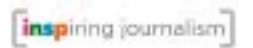


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Why Do So Many American Veterans Become Homeless?

By Nicole Kiser

In the United States, the veteran population has long been disproportionately represented in the population of those experiencing homelessness. In 2017, approximately **7.7% of the population** of the United States claimed veteran status. In January of that same year, veterans accounted for **9.1% of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's annual point in time count**. Researchers have found both male and female veterans to be at a **greater risk for homelessness than their non-veteran counterparts**, so what puts veterans at a greater risk of becoming homeless?

Often, what causes a veteran to become homeless is similar to what causes homelessness for a non-veteran. Many veterans that become homeless struggle with substance abuse or mental illness. These conditions are often difficult and expensive to properly diagnose and treat, and carry significant societal stigma, which can make getting help harder.

Additionally, **veterans who are unmarried or without family members are more likely to become homeless**. Without a support system to turn to in times of need, many find themselves on the street. Veterans, in particular, **are more likely to experience social isolation** after deploy-

ment, making finding and sustaining a support system even more difficult.

Sometimes, the reasons veterans join the military contribute to the reasons they become homeless. Unsurprisingly, poverty or low income is also a major contributor to homelessness. The military **is known to target re-**

Often, what causes a veteran to become homeless is similar to what causes homelessness for a non-veteran. Many veterans that become homeless struggle with substance abuse or mental illness. These conditions are often difficult and expensive to properly diagnose and treat, and carry significant societal stigma, which can make getting help harder.

ruitment at poorer schools, and enlistment can sound very appealing to those experiencing economic hardship. Service is marketed as granting those that enlist with a free ride to college, a significant scholarship, a path to citizenship, or, at least minimally, a stable job.

However, the perks that come with service are almost all tied to an honorable discharge, including Veterans Affairs benefits and healthcare. While over **85% of veterans receive an honorable discharge**, discharges

can be highly subjective, **with two different veterans receiving wildly different punishment for the same infraction**. Until the repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in 2011, **service members could receive a discharge that was not honorable for “homosexual conduct,”** which could include hugging, hand-holding, and kissing.

Some of the same kinds of military misconduct that can still lead to other

Even under the best of circumstances, the transition to civilian life can be difficult. Though the military offers a training program to facilitate the transition, **the DoD Transition Assistance Program is very compressed and allows little engagement**. Many veterans leave the military without knowing how to file for benefits or healthcare with the Veterans Affairs office. **In 2010, fewer than half of veterans surveyed understood their benefits.**

Veterans service officers, or VSOs, are supposed to help smooth the transition and help veterans apply for benefits. A good VSO **can save years of waiting time and double a veteran's disability benefits**, compared with veterans filing their own claims. However, many areas don't have enough VSOs to go around, and some organizations only have the budget to hire a VSO part-time. This can make finding and gaining access to a VSO difficult, if not impossible, for veterans in need.

VSOs are just one part of the missing advocacy for veterans. **In 2015, five of the top ten unmet needs of veterans experiencing homeless-**

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WHAT SHOULD WE COVER NEXT? FILL OUT OUR SURVEY AT:
<https://bit.ly/2WbMRsg>

STREET *Zine*

STREET *Zine* is a program of The Stewpot.



The STREET *Zine* is a monthly newspaper published by The Stewpot, a ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. The Stewpot provides services and resources for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless. The organization also offers opportunities for a new life.

As part of this ministry, the STREET *Zine* seeks to raise awareness about the issues surrounding homelessness and poverty. At the same time, the monthly publication offers financial opportunity for homeless clients who sell the paper to Dallas residents. Vendors are able to move towards economic self-sufficiency by using the money they receive from selling copies to purchase bus passes, food, and necessary living expenses. Clients also receive stipends for contributing articles to STREET *Zine*.

The content in STREET *Zine* does not necessarily reflect the views or endorsement of its publisher, editors, contributors, sponsors, or advertisers. To learn more about this publication, contact Suzanne Erickson, Director of Educational and Workforce Programs, 1835 Young Street, Dallas, Texas 75201 or SuzanneE@thestewpot.org. And to read more about STREET *Zine*, a member of the International Network of Street Papers, go to www.thestewpot.org/streetzine.

STREET *Zine* is published by
The Stewpot of First Presbyterian Church.

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A Letter from the Executive Director

By Brenda Snitzer

“Leave No Man (Woman) Behind” is a creed as old as wartime itself, and the various American military branches ascribe to this mantra. Scripture also exhorts us, “We who are strong ought to bear with the weak not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up...” (Romans 15:1-2).

This creed is the belief of the City of Dallas and the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA), as well as of the providers of programs and services for those experiencing homelessness in our region. On February 19, 2020, Dallas City Council Member Chad West led a press conference that Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson and all members of the Dallas City Council attended, where they officially launched the second “Veterans Housing Challenge to End Homelessness.” They did so under the banner “No Buddy Left Behind.”

Ending veterans experiencing homelessness in Dallas and Collin Counties has been a significant focus for MDHA and partnering agencies the past several years. During the 2020 homeless count last winter, 360 veterans were identified as experiencing homelessness in either Dallas or Collin County. That figure is now 297 veterans, but either figure is totally unacceptable. These men and women entered our Armed Forces to defend us and our country.

Housing veterans who are homeless has especially been a major effort during the pandemic, as MDHA Program Manager Alex Abraham makes clear in his interview in this edition. He works closely in assisting organizations across both counties to achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness. As he says, “We want to find practical solutions for housing veterans experiencing homelessness.”

The goal of “Effectively End Veteran Homelessness by 2021” is only one of the three main aims of the transformation of the homeless rehousing system. We believe this goal can be achieved and that the City of Dallas and MDHA can move on to the rest of the goals: “Reduce Chronic Unsheltered Homelessness by 2023” and “Reduce Family and Youth Homelessness by 2025.”

Many organizations, including The Stewpot, have already been awarded funding for 2021 to begin rapid rehousing programs. These initiatives will move as quickly as possible to get those in our community who are experiencing homelessness into housing. Clients also will receive important services in the apartments or hotels where they may find a safe residence.

Stay tuned for more in the coming months about this effort. These programs will go a long way in achieving the goals of reducing and ending homelessness in Dallas. When we focus together on housing those who need it, we won’t leave anyone behind.

*Brenda Snitzer is executive director of The Stewpot and a member of the STREET *Zine* Editorial Advisory Board.*

2020

STEWSPOT STATS



35,000 family meals
distributed

692 households benefited
from our program

3,271 individuals impacted

13 of 14 city council districts
represented

THE STEWPOT
2020



242
therapy sessions

26 people
receiving mental
health services

THE STEWPOT
2020

The Pastor's Letter

By The Rev. Amos Disasa

One of the unexpected joys of moving from a ninth-floor apartment downtown to a neighborhood in Oak Cliff is hearing the sounds of an ice cream truck again. Each time we hear it, my two children put out their hands for some money, jump on their bikes and go barreling down the street like they're first responders.

If their mother had seen me on the sidewalk yelling at them to do whatever it takes to find the truck, she'd tell me there is no good reason for them to roll through stop signs, ride on the street and risk getting lost on their return. She's right, of course, but the sound of an ice cream truck is the siren song of children and easily distracted adults like me. There is nothing I can do.

The unfortunate ending to this story is that every time my kids chased the sound of the truck, they returned home disappointed and empty-handed. After 15 minutes of riding all the streets around our home, some of them twice, the ice cream remained elusive. What is it about an ice cream truck's song that makes it easy to hear, but hard to track down? No matter how hard and fast they rode, the song, the ice cream signal, was everywhere in general and nowhere in particular.

In Isaiah 49 God says to God's people that soon they will hear a signal. The signal will be evident in a great reversal of fortune. The kings and queens of rival nations exiled God's people from their sacred city of Jerusalem, destroyed their house of worship and scattered families apart from each other in captivity. But God says that soon the same powerful autocrats that ruined their lives would kiss their feet. The Babylonian queens and kings would bring the children back to God's people like a foster parent to a birth family. God's people would know God was at work making things right when their daughters were perched on the shoulders of their ruthless captors and the sons napped on their bosoms.

God is telling the restless exiles that you won't miss the signal that God is near because the sound of restoration will be obvious, as close

as the sound of your own children.

But it's likely the exiled and desperate people of God heard something else that sounded like the familiar song of an ice cream truck they'd never been able to find.

Considering the circumstances, promises like these can sound melodramatic. If you are in exile, socially distanced from family, collectively quarantined in spirit from the parts of normal life now considered a health risk, quietly withdrawing and adapting in ways that don't make you comfortable, the persistent promises of a return to normal life start to sound like a signal that's everywhere in general and nowhere in particular.

God's people are told that soon there will be gladness instead of mourning, but what about right now? How many more tears must be shed today, and hours of lonely grieving endured today, for the loss of life?

The difference between your perpetually late friend and God is that God is intent to keep coming, whether we choose to keep waiting or give up.

Yet still, God is intent to be in this world with us. It can be disappointing to hear God sound like a friend that's always late, but has a good excuse. The friend always, eventually, shows up, but they never fail to make you wait. The promises they make to be there sound more and more like a song that's everywhere in general and nowhere in particular.

The difference between your perpetually late friend and God is that God is intent to keep coming, whether we choose to keep waiting or give up. God has never left our slow-moving world full of hard-headed people that frequently give up when it gets tough and are prone to bouts of laziness.

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Our challenge is to be like the kids and never stop believing that God is right around the corner. To never stop listening for the signal that God has come near again. We may not find God every time life demands that we find the source of the song that sounds like a sacred movement, but still we go.

The Rev. Amos Disasa is senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.

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Ending Veteran Homelessness: A Conversation with Alex Abraham

By Bill McKenzie

Alex Abraham serves as program manager for the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance, which works across Dallas and Collin counties to meet the needs of residents experiencing homelessness. As part of his work each week, Abraham works with service providers, such as the Department of Veteran Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, to address the particular needs of veterans experiencing homelessness. In this interview, he explains the work being done across our region to house veterans who lack a safe place to call home.

Before the pandemic hit, the City of Dallas launched the goal of using federal housing vouchers to get 100 veterans into housing in 100 days in 2020. Similar efforts have been launched elsewhere in Texas. What are the results of these initiatives?

Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance, in collaboration with the City of Dallas and Councilman Chad West, focused on this veteran initiative. We want to find practical solutions for housing veterans experiencing homelessness.

We did something similar in 2019, and we were starting this initiative in February of last year. Then, the pandemic hit. We decided in July that we needed to adjust since so many providers were going virtual or apartment complexes were

The biggest barrier to getting veterans housed, as well as other people experiencing homelessness, is the lack of affordable housing in our community.

shutting down or only having virtual visits. That affected how we as a system helped veterans connect to housing.

We still continue to get people housed through partners like the American GI Forum, Endeavors and the VA. They each provide supportive housing for veterans. We also have started a Veterans Leader group and expanded our veterans' task force to identify parts of our system that need refining. That way, we can get veterans into housing more quickly despite the challenges the pandemic presents.

What are your thoughts about this effort beyond the pandemic, which, of course, no one knows precisely when it will end?

We have not decided yet what our work will look like post-pandemic, but we do want to work on ending veteran homelessness this year. Our goal is to end veteran homelessness [in Dallas and Collin counties] by October.

How many veterans in Dallas and Collin counties are experiencing homelessness?

We currently have 297 veterans in our system who are experiencing homelessness in those counties.

What is the overall homeless population count for these two counties?

As of the last official count, which took place last

January, there were 4,471 people. That includes sheltered and unsheltered people in both counties.

Whenever we come out of the pandemic, what is your assessment of how much affordable housing is available for veterans experiencing homelessness?

The biggest barrier to getting veterans housed, as well as other people experiencing homelessness, is the lack of affordable housing in our community. When people are trying to find a place that is affordable, they also often are having to settle for some place that is not always safe. They are at risk of being in a place with high crime or substance abuse.

What we need is more apartments that will work with our community and that will work with projects that provide a federal subsidy. Is most of the housing you all are successful in getting veterans into largely in Dallas County?

Yes. Clients we work with often rely on public transportation, so it is hard for them to get to housing that is not near public transportation.

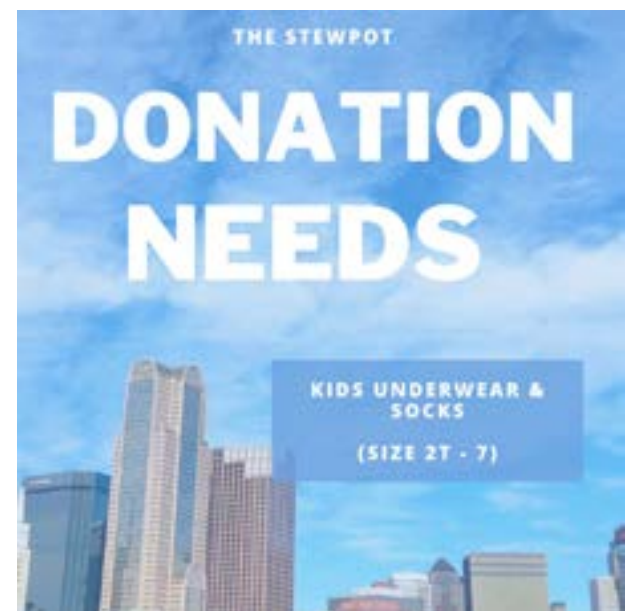
How difficult — or how possible — is it to get quality case management to go along with the housing?

That's an important point. Quality case management is imperative for someone who is homeless and wanting to transition back into their own independence.

Is the case management more often done at the apartment site or through an organization someplace else?

Typically, if the housing provider is using a federal voucher, they will offer case management

Continued on page 8



From Army to Art: Cornelious Bracken's Path to Purpose

By Poppy Sundeen

Some people know what they want to do with their lives from an early age. But for most, the path isn't a straight line. When Cornelious graduated from high school in 1987, he was at loose ends. "I decided to go into the Army hoping I'd find what I wanted to do."

His hopes for a direction and a sense of purpose didn't materialize.

"The military wasn't my thing," says Cornelious. Much of his time was spent cleaning in preparation for highly competitive barracks inspections. "All we did was clean. It was like living in a museum." He disliked the pressure for something he didn't value. "What was the purpose of going into the Army? Is this what it's all about?"

Three years of service and no closer to his goal

After leaving the Army, Cornelious returned to his native Dallas, where he was once again at loose ends. "I felt like I'd wasted those years in the Army and still hadn't found myself."

With no marketable skills, he tried to cobble together a living with low-paying jobs, but couldn't make enough to pay his rent. "It was a real low point in my life. I was homeless and just drifting through life."



"Lost on the Way to the Parade"

Life on the street wasn't easy. Cornelious survived by working odd jobs. "I kept to myself, so I didn't have too much trouble." He turned down offers of help from his family and opted not to look for assistance from Veterans Affairs. "I haven't been in touch with the military since I left."

The move downtown, and up

Eventually, Cornelious traded the streets of North Dallas for downtown, where resources for the homeless are more accessible. One resource that

proved particularly helpful was The Stewpot.

"I didn't really know about The Stewpot. I just saw other homeless people heading that way, and I followed them. They were going there for food."

Cornelious started visiting regularly for meals.* "Then one day I heard that they were having a talent show. There was an art thing in it, and I knew I wanted to enter."

A whim becomes a window of opportunity

The sudden urge to enter an art competition seemed to come out of nowhere. Cornelious hadn't participated in an art activity of any kind since he was a kid. "I did art in elementary school. I just remembered it as fun."

As it turned out, the contest was only for people in The Stewpot Art Program. That wasn't going to stop Cornelious. He signed up for the program. Then he learned he had to do drawings and show them to the teacher for a critique. That didn't stop him either.

His persistence paid off. The art teacher was impressed by his drawings and suggested that Cornelious try painting. "I'd never done that before." He started out by working with pastels, then transitioned to



"A Marine's Funeral"

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acrylic paints, his current medium of choice.

Success as an artist

It didn't take long for Cornelious to become a prolific artist. His work filled the studio walls and sold briskly at art shows. One of his pieces was selected by former First Lady Laura Bush to hang in the White House.

The proceeds from his art helped Cornelious get into a small apartment. "I used to go to the studio at The Stewpot every day, but when the pandemic hit, I began doing my art from home." The Art Program director, Betty Heckman, keeps him supplied with canvasses and materials.

Now that the program is ramping up again, Cornelious and his fellow artists are allowed to mask up and work in the studio one person at a time.

The way the world should be

Once Cornelious discovered his calling as an artist, nothing could slow him down — not the pandemic and not the kidney disease that requires dialysis three days a week.

"Painting is what I want to do for the rest of my life," he says. "I want my art to tell a story, a positive message about how God loves us and the way the world should be." It's a message that comes through clearly in his paintings' jubilant colors and joyous people.

As to his military service, Cornelious has no regrets. "If everything had been perfect in the Army, it wouldn't have led me to art. It was a rocky road, but it was worth it."

Poppy Sundeen, a Dallas writer, is a member of the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.

**Prior to 2008, The Stewpot served lunch during the week. In 2008, The Stewpot partnered with the newly opened Bridge facility to serve three meals a day, seven days a week at The Bridge facility.*



"A Hard Fighting Soldier"

View from the Street: Inside a Veteran's Life

By Sarah Disasa

Bill was 18 years old when he joined the military. He had two grandfathers and other family members who had been in the military, and so he decided to follow in their footsteps. "I just wanted to," he said, as he explained why he joined the Marine Corps.

One of the things that Bill enjoyed most about being a Marine was the travel that he experienced while serving. During his three-and-a-half years as a Marine, Bill served mostly in South America. He also liked the fact that he never knew what he would be doing. "One day you might be on guard duty, the next day you might be on a helicopter, or jumping out of it. You never knew what you were going to do. It was never the same routine."

Bill learned many things from the military. "Surviving while being homeless," he responded, when asked about what the military taught him years ago that he still relies on today. Bill and his wife have been homeless for over two years. During that time, he and his wife of seven years have camped in a wooded area in Dallas. From his military experience, Bill explained that he knows how to set

up a camp and make do with the resources he has.

When Bill was in his early 20s, he was medically discharged from the military after surviving a helicopter crash. It was a difficult transition back to civilian life. "A lot of what was making it tough was being stupid. I turned to drugs and alcohol for a while." After that initial and difficult period of transition from the Marines, Bill was able to hold down several jobs, mostly in construction, and support himself for 30 years.

In 2014, Bill was diagnosed with lung cancer. That diagnosis, along with other health complications, was the catalyst for a series of events that led to homelessness. Unable to work and make money, Bill lost his apartment and soon found himself on the streets.

Curious about his Veterans Affairs benefits, I asked Bill what services had helped him when he lost his housing. "None," he replied. Bill explained that he did not qualify for assistance with his housing because his time frame had lapsed, and he was no longer eligible. It had been about 30 years since he had been discharged.

Bill said that he has been denied Medicare and Medicaid multiple times. He further explained that since he does not have insurance, Medicaid, Medicare or VA benefits, getting the medical care he needs is very difficult.

Bill learned many things from the military. "Surviving while being homeless," he responded, when asked about what the military taught him years ago that he still relies on today.

"Even to this day, sometimes I have problems around the 4th of July. Especially if I don't have any meds for PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]." Bill also still experiences medical problems from his helicopter crash from his early 20s, in addition to his more recent medical issues.

In February, Bill is planning to apply for federal disability benefits. "Where I can get medical insurance, get some money, and get a place," he said, "and start getting the proper medicine that I need."

Bill closed our conversation by reflecting on the community in which he is a part. "I'm not the only one. There's millions out there. I personally know about 30 other vets here that hang around downtown Dallas that are going through the same things as I am."

Sarah Disasa is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.

Resources and Support for Veterans

By Nicole Kiser

Veterans who are experiencing homelessness experience unique challenges. The following is a list of resources for veterans experiencing or at risk for homelessness in the Dallas area.

1. VA North Texas Health Care System:

The VA North Texas Health Care System lists contact information and details about resources provided by the VA for veterans experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

www.northtexas.va.gov/services/homeless/

2. PATRIOTLink:

PATRIOTLink is a resource designed to help veterans locate support resources and programs. PATRIOTLink's database contains over 6,000 programs that have been screened by PATRIOTLink to help veterans find support for topics such as financial counseling, peer support, or VA benefits. PATRIOTLink is a partner supported by the Office of Community Engagement of the VA.

www.patriotlink.org/

3. National Resource Directory:

The National Resource Directory is a database of vetted resources for service members, veterans, and their families.

nrd.gov/

4. Dallas County Veteran Services Office:

The Dallas County Veteran Services Office is designed to help veterans or their families obtain benefits from Veterans Affairs. The Dallas County Veteran Services Office is not currently accepting walk-ins and are operating by appointment only.

Address: 2377 N. Stemmons Freeway, Suite 631, Dallas, TX 75207

Phone: (972) 692-4939

Fax: (214) 819-2880

Email: veteran.services1@dallascounty.org

Office Hours: 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

www.dallascounty.org/departments/veteran-services/

5. Dallas VA Medical Center:

The Dallas VA Medical Center is the VA's second largest health care system, serving over 100,000 veterans a year.

Address: 4500 S. Lancaster Rd., Dallas, TX 75216

Phone: 214-857-3179

6. Veterans Resource Center:

The Dallas Veterans Resource Center helps connect veterans with housing solutions. Their day center can provide necessary services such as laundry and internet access to veterans in need.

Address: 4900 S. Lancaster Rd., Dallas TX 75216 (Location of the Dallas Community Resource and Referral Center)

Phone: 214-742-8387, x77564

www.texvet.org/resources/veterans-resource-center-homeless-resources

7. The Bridge Center:

Located down the street from The Stewpot, the Bridge Center offers both day services and night shelter to those experiencing homelessness. Services include meal service, hot showers, physical and mental health evaluations and care management services.

Address: 1818 Corsicana St., Dallas, TX 75201 (Location of Dallas HCHV Outreach)

Phone: 214-670-1123

www.bridgehrc.org/

8. Endeavors:

Endeavors' Veteran Supportive Services works to prevent homelessness among veterans and their families. Endeavor offers rapid rehousing, financial assistance, and one-on-one case management to eligible veterans. Their services include short-term emergency housing, job placement assistance, mental health resources, access to substance abuse programs and assistance obtaining VA benefits and services.

Phone: 214-932-6276

www.endeavors.org/veteran-supportive-services/

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine and a member of the STREETZine editorial board.

Continued from page 1

ness were related to legal assistance. Similar to non-veterans, veterans desire legal help with preventing eviction or foreclosure, child support, and outstanding warrants or fines. Like others experiencing homelessness, identification services are crucial to veterans, as legal assistance restoring a driver's license that has lapsed during service may allow them to access other resources as well.

Veterans also face some unique challenges. Navigating the labyrinthine system of Veterans Affairs benefits often requires legal help. Those without an honorable discharge can often still gain access to Veterans Affairs benefits by **undergoing a character of service determination**. This case-by-case review process often includes submitting evidence and can be greatly helped by legal assistance.

Veterans who are not honorably discharged can also gain access to benefits by **getting a discharge upgrade** from the Discharge Review Board or the Board of Corrections of Military Records. Using legal counsel to appeal a discharge can allow a

Veterans, in particular, are more likely to experience social isolation after deployment, making finding and sustaining a support system even more difficult.

service member to be granted new consideration for mental health problems and other mitigating circumstances.

Through the work of the VA, medical-legal partnerships, VSOs, and countless other service providers, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness has been decreasing since 2010. While it's unclear how the pandemic will affect those numbers, the progress made with the limited (**and often decreasing**) funding available has been significant.

With increased sensitivity to risk factors for homelessness, increased access to legal aid, and further simplification of the unnecessarily intricate dance

that the VA system has become, veterans may be able to better navigate their benefits, and ultimately their transition to civilian life.

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine and a member of the STREETZine editorial board.



Continued from page 4

as part of that voucher. That is often the greatest factor in whether someone is going to succeed in that program.

Quality case management depends upon staffing and logistics. If an owner has complexes scattered through the area, the case manager may have to be driving around to make those appointments. It does put a lot on the manager, but case management is very important. It helps someone stay healthy and housed.

And what about homeless veterans who want to secure employment or just know about jobs? What do you all see there?

Providers like Endeavors, the VA and the American GI Forum offer housing as well as employment opportunities. They connect their clients

Quality case management is imperative for someone who is homeless and wanting to transition back into their own independence.

to employers. They have staff who work with veterans to help them secure a job or get benefits.

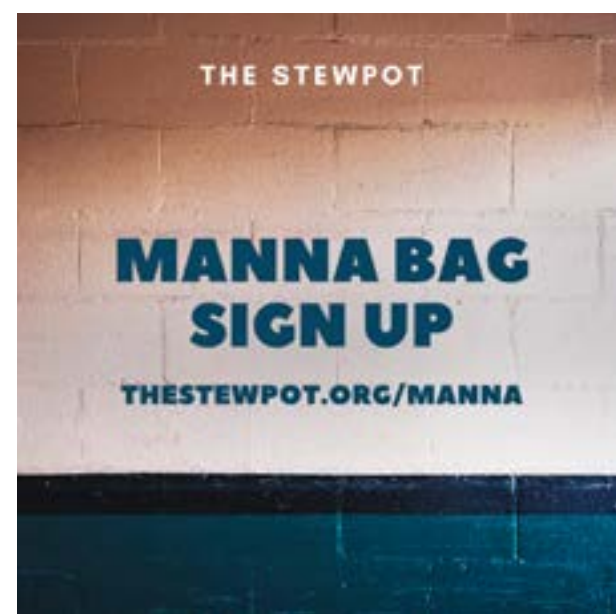
What impact is the pandemic having on veterans experiencing homelessness?

Through the CARES Act that Congress approved last year, the VA's SSVF program has gotten money to providers to put up veterans in emergency housing like hotels. They have worked

together with the City of Dallas. They have been working tirelessly to get veterans into these hotels. The housing also provides the veterans a place to quarantine or stay socially distanced. That is not easy to do on the street.

The challenge is getting veterans connected to the appropriate housing. But we work each week virtually with case managers from housing projects and shelters and service providers to identify those veterans who need housing and to connect them to the housing that fits their needs. Our partners and system have collectively gotten 93 veterans off the streets and into permanent housing since October.

Bill McKenzie is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREET-Zine Editorial Advisory Board.



Jokes and Riddles

Q: How do you put a giraffe in the refrigerator?

A: Open the door and put it in.

Q: How do you put an elephant in the refrigerator?

A: Open the door, take out the giraffe, and put the elephant in.

Q: The Lion King calls a conference of all the animals in his kingdom. Which animal doesn't show up?

A: The elephant. It's in the refrigerator.

Q: What has four wheels and flies?

A: A garbage truck.

Q: What's the difference between a hill and a pill?

A: One is hard to get up, and the other is hard to get down.

Q: What insect lives on the least food?

A: The moth. It eats holes.

Q: What's worse than raining cats and dogs?

A: Hailing taxis and buses.

Q: What's the difference between an accordion and an onion?

A: Nobody cries when you cut up an accordion.

Q: Why is a dog like a tree?

A: They both produce bark.

Q: When was Rome built?

A: At night, because it wasn't built in a day.

Q: Which travels at greater speed, heat or cold?

A: Heat, because you can always catch a cold!

A cowboy walks into a bar. His hat is made out of paper. His vest, shirt and jeans are made out of paper. Even his boots and spurs are paper! The sheriff arrests him for rustling.

Salesman: This vacuum cleaner will cut your work in half.

Customer: Great. I'll take two of them.

A horse walks into a bar. The bartender asks, "Why the long face?"

Nurse: Doctor, there is an invisible man in the waiting room.

Doctor: Tell him I can't see him right now.

If olive oil comes from olives, where does baby oil come from?

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Justin.

Justin who?

Just in time for supper.

Around The Stewpot: Cleaning and Pandemic Precautions

By Nicole Kiser

For this month's Around The Stewpot, STREETZine emailed with Cindy Bailey, the director of operations at The Stewpot, to ask for her insight into The Stewpot's cleaning and pandemic precautions.

The Stewpot serves a lot of people. From The Stewpot Art Program to the Children and Youth programs, The Stewpot serves thousands of people of diverse populations each year. In March 2020, pretty much everything shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to continue serving the vulnerable populations of Dallas, The Stewpot had to adapt its practices to provide necessary services while still keeping its staff, clients, and volunteers safe.

With limited access to healthcare and little ability to quarantine, those experiencing homelessness have been identified as one of the most vulnerable populations during this pandemic. While The Stewpot has worked with the City of Dallas and other partners to house those experiencing homelessness, it has also taken action inside the building to help limit exposure.

“At this time only essential staff are allowed on The Stewpot campus,” says Cindy Bailey, director of operations at The Stewpot. In order to limit contact between staff and clients, most volunteer positions are only open **virtually**. “We do have volunteers assisting with our Family Stabilization Food Distribution events...[but] these volunteers are limited to FPC [First Presbyterian Church] staff and church members, as well as family members who live in their households.”

And volunteer positions are not the only things that have become virtual. “The Stewpot's Counseling Service is still helping many via virtual sessions,” says Bailey. “The Children and Youth

program continues to support students by providing enrichment activities, homework help, [and] continued partnership with community organizations...while meeting virtually each week.”

Where virtual interaction is not practical, social distancing helps keep clients safe. “Due to the pandemic, we have had to limit the number of clients allowed in the building...Chairs are placed six feet apart,” says Bailey. Despite the restrictions, The Stewpot has tried to keep as many of its services available as possible. Partner agencies remain onsite to provide dental, medical and mental health assistance. And The Stewpot continues to offer restrooms, emergency clothing and hygiene services, identification services, representative payee services, mail and document delivery, and bank and rental assistance.

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“Artists are able to work in the studios all day on specific days — one artist per studio — so that they can be safely distanced,” says Bailey. The Art Program director, Betty Heckman, “has been uploading photos of artwork so that artists can continue selling their work during this socially distanced period.”

Some things had to change though. “All staff, clients, and outside agency personnel must wear a mask when in common areas,” says Bailey. “Masks are required for all clients while in the building and provided for those who are without. Caseworkers, who meet face-to-face with clients, have a plastic shield on their desks to further protect them and the clients.”

In addition to cleaning high-touch areas and restrooms several times a day, more hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed, and the client waiting area has been restricted to those on lists to see specified providers. Meal service at The Bridge

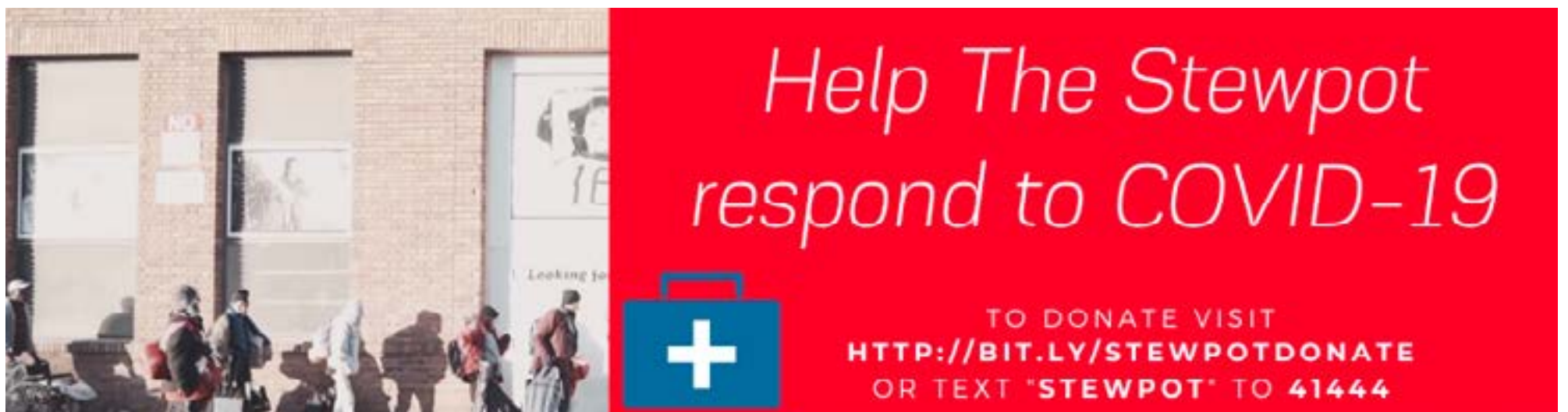
Homeless Recovery Center is now served using disposable serving products. Before the era of COVID, The Stewpot already contracted a professional cleaning company to clean the building on a nightly basis. The cleaning company has since performed additional deep cleanings of the building as an extra precaution against the pandemic.

The staff is taking extra precautions as well. Food preparation areas, like coffee stations and refrigerators, have been shut down. Staff bring their own coffee and lunches from home. Additionally, The Stewpot uses a symptom checker to determine if staff are eligible to be on campus. “Each staff member and student must login to the system to answer questions regarding any new COVID-19 symptoms, their last COVID-19 test, exposure to anyone who tested positive for COVID-19, body temperature, etc.” says Bailey.

“If a staff member is 1) exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19 or 2) tests positive for COVID-19, then they are asked to follow up with a health care provider and follow the CDC guidelines regarding testing and quarantining. The online symptom checker will guide the person as to when they are eligible to return to work” with oversight from the senior operations director, Ashlee Hueston.

Thanks to the dedication and cooperation of its incredible staff, The Stewpot has managed to expand its services in the midst of a pandemic, now offering rapid rehousing assistance and increased food distribution assistance. And the community has responded to its resilience: “We have wonderful donors who have helped provide PPE and cleaning supplies when we have experienced shortages of needed items from our usual sources,” says Bailey. Through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Stewpot has worked hard to continue providing services to vulnerable populations without sacrificing the safety of its clients and its staff.

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine and a member of the STREETZine editorial board.



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STREETZine is a nonprofit newspaper published by The Stewpot of First Presbyterian Church for the benefit of people living in poverty. It includes news, particularly about issues important to those experiencing homelessness. STREETZine creates direct economic opportunity. New vendors receive ten free papers. After the first ten, vendors pay twenty-five cents for a paper to be distributed for a one-dollar or more donation. Vendors typically profit seventy-five cents from each paper. Vendors are self-employed and set their own hours. Distributing STREETZine is protected by the First Amendment.

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