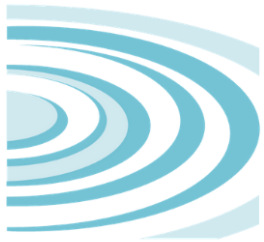


From Open Doors to Lasting Paths: Social Recovery in Shelter and Beyond



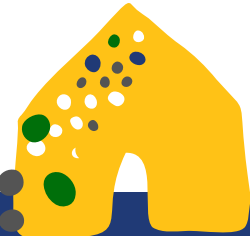
Dalio
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The Housing
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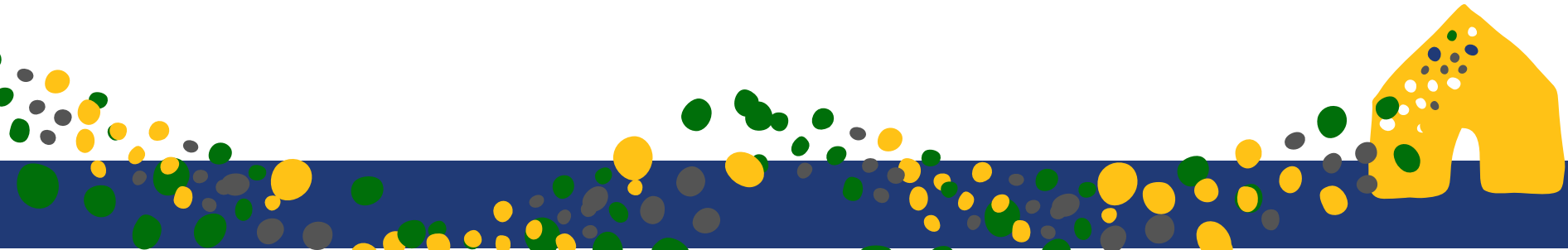


Connecticut
Department of
HOUSING



From Open Doors to Lasting Paths: Social Recovery in Shelter and Beyond

JP Rossi, Open Doors



From Open Doors to Lasting Paths:

Social Recovery in Shelter and Beyond

Joao Rossi
Social and Outreach Program Manager

May 2025

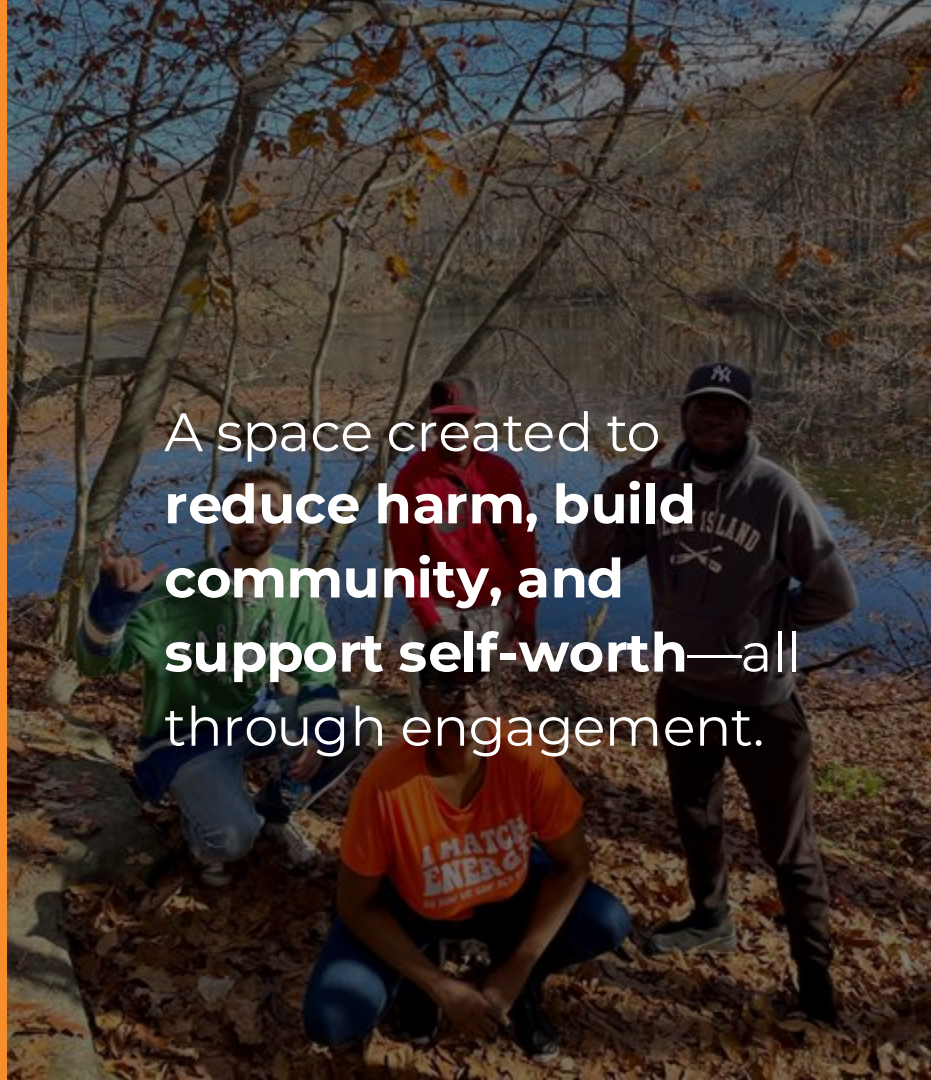
We saw a gap.

Clients were **bored, isolated, and disengaged**, but many programs required sobriety or compliance.

Overview

We created *The Social.*

A space created to
**reduce harm, build
community, and
support self-worth**—all
through engagement.



What is The Social?

The Social is a social rehabilitation center grounded in harm reduction, skill building, and community.

The priority is ***purpose, not pressure.***

How it works



We run **40 hours of weekly programming** for individuals experiencing homelessness.



All programming is **voluntary, inclusive, and human-first.**



We **extend the invitation to all members of our surrounding community** to take part.

Growth

What began as an experiment is now a fixture.

+89

*Total groups since
our first month*

↑110%

*Increase in total
group activities
since initiation.*

+49

*Unique activity
cohorts since our
first month*

↑308%

*Increase in unique
activity cohorts
since initiation.*

Core Pillars of *The Social*

The Social is built on five core pillars
— each designed to facilitate safe,
open, and honest engagement.

Core Pillars of *The Social*

1

Connection

created through safe spaces
and social interaction

2

Exploration

facilitated by new experiences
designed to spark motivation

3

Skill-building

designed to foster self-reliance

4

Client Leadership

meant to promote democratic
decision making

5

Community Partners

brought in to shape and expand
client-community relationships

What Makes *The Social* Work

The Social isn't fancy—but it's real.

Here's what's moved the needle.

What Makes *The Social Work*

**Letting people show up
exactly as they are.**



What Makes *The Social Work*

**Giving structure
without judgment.**



What Makes *The Social Work*

**Bringing in
consistent newness.**



A group of people are seated around a long, light-colored table in a meeting room. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or a collaborative activity. The room has large windows in the background, and there are some items on the table, like a water bottle and papers. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The text 'What Makes The Social Work' is in the top left, and 'Encouraging participation in therapy' is in the middle left.

What Makes *The Social Work*

**Encouraging
participation in therapy**

A group of approximately ten people are gathered around a long, light-colored wooden table in a meeting room. They are all looking towards the left side of the frame, suggesting they are listening to a speaker or participating in a discussion. The room has large windows in the background, and there are some framed pictures on the wall. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent orange filter. The text 'What Makes The Social Work' is in the top left, and 'Encouraging participation in therapy' is in the middle left in a large, bold, white font.

What Makes *The Social Work*

**Encouraging
participation in therapy**

What Makes *The Social Work*

Imbuing our programming with these values was a game-changer.

It has allowed us to innovate by:

✓ **Integrating** case management directly into group space.

✓ **Providing** group therapy sessions that have reached people who never saw themselves in therapy.

✓ **Giving** clients the lead or offering them the agency to co-facilitate sessions.

✓ **Fostering** low-cost partnerships that have opened big doors (e.g., free museum entries).

Challenges

***Despite the progress we've made
it's not all smooth sailing—and
that's ok.***

Challenges

Engagement isn't always steady.

It rises and falls with:

Mental health

Weather

Substance use

Personal challenges

Challenges

Still, ambition can be sparked.

Success—though hard to quantify—is felt through:

Vibe

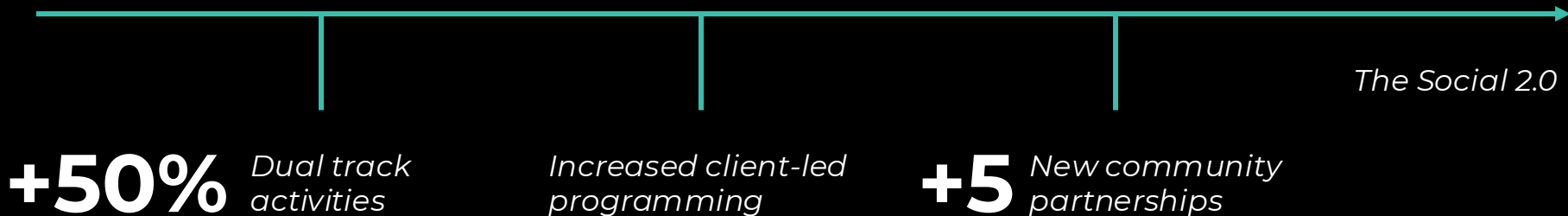
Participation

What people say when you're *not* in the room

Where We're Going | ***The Social 2.0***

We're always looking to better evolve *The Social* as the opportunity allows and demand increases.

The Social



How To Help

If you want to help, there are simple ways to **make a meaningful impact:**

Open your doors

Local businesses can provide welcoming spaces for community use.

Share your skills

Volunteers can lead one-time workshops in anything from cooking to coding.

Partner up

Collaborate on programs like financial literacy, art therapy, or fitness.

Launching a Group That Works

You don't need much to get started—just time, space, and a willingness to show up.

This model can work in any shelter or drop-in center, no special setup required. Start small and be consistent. *Steady presence is key.*

Conclusion

To fix people, we must create conditions for them to heal — ***human connection is the foundation.***

Recovery doesn't always look like progress, but ***dignity is the most powerful intervention we have.***

Thank You

Thank You!

For any questions email
info@cceh.org

Visit our website cceh.org

