One of the delights of working at Central City Concern (CCC) is exploring the creative ways our staff and clients address homelessness, poverty and social isolation. As a provider of health care, I have always been familiar with counseling, peer support, medical care and medication as ways to support people’s journeys of recovery. In recent months, however, I have been able to dive deeper into our employment programs, some of which you will see featured in the pages of this newsletter.

A key tenet of the supported employment model CCC uses is the idea that everyone who wants to work, regardless of disability or background, can work. This approach builds confidence and self-sufficiency, shatters stereotypes, supports the community, and helps health and housing outcomes as well. In 2017, our employment team served nearly 1,300 job seekers, with 58 percent of them exiting the program with employment, at more than 500 employers. Clients at our Employment Access Center are partnered with an employment specialist, who works with each individual to design a tailored path to employment.

Different people have different employment needs. For individuals with a history of mental illness, the employment specialists are embedded within teams at the Old Town Recovery Center. Women and mothers seeking careers may get a start in marketing and business working at our Central City Coffee social enterprise. To reduce recidivism in our African-American community by improving employment outcomes, Flip The Script was launched in 2017 by CCC, Multnomah County’s Department of Community Justice, the Joint Office of Homeless Services and Meyer Memorial Trust. CCC’s Community Volunteer Corps engages individuals in mentored community (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)
Sherri Culver and Mary McLaughlin took an active interest in Central City Concern (CCC) when they attended an event, *Get to Know the Real Central City Concern*, in September 2016. The evening’s focus was a PhotoVoice project featuring photographs taken by CCC clients, inspired by their journeys into and out of homelessness.

Sherri and Mary, portrait artists who use quilting as their medium, were surprised by the exhibit. “We hoped to see some interesting faces,” says Sherri. But there were no photos of people living outside, just images chronicling the photographers’ journeys into and out of homelessness. “Our original idea of creating portraits of those who are homeless to bring attention to their plight evolved into a celebration of those who have overcome extreme life challenges and are now reaching back to help others.”

The duo has worked on two projects together and proven to be compatible in style, technique and quality. Sherri, retired, found her way into the art of quilting by filling her family’s demand for wedding and baby gifts. “I realized early on that traditional quilting is far too repetitive and boring for me,” says Sherri. “I’ve always been intrigued by people and faces. Once I figured out how to create them with fabric, I have never looked back.”

Mary has sewn since childhood, but is a newcomer to quilting, having just taken it up when she met Sherri. “I worked in the athletic wear industry for almost two decades,” says Mary. “During all that time, I was too busy to make art. I wish that weren’t so, and now I encourage others to make time to do things that bring them joy.”

Both Sherri and Mary believe in CCC’s work and are impressed with the quality of people doing that work. To honor the transformative role of peer relationships in recovery journeys, they created quilted portraits of four CCC employees who use their personal experiences to offer strength and hope to clients. The quilts were unveiled at a recent *Get to Know the Real Central City Concern* event focusing on the power of lived experience. “The experience of making portraits teaches you to look deeply at someone and try to capture something essential to their personal story,” says Mary.

To see Sherri and Mary’s labor of love, go to www.sherriquilts.com.
On a warm morning in June, women from Central City Coffee set up shop at a table in the Lloyd Farmers Market. Throughout the busy day, they share sample cups of delicious Central City Coffee and sell bags of sustainably harvested, locally roasted coffee beans to happy customers.

One hundred percent of the profits go directly to Central City Concern programs, yet equally important is the experience women gain from participating in Central City Coffee’s training program. These trainees, all moms, train full time for six months, roasting, packaging, marketing, selling and delivering Central City Coffee.

Many of our coffee trainees were recently at their lowest points: homeless and struggling with substance use disorders. The opportunity to learn new clerical, sales and marketing skills is priceless. At the end of their training period, they will have gained experience and confidence to enter the workforce and support their families. In 2017, Central City Coffee hired 13 trainees and the program is growing.

Central City Coffee has been brewing since 2013, and soon will have a completely new look that celebrates how the program empowers formerly homeless single moms with training and support. Keep an eye out for our lively new bags at specialty grocery stores, farmers markets and office break rooms near you!

To learn more about the social enterprise or to place an online order, please visit www.centralcitycoffee.org
All Tyrone wanted was “to walk down the street with a life.”

His childhood in Pasadena, Calif. was stable, but he “made bad choices” that landed him in juvenile detention by age 14. He fell deeper into drug use and revolved in and out of incarceration. But during his last stint in jail, he began to study positive thinking.

Once he was released, he walked through the doors of the Central City Concern Recovery Center (CCCRC) outpatient treatment program and his life changed forever. The counselors got him into supportive housing and CCC’s Recovery Mentor Program.

He finished CCC’s Community Volunteer Corps program and got a job at the Dollar Tree. “I wore my Dollar Tree shirt on my days off,” Tyrone says. “I wanted people to know I was working.”

Tyrone is now nine years into his recovery and works at CCC as a case manager. He is a single dad to a 3-year-old, a year away from a bachelor’s degree, and a homeowner. He’s also exploring his creative side through photography and writing a book.

“I have so much more than I expected,” he says. “I am grateful every second.”