so the tournament was born.”

The Tournament has been a labor of love for the couple and their family and friends—love for their son, love for their neighbors and love for St. Christopher’s Inn. The day has grown into a real community affair. Luke organizes the teams, Shirley and her helpers make up raffle baskets, concessions are brought in, and a good time is had by all! It takes months of planning, but Luke and Shirley say it has been worth it to see some of their sadness turn into joy on and off the field. All the proceeds are given to St. Christopher’s Inn in their son Luke’s memory. They chose the Inn as the beneficiary of their charity because of the kindness they were shown years ago when they inquired about a placement for their son. Shirley says, *“The Inn was nearing capacity, but they were able to find a bed. And, though Luke did not enter the program, we were touched by that kindness. Through the years we’ve learned so much about the services and care St. Christopher’s Inn provides. We’re very happy we’ve been able to help many men get back on their feet in this way.”*

It is estimated that the Johnson’s generosity through the gifts from their tournaments have impacted close to 4,500 men.

## 19th Annual Board of Directors Reception

The stars came out at Planet Hollywood NYC in October—the stars that help support St. Christopher’s Inn! This year’s honorees were Roger Ross of the Enterprise Association of Steamfitters Local 638. Roger is a tireless advocate for those in need of substance use care. He has a long relationship with the Inn and is a great supporter helping to get Steamfitter members the assistance they need. Matt Butler, songwriter, poet and storyteller also has a relationship with the Inn. He even wrote a song about it! Performing his one man show, Reckless Son, Matt seeks to humanize the experience of the incarcerated by giving them a voice through story and song. He has performed for our Brothers Christopher several times offering hope and encouraging healing. Comedian Tom Shillue rounded out the evening serving as emcee.

Along with our honorees, our shiniest stars were our sponsors and supporters who came out to celebrate and fuel the mission of the Inn. Visit our events page on our website or scan the QR code to see more photos and this year’s SCI video “A Path Forward”.







# HOW OUR BROTHERS CHRISTOPHER GROW



## FRANCISCAN SUPPORT

Separating us from any other recovery community, we offered more than 3,000 individual spiritual guidance sessions for all faith traditions and backgrounds – healing body, mind and spirit.



## NOURISHMENT

By the end of 2025, we will have served over 100,000 meals and snacks.

## HOSPITALITY

A Brother Christopher will stay at the Inn an average of 74 days which is longer than many other residential recovery programs.



## COMMUNITY

Nearly 400 walkers and friends joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Be the Bridge Walk for Recovery.

## OUTREACH

Our Brothers Christopher at San Damiano Farm educate local organizations on growing plants from their seedlings that they produce to ultimately feeding thousands of people.



## SUCCESS

Program completion rate of 61% higher than the national average.

\*DATA FOR FY'25