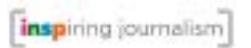


# STREET *Zine*

Offering financial opportunity to homeless and economically disadvantaged individuals.  
STREETZine is a program of The Stewpot and a member of **International Network of Street Papers**



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## Finding New Ways to Invest in Holiday Spirit

By Nicole Kiser

This Thanksgiving was anything but traditional for many Americans. The pandemic had caused people to get creative with their Thanksgiving plans, including planning smaller and even outdoor gatherings. With **many people still nervous about air travel**, some families even opted to make their celebrations virtual, prompting **Zoom to lift their 40-minute meeting limit** on Thanksgiving Day.

The effects of the pandemic have also caused increased demand on food services. On November 14, the **North Texas Food Bank distributed food to over 8,500 families**. This Thanksgiving-themed distribution was its largest distribution yet and had some people camping out overnight to ensure they would receive supplies, which included a frozen turkey for the holiday.

Other organizations continued their annual support of families in need. A turkey dinner was on the menu for **Meals on Wheels** clients. **Crossroads Community Services** and **Frisco Family Services** created Thanksgiving food boxes with traditional favorites such as stuffing, yams and cranberry sauce.

**Operation Turkey** continued its annual tradition of using 100% volunteers in order to prepare and deliver meals on Thanksgiving morning. Last year, over 35,000 volunteers

delivered over 62,000 meals to those in need. This year, Operation Turkey planned to deliver 75,000 meals throughout the country.

Even Walmart decided to help out for the holidays. In an **exclusive promotion**, Walmart, Ibotta, Campbell's, Butterball and Coca-Cola, launched the Free Thanksgiving Dinner program to help families facing economic hardship feed their holiday spirit. Families could buy customary staples of a Thanksgiving dinner,



*Over 1,000 holiday goody bags were delivered to The Stewpot for the Children & Youth program.*

such as a turkey, green beans and mashed potatoes and receive cash-back on their purchase.

And service providers are continuing to work to keep the holidays as magical as possible in spite of the pandemic. The **Salvation Army started its red kettle holiday fundraising earlier** than usual in order to better support families. **The Stewpot** collected items such as games, puzzles and stickers to give to the par-

ticipants of their Children and Youth Programs. **Toys for Tots** made it easier than ever to donate by posting an Amazon wish list for items, allowing people to donate entirely online.

For those looking for a more personal connection, the Salvation Army's **Angel Tree** program lets volunteers "adopt" a child online or in a participating store; the volunteer then purchases Christmas presents for their selected child. The Salvation Army has created drive-through drop-off

locations for presents for both convenience and safety. Similarly, The Family Place's **Adopt-a-Family** program allows each member of a family in need to submit one want and one need to the program. Volunteers can then choose a family to gift items.

In light of the pandemic, many organizations are also rethinking holiday events. North Texas Food Bank and My Possibilities are **hosting a**

**showing of *It's a Wonderful Life*** at a drive-in movie theater on December 10 to foster community and holiday spirit while limiting contact between people. The S.M. Wright Foundation is hosting its annual **Christmas in the Park at Fair Park** as a curbside event due to pandemic restrictions, but will still provide food, clothing, household items and toys to Dallas families.

While the pandemic has affected much of what is considered traditional this holiday season, people are bringing out their holiday decorations **earlier than usual** this year. In place of crowded Christmas festivals, many cities are putting up light displays for the public. **Plano** and **Grapevine** both hosted drive-through light shows in November. While many other **drive-through light shows** have popped up in the metroplex, Plano, Grapevine, Frisco and Downtown Dallas have spectacular holiday light displays that can be seen through December. Despite travel restrictions and economic hardship, or maybe because of them, people are finding new ways to invest in the holiday spirit.

*Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.*

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WHAT SHOULD WE COVER NEXT? FILL OUT OUR SURVEY AT:  
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# 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](mailto: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](http://www.thestewpot.org/streetzine).

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Managing Editor: Nicole Kiser

#### Editorial Advisory Board:

The Rev. Amos Disasa  
Brenda Snitzer  
Suzanne Erickson  
David Moore  
Poppy Sundeen  
Sarah Disasa  
William McKenzie

[streetzine@thestewpot.org](mailto:streetzine@thestewpot.org)

STREET *Zine* is a member of:



## A Letter from the Executive Director

By Brenda Snitzer

November is the season of gratitude. And I Thessalonians 5:18, says we should, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

For those of us who have homes or a roof over our heads, closets with changes of clothes and know where our next meal is coming from, this scripture is easier to live by. Maybe 2020 has made it more of a challenge, but not as much as for those who are living in shelters or are on the streets, especially as winter approaches. And yet, my experience of folks experiencing homelessness is that many of them have a spirit of gratitude for many things despite their difficult circumstances, even in a year that has brought on more complexities and hurdles for the most thankful of folks.

Despite the circumstances of 2020, I am hopeful now for some progress for those of us providing services in the city of Dallas for folks who are unsheltered or seeking housing. The progress began a year ago during inclement weather, when the City of Dallas’ Office of Homelessness Solutions (OHS) and many of us who provide services collaborated to help the unsheltered.

For the first time, the City stepped up in a big way and provided shelter at the Kay Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center, getting over 300 unsheltered folks out of the freezing weather. Providers like The Bridge, The Stewpot, CitySquare, Austin Street, Our Calling, Salvation Army, Union Gospel, MetroCare, Oak Lawn United Methodist Church, Mission Oak Cliff and a number of others, including volunteers from around the city, banded together to help with services at the Convention Center.

The collaborative effort also provided transportation for folks to get out of the cold overnight, have a safe, dry place to sleep and eat dinner and breakfast. For 14 nights during the winter, this band of providers and the City of Dallas assisted each other in serving our most vulnerable citizens.

This comprehensive solution became the precursor to preparations for what would later become the emergency shelter for individuals when Covid-19 hit. Again, the City of Dallas and the provider community worked together to establish the Convention Center as an emergency facility so that individuals could have a place to “shelter” and stay socially distanced.

The collaborative spirit of the service providers has

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been operating since March. And although the Convention Center closed down at the end of August, the collaboration has continued with the City operating hotels to keep folks isolated either because of Covid or to make sure they don’t have Covid before getting into a shelter.

As we approach winter weather again, this challenge amidst the pandemic is more difficult. But the City, the providers and churches are continuing to work together to figure out a plan to help as many unsheltered individuals as possible get out of the freezing temps.

These efforts, along with a focused energy on enhancements to the Homeless Response System — including increasing the number of people being moved into housing through rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing and an expansion of housing units — are the result of collaborations with the City of Dallas, Dallas County, Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance and the provider community. More dollars are being put toward this work, and organizations are stepping up to get people housed and sheltered.

The work of all of these partners and the funding community gives me great hope. And I believe we can reduce and end homelessness together — one individual and one family at a time — many times over. For that I can be truly grateful!

*Brenda Snitzer is executive director of The Stewpot.*

## The Pastor's Letter

By The Rev. Rebecca Chancellor Sicks

*This essay is adapted from a sermon Rev. Sicks gave on November 1.*

The vision of heaven we receive from John of Patmos in the seventh chapter of Revelation includes an enormous crowd too big to count with people from every nation — all tribes and all peoples and all languages.

And what is this truly enormous crowd of saints doing? They are engaged in the worship of God; in fact, they are listening and singing. The sounds of heaven include the angels and the elders and the four living creatures worshipping God and singing, “Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever — Amen!”

And the saints, robed in white with palm branches in their hands cry out in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

The Rev. Tom Tate, a Presbyterian pastor, points out that “The saints’ cry may not always come in four-part harmony, but it is always a joyful noise. So the saints listen while they join in the song. Even in the midst of evil, war, social upheaval, famine, luxury and greed, saints cannot keep from singing! Though sickness unto death, persecution, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, tsunami and state-sanctioned injustice may confront them, saints cannot keep from listening.”

As I think about how much disruption we have experienced in our community life and how different the holidays will feel this year, I am reminded that the saints in heaven cannot keep from singing, and they cannot keep from listening. They spend their days and their nights in worship.

My grandfather, Chuck, who is now among the saints in heaven, was an aeronautical engineer who must have drawn a lot for work, but I don’t remember him specifically as an artist. I do clearly remember him showing me a drawing he had done of Revelation 4 and describing it to me in detail. It was much of the scene in Revelation 7: a mysterious God on the throne in the center, the four Living Creatures, the angels and the Elders. And he titled it: “The Heavenly Worship.” It gives me hope that my grandfather is now part of that heavenly worship, joined by many others who are also now part of the multitude of saints. And they are listening and singing.

Who do you picture in the heavenly worship scene? Can you hear the music?

Rev. Tate goes further in saying, “The music from those gathered at the throne signals a victory that goes by the name ‘salvation.’ The music of salvation transforms the saints and the places they live. The music of salvation gives a different score to political theory, such that it is always the Lord and not the empire that liberates. The music of salvation leads saints to endure whatever trouble springs up. The music of salvation invites the revolution that will not let division have the final word.”

The music of salvation plays for all to hear. But note: These saints that John describes have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They have responded to God’s invitation; they have joined in the song. And now God will shelter them and provide for them. No more hunger, no thirst, no scorching heat. They have a Shepherd who will guide them to springs of living water. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

We are now getting ready for Advent and Christmas; we will watch and wait for Emmanuel, God-with-us, to come. As we await the coming of God’s reign and pray that we

might get a glimpse of the mystery of God, what do we hear when we listen? And what songs of salvation are we singing for others to hear?

**As I think about how much disruption we have experienced in our community life and how different the holidays will feel this year, I am reminded that the saints in heaven cannot keep from singing and they cannot keep from listening.**

This year, though the holidays will look different as we gather with loved ones over computer monitors and smartphones instead of traveling across the city or country to share a meal together, we must keep singing! And we must keep listening to the songs of salvation around us! Let us encourage one another and share the good news that there is a place for everyone at the Table in God’s house, for all people from every nation, tribe and land. May our words and actions be songs of salvation that bring justice for all and transform our neighborhoods and communities.

Even in these challenging days, let us keep singing the good news of the Gospel. Let us keep listening to the music of salvation that will transform and liberate. It is this music of salvation that is the soundtrack to our lives, day in and day out, until that day when we are all united in heavenly worship.

*The Rev. Rebecca Chancellor Sicks is associate pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.*



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# Finding Hope in Meeting the Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness: A Conversation with Kevin Oden

By Bill McKenzie

*Kevin Oden is the interim director of the Office of Homeless Solutions with the City of Dallas. Created in 2017, the office works with partners across Dallas to keep people from ending up homeless and to intervene when they do. Formerly a part of the City's Office of Emergency Management, Oden spoke with STREETZine's Brenda Snitzer, Nicole Kiser, Suzanne Erickson and Bill McKenzie about sheltering people during the coming winter months, quickly intervening to get people experiencing homelessness into housing and working with partners to address these challenges. In Oden's eyes, the entire city has a stake in getting people out of homelessness and into housing and stability.*

**The City provided shelter with the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center last year during inclement weather and then again during the pandemic from March to August. What did you all learn and accomplish from those experiences?**

The inclement weather shelter prepared us for what happened from March through August with the outbreak of COVID-19. We had to learn the supportive services that were needed on site during inclement weather and develop the ability to remain flexible to meet the needs of our guests. And we didn't need the stigma that surrounds homeless shelters, such as over-policing and having too much security. We learned we could do this by providing compassionate care, which was our aim.

The same thing was true with COVID. We were trying to keep people out of an environment where disease could easily spread.

I learned that my team was willing to go above and beyond in any circumstance. And I have a deep appreciation for service providers. The Stewpot provided lunch daily for six months. The Bridge, Union Gospel, Salvation Army, Austin

Street and others provided us expertise and staff each day since we didn't know how to run a shelter to save our lives, particularly one that ended up being the biggest and longest shelter operation Dallas had run. We provided more than 49,000 overnight stays.

**Why did you stop housing people at the Convention Center during the pandemic?**

We started putting people in hotels when there was an outbreak of COVID at the Dallas Life Shelter in April. We had to quickly house about 150 people, quarantine and test them, and offer services in a hotel environment. We had never done that at scale before, but we realized that we could and that it made sense when you consider the cost, effort and quality of living that the hotel setting offered.

We also started to see that shelters like Austin Street, Salvation Army and Union Gospel could provide more capacity. We could put about 100 of the 375 people we were sheltering on average each night at the Convention Center into one of the shelters. And we could take the rest and get them into hotels until the summer months came.

**What is the City doing now to help with sheltering folks? And what will the City be doing during inclement weather this winter?**

We still run a hotel option, primarily for people without a home who test positive for COVID-19 or who are awaiting a test result to get into a shelter. We have remained full given the recent surge in cases.

The City Council, along with our partners at Dallas County and the Catholic Charities of Dallas, came together to purchase a 180-unit hotel near I-635 and Coit Road. It will bring on additional units in mid-December for COVID purposes or for adding capacity during winter months.

The Council also passed an ordinance that will allow additional shelter during months of inclement weather. We look forward to receiving applicants for this additional sheltering. And whatever we need to do as a city during winter weather, whether that is reopening the Convention Center or rapidly adding more hotel units, we will do.

**The Council did say that no sheltering could take place within a half-mile of the Central Business District. How might that affect sheltering?**

We at the Office of Homeless Solutions will take applications and carry out the policy decisions of the City Council. Sheltering everyone without a



**Kevin Oden, interim director of the City of Dallas' Office of Homeless Solutions.**

home in inclement weather is challenging. But we are confident in our partners and expertise and will make every effort to care for our most vulnerable neighbors when temperatures drop.

**“Rapid rehousing” has emerged as a strategy to deal with the challenges facing people experiencing homelessness. What does that strategy entail? And how is your office attempting to execute it?**

In June, the City Council approved a \$7 million investment in rapid rehousing, the biggest investment we have made as a city in that strategy. The goal is for 300 individuals or families to be placed in apartment settings and their rent paid for 12 months. The subsidy would decline each quarter. We want to see incomes grow and not just repeatedly pay rent. And the parties providing housing would provide 16 months of case management. Even after the rental subsidy ends, they still would receive care.

The target population is people who would have the ability through a job, wage growth or entitlements and benefits to get and stay housed. We are now more than halfway through the housing part. And by “we,” we don't provide the housing. We just cut the check and do the administration. We have seven sub-recipients who have worked together beautifully. Some have moved in all their residents and are now supporting them. And others are halfway or more done in moving in their people.

We will get 300 rehoused by the end of the year. That is a major win for us. The city had previously completed about 45 rapid rehousing placements.

Under our Landlord Subsidized Leasing Program, which is a partnership with CitySquare and

*Continued on page 9*

## View from the Street: Gratitude and Hope

By Tony Jameson

For this month's View from the Street, STREETZine asked Tony Jameson, a vendor of STREETZine, what he was grateful for and what he hoped for in the coming year.

### What I'm grateful for...

There are three things I'm grateful for:

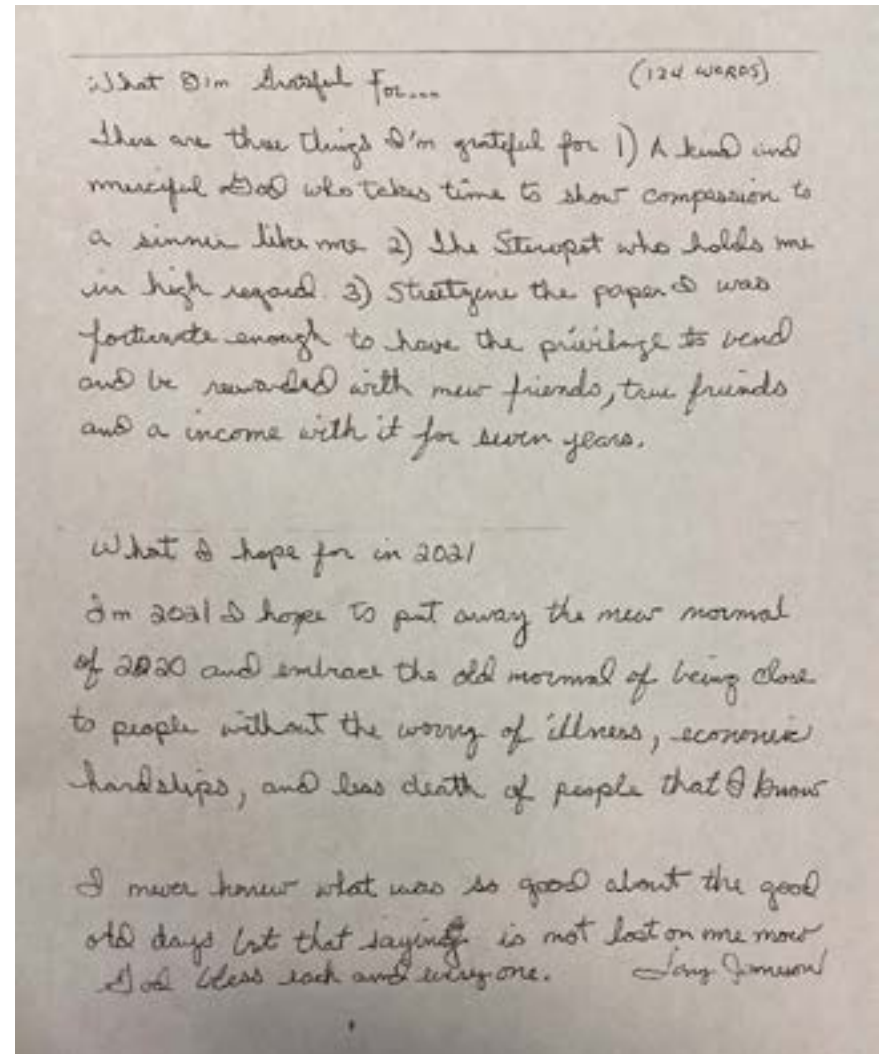
1. A kind and merciful God who takes time to show compassion to a sinner like me.
2. The Stewpot, who holds me in high regard.
3. *STREETZine*, the paper I was fortunate enough to have the privilege to vend and be rewarded with new friends, true friends and an income with it for seven years.

### What I hope for in 2021:

In 2021, I hope to put away the new normal of 2020 and embrace the old normal of being close to people without the worry of illness, economic hardships and less death of people that I know.

I never knew what was so good about the good old days, but that saying is not lost on me now. God bless each and every one.

*Tony Jameson is a vendor of STREETZine.*



## Stewpot Artists



*Above: Overflowing Mystery, 2017*

*Below: Untitled  
Luis Arispe*



# The Art of Survival: Darrell's Story

By Poppy Sundeen

Alcoholism. Homelessness. Cancer. It's hard enough to battle any one of them. Darrell Plunkett has faced all three and lives to tell the tale. "Sometimes I used to share my story with customers," he says. Working as a bartender until the pandemic put him out of work, Darrell has encountered plenty of people who could benefit from hearing about his life and his path to sobriety.

## Scared sober

His recovery began with a serious scare. "I went to the hospital thinking I was having a heart attack." It turned out to be alcohol poisoning and dehydration. "That's when I decided to quit."

Two weeks into an outpatient treatment program, Darrell lapsed. "I went back to my old neighborhood, ran into a friend, had a drink and there I was again. I felt like an idiot. No money. Feeling bad. But I've been sober ever since — seven years now."

A counselor at the program suggested that Darrell join a church. "I found one nearby and started volunteering at their food pantry — keeping real busy."



*Darrell Plunkett, an artist in The Stewpot's art program.*



*Some of Plunkett's artwork. Left: Plunkett's painting "Wake Up!"*

Darrell also belongs to an Alcoholics Anonymous group that currently meets via Zoom. "I know I can't ever touch the stuff again. If I drink, it'll ruin everything I've worked for."

## A place to call home

Having a home has played an important role in Darrell's recovery. "I don't know if I could stay sober on the streets. I'd need something to kill the shock of being homeless."

Darrell has lived in a rent-subsidized apartment since 2014. "I feel blessed to have it," he says, as he recalls the challenges of life on the street. "Back before that, I was in and out of shelters. They'll ban you for being drunk."

For safety while sleeping on the streets, Darrell teamed up with another homeless man. "You have to watch your back," he explains. "It helps if there are two people and your partner is a tough guy."

## In from the cold

Inclement weather was another challenge of living on the streets. "My partner and I had a bunch of blankets. We'd hide them during the day, so no one would take them."

On cold nights, they would retrieve the blankets and head for one of their usual spots. "Two of our sleeping places had porches with roofs, so we'd go there if it was raining or snowing."

Darrell tells of one night so cold that a dozen blankets, five pairs of pants and multiple layers of socks were not enough. "It's not good sleep at all." The two exhausted men would pack up by 6:00 a.m. to avoid being ticketed by police.

## Comfort in art

During a shelter stay in 2010, Darrell met a sketch artist who told him about the art program at The Stewpot. "I went for an interview, and the next week I was learning how to paint."

Not long after that, he sold his first piece at Richardson's Cottonwood Festival. His works include acrylics on canvas, chalk pastels and large-scale murals around the Deep Ellum area. In 2016, he submitted the winning design for a mural at the downtown Encore Park Community Gardens. "I ended up painting it during the hottest September ever, but it was a great experience."

Darrell considers art to be therapeutic. "A lot of my feelings come out in art."

## Confronting cancer

Darrell put his art to good use after his cancer diagnosis in 2019. "It was head and neck cancer with no known cause." He had surgery to remove affected lymph nodes, followed by a series of radiation treatments. His art helped him through. "I did positive paintings and tried to teach myself about light and darkness."

*Continued on page 7*

Continued from page 6

In July of this year, Darrell got good news. His scans confirmed that he was cancer-free. “I don’t want any more surprises,” he says of his new focus on prevention. “I got insurance, a primary care doctor and all my screenings. The only thing they found was [Type II] diabetes.”

Weight loss and physical activity have helped Darrell get his blood sugar under control. Part of his regimen is walking, and he hopes to get his 20-pound cat, Bubba, in on the action. “I got a cat harness and leash for him. Not sure how he’ll handle that.”

### A perspective on life

Like the rest of us, Darrell is eager for the pandemic to end. “I wish we could have our Stewpot art show this December, and I think Soup’s On will be virtual,” he says, referring to The Stewpot lun-

**Alcoholism. Homelessness. Cancer. It’s hard enough to battle any one of them. Darrell Plunkett has faced all three and lives to tell the tale.**

cheon and art show that usually takes place in February.

Still, overall, Darrell is content. From the windows of his fifth-floor apartment, he likes to look out toward the downtown streets where he once slept. “It gives me a kind of perspective. I’m so blessed.”

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



*Plunkett’s mural in Encore Park.*

## 50 Feet from Home

By Joe Smith

*Joe Smith, advocacy director at the Sacramento, California, shelter Loaves and Fishes, shares an experience he had with two homeless people during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of whom had gotten sick. He reflects on the housing crisis that is putting people out on the streets, when there are empty motel rooms because of the standstill of tourism and other effects of COVID-19.*

As part of the COVID-19 crisis response, people have had to shelter in place. They must stay at home in order to protect their health and the health of the population. But what do you do when you don’t have a home, when you don’t have a tent? When you only have a bicycle and your bedroll? One of the guests at Loaves and Fishes [a homeless shelter and advocacy group], a homeless man named Richard, was taken by ambulance to the hospital with COVID-19-like symptoms. He was tested and released from the ER back to the streets, but he was very sick.

Richard is an author and an artist. He has published several short stories and, with the help of a local photographer, sold several copies.

Joe Smith found where he was camping and went that morning to check in on him. At 6:30 am on

March 30, he found Richard in a doorway in front of the Wells Fargo Pavilion, and he was in pretty bad shape.

Next to him, about 10 feet away, was Anthony, a good man with a big heart. He was camping nearby out of concern. Smith left with the promise to return with food and water. He would also make some calls on Richard’s behalf.

After some calls, the City of Sacramento told Smith they would try to have a facilitator come and see him. He’s heard these things before, but after dropping them off some food, he found out what had happened. A facilitator from Sacramento Steps Forward appeared and put Richard in a motel room for a week with the option for a second. A victory – something we all needed at that moment, especially Richard. He is now fully recovered.

But what about Anthony? Richard’s friend who camped nearby? He was left wondering what became of his friend—wondering whether he was going to get sick as well.

While sitting in front of the Wells Fargo Pavilion, Anthony pointed across the street to the vacated building that used to be part of the Holiday Inn Express. He said to Smith, “I’m only 50 feet away from a place to call home.”

Anthony and his friend were sleeping outside directly across the street from shelter.

A vacated motel building that offers protection from the cold, safety from the virus and access to a bathroom.

Sacramento is a county with over 11,000 people predicted to experience homelessness during the year 2020 and a vacancy rate of about three percent. The tourism business has come to a halt due to COVID-19.

With so many vacant motel rooms, how can there be a housing crisis? How can so many individuals be sleeping outside during a global pandemic? Of course, it’s critical to provide for our most vulnerable, but often the homeless are forgotten. COVID-19 has taught us that everyone is equal. That everyone is susceptible. That everyone deserves a place to call home.

*Courtesy of Homeward Street Journal / INSP.ngo*



*A homeless man sleeps on a bench in Sacramento, California. Photo Credit: Robert Couse-Baker / Flickr Creative Commons.*

# THANKSGIVING WORD SEARCH

By Jennifer Nagorka

S D H V A V A L I N M Z A I N I K P M U P P M  
W A G R A T I T U D E A G N I M I O P C E G C  
T M W P H O M M Y E T U C A N R R C T H O I O  
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N A C E P R H A Y U O R T Y P A E K F E A S T  
D H I P L A I N T M E B U E S S I N P A Y K L

WORDS CAN BE BACKWARDS, DIAGONAL, ACROSS AND UP AND DOWN.

MAYFLOWER  
DRESSING  
PUMPKIN  
THANKSGIVING  
MAYFLOWER  
PARADE  
DINNER  
BLACK FRIDAY  
FOOTBALL  
SAY GRACE

STUFFED  
GIBLET  
GRAVY  
GRATITUDE  
POTATOES  
HOLIDAY  
PLENTY  
HUNGRY  
PECAN  
CORNUCOPIA

CRANBERRY  
NOVEMBER  
PILGRIM  
TURKEY  
SLEEPY  
FEAST



*Continued from page 4*

Family Gateway, we also have gotten 68 people moved into housing.

In both programs, these are people who otherwise would have been on the street or in a shelter. They now are being rehoused and supported. But this just doesn't stop there. We also have 180 supportive housing units and have plans to ask the City Council for more.

**What are the differences in meeting the needs of those who require help securing short-term rapid rehousing versus those who need it for the long term?**

We need both. We all know that there are barriers for the unsheltered population with chronic homelessness just to get into a shelter. But there is a spectrum of needs. We need immediate diversions and preventions for families who have ended up homeless through no fault of their own because of the coronavirus. There is no one type of housing program that will suit everyone.

We need to do this at scale and get ahead of where we are. If we can do supportive housing and rapid rehousing at the same time, we can serve our population in an equitable sense.

**How are City Hall and Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA) working together to improve the system to reduce and end homelessness in Dallas?**

It behooves all of us not to do the easy thing. If the City of Dallas just got a million dollars, the easy thing would be to spend it on things that benefit Dallas. The smarter, better way to invest in the system is for all of us who receive funds to come together with MDHA and leverage it

together to create at-scale housing, supportive service or whatever it might be. The challenge for MDHA is to get us all to take off our city and county hats. Carl Falconer, the head of MDHA, is doing a good job. Hopefully, we can come together to leverage our funds.

**What are the particular needs of homeless veterans? In 2019, 11.3 percent of homelessness individuals in Dallas were veterans.**

The basic need is not unlike that of anyone experiencing homelessness. They need safe and stable housing. It is incumbent upon us to make sure there is access to it and that we continue to partner with leaders in the veterans community.

We partner, for example, with the VA, including the Dallas VA Hospital, and the Dallas Housing Authority. Dallas City Councilman Chad West has particularly championed the needs of veterans through his role as chair of the Housing and Homelessness Solutions Committee.

All of these groups combined have resources. We need to be on the same page and leverage them, like I said in the last answer. There is no reason that someone who has served and sacrificed like a veteran has done should live in an unsheltered state, or even a shelter, for any extended period of time.

**And what about strategies dealing with homeless youth? There were about 180 children under 18 in the 2019 official count of people experiencing homelessness in Dallas.**

Yes, we do have strategies and funds to help provide solutions for youth experiencing homelessness. Before my current role, I worked with Dallas Police in overseeing the Ride Care program,

the mental health response unit. I learned there how important it is to address traumas at a young age. If we can intervene in the life of a young person who has become homeless, we might be able to change the course of the adult years.

Making those investments is crucial. We have a number of organizations in this city that are serving youth. They deserve to have funds from the City of Dallas carved out for that purpose. I am excited that we are able to help them meet those needs.

***The inclement weather shelter prepared us for what happened from March through August with the outbreak of COVID-19.***

**What gives you hope in facing all these challenges?**

I am going to give you an answer that may sound weird. But the fact that we were able to recently purchase a hotel with 180 units of supportive housing, with full support from the City Council and with the council member in whose district the hotel is located saying he welcomed that purchase, fills me with optimism.

And then surrounding myself with the people doing the work on the street gives me hope. They know far more than I do, and are motivated to make a difference. Let me just say, there is no complacency.

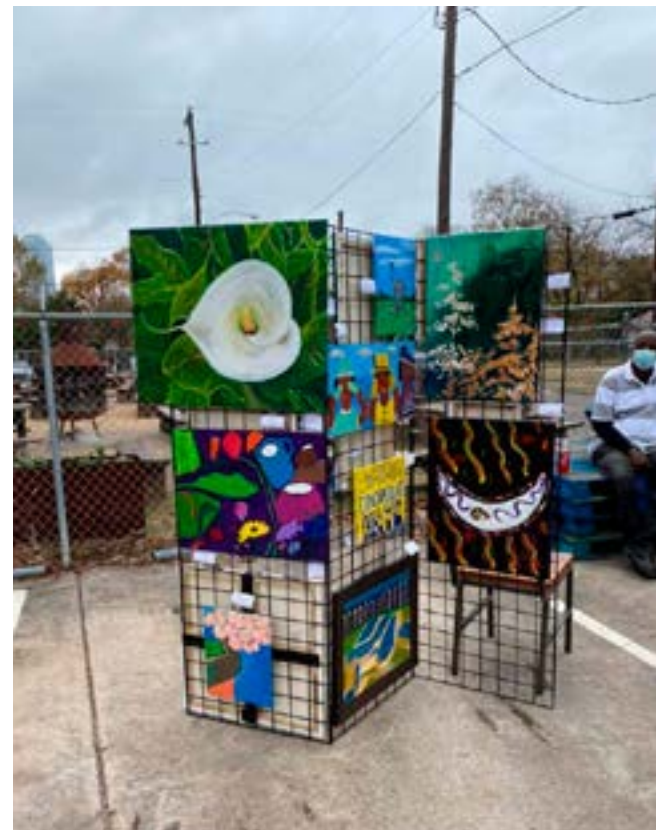
*Bill McKenzie is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREET-Zine Editorial Advisory Board.*



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THE STEWPOT  
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## Around The Stewpot: Inclement Weather Services

By Nicole Kiser

*For this month's Around The Stewpot, STREETZine called Laura Westerlage, the director of Client Services at The Stewpot, to ask for her insight into The Stewpot's inclement weather services.*

Though 2020 has definitely had more than its fair share of hardships, The Stewpot has been glad about one thing. “This time last year it was really cold,” says Laura Westerlage, director of Client Services at The Stewpot.

Inclement weather is a major concern for those providing services to people experiencing homelessness. “The cold weather definitely is somewhat of a danger for our clients. Being outside in the elements, especially if it’s raining and cold, can pose a health risk for them. If you’re cold and then you also get wet, it’s very hard to warm up, so you’re putting your body through a lot with that alone,” says Westerlage.

That doesn’t necessarily mean it’s easy to convince clients to go to an inclement weather shelter. Some clients refuse, especially if they have a tent or other means of shelter. Many shelters don’t have the space or resources to allow clients to keep their pets or all of their belongings, forcing clients to consider what to do with their companions and possessions. And new restrictions are making

shelters even less appealing to many clients.

“Some of the shelters, like the Salvation Army, have several quarantine rooms,” says Westerlage. “So if a client hasn’t had a test, they can come in, [and] they put him up in one of the rooms at the shelter, but they’re not allowed to leave that room for a week. What they have found is that people don’t stay. They have that as an option, but a lot of the clients don’t make it. They go two days in that room in isolation, [say] forget it, and just leave.”

**“During winter, we’re giving out socks and hats and gloves almost daily just to make sure that people have what they need to stay warm,” says Westerlage.**

Unfortunately for clients, it’s also become more difficult to become an inclement weather shelter. “The City [of Dallas] has been working for over a year now to create this inclement weather policy which would allow churches and other faith organizations — places that aren’t typically a shelter — to house people overnight when the weather gets bad,” says Westerlage. These organizations would have to apply to become an inclement weather shelter and then follow guidelines set out by the city “mostly to protect the clients.”

However, some providers are concerned that many organizations just won’t sign up. The extra steps created by the city risk deterring organiza-

tions that had previously been serving as inclement weather shelters from applying. And the new policy excludes organizations in or near downtown from applying for permits, preventing some providers from helping.

While it’s unclear if the city’s new policy will provide enough beds during times of inclement weather, The Stewpot is prepared to help in whatever way it can. “The last couple of years we provided transportation for the clients,” says Westerlage. “If we know that the weather is going to get inclement — below freezing or close to freezing with rain,” she reports, Stewpot staff would use a van to offer transportation to clients downtown, coordinating with other providers to transport clients to inclement weather shelters that had room for them.

The Stewpot also helps clients stay warm outside of the shelters. “We definitely have lots of cold weather clothing: hats, gloves and socks. So many socks,” says Westerlage. “During winter, we’re giving out socks and hats and gloves almost daily just to make sure that people have what they need to stay warm. We also have blankets that we give out to people that choose to stay outside during the cold weather.”

Though The Stewpot has limited how it receives in-kind donations due to the pandemic, it is currently requesting men’s coats and hand warmers in preparation for the colder winter weather. If you have a question about in-kind donations, please reach out to [adriennen@thestewpot.org](mailto:adriennen@thestewpot.org).

*Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.*

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