

STREETzine



the STEWPOT

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STREETzine is a program of The Stewpot and a member of **International Network of Street Papers**

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Living in Transition

By Bill McKenzie

People experiencing homelessness in Dallas or any other place around the country rarely start out without a home. Most likely, they are caught up in some kind of transition.

They may be moving from a place where they suffered domestic violence to a safe shelter. They may have lost a job and need a place to live. They may have lost their home because the rent and bills got too high. Or they may have suffered a mental illness that led them to a place of despair. Those are among some of the major reasons people end up experiencing homelessness, the National Alliance to End Homelessness reports.

They may be moving from a place where they suffered domestic violence to a safe shelter. They may have lost a job and need a place to live. They may have lost their home because the rent and bills got too high. Or they may have suffered a mental illness that led them to a place of despair. Those are among some of the major reasons people end up experiencing homelessness, the National Alliance to End Homelessness reports.

In terms of domestic violence, the National Center on Family Homelessness reported in 2020 that 25 percent of women experiencing homelessness are there because of violence committed against them. The same report indicates that the “lifetime prevalence of DV [domestic violence] among women in the general population is estimated to be between 23% and 30%; while prevalence of DV [domestic violence] among homeless

women is over 60%.”

Another heart-wrenching set of transitions involves veterans — the very people who once served and protected our nation and its ideals. The National Alliance to End Homelessness reports that, in 2019, 21 out of every 10,000 veterans lived on America’s streets or in its shelters. That figure is slightly higher than the national average of 17 out of every 10,000 Americans experiencing homelessness. And the numbers were even higher for veterans of color. For example, 56 out of every 10,000 Black veterans were homeless in 2019.

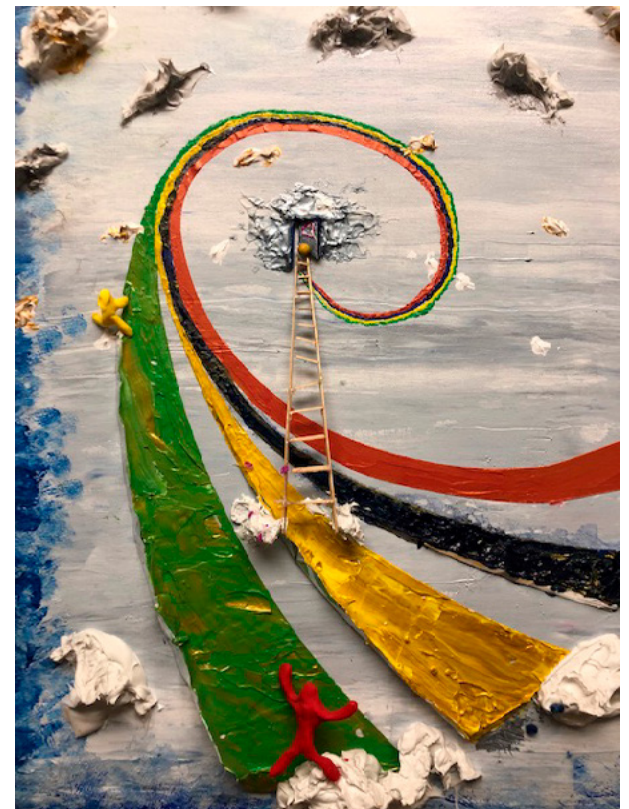
On the cusp of change

At the same time, some people experiencing homelessness may be on the cusp of a positive change. They may move from addiction to sobriety. They may move from prison to freedom. They may move from lacking a home to being housed.

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Consider the veteran homeless population. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, veteran homelessness actually has decreased 39 percent since 2007. The organization’s 2021 Point in Time Count reports states, “82 communities and 3 states have announced that they ended veterans’ homelessness (meaning that systems can ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time).” The Black veteran homeless population saw the most significant drop.

One reason for the decline in the



Artwork by Sam Cooper.

veteran homeless population is that some communities have focused resources on veterans. The NBC affiliate in Dallas-Fort Worth reported in November how the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance has prioritized using the resources of its partner organizations to quickly find housing for veterans experiencing homelessness. Encouragingly, veteran homelessness has declined 18 percent in Dallas and Collin Counties since 2019.

This is just one example of how the right services can divert individuals from becoming homeless. The National Alliance to End Homelessness points out how services targeted toward people with families and chronically homeless individuals also have reduced the population of people in those subgroups from experiencing homelessness.

Lives in transition

The Dallas Morning News’ Sharon Grigsby detailed recently how Ellen Magnis, who

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STREETZine is a program of
The Stewpot.



The **STREETZine** 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 **STREETZine** seeks to raise awareness about the issues surrounding homelessness and poverty. The monthly publication also offers financial opportunity for Stewpot 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 **STREETZine**.

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The Pastor's Letter: Two Perspectives

By **The Rev. Meagan Findeiss**

*This essay is an excerpt of a sermon
delivered by The Rev. Meagan Findeiss*

Have you ever come across the image of the duck and the rabbit? It is referred to as an ambiguous image or a multi-stable perception. The picture has an image of a rabbit with its ears laying back on its head and its eyes facing toward the right. But if you look at the image a little differently, it isn't a rabbit at all. The ears are, in fact, the beak of a duck looking in the other direction.

There are clearly two different images, but they are situated within the one picture. Two perspectives presented at the same time.

The concept of unity is similar. There can be two perspectives: one of gift, and one of calling.

There can be two perspectives: one of gift, and one of calling.

The gift of oneness manifests when people are together. If a person happens to be sick or lonely, and others come and care for them, the person is reminded that they are part of something bigger. They are part of Christ's oneness. They are part of the body.

The gift of oneness manifests when people are together. If a person happens to be sick or lonely, and others come and care for them, the person is reminded that they are part of something bigger.

In one church youth group, students hold hands before each meeting and pray. They inter-digitize their handholding, interlocking fingers. The reason for doing so: "Our fingers are our strength, and the space between our fingers are our weaknesses. When we hold hands, we fill in others' weaknesses with our strengths."

Unity brings us together as one.

God Almighty loves each and every one of us, and has given us a precious gift.

Our world, though, defaults to division and separation: from national pride, to politics, to values, the things that separate us are endless. There is always something working toward separation.

I remember talking with someone who told me about their family after the 2016 election. She and her husband had been uninvited from their family's Thanksgiving gathering. She seemed to be okay with it as well. There was mutual refusal from both parties to be in the presence of each other... because of their differing political beliefs. But you could fill in the blank here, there was mutual refusal because of their attitude, their cleanliness, their demeanor, their priorities...the list goes on and on.

Ultimately, this couple stopped talking with their family, and their family stopped talking with them. Difference so easily leads to separation.

Unity calls us to an altered way of acting. It pushes us to see past the difference and work towards reconciliation. Not bulldoze the other's belief but be in a position of receiving the other person, engaging in dialogue that goes deeper than disagreement. Unity is one of those gifts that you must do something with.

Unity calls us to an altered way of acting. It pushes us to see past the difference and work towards reconciliation.

Like a boxed amaryllis you might receive, **unity** will not grow if you continue to keep it in its box. You must take the seed and put it in the soil, tend to it with water, find the precise spot for the right amount of sunlight. The **seed** needs nurturing and tending.

Like a boxed amaryllis you might receive, unity will not grow if you continue to keep it in its box.

The only way unity will blossom is if it too receives nurturing and tending. It requires a response. We are to

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Executive Director's Report: Transitions – In and Out of Homelessness

By Brenda Snitzer

This issue of STREETZine focuses on transitions. Life is a series of transitions. Unfortunately, the transition where we meet many of the folks we serve is in their transition into homelessness.

They come to The Stewpot because they need documents to get housing or for employment. We see so many people who are homeless for the first time and they do not know where to turn. Others we serve are chronically homeless, having lived on the street or in shelter for years. They hope to eventually transition into being housed and we work to assist or guide them there.

Recently, the newest Point in Time (PIT) Count data for 2022 showed a slight decrease in overall homelessness compared to last year. However “on any given night, there are 4,410 individuals experiencing homelessness in Dallas and Collin Counties,” shared Joli Robinson, president and CEO of the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA). The concerning trend is a growing population of chronic homelessness. The data also continues to show racial disparities. PIT Count data can be found at Dallas and Collin Counties Point in Time (PIT) Count - MDHA | MDHA (mdhadallas.org)

The concerning trend is a growing population of chronic homelessness. The data also continues to show racial disparities.

MDHA and the homeless collaborative, of which we are a part, are trying to change those trends with the Dallas Real Time Rapid Rehousing initiative. Through Rapid Rehousing, the collaborative has transitioned 277 households out of homelessness this year (696 households have been



The Rapid Rehousing team delivering some essentials . Photo courtesy of Alex Vorse.

enrolled thus far). That is a great start, but there is so much to do.

Through Rapid Rehousing, the collaborative has transitioned 277 households out of homelessness this year (696 households have been enrolled thus far). That is a great start, but there is so much to do.

The two biggest barriers are not enough affordable housing and landlords not accepting our referrals. The collaborative has a huge group working on the effort, but we need more partners.

After that, the biggest barriers are

insufficient funding for Permanent Supportive Housing, which provides long-term housing for clients, and lack of sufficient resources for those who are unable to transition to living on their own. Due to disabilities or other barriers, they cannot pay for the rent and utilities. This reality keeps many “chronically homeless” folks from being housed.

We need more partners and resources as we address the systems that create or continue homelessness for so many. Meanwhile, you can watch our collaborative’s work at: Community Dashboard - MDHA | MDHA (mdhadallas.org)

Brenda Snitzer is the executive director of The Stewpot.

Getting Back on Track

Lamon's Path to a Home and a Job

By Poppy Sundeen

A year ago, Lamon Blanton couldn't picture himself in an apartment of his own. "I didn't even see it as a possibility," he says. "I'd been living with my aunt and had gone eight months without using drugs, but then I went back to doing street stuff."

It wasn't the first time Lamon strayed from the path he aspired to follow. His struggle began soon after leaving his home in the small East Texas town of Laneville. "I grew up poor, but in terms of values, I had a great upbringing. I was taught to do the right thing."

Moving to Dallas at age 18 turned his world upside down. "Growing up, I was playing sports. I don't remember anybody doing drugs or drinking alcohol or committing crimes. The city took me down a totally different path."

Losing his way

His intention when he first arrived in Dallas was to get a college education. "My teachers told me I was pretty good at writing. I wasn't sure what I'd end up doing, but I wanted to get started, so I enrolled at Richland College."

His plan came apart after he fell in with a crowd from his apartment complex. "I stopped going to classes and started drinking and smoking marijuana. I was hanging out with three other guys. Every one of them ended up going to prison, one for murder."

Lamon remembers his grandmother warning him about people who could lead him into trouble. "I thought she didn't have a clue what she was talking about. Now I get it. Other family members took those lessons seriously, but I didn't." Fortunately, he saw the light in time. "I came to the conclusion that those guys weren't my friends and stopped hanging out with them, not that I can blame anyone else."

Finding strength in faith

Lamon didn't try hard drugs until age 30. The introduction might have marked the start of a dangerous downward spiral if his fall had not been broken by a powerful experience. "I was called by the Lord in 2006," he says. "I can't explain it or take credit for it."

He was left with an urge to give up the things of this world and fully commit to God. "That decision comes easy when you realize that nothing good is going to happen for you until do."

Despite his good intentions, he experienced setbacks. "Sometimes life got really hard and instead of waiting on God and trusting Him to work things out, I just quit. It's kind of been the story of my life — to just quit. But I've come to the conclusion that quitting is not an option. I have to trust God, and I'm grateful that He takes the time to work with me."

Commitment renewed

"On November third of last year, I turned back to God." His return began a period of major change in Lamon's life. "I was living at Union Gospel Mission when I got a call from Ofelia Zamora [Rapid Rehousing Program case manager at The Stewpot]. I had signed up for the program at Austin Street Shelter before I left there. She asked if I was still interested, and of course, I said I was. A month later, she had me in an apartment."

A couple of weeks after moving in, Lamon started a job at Amazon's Cockrell Hill fulfillment center. "My apartment is in East Dallas, right on a bus line — makes it easy to get around."

His proximity to downtown has also been helpful for appointments at The Stewpot Dental Clinic. "I went to Parkland for oral surgery, and then to The Stewpot for the rest of the process." The makeover, now complete, has improved both his oral health and his appearance.

Settling into a new life

Now that Lamon has a home and a job, he's able to enjoy the simple pleasures in life. "I have a brother who lives in Mesquite, and he comes over from time to time."

He also enjoys indoor gardening. "I just started learning about houseplants." He looks for the best possible balance of sunlight and shade for each, adjusting their watering schedule to help them thrive. He wants to make good choices for them, just as he does for himself.

Good choices are a central component to Lamon's advice for people who want to make positive changes. "It's about making better choices in life. People who are functioning in society pay their bills on time. They don't get drunk, don't drink every day. They don't do drugs. They don't go to work under the influence. And they don't resolve their problems in ways that get the police involved."

For Lamon, it circles back to faith. "First thing I'd tell them," he says, "is Jesus Christ."

Poppy Sundeen, a Dallas writer, is a member of the STREETzine editorial board.



Photo courtesy of Lamon Blanton

A View from the Street

By Vicki Gies

There were several reasons that made it difficult for us to get stable housing. Well, the pets were part of it. And money was part of it, too. My husband Bill hadn't gotten his disability yet. We were living on my paycheck alone, and that wasn't nearly enough.

It was 2018 when we first went back to the lake to live. I had to take my paycheck and buy a cabin tent, provisions for the dogs and for us, and a camp stove and all that stuff. My paycheck was from Social Security and retirement, and off and on from selling STREETZine. It was just hard to make money selling STREETZine because I had to buy a bus pass to get downtown to sell it. It was tough living on one paycheck for two people.

We also had two evictions on our record. We were evicted from two places because we couldn't pay rent at the time. And we couldn't go to any apartments with our animals.

Now, we both get some money. I get retirement. I had two careers and started working when I was 17. My husband gets Supplemental Security Income (SSI). It wasn't until he got SSI that we could afford something of our own. Bill had gotten one stimulus check and his first SSI paycheck. He didn't have a bank account, and someone had taken his ID, so he couldn't open a bank account. That meant that he couldn't get access to that money. So that was another

obstacle to getting housing.

A friend of ours from church told his landlord that we needed a place to live. The landlord said that he had a place in Seagoville, and he would hold the mobile home for us. We were excited to find out that the mobile home was going to be \$800 a month.

At first, I wasn't big on being in Seagoville, but I like it now because we can't afford anything more at the moment. I've met a lot of people at the Senior Center, and we love living in the country. I feel like I have friends there now.

We've come this far. We have a home. We have a truck. We have a life again. But our landlord is planning to move locations of our mobile home because he sold the property we are on right now. Our landlord wants us to stay, because we pay our rent on time. But I'm not sure where he is planning to move our mobile home.

It's just a big headache to think about starting this process over again. It was a huge effort to move from the lake when we moved out of homelessness to the mobile home. We have been driving around different routes to see if we can find anything. If our landlord moves our mobile home, I guess we will move there. It has to happen by June 30th.

We don't want to be homeless again. We got out of it. Everything is just a big question mark right now.

Vicki Gies is a STREETZine vendor and frequent STREETZine contributor.

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work toward oneness, recognizing the readiness of separation and partisanship, and choosing to strive for oneness instead.

As humans we are quick to disagree, always finding something to get angry about. Parker Palmer says, "Wholeness does not mean perfection – it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life." When you respond to the gift of unity, you embrace one another and recognize them as God's beloved. You work on seeing people as individuals, not just as a differing opinion.

Unity is something that we are called to work towards, a calling that comes with a gift. When we are in relationship with Jesus, we take on a new nature.

Unity is something that we are called to work towards, a calling that comes with a gift.

We begin to desire the things that God desires. We do not have to do these things to receive the gift, the gift has been freely given. We have received it not from our own achievement or merit. It is graciously and lovingly given to us. Let us accept this gift of unity and live out our calling.

The Rev. Meagan Findeiss is associate pastor of care and belonging at the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.

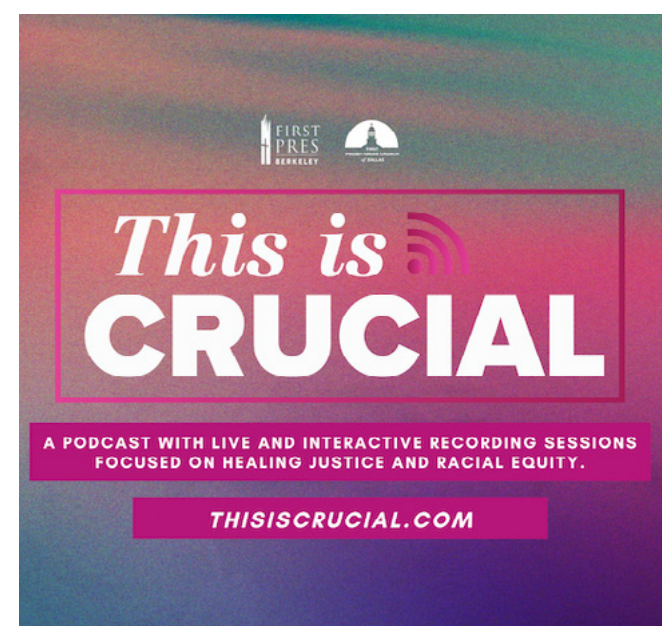
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Until I Can Make My Dream Happen

By Brian Augustine

Before I became homeless, I had a mortgage, truck, and dog.

Before I became homeless, I had a mortgage, truck, and dog.

I was buying a house in Northglenn, Colorado, a suburb of Denver. Me and my brother went in on the house together to give our mother a stable forever home. This was going to be my forever home too.

We had gotten lucky and found a five-bedroom, two-bathroom house for \$110,000 – just before Colorado’s housing market started to climb.

People offered us \$120,000 to buy the house from us. This was home to me because when I came home from work, people were waiting for me, and Ruth, my dog, was thrilled to see me each and every time.

After nine years, I came home, and my brother had moved out. His explanation didn’t make sense to me. He said he felt threatened for his life. In my family, that meant someone had a weapon and was coming after them. (Yes, I come from a very dysfunctional family.)

I found out later, he had taken a \$45,000 loan on the equity of the house, without my knowledge, to pay off his credit cards. He could do this because we didn’t sign an agreement saying he couldn’t. (Yes, that’s the law.) I was stuck not only with the mortgage, but also his loan.

So, I got a second job and prepared to spend my next ten years paying only bills. A few months later, my world fell apart.

It was the middle of May, and I was raking up the last of the leaves that had fallen after the first snow of winter. That’s when my back blew out. I blew a disc out, plus three vertebrae. The doctors told me it was just a matter of time before it ruptured, and I

would be wheelchair-bound for life.

I walk with a cane because I refuse to listen to doctors. I still use the cane to stand up straight.

I now live in a room, where the rent has more than doubled in the ten and a half years I have lived here, and it would have been tripled if not for the pandemic or having a good landlord.

This is in no way a home. There is no one to come home to, nothing waiting for my return – just a shelter.

This is in no way a home. There is no one to come home to, nothing waiting for my return – just a shelter.

Don’t get me wrong, having a shelter is great after living on the streets. I don’t miss the cold winter nights of Colorado.

The house I ended up losing to foreclosure recently sold for \$450,000 – four times the amount I paid for it 20 years ago. I don’t miss the house, but the home is a loss that still leaves an ache in my heart.

Now, I sell the street paper Denver VOICE to pay my rent, and to live in the place I call home, but it isn’t. The corners where I work are now my home. That is where people are happy to see me, where I feel welcome and comfortable.

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The price of housing has gone up so dramatically, that if I wanted to buy a house in Denver and qualify for a loan, I would have to make in a month what I used to make in six months. But there are no places I could afford to live or a town where a home is affordable and livable. I would move to one of these places.

But being on a fixed income, I don’t have the money to move or the transportation to even do my shopping.

I don’t mind small towns or country living. I don’t need to be where things are happening, or where there are thousands of things to do, most of which I can’t afford to do anyway.

My dream is to have a nice house on 40 acres of land where I can grow food. I’d take that food to poorer areas of big places and give healthy food to people who need it most. And I believe I will be presented with the ability to have what doesn’t come easily. I would spend my free time writing the stories that come to me, maybe get a book published.

My dream is to have a nice house on 40 acres of land where I can grow food.

I’ve heard that throughout America, there is more than enough housing, that everyone could have a place to live without building even one new house. But we build big cities, bigger, while small towns are emptier.

Until I can make my dream happen, I will keep stepping forward, looking at the short-term future, and getting prepared for more tough times, while at the same time, keeping an optimistic outlook on life.

Until I can make my dream happen, I will keep stepping forward, looking at the short-term future, and getting prepared for more tough times, while at the same time, keeping an optimistic outlook on life.

Brian Augustine sells the Denver VOICE. He wrote this piece for the International Network of Street Papers’ Housing for the People series.

Courtesy of INSP North America / International Network of Street Papers.

To Everything There is a Season

Words in this puzzle can be diagonal, forwards, backwards, up or down.

A	G	R	A	D	U	A	T	I	O	N	E	L	P	O	S
G	E	A	N	L	A	U	G	H	U	S	P	O	R	T	S
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MOURN

SCATTERSTONES

WINTER

WEDDING

DANCE

BUILD

SPRING

HUNTING

RAINY

LAUGH

SUMMER

PLANT

TAX

HARVEST

AUTUMN

WEEP

EMBRACE

MATING

WAR

GRADUATION

SILENT

SPORTS

PEACE

BORN

SPEAK

PROM

LOVE

MEND

SEARCH

HATE

Writer's Workshop Essays

Editor's Note: Each Friday morning at 10 a.m., The Stewpot hosts a Writers' Workshop. During the sessions, participants address selected topics through prose or poetry. In this edition of STREETZine, we feature the essays of writers who describe transitions in their lives. We also are honored to feature the poetry of one of our regular participants.

Making the Transition to Forgiveness

By Darin Thomas

Going to Gateway Foundation was something positive that happened to me. God put it on Gateway to be a blessing to me. Living at the treatment center in Lancaster, Texas, helped change my life by showing me how to be a better person. I worked on having the power to change my life, on how to be a man, and how to help others.

I especially worked on learning how to forgive. Forgiveness was a big eye-opener for me. My father murdered my mother when I was nine-years-old. I hated him for so many years. Therapists and counselors at Gateway helped me learn how to start forgiving him and others. They also helped me stop blaming myself and others for what went wrong in my life, including going to county jail.

I thought about these parts of my life while I was receiving treatment at other places. But the treatment at Gateway was best. The people I worked with taught me how to go deep into my soul. I wouldn't be where I am without them.

Now, I am using the skill of learning to forgive to help other people think about what they have been through. I love giving people a chance to listen about what happened to me, about my mother's death and my father being sentenced to prison for 50 years for her murder. I feel very good that I forgave my dad and other people who have harmed me. You have got to forgive people who harm and hurt you. If Jesus didn't die on the Cross for our sins, where would we be today?

I have lived through a lot, but I know now how to move on. I love my brother and sisters for holding on. We all saw our mother's death. We took it differently, but we stayed together, including when our oldest sister died last spring.

This is all about the power to change and to move on, helping other people in their lives and making the world a better place to live in. This feels so good. And God is so good.

Darin Thomas is a participant in The Stewpot's Writer's Workshop.



Photo courtesy of Brett Jordan through Unsplash

From the bEast to the Wastelands

By QtheGreo

To call this a transition would be like saying the ocean transitioned to fire. My transition was a bird being thrown out of the nest so I could learn to fly but my wings were stone, needing my tears to erode them.

I went from the bEast to the wastelands; East Texas is the soil where I was planted. Tyler, Texas is the soil where I was planted and sprouted and grew. It was a beast lurking around every tree and claws that dug into your ribs while you slept. I left for college but came back because the mark of the beast branded my eyelids and spirit. I needed to leave, or it was going to swallow me.

That's when I got my phone, looking at it like the paddle I could use to paddle away from this beast. My aunt picked up the phone and it sounded like heaven's gates opening. She and my uncle became my safety net from falling into the mouth of the beast.

I said goodbye to my mother, nana, and sister, leaving them with promises from a boy that will one day come back a man.

My aunt and uncle live in a Dallas area I like to call the wastelands, South Oak Cliff. A place where liquor bottles grow out of the dirt like weeds. If you were to cut the air, it'd be like cutting a brick of weed. Though one man's trash is another man's treasure. I call it the wastelands, but this place is my saving grace.

My people are some of the best gardeners I know. They grew a garden in this jungle. They opened it up to me and the soil kisses the coal burns on my feet. Its tree shelters me from the storms roared by the beast. The food they put on the table nourishes the light in me. I'm forever grateful to them. They are the strength that moved the stone from my cave for me to see the light.

The wasteland is tough and treacherous but rough places grow tougher men. I don't want to paint the picture of the wastelands as a terrible place because this picture is also beautiful. The people here bite, but a lot of them are gems too.

My aunt said I am going through a rite of passage and that experiencing life with my now-evolved eyes will have me coming back as the man I promised my mom. To say my journey so far has been a positive impact would be an understatement.

Q the Greo is a participant in The Stewpot's Writer's Workshop.

Losing it All

By Gershon Trunnell

I had a life with lots of people. But it seemed like everything I had or did, they wanted or wanted to take credit for.

One incident occurred when one of my nephews went to jail and the family came to me to post bail. I gave up a total of six rings and two bracelets and four necklaces, along with fifteen hundred dollars in cash.

When it was time for my nephew to go to court, he didn't show. Everything was forfeited to bail bonds. I was upset, disappointed, and regretful. However, this became one of the best things to happen. After people didn't see the gold and other things, they didn't come around as much. In fact, they didn't come around at all. That gave me time to focus on my needs instead of what people wanted. Since no one wanted to pay me back or help me, I took advantage of this change and helped myself.

When I first experienced homelessness, I had some interesting things happen to better understand all the different lifestyles, people, and things of this world. I developed an attitude of how to help others instead of hurting them and myself. I decided to implement positive acts and bring hope in the lives that I may encounter. This shift has shown great promise to this present day.

Gershon Trunnell is a Stewpot artist and a participant in the Writer's Workshop.



Hole-in-one by Gershon Trunnell

Inspire on December 29, 2021

By Ty Umondak

Sometimes in the peace of darkness there is light. This light is called inspiration by some, but what is inspiration borne of? It has many mothers but who is the father? Turmoil and hardship, they have birthed many as love, lust, and ambition have gain their fair share of plenty. Is inspiration the fire of my desire or just a feeling that will quietly retire?

Ty Umondak is a participant in the Stewpot's Writer's Workshop.

Continued from page 1

once was a young single mother with two young children, now heads a shelter in Dallas for women who could have ended up living on the streets of this city. Magnis serves as president and CEO of Family Gateway, a nonprofit that helps women make their own transitions to safe shelter — and away from homelessness.

Earlier in her life, Magnis was very close herself to being without a secure place to live. She was a teen mother at 17, married at 18, and a single mother with two children by age 23. At a vulnerable stage in her life, Magnis found stability by sharing an apartment with another single mother. The two women were there for each other. Otherwise, she told Grigsby, she easily could have ended up homeless with her young children. “You can withstand all sorts of things if you have the right support,” Magnis concluded.

Some participants in The Stewpot's Writer's Workshop, which meets each Friday at 10 a.m., describe in this edition their own transitions. In Darin Thomas' case, he had to learn to change from hating his father for murdering his mother to learning how to forgive his dad. In Q the Greo's case, he made a major transition from living in a cramped motel room with his mother and sisters in East Texas (what he terms “bEast Texas”) to living in Dallas in South Oak Cliff with his extended family. And, after experiencing painful moments with his family, Gershon Trunnell learned how to bring hope to the lives of the people he encounters.

Several other participants in the workshops have described their own journeys over the last few months. They, too, have experienced challenging transitions. In too many cases, they have faced transitional moments early in their lives. Trauma brought on by violence, poverty, disease and family breakdown, among other causes, have led them to encounter struggles that no young people should ever have to face.

Yet, for some, they are attempting to build a new life. They are living in transition.

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

Around The Stewpot: Helping Clients Establish Their Identity

By Suzanne Erickson

Most of us are able to keep birth certificates and other vital records in a safe place at home or perhaps in a bank box. But those options often don't exist for those among us who live on the streets or in a shelter.

People experiencing homelessness may have lost important records after losing a permanent residence or going through a repeated change of address. Finding a place to live, getting a job, or simply voting become next to impossible without those documents.

This need first became apparent to The Stewpot back in 1987. Ever since then, we have run a Vital Records Program, even though we only had one part-time manager running the program in 1987. Now, we have five case managers who see 25-30 clients a day. They also collaborate with other agencies to meet this need, receiving referrals from the Salvation Army, Family Gateway, The Bridge, Austin Street Center, and many other agencies.

Wherever the clients come from, our case managers walk them through the tedious process of applying for the many documents required to establish their identity. To obtain a Texas identification, for example, our clients need items like birth certificates, school records, a voter registration card, and a Social Security card. The caseworkers know how to obtain those documents and what the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) requires. The Stewpot covers the costs of obtaining them, too.

Our case managers walk them through the tedious process of applying for the many documents required to establish their identity.

Over the years, we have developed a relationship with the City of Dallas

By the Number

In 2021, The Stewpot's front-line associate took **2,804** initial calls for ID assistance; **1,727** clients received vouchers for state IDs; and **565** individuals obtained their birth certificates so they could join housing programs.

Vital Records Office. That's where individuals born in Texas can get their birth certificate. All clients assisted with this service are provided a Texas birth certificate voucher as form of payment. The Bureau of Vital Statistics sends a monthly invoice to The Stewpot to receive payment for these documents.

While waiting for documents or identification to arrive, we give clients a Stewpot ID. We created that card as a temporary tool. The City of Dallas, the Dallas Police Department, the FBI, medical examiners and other homeless providers recognize it as a valid ID, too.

Once all of the necessary documents have been collected, the caseworker makes an appointment for the client to go to the DPS office. They also provide them with a bus pass and provide payment for the identification.

At times, The Stewpot caseworkers act as "detectives" to help a client get the necessary documents. A caseworker may discover a birth certificate was never filed for a client that was born at home or by a midwife. Caseworkers

can sometimes maneuver around this obstacle if the client has other supporting documentation. Or if they still have the ability to contact a person who was present when they were born.

Birth certificates from other states can be more difficult to obtain. Caseworkers retrieve them using an online service. Caseworkers usually know how long it will take each state to process the request. For a Social Security card, clients must provide a certified copy of their medical records to submit with their application.

Fortunately, we have been able to expand these services with two helpful grants. One is from the City of Dallas Office of Homeless Services to pay for documents. The other is from the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance to pay for our case managers.

The work can be time-consuming, but the result is vital: Helping Stewpot clients receive the essential records that confirm their identity.

Suzanne Erickson is senior director of programs at The Stewpot.



Client Service team. Photo courtesy of Suzanne Erickson.

Stewpot Artists



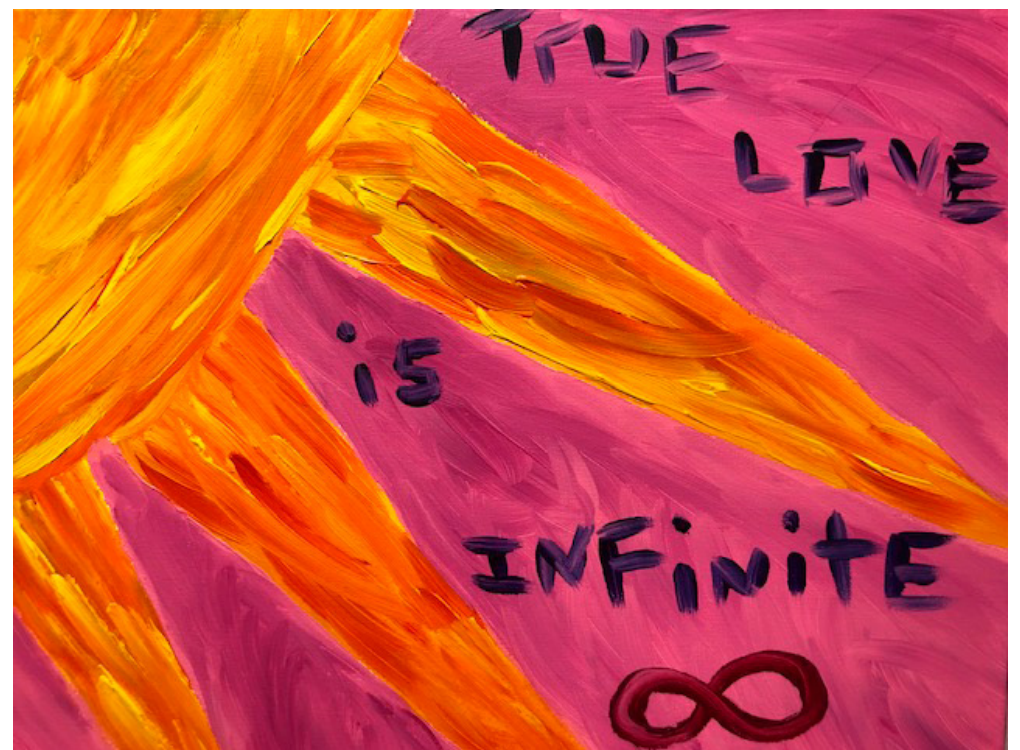
Michael Norwood



Stephen McGee



Edwin Fuller



Jennifer Moore

Street Newspapers - A Voice for the Homeless & Impoverished

What is **STREETZine**?

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. Vendors receive papers to be distributed for a one-dollar or more donation.



Advertise in **STREETZine**

Support **STREETZine** and its vendors with your business or personal advertisements and announcements.

Email:

streetzine@thestewpot.org

Distributing **STREETZine** is protected by the First Amendment.

STREETZine vendors are self employed and set their own hours.

They are required to wear a vendor badge at all times when distributing the paper. In order to distribute **STREETZine**, vendors agree to comply with Dallas City Ordinances.

If at any time you feel a vendor is in violation of any Dallas City Ordinance please contact us immediately with the vendor name or number at streetzine@thestewpot.org

CHAPTER 31, SECTION 31-35 of the Dallas City Code PANHANDLING OFFENSES

Solicitation by coercion; solicitation near designated locations and facilities; solicitation anywhere in the city after sunset and before sunrise any day of the week. Exception can be made on private property with advance written permission of the owner, manager, or other person in control of the property.

A person commits an offense if he conducts a solicitation to any person placing or preparing to place money in a parking meter.

The ordinance specifically applies to solicitations at anytime within 25 feet of:

Automatic teller machines; Exterior public pay phones; Public transportation stops; Self service car washes; Self service gas pumps; An entrance or exit of a bank, credit union or similar financial institution; Outdoor dining areas of fixed food establishments.

Want to be a vendor?

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VENDOR #