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News, updates, stories, and more from the Center for Urban Community Services.  
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Dear Friends of CUCS,

CUCS is experiencing an exciting transition. With profound thanks, we are saying goodbye to our acting CEO, Dr. Van Yu, who will return to his role as Chief Medical Officer with Janian, CUCS's medical affiliate. We are welcoming Dawn M. Pinnock as our new President and CEO, the first woman and person of color to hold this position. Dawn brings with her a broad scope of experience, expertise, and vision as she assumes her new role.

This special edition of the CUCS Report gives you the opportunity to learn a little about them as CUCS goes from strength to strength in our life-saving and life enriching work.

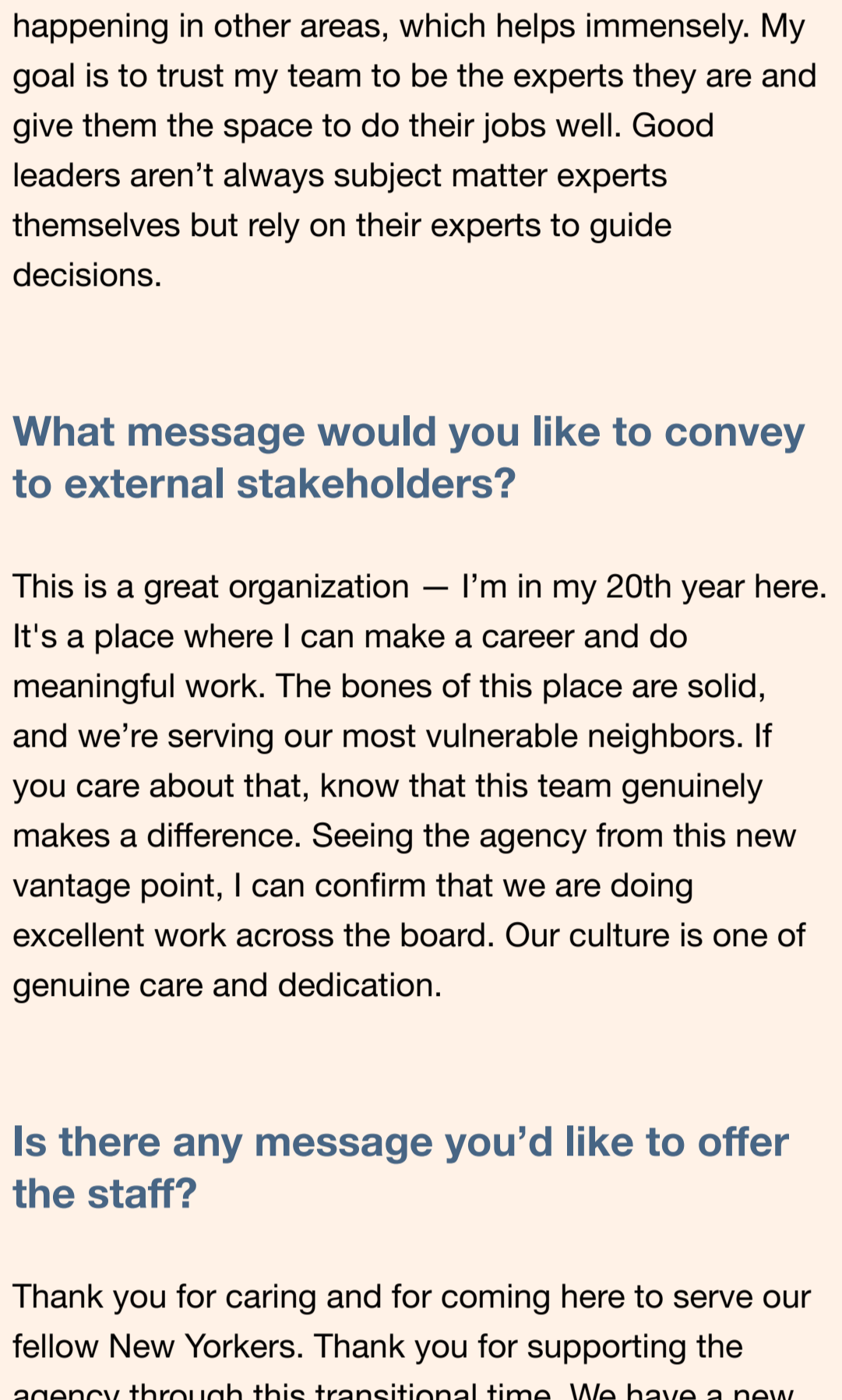
We are grateful for our stellar staff and leadership, and as always, your support and partnership.

With deepest gratitude,

Rise Roth  
Chief Development and Communications Officer

## Meet Dr. Van Yu

An interview with Dr. Van Yu, Chief Medical Officer



Dr. Van Yu, Chief Medical Officer

### As the acting CEO, what highlights and insights have you gained during your tenure?

I've learned so much about other parts of the agency that I didn't know before. In the process, I've gotten to know people I hadn't worked with closely before, such as the executive team. It's been incredibly gratifying to learn new things and connect with these dedicated individuals. Everyone I've interacted with, both internally and externally, has been incredibly nice. Even when we are dealing with challenging issues, I've seen firsthand how relationships can lead to resolving real issues.

I can't say I was surprised, but it was great to have my notion reinforced that my colleagues are really good at what they do. They're committed, industrious, and resourceful. There are so many things in this agency that work so well and are well put together. This understanding will help me navigate my role as CMO more effectively and efficiently.

### What were some of the challenges and successes you encountered?

Learning what I needed to learn to make informed decisions and embrace the responsibility that comes with the role was a challenge, especially in areas outside the medical world, like fiscal and property management. Fiscal issues were my main focus, and I feel good about the working relationship we've developed to keep things moving smoothly. The executive team continued to support the environment, allowing people to keep doing the good work they're known for.



Janian Street Medicine meets and treats clients wherever they are.

### How will this experience impact how you lead Janian going forward?

I now have a different perspective on things. When an issue arises, I have more knowledge about what's happening in other areas, which helps immensely. My goal is to trust my team to be the experts they are and give them the space to do their jobs well. Good leaders aren't always subject matter experts themselves but rely on their experts to guide decisions.

### What message would you like to convey to external stakeholders?

This is a great organization — I'm in my 20th year here. It's a place where I can make a career and do meaningful work. The bones of this place are solid, and we're serving our most vulnerable neighbors. If you care about that, knowing that this team genuinely makes a difference. Seeing the agency from this new vantage point, I can confirm that we are doing excellent work across the board. Our culture is one of genuine care and dedication.

### Is there any message you'd like to offer the staff?

Thank you for caring and for coming here to serve our fellow New Yorkers. Thank you for supporting the agency through this transitional time. We have a new leader, Dawn, and I am thrilled to see her in this role. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise. I feel immense gratitude for our staff and excitement for the fresh perspective Dawn will bring. I'm eager to see what transformations we can build upon as we continue our mission.

## A New Chapter for CUCS

CUCS welcomes Dawn M. Pinnock as President and Chief Executive Officer



Dawn M. Pinnock, President and Chief Executive Officer

### Tell us about your history, how you got to this point, and how your previous work aligns with what you anticipate doing at CUCS.

Years ago, I worked in the nonprofit sector while pursuing my graduate degree, focusing on providing medical care to women and children in Haiti. I traveled extensively throughout Haiti and was deeply interested in addressing the instability our clients faced in their lives. Later, I shifted into government, believing it would allow me to do good in the world and stay in service. My family had dedicated their careers to government, making it a fitting choice. For over 27 and a half years, I had the opportunity to serve some of New York's most vulnerable populations, including those needing low-income housing, young people involved in the justice system, and individuals recently released from prison.

My colleagues and friends in the supportive housing space spoke highly of CUCS, describing it as a stellar organization, with other organizations following its model of client care. My competitive nature and desire to be associated with the best led me to pursue this opportunity.

### What do you think are the strengths of CUCS and its programs, and how do you plan to enhance them?

There are so many strengths. First, the people. The commitment to the mission at CUCS is incredible. Our staff consistently tackles difficult issues, helping individuals address a host of problems that impact their ability to remain housed or receive quality care. The knowledge, dedication, and caliber of our team are commendable.

Our holistic model is impressive. We consider the whole person, understanding that many factors contribute to someone's ability to remain stable and housed. Our team meets clients where they are and takes a step-by-step approach to ensure clients achieve their goals.

To enhance our programs, I believe in strengthening internal partnerships to foster more cross-collaboration within our organization, improving our programs and outcomes. Externally, we need to share our model with a broader audience to attract additional funding. Unrestricted funds allow us to do more and better work for our staff and clients.



A CUCS client plants flowers in their housing site garden.

### What partnerships do you think are crucial for CUCS to continue being effective, and what message would you like to send to our stakeholders?

Partnership is core to the work we do, and I'm thankful for the many ways our partners show up for CUCS. You are a direct contributor to the success of this organization.

As CEO, I fully appreciate our partners and look forward to strengthening our relationships with them as we continue this meaningful and life-changing work, while also uplifting the stories of the CUCS staff and our clients.

It's crucial for us to foster partnerships on a broad scale to highlight the breadth of CUCS' work and to optimize fundraising opportunities. Establishing and strengthening partnerships with elected officials, community leaders, interested New Yorkers and potential funders will be ideal as we look ahead to sustain and enhance operations.

For years CUCS has been New York City's "best kept secret," and as CEO I'd like to share our mission-focused approach with the world!



CUCS clients flourish in permanent supportive housing.

### What message would you like to send to CUCS staff?

Well, I'd first like to say "thank you!" While I'm sure you don't hear it as often as you should, you are everyday heroes. You make the decision every day to serve — to be selfless and to help others rebuild their lives. Service is not for the faint of heart — it is a calling. The CUCS team responds to this calling to support others, without an expectation of thanks or recognition. What an awesome privilege it is to serve you — you are the foundation from which this agency has been able to grow over the last 30+ years.

I know that serving as your CEO will be one of the highlights of my personal and professional service journeys.

I ask for your patience as I ask questions and introduce new ideas. My goal is to be your greatest champion and advocate - the only way I can do that is to learn all aspects of CUCS as an organization. And that starts with the CUCS team.

## The first step to making a difference is getting informed and staying informed



Thank you for reading the CUCS Report. Our goal is to make sure New Yorkers are well-informed as we continue our work to help people rise from poverty, exit homelessness, and be healthy.

The CUCS Report is a publication of the Center for Urban Community Services.

Do you have questions about the CUCS Report, our services, facilities or programs? Contact: [devcom@cucs.org](mailto:devcom@cucs.org)

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