



Our Lord Jesus, King of the Universe November 22, 2015 B

Homeless in Brevard County

This week's Pastor's Column is by Deacon John Farrell, Executive Director of Daily Bread, and Keith Donald, Founder and Director of Steadytown.

THE PROBLEM

Across the country, in Florida, and here in Brevard County, homelessness is a public health crisis.

In Brevard, on any given night, over 1,000 people are living outdoors¹, and over 100 school-age children are sleeping in cars or other places not fit for human habitation². Each month over 50 families seek help with a housing crisis.

Let us remember that each person experiencing homelessness is someone's mother, father, sister, brother, daughter, son.

A homeless child is 50% more likely to be retained at a grade level, miss school, or drop out of school, costing over \$9,000 per year per child³. When the family of a homeless child receives permanent, stable housing, school attendance and learning gains increase significantly⁴.

A homeless adult with a disabling condition costs our community over \$31,000 a year in emergency room visits and hospitalizations. When the adult receives permanent, stable housing, costs are reduced to \$11,000 a year, and healthcare moves from the emergency room to preventative care⁵.

Those who help end homelessness bring hope to the hopeless. They serve in a manner that saves lives and money.

And homelessness can be ended.

THE SOLUTION

In Brevard, two organizations are making an exceptional difference in ending homelessness. They

n



DAILY BREAD



The Daily Bread in Melbourne operates a "Solution Center" for families in crisis. There, families meet with trained social workers to problem-solve difficult situations.

Families are helped to secure a safe, temporary place to stay while working together on permanent, stable housing. Most are successful in obtaining housing on their own with modest financial assistance, which might include a small interest-free microloan for help with a security deposit.

For those who continue to struggle, the Daily Bread coordinates referrals to partner agencies that step in to provide more support. Through evidence-based assessment, the Daily Bread ensures each family receives the appropriate level of support needed to obtain housing and remain housed long-term.



Meet Molly⁶. Molly and her six-year old daughter June had been homeless multiple times in the last two years.

Sometimes they slept in her car, other times they were able to stay on the floor of a friend's house. Molly arrived at the Daily Bread in crisis earlier this year. Where she was staying had become unsafe and she was back in her car. She had no job and no money. Her daughter was missing school and acting out.

In Molly the Daily Bread saw a young woman with great potential struggling to end her homelessness on her own. They connected her to Genesis House for crisis housing—where she was matched with a Case Manager to provide more support in obtaining permanent, stable housing. Within a month, Molly had her own apartment. Within three months, she had a job and was paying most of her bills. She had learned how to manage the issues that had been factors in her homelessness. Today, Molly and her daughter are stably housed and doing great.

PEACE GAP

MINISTRY

Peace Gap Ministry in Palm Bay, a non-profit of Peace Lutheran Church, operates a "Street to Home" campaign to end chronic homelessness. People experiencing chronic homelessness have lived outdoors continuously for one year or more and suffer from severe, disabling conditions. They truly are some of Brevard's most vulnerable residents.

It's estimated there are 200 chronically homeless people residing in Brevard County⁶. Outreach workers at Peace Gap Ministry come to know each of these people by their name and level of need. Through informed assessment, Peace Gap Ministry ensures the most vulnerable are served first, and each receives the intensive support they need to obtain permanent, stable housing. A partnership with the Housing Authority of Brevard County ensures that housing remains affordable for each person served.



Meet James⁷. *James, a legally blind 62-year-old man, had been sleeping outside around the Downtown Melbourne area for 15 months.*

During that time, he suffered several strokes, including one that resulted in a month-long hospital stay. He fell and hit his head and became increasingly confined to a wheelchair.

Peace Gap Ministry found James sleeping at the steps of a local church in the cold. Their assessment placed him at the top of the priority list for supportive housing. Within two weeks, James was housed. He got to pick out the furniture for his own apartment, which instilled ownership and pride in his housing. A month later he was approved for Social Security. James now pays his own bills. He has not returned to the hospital and has gained 40 pounds!

⁷stories have names and faces changed to protect

CALL TO ACTION

You can help us end homelessness by giving of your time, talent, and treasure.

Just some of the ways you can make a difference:

- Bake cookies to make a "welcome home day" extra special.
- Use your skills in decorating to make an empty house

feel like home.

- Flex your muscles to move furniture on a rehousing day.
- Donate furniture, household goods, and hygiene kits for rehousing.
- Let us know of property owners interested in providing housing for clients receiving case management support.
- Volunteer as a family crisis diversion specialist or street outreach worker.
- Support Case Managers in helping clients obtain employment, further their education, and receive health benefits.

TIME AND TALENT

If you wish to give of your time and talent for serving homeless families in crisis, call Deacon John Farrell, Executive Director of Daily Bread, at (321) 723-1060, extension 25, or Miranda Fuoco, Social Services Manager, at extension 12.

If you wish to give of your time and talent for serving chronically homeless adults with disabilities, call Joe Kline, Director of Peace Gap Ministry, at (321) 557-6078.

Be sure to "Like" the "Daily Bread," "Peace Gap Ministry," and "House2Home-Donation and Volunteer Page" on Facebook!

TREASURE

If you wish to donate funds in support of ending family homelessness, please mail a check to:

**Daily Bread
"Family Solution Center"
815 East Fee Ave
Melbourne, FL, 32901**

If you wish to donate funds in support of ending chronic homelessness, please mail a check to:

**Peace Gap Ministry
"Street to Home Campaign"
1801 Port Malabar Blvd NE
Palm Bay, FL 32905**

With

A Thanksgiving Prayer

*Lord God, all powerful and ever loving,
we ask You on this Thanksgiving Day
to give us grateful hearts.*

County!

References:

- ¹ *Brevard County 2014 Point in Time Count Survey*
- ^{2,3} *Brevard Public Schools Student in Transition 2014-15 Data*
- ⁴ *University of Central Florida Department of Education 2012 Study on Children in Transition*
- ⁵ *Central Florida Commission on Homelessness 2014 Study*
- ⁶ *Brevard Homeless Coalition Coordinated Assessment Data June 2015 – November 2015*

***Wishing all our parishioners
a very blessed Thanksgiving!***

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Le Sarah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.