



**A Survey of Best Practices:  
Communities Making a Difference**

Atlanta, Georgia

Denver, Colorado

Fairfax County, Virginia

Houston/Harris County, Texas

Los Angeles, California

Marin County, California

Miami-Dade County, Florida

Minneapolis/Hennepin County, Minnesota

New Orleans, Louisiana

Tulsa, Oklahoma

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### Research, Writing and Technical Support:

Glenda Hood - triSect  
 Steve Seibert - triSect  
 Shelley Lauten - triSect  
 Jill Shargaa - Shargaa Illustration & Design  
 Beverly Grant - Impact Homelessness

*This report was prepared exclusively for*



An initiative of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness

### Communities That Participated in This Report



# Most People Aren't Affected by Homelessness. Until You Are.

Until you come home from a war and just can't tackle the day-to-day responsibilities needed to provide shelter. Until an elder, without money or family, takes to the street. Until the homeless congregate near your business and discourage customers. Until a global economic recession leaves 13 million U.S. wage earners without jobs and 4 million families without homes. Until a friend of a friend or a family member, for



**633,782 people are experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States.**

*Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness*

whatever reasons, cannot find a safe place to sleep for the night.

These are the stories of 10 American communities which faced the homeless challenge and found answers. The communities are as different as are the solutions. But there were some common themes.

**Leadership matters.** Some person or persons with influence, resources and the ability to make decisions must decide this issue is a priority and is willing to press the matter.

**Collaborate or fail.** Homelessness is never solved by one sector. The government, the philanthropic sector and the business sectors, but mostly the business sector, must be fully engaged.

**People need to understand.** Not one program we studied succeeded

without the community's buy-in to the problem and the solutions.

We interviewed representatives from each of these communities and fully understand this is a summary of just some of the best community—building ideas in the country. But we believe in the power of asking successful folks who have struggled with how to end homelessness what they did and how they did it; it's that simple.

This report is written under the guidance and at the request of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. The authors are the three founding partners of triSect LLC, a strategy firm focused on civic innovation. We have donated our time to explore what communities across the United States are doing to end homelessness.

## Glossary of Terms

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act** - The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 is a United States federal law that provides federal money for homeless programs, including the Continuum of Care Program.

**Continuum of Care** - The Continuum of Care (CoC) is a set of three competitively-awarded programs created to address the problems of homelessness in a comprehensive manner with other federal agencies.

**Housing First** - Housing First is a relatively recent innovation in human service programs regarding treatment of the homeless. Rather than moving homeless individuals through different "levels" of housing (known

as the Continuum of Care), Housing First moves the homeless individual or household immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own apartments. Housing First approaches are based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues that may affect the household can and should be addressed once housing is obtained.

**Chronic Homeless** - A chronically homeless individual is someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and has a disability. A family with an adult member who meets this description would also be considered chronically homeless.

# ATLANTA, GEORGIA

ORGANIZATION: UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN ATLANTA,  
REGIONAL COMMISSION TO END HOMELESSNESS  
GOAL: TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS WITHIN 10 YEARS

In 2002, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin endorsed a regional plan to end chronic homelessness in 10 years. A voluntary and independent advisory group, the Regional Commission to End Homelessness (the "Commission") was established, comprised of representatives from the City of Atlanta and seven surrounding counties. The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta staffs the Commission.

### What Did They Do?

Along with the Mayor, the business community agreed to lead this initiative under the umbrella of the region's United Way. Highly respected business leaders became "community champions" and were

called upon to raise awareness of the homelessness challenges...and to raise funds. When advocacy for the homeless was required, a prominent business leader was often the individual making the pitch.

Metro Atlanta is a giving community; the private sector has raised approximately \$50 million in the last decade to fund a variety of innovative programs. In addition, the City floated a \$22 million bond deal to build supportive housing. All this complements the City's efforts as the Continuum of Care entity.

**The regional political collaboration was not immediate. In some cases it took years for all the area local governments**

**to agree to participate in the Commission's work. Collaboration takes time and patience.**

Working "Councils" dealing with specific needs (employment, mental health, housing, etc.) were formed under the Commission's oversight. The Councils meet quarterly and provide the forums to work through the details of providing services.

### Is It Working?

Absolutely, although here is where pure statistics don't tell the whole story. Ten years ago, there were approximately 7,000 homeless persons in the Atlanta area. Today, there are still about 7,000 homeless persons in the Atlanta area. However, during that



United Way of Greater Atlanta



Atlanta Housing Authority



Former Mayor Shirley Franklin



same period the Commission and its partners have built 3,000 new beds for the homeless and created supportive programs to serve those who use them.

Atlanta's Housing Authority now provides the Commission 700 housing vouchers a year, reflecting a remarkable collaboration among government and the private sector and an innovative way to find beds in a hurry.

The Commission is testing programs such as "Street to Home," which utilizes formerly homeless individuals to reach out to those still on the streets, encouraging the latter to move to four-person apartments. Initial success rates for this peer-to-peer initiative are promising.

As is the "Hospital to Home" program, which focuses on the homeless who keep coming to Brady Hospital's emergency room for warmth and safety when real housing is a far better and more cost-effective alternative.

As is the new justice-related

## WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. The need for strong business community support:** specifically, the personal and professional leadership from community "champions"
- 2. Independent, business-led efforts encouraging the testing of new innovative practices**
- 3. Understanding that collaboration requires patience and time**

program which identifies those offenders who are about to be released and know they will have no housing when it happens. With support from the local judiciary and the Sheriff, the Commission is finding beds and services for those who will need them soon.

Other programs supported by the Commission include funding a Director of Public Policy who advocates for selected homelessness funding and programs and hiring specialists who help the homeless

properly apply for disability benefits.

**Advocates for Atlanta's homeless population have been open to new ideas.** The attention to veterans, hospitals, jails and disability benefits reflect necessary innovation.

**But stability also matters.** Representative of the community's long-term commitment to ending chronic homelessness is the fact that the Mayor who started the effort, Shirley Franklin, has returned from the private sector to Co-Chair the Commission.



Twice a month, as many as 20 to 45 volunteers from the community perform an early morning outreach checking on the homeless and offering them a place to stay.

# DENVER, COLORADO

ORGANIZATION: DENVER'S ROAD HOME

GOAL: TO END HOMELESSNESS WITHIN 10 YEARS

In 2005, the recently elected Mayor and City Council adopted the goal to end homelessness within 10 years and created Denver's Road Home ("DRH") as the implementing agency. This plan started as a grassroots effort among service providers and homeless advocates and included community meetings with hundreds of participants within the city and surrounding areas. A resulting white paper laid out the challenge and provided the focus for the plan.

Nearly 5,000 people are homeless daily in the metro-Denver area of which 64% are people with families, 42% are women and one-third are working.

The plan initially focused on the

chronically homeless and the first five years of the plan showed a 75% decrease in that population, although that number is beginning to creep up.

According to its Executive Director, Bennie Milliner, DRH is "to be a convener of those who can impact this issue and to advocate for the ones who can't; to be an avenue for innovation for those who think they have a new and different way to do it, all of which must be undergirded by data and analysis. In the end DHR's goal is to help people who deserve it and also to change the perceptions around what homelessness is and who the homeless are."

DRH costs about \$7 million per year, one-tenth of the total cost to the community of dealing with homeless challenges.

### How Did They Do it?

As seen in other communities, leadership and community engagement are keys. A passionate Mayor (who is now Governor of Colorado) led the initiative but his successors and successive city councils have continued the effort. Addressing homelessness has become woven into the community ethic.

Business and philanthropic involvement was critical and in fact, had been the primary movers and funders in the past. To this day,



*Working with our partners to prevent homelessness.*



*Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock*

Mile High United Way is still one of the DRH's four core partners and the private dollars raised allow for program flexibility. However, now local government, through its tax base, funds a majority of the local effort (approximately 70%), and reflects an institutional commitment to serve the homeless. Denver's focus on increasing government support is different than other communities who have increasingly relied on the private sector. Clearly, every community is different, although all require leadership and collaboration.

Now in year eight of the 10-year plan, DRH has added thousands of new housing opportunities, including units for the chronically homeless; prevented almost 6,000 from becoming homeless through eviction assistance; mentored 1,158 families and seniors out of homelessness through its partnership with the faith community, with extraordinary long term results. DRH has generated thousands of employment and training opportunities and finally, its

### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Ensuring strong and consistent political leadership over successive administrations**
- 2. Funding and commitment from local government**
- 3. Identifying an organizational "champion":** This champion should convene, advocate, provide research and promote public interest.

Denver Street Outreach Collaborative has housed nearly 2,000 persons through their street outreach efforts.

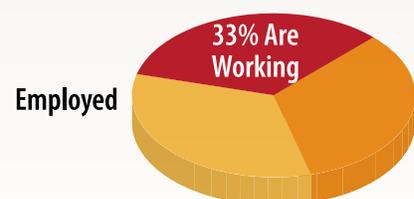
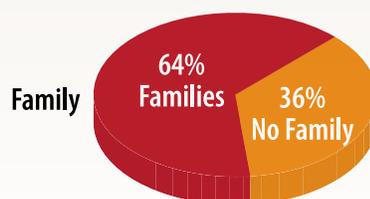
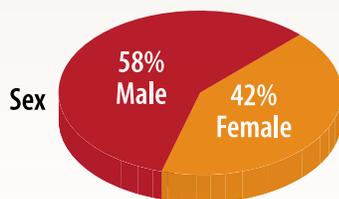
### What's Next?

It is hard to maintain a 10-year plan. The world changes quickly and it is a testament to the political and community commitment that Denver continues to work the plan and measure the success against that plan.

The obstacles are significant, however. There is a dearth of affordable housing in Denver. There are expectations from service providers hoping for historic funding

which no longer exists, and DRH is crafting a new Request for Proposal approach which will better leverage limited funding. Denver's 16<sup>th</sup> Street pedestrian mall is an attraction for "traveling hordes of youth" and provides a challenge for both law enforcement and temporary housing. In the long run, DRH seeks sustainable solutions; a more stable revenue source dedicated revenue source for homelessness, better metrics and evaluation to determine which services work best and more case management intervention to move the homeless person to the best possible place in society.

### City and County of Denver 2013 Numbers



Above: MG Edwards (center) "From the top down—we will not forget our vets."  
At right: Dad and son, "Homes bring families together."



# FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

ORGANIZATION: THE FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFICE TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS (OPEH)

GOAL: TO END HOMELESSNESS WITHIN THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Fairfax County, a significantly affluent community outside Washington, D.C., is home to about one million residents. In recent years, however, more and more pockets of poverty and low income individuals and families have made up the population. Since Fairfax County is a large community with few real urban areas, the homeless may not necessarily be noticed on the streets, yet a very seasoned non-profit community began to identify the growing numbers and felt the need for housing and related support services.

### What Did They Do?

The Fairfax County Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH) was established in 2008 by the Fairfax

County Board of Supervisors to manage, coordinate and monitor implementation of the community's plan to end homelessness within the next 10 years. Under OPEH's support, a community partnership was established composed of non-profits, businesses, faith-based communities and county agencies to implement the 10-year plan and focus on rapid re-housing and prevention by increasing available permanent affordable housing. Since the implementation start in 2009 for the 10-year plan, homelessness has been reduced by 26%.

### How Have They Created Success?

*There was a realignment of systems*

*and funding into one agency under the County.* All policy and program functions and resources exist in one place. OPEH moved from only policy driven oversight to policy and program oversight through partnerships with non-profits and other agencies of the County. They moved from implementing a plan with no access to or ability to move resources to being able to do both. Non-profits are now held more accountable and there has been increasing 'buy-in' from local government.

### *They are data driven.*

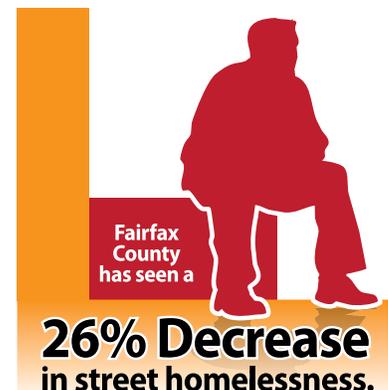
Data has allowed OPEH to propel and educate people as well as engage more of the community in homeless



Ending homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls Church community takes the work of many partners.



Fairfax County, Virginia



efforts. Before, everyone talked about homelessness differently, now they are using the same information. Data shows both the success stories and where gaps still exist. Nineteen organizations and 120 programs jointly collect, report and revalidate data with report cards given to the non-profits. This allows the non-profits with whom OPEH has a contractual relationship to focus on an outcome-driven system.

**Federal dollars were effectively used to pilot key initiatives.** The targeted investment of Federal stimulus dollars attracted local dollars to support OPEH's prevention and rapid re-housing initiatives. The prevention efforts keep people in their homes and from entering the system. Social workers/case managers have become housing locators working for multiple programs which move or keep, especially families and children, out of shelters and into permanent housing. And the community understands the value of this shift in resource allocation.

**Public awareness has been created.** OPEH's active community education and awareness of the homeless has encouraged broader citizen understanding and engagement as well as built a strong partnership model with the faith organizations, non-profits, the schools (through a liaison) and business, especially the Chamber of Commerce.

**Leadership has stepped forward and led.**

The independent Governing Board has high ranking corporate, faith and government representation – individuals who are key influencers and

## WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Rethinking leadership structures:** Boards, Subcommittees and Councils were structured so that all voices had "a place to be heard" on the issues that mattered most to them.
- 2. Recognizing the importance of a shared vision built upon trust and relationships;** especially when resources are declining
- 3. Using data based decision-making to drive results**

decision-makers. The non-profits do not sit on the Governing Board, but instead actively participate with the two important sub-committees: resource development and advocacy.

There also exists a year-old Consumer Advocacy Council made up of current and former homeless individuals who have a strong voice in prevention and ending homelessness based on personal experiences. The chair of this group sits on the Governing Board.

### What's Next?

With the guidance and commitment from Fairfax County's Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH), the homeless numbers continue to decrease.

Fairfax County has redesigned the systems to ensure that they are in line with desired outcomes. They have invested time, energy and resources to not just collect data but use it in decision-making. They have created a housing locator network and a community case management model. They have built the strongest

of partnership models. The challenge for the future is to make certain that these positive changes and best practices are sustained.

Fairfax County leaders also know the reality of their ongoing challenges to identify affordable housing for homeless singles; to continue to lower the length of shelter stays and move people into permanent housing; and to tackle the issue of reduced resources.

Dean Klein, OPEH's first director hired in 2009, shares that many lessons have been learned and are applied to meeting the community's plan to end homelessness in 10 years. Klein adds that a strong partnership, staying focused, and committed leadership are most important for success.



Members of the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH)

**In 2007:**  
Waiting Time to get into a Family Shelter  
**2-3 Months**

**In 2013:**  
Waiting Time to get into a Family Shelter  
**2-3 Days**



# HOUSTON/HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

ORGANIZATION: COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

GOAL: TO PROVIDE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR CHRONICALLY HOMELESS PEOPLE

Like other large Southern cities, Houston's homeless population was visible and growing. In January 2012, HUD identified Houston as a "priority community," recognizing the daily count of 8,500 homeless persons, most of whom were not sheltered. Studies showed homelessness cost the community \$100 million annually.

## What Did They Do?

With support from HUD's "technical assistance" program, the Coalition formed a Steering Committee comprised of business, government and civic leaders. Business sector involvement was critical, providing political support but also asking tough

questions and holding the process accountable.

The Mayor of Houston also played an essential role. Early in her second term in office, the Mayor made "Ending Homelessness" a public and political priority.

Working on a short time frame, the Steering Committee proposed a comprehensive strategy based upon a community planning process. Any hope for successfully addressing the homeless challenge required winning the hearts and minds of the community. The Coalition hosted eight days of planning charrettes involving nearly 400 community stakeholders. These efforts resulted in five "action steps." The Mayor

continued to provide significant leadership but respectfully deferred to the details in the community plan for implementation.

Based upon this transparent, community-based visioning effort, the Coalition developed an assessment process for each person, trying to identify the path out of homelessness; is it permanent or transitional housing or could the individual be rapidly returned to regular housing with stabilization?

To build trust with service providers and to help overcome organizational "fear of change", the Coalition provided technical and financial support. More importantly, Coalition staff got personally involved



Planning charrettes involved nearly 400 community stakeholders in the Houston area.



Annual Cost to the Community: \$100 Million



26% Decrease in street homelessness.



Mayor Annise Parker

in implementing the new approaches. They worked side-by-side, testing a new approach with the Veterans Administration. Members of the Coalition learned that “breaking down silos” required a great deal of work on their part—listening to and learning from their partners how to make the system work better for everyone. Candid, frank conversations were key to building trust along the way.

### Is It Working?

Data show the annual count of homeless persons in the Houston area, between 2011-2013, down from 8,500 to 6,300 and for the first time the sheltered population was greater than those on the street. In Houston, political leadership, broad community engagement and a collaborative relationship between funder and service provider is working.

### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Recognizing that leadership matters:** The Mayor made “Ending Homelessness” a priority and HUD’s local staff provided critical assistance.
- 2. Basing strategy upon good data and diverse community engagement**
- 3. Ensuring that “umbrella” organizations not take a “top down” approach with service providers and others in the community:** Rather, a collaborative model built on trust must be established if “community silos” are to be strategically aligned.



Business, government and civic leaders join together for community planning sessions. Pictured below, Houston’s volunteers and staff check on the homeless.



# LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

ORGANIZATION: UNITED WAY-GREATER LOS ANGELES

GOAL: TO END CHRONIC AND VETERAN HOMELESSNESS BY 2016

Los Angeles is the homeless capital of the country. There are 40,000 homeless individuals on the city's streets every night, 7,000 of whom are military veterans. And it costs the region \$875 million annually to deal with this challenge.

With its warm climate and attractive location, homelessness has long been a significant policy issue in Los Angeles. Much good work was being done, but the providers were "siloeed" across geography and across sectors. Business, government and the non-profit service providers were not adequately collaborating and this lack of coordination was made worse by the physical and structural enormity of the area to be served;

Los Angeles County covers 4,000 square miles, holds 10 million people and is comprised of 88 cities.

### What Did They Do?

In 2010, this regional United Way chose to focus on "Ending Homelessness" as one of three "pathways out of poverty" (the other two involving education and income). This is not a historical United Way mission, but the impacts of homelessness were being felt in each part of the community and traditional approaches were not working.

With such a large area and plethora of governments, the United Way concluded that government could be a leader in the effort to end

homelessness but could not be the only leader.

So the United Way teamed up with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and formed a Business Leaders Task Force, co-chaired by a member of each organization. The United Way focuses on convening, research, community engagement, and grantmaking, and the Chamber advocates with elected officials and other community leaders on how these initiatives will save taxpayer dollars and enhance the overall economic prosperity of the region.

In addition, the United Way concluded it was important to build the case that providing permanent housing is less expensive than doing



Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

**20% Decrease**  
in Veterans' homelessness.



Los Angeles, California

40,000 Homeless Individuals in Los Angeles, 7,000 of Whom are Military Veterans.

0 10,000 20,000 30,000 40,000 50,000

nothing. In 2009, the United Way produced a study which showed that greater Los Angeles was spending \$875 million a year addressing the homeless situation, confirming that the community had substantial resources to address the problem if they could only channel public and private resources to be spent more effectively and collaboratively. The United Way later championed the "Housing First" model, showing again that it has a higher success rate than any other alternative (the goal is to keep people in housing), that it costs less than doing nothing and most importantly that without effective intervention people will die on the streets. There is a moral element to consider.

### Is It Working?

It's a little too soon to tell because the homeless surveys are only conducted every two years. Early indications are positive, including what appears to be 20% reduction in the veterans' homeless population.

### What's Next?

Building a "coordinated entry system" for the region which links homeless individuals and families to the most appropriate housing option available in the community.

### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Recognizing the power of the business community as a critical ally**
- 2. Developing the public case for ending homelessness based on solid data**
- 3. Engaging every sector to promote solutions:** Government, nonprofit, business, philanthropy and faith communities must be at the table.

It is hard to convince people that it is possible to end homelessness. By recognizing that business must help lead the effort, by relying on legitimate data to make the case, by choosing the Housing First model and by working collaboratively with the area's COC (Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority), and all other sectors involved in this issue, trust has been built with the stakeholders. Collaborative leadership, across all sectors, is the key.



*Pictured above: Business leaders task force with Council Member Huizar*

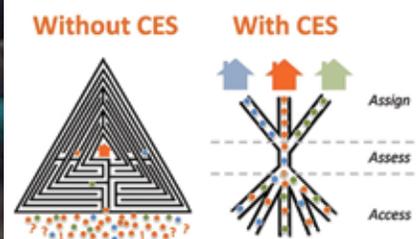
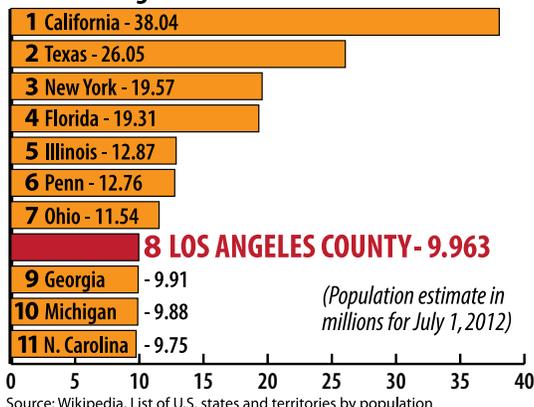


*Pictured above: Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant overlooks the crowd at the HomeWalk 2012.*



*At left: Coordinated Entry System (CES) team gives the "all hands in" sign at a planning meeting.*

### How Does the Population of Los Angeles County Rank Among the 50 States?



# MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

ORGANIZATION: MARIN PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS  
GOAL: TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE HOUSING

A 2010 article in *North San Francisco Bay Biz* magazine stated that “Just north of San Francisco, in one of the most affluent counties in California, Marin County’s homeless population is on the rise.” Marin County, home to over a quarter million people, known for its natural beauty, liberal politics and one of the highest incomes per capita in the U.S., was not immune to homelessness. The high housing and land costs along with the difficulty identifying affordable housing sites had been further exacerbated by the recent economic downturn.

In January of 2009, there were 1,770 homeless in Marin County with some 3,000 more on the brink of

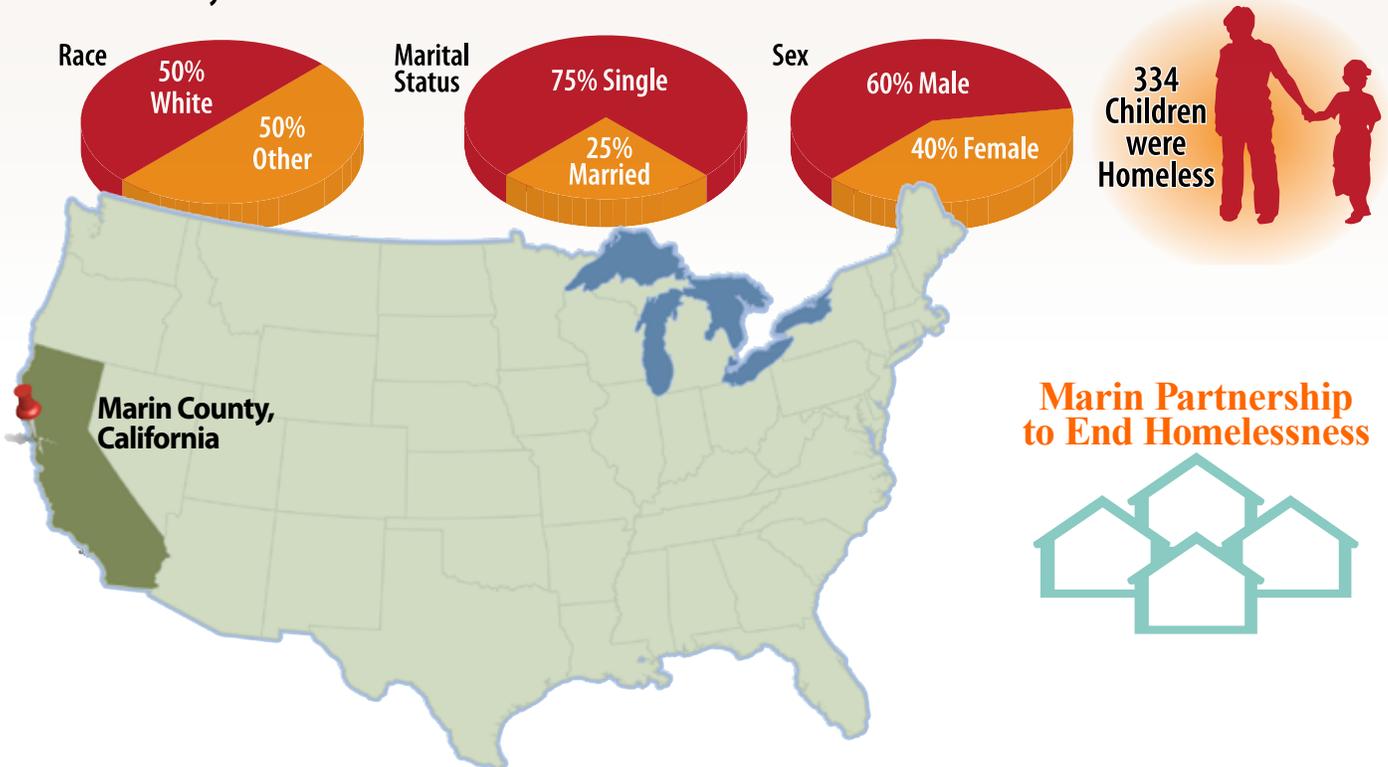
homelessness. Of these, more than 50% were white, 75% single, 60% male and 334 were children. What was the cause of their homelessness? The primary cause – for 90% of homeless families and 80% of single adults - was simply not having enough money to pay bills and find affordable housing – and 40% cited job loss as the reason.

As the number of homeless increased for Marin, community leaders realized everyone needed to take ownership. Housing became a priority and the Marin Partnership to End Homelessness works closely with funders, services and housing providers to make this a reality.

## What Did They Do?

Originally established in 1993 as the Marin Continuum of Housing and Services, a 2011 strategic planning process resulted in changes to the organization’s strategic vision and organizational goals as well as a name change to the Marin Partnership to End Homelessness. The Partnership became the collaborative vehicle for 30 Marin organizations and community groups to co-ordinate, increase and create effective change in housing and services for low income and the homeless. As the community convener of agencies and programs, the Partnership’s mission is to collectively ensure that families and individuals in need become

## Marin County’s Homeless - 2009



and remain housed with adequate support services, while at the same time advocating for systemic changes that contribute to preventing and ending homelessness.

### How Have They Succeeded?

The Partnership brings together its partner agencies in quarterly discussions of emerging and pertinent homeless issues as well as regular meetings around specific programs and community initiatives.

The **primary goal of providing adequate housing** is woven into each of the program components. The Partnership works collaboratively with other programs in Marin that offer shelter plus care, wrap-around case management and a wide range of community services, and respects clients and their desire to improve quality of life.

### The primary programs include:

**1) The Partnership's Hamilton Meadows Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing Program**, at the former Hamilton Air Field in Novato, with 83 units of transitional housing and 18 Section 8 units provide homes to over 200 formerly homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, including over 80 children. Residents stay for up to two years and receive a range of supportive services.

**2) The Partnership provides advocacy, education and community information:** Advocacy on behalf of homeless individuals and community organizations; education to its member agencies and the community at large on homeless and housing issues; and community information for low-income families and individuals about housing and services. These form the framework for strong public awareness and widespread understanding of the homeless.

### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Allowing everyone the opportunity to participate**
- 2. Building public awareness and engagement by putting a human face on homelessness**
- 3. Staying focused on the community plan and learning from others' best practices**

**3) The Partnership participates with other agencies in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)** which collects demographic data on participants of programs and/or services from agencies and programs that work with the homeless and low income populations in Marin County. Successful efforts are measured, unmet needs and gaps in services are identified, and an increased understanding of the issues facing the homeless, the low income and the community as a whole are realized.

Accurate data collection and effective measurements allow Marin County to report a 20% reduction in homelessness.

**4) The Partnership publishes an annual *Marin Community Resource Guide*** with contact information for the area's non-profit services and housing providers. This guide is important to connect the families and individuals who need assistance to the appropriate agency.

**5) The Partnership provides strategic system planning and public policy analysis** for maintenance and preservation of affordable housing and services. Through discussion, deliberation and promotion of best practices, policies and program models, the community's goal to end homelessness is advanced.

### What's Next?

The **greatest challenge** for the Marin Partnership will be to continually meet an increased need for transitional housing knowing the difficulty in locating affordable units amid the high housing and land costs as well as high cost of living. This is further challenged with the deliberate decision to build fewer shelters in the community.

Identifying additional and diverse funding sources to meet the housing demands for the homeless along with the ability to most effectively apply the resources will be an ongoing challenge.

The Marin Partnership to End Homelessness' strength has been enabling coordination among partner organizations that provide services to the homeless, cooperation that leads to a single voice for identifying and addressing homeless needs, and collaboration around effective solutions toward ending homelessness that have become best practices for Marin County and beyond.

This model is working for Marin County—a model of strong successful collaboration meeting challenges to be sustained into the future.

*Hamilton Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing units*



# MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

ORGANIZATION: MIAMI-DADE COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS  
GOAL: TO FOCUS ON ADVOCACY

The Miami-Dade Coalition for the Homeless (the “Coalition”) was created in 1985 as an advocacy organization, founded on the concept that every individual deserves food and shelter, to be safe and to be treated with respect. By the mid-1990s, Miami-Dade was rocked by the presence of 8,000 homeless persons living on the streets each day and the Coalition’s core premises were tested. In collaboration with the area’s Continuum of Care organization, the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust, the Coalition has become an independent voice (no government funding) speaking for those who often have no voice.

## What Did They Do?

Early in its existence, the Coalition’s Board of Directors determined that advocacy should be its primary role. Its partner, the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust implements the local Continuum of Care plan and advises the County Commission on homelessness matters while the Coalition focuses on championing their interests. This means the Coalition might take controversial positions or at least positions contrary to those adopted by government or private funders. The Coalition’s independence is the key to its role as an advocate.

The Coalition was able to use a provision in the McKinney-Vento Act to receive the proceeds of the sale of surplus military property. This sale raised \$7 million which has funded the Coalition’s continuing operation and a grants program.

For 25 years, community partners have also engaged. When Miami-Dade’s homelessness challenges were first assessed, it was deemed to be too large for the private sector to fund alone, and an “ongoing” source of local public funding was needed. The Florida Legislature, supported by the Governor and the Miami-Dade County Commission, made it possible for there to be a 1% sales tax on food



At left: Homeless Youth Initiative Planning Meeting



Miami-Dade County, Florida

Miami-Dade County has seen a

**60.76% Decrease**  
in street homelessness.

and beverages sold in the larger restaurants in the community. (NOTE: Fifteen percent (15%) of the total tax collected is used for domestic violence programs.)

Led by Alvah Chapman, an iconic member of the business community and publisher of the Miami Herald, who rallied support across the community, the County adopted this tax, the only one of its kind in the country. It is an on-going source of income and now raises over \$15 million per year.

### Is It Working?

Since February 1996, when the first official count was taken, the estimated number of homeless people has decreased from approximately 8,000 to nearly 3,954, only 868 of whom are living on the streets today.

### Key Lessons

- 1) The importance of an independent voice advocating for the homeless. This independent voice can also play the role of mediator and facilitator in helping

## WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Recognizing the importance of an independent voice advocating for the homeless:** This voice can also play the role of mediator and facilitator in helping stakeholders find common ground.
- 2. Tasking business leadership with identifying on-going funding sources**
- 3. Building trust and collaboration among stakeholders**

stakeholders find common ground.

- 2) Business leadership is essential in building community support to address homelessness and in adopting a locally-based, on-going funding source for homeless programs.

### What's Next?

Despite Miami-Dade's significant success, the homelessness challenge never ends. The chronically homeless are still the hardest population to serve and don't often fit well into the "product" long offered by service providers. HUD's "Housing First"

approach requires providers to adapt to new approaches and this takes time and trust; trust among the stakeholders and trust between the stakeholders and the clients they serve.

The policy implications of homelessness also require vigilance. The Coalition's role is to advocate for the homeless. When a government considers actions which may lead to the criminalization of homelessness (anti-panhandling ordinances, for example), an independent advocate may offer the decision-makers a perspective not otherwise available from more traditional sources.



Above: Indoor Meal Homeless Program at Mt. Zion Baptist Church  
At left: Bobbie Ibarra speaking to Mildred during homeless outreach

# MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

ORGANIZATION: OFFICE TO END HOMELESSNESS, MINNEAPOLIS/HENNEPIN COUNTY  
GOAL: TO END HOMELESSNESS BY 2016

Minneapolis and Hennepin County have a population of close to 1.2 million people and on any given evening, more than 2,000 men, women, children and young adults are homeless.

In 2006, The Mayor of Minneapolis joined forces with the City Council and members of the County Board to create the **Commission to End Homelessness**, comprised of 70 leaders representing federal, state and local governments, business, nonprofits, faith and philanthropic communities, along with formerly homeless and homeless citizens.

## What Did They Do?

The Commission spent 100 days

developing **Heading Home Hennepin**, a 10-year plan to end homelessness. This plan included six goals, 30 recommendations and more than 50 concrete action steps.

([www.hennepin.headinghomeminnesota.org](http://www.hennepin.headinghomeminnesota.org))

In laying out the plan, the Commission first reached consensus on the eight core principles that would guide their efforts:

- 1) All people deserve safe, decent and affordable housing
- 2) Shelter is not housing
- 3) Providing services without housing does not end homelessness
- 4) Homelessness costs more than housing
- 5) Data is important

- 6) Prevention is the best solution
- 7) Ending homelessness requires a community wide response
- 8) Ending homelessness is attainable

## Is It Working?

Mikkel Beckmen, Executive Director of the Office to End Homelessness acknowledges that when they have been able to apply targeted resources to their goals and action steps, they have seen progress. For example, he credits the community's 50% decrease in veterans' homelessness to a strong, responsive partnership with the local Veteran Administration team and the national funding available to communities for addressing this issue.



*Project Homeless Connect provides services to homeless citizens, such as dental exams and cleanings.*



**50%  
Decrease**  
in Veterans'  
homelessness.



Mayor R.T. Rybak

Minneapolis has also seen a 39% reduction in street homelessness, which, in large part, is due to the creation of innovative Street Outreach Teams. These teams are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to work with homeless citizens and get them connected to the resources and housing they need as quickly and efficiently as possible. In part, this effort is funded by the city's Downtown (Business) Council, who established a target of being the first major city in America to eliminate street homelessness (by 2025), and then established a tax on downtown businesses to support the efforts of the Street Outreach Team.

A third action area that has seen success is the community's focus on a "Housing First" model. Between 2007 and 2009, 1,419 new permanent housing opportunities were created. In addition, hundreds of individual and families were housed through short-term subsidies and rapid exits from shelters. A key success factor is the number of non-profit community organizations who are working together with developers to create and coordinate innovative housing

## WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

1. Monthly, face-to-face meetings with all agency Executive Directors
2. Shared focus on goal attainment
3. Communicating progress and results to the community

solutions and funding models. All are working towards a common goal of creating 5,000 new housing opportunities distributed throughout the neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the surrounding county for men, women, children and youth by 2016.

### What's Next?

What began as the **Commission to End Homelessness** has morphed into **Heading Home Hennepin**, which continues to be co-chaired by Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman and Rev. Jim Gertmenian, Senior Pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church.

Monthly working groups, consisting of staff and executive directors of various agencies, meet to work on the goals in the plan. This regular communication and shared

focus on goal attainment is cited as the primary reason for the collective impact that has been made in Minneapolis and Hennepin county. This has been a critical success factor in achieving the results to date, and the importance of communicating results of this community-wide effort to citizens cannot be overstated.

**Heading Home Hennepin's** efforts are showing remarkable progress despite immense challenges in the economy and a housing vacancy rate of less than 2%.

The community continues to focus on the six Key Goals (Prevention, Outreach, Housing, Service Delivery Improvement, Self Support Capacity Building, Systems Improvement) and are working on developing suburban and regional strategies to effect change for a larger geographic footprint.

At right:  
Hennepin County  
Commissioner  
Gail Dorfman



Project Homeless Connect provides services to homeless citizens, including blood pressure checks.

Minneapolis  
has seen a  
**39% Decrease**  
in street homelessness.

# NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

ORGANIZATION: NEW ORLEANS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

GOAL: TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL NEW ORLEANIANS HAVE A PLACE THEY CAN CALL HOME

Few cities in America have experienced homelessness like the residents in New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, over 11,000 residents of New Orleans metro area found themselves without a home. By 2010, the number of homeless in New Orleans on any given night hovered around 6,500. In May of 2012, Mayor Mitchell Landrieu was elected and made ending homelessness in New Orleans a priority. He convened a Homeless Services Working Group—a cross section of government, business and community stakeholders—including residents who were or had been homeless.

The Homeless Services Working Group was charged with developing

a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. In the plan, the working group recommended that the Mayor establish the New Orleans Interagency Council on Homelessness (NOICH), for the purpose of retooling New Orleans' homeless services for greater impact. The Mayor concurred and Mayor's Executive Order established the Council as a Mayoral Advisory Committee.

### What Did They Do?

Since the formation of the NOICH, the number of homeless has continued to decline – and decline dramatically: in 2011: 6,687; in 2012: 4,903 and by January of 2013: 2,337.

What has happened to cause this decline?

The Mayor's Executive Order outlined the charge of the NOICH:

- Oversee the implementation of the New Orleans Homeless Services Working Group's Ten Year Plan
- Review the planning processes, policies and implementation strategies undertaken by homeless service providers that are part of the Continuum of Care
- Coordinate among relevant agencies and entities regarding the provision of housing services and housing production
- Coordinate annual weather freeze plan with the Health



CITY OF NEW ORLEANS  
HOMELESS SERVICES  
WORKING GROUP



In 2005, Hurricane Katrina left 11,000 residents of the New Orleans metro area homeless.



New Orleans,  
Louisiana

2011: 6,687 Homeless  
2013: 2,337 Homeless  
**26.68%  
Decrease**



Mayor Mitchell Landrieu

Department and other agencies or entities

- Establish standing committees regarding homeless services delivery, funding, data and veterans affairs

### Is It Working?

Stacey Horn Koch, Director of the NOICH believes that the Interagency Council provided the opportunity to bring together everyone who needed to have a voice in the solutions to the table. While it was a significant change from the past, the Council signified a move away from the status quo to a new structural model that broke down “siloed thinking” into a model of collaboration and shared actions. Through this Executive Order, the Mayor was able to ensure cross-functional and cross-jurisdictional collaboration and integration of action plans and shared resources to tackle the issues relating to the four standing committees. According to Koch, agencies and community leaders are excited and engaged by the process.

One exemplary “Best Practice” that has come from the Council is the release of a combined Request for Proposals for Federal, State, City and Private Capital and Operating Funds for service providers, faith-based organizations and housing developers to develop community based permanent supportive housing for homeless citizens.

This RFP is the first in the United States to “bundle” and leverage funding streams to maximize results in creating sustainable housing options. Funding available through this RFP includes:



### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

1. Creative “bundling” of funding streams available to address homelessness
2. Regular and consistent meetings of all stakeholders to share progress on goals
3. A key leader or leaders who make ending homelessness a priority

- City of New Orleans HOME funds
- Veteran’s Administration VASH vouchers
- HANO Section 8 vouchers
- State of Louisiana Supportive Housing vouchers
- New Orleans Redevelopment Authority Properties
- Downtown Development District

The RFP commits to awards totaling \$4.5 million for the acquisition and rehabilitation to support the development of properties to house the homeless. It also commits to awarding \$450,000 to fund rental assistance and an additional \$40,000 in supportive services funding.

### What’s Next?

For Koch, the most important “Next Steps” are the consistent, regular meetings of leaders and service providers showcasing what they are doing to make progress on their goals. Through working together on a shared set of common outcomes and shared interest, key stakeholders not only are building trusting relationships across organizational lines, they also are seeing results like they’ve never seen before. Koch firmly believes that the New Orleans’ community has achieved incredible results because committed people are understanding that great results can happen when people are working towards a shared vision and holding each other accountable for progress.



*NOICH will develop a community process to engage both homeless constituents and homeless service providers in New Orleans.*

# TULSA, OKLAHOMA

ORGANIZATION: MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF TULSA, OKLAHOMA

GOAL: TO ELIMINATE AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Why would an association known for its advocacy on mental health issues get into the housing business?

Here's why.

In 1989, affordable housing in Tulsa was at an all-time low and it was very difficult to find housing for people with mental illnesses. When the leaders of the Mental Health Association in Tulsa began to seek solutions to this dilemma, they discovered that the cost of housing people with mental issues varied greatly.

In fact, in 2013 figures, annual costs look like this:

- Correctional system for an inmate with mental illness .....\$43,000
- Cost of a shelter .....\$24,000
- Correctional system .....\$15,650
- Supportive housing .....\$7,893

Led by innovative business leaders, the Mental Health Association of Tulsa's Board of Directors focused on this mission: to help residents rebuild their lives by focusing on providing safe and affordable housing along with support services to ensure a community based, sustainable lifestyle.

### What Did They Do?

Early on, the Board of Directors elected to hire an urban planner to help the Board figure out a sustainable housing model that would work for Tulsa. With his assistance, they devised a plan that included insuring that the homeless and/or mentally ill person was not segregated into one type of housing

or one area of the community. They devised a mixed-income/mixed-population approach. To be successful, they believed the Mental Health Association had to develop a public/private model to **purchase and operate** the properties to insure the necessary support systems were available to support their clients.

They applied for an early HUD demonstration grant for five years to see if their model to **own and operate a continuum of affordable housing** for their clients would work. They began with 12 housing units and today, the Association owns and manages approximately 890 housing units; 26 apartment complexes, three non-residential properties and six residential programs and services. Housing is

In 2013,  
Annual Costs  
Look Like This:

Annual Costs:  
**\$43,000**  
To Correctional System  
for an inmate  
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Annual Costs:  
**\$24,000**  
Shelter



Annual Costs:  
**\$15,650**  
Correctional System



Annual Costs:  
**\$24,000**  
Supportive  
Housing




scattered throughout the community and must meet the following criteria: access to services, public transportation, shopping and jobs.

Approximately 50% of the current housing is dedicated to homeless or formerly homeless adult individuals and families. The other 50% of the residents pay market prices, which allows for the funding of services to the residents who need them.

### Is It Working?

In 2012, 91% of formerly homeless individuals who entered this housing have not returned to homelessness.

Critical success factors, according to Greg Shinn, Associate Director of the Mental Health Association in Tulsa, include having a visionary business and philanthropic community willing to raise investment funding. In 2001, for example, the business and philanthropic community raised \$5.25 million that were used to supplement federal funding and allow the Association to own these properties, debt free.

For over 24 years, this model has worked. It has saved taxpayer dollars, reduced homelessness and offers a stigma-free community for residents.

Additionally, the Tulsa Community Foundation facilitated

### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS?

- 1. Having visionary business and philanthropic leaders willing to raise investments**
- 2. Integrating housing throughout the community**
- 3. Building or purchasing housing accessible to transportation, shopping and jobs**
- 4. Surrounding residents with the proper level of support services**

an initiative, “A Way Home for Tulsa” where 23 local non-profits have formal Memorandums of Understanding to provide the necessary services required by the residents to achieve success in the community.

### What’s Next?

Once a social service and advocacy organization, the Mental Health Association has evolved into a sophisticated property management company.

In addition to providing housing for the chronically homeless and mentally ill, Shinn also is focused on his organization’s role in stimulating the Tulsa economy—by hiring those who were previously homeless—Shinn says there are 120

employees at 26 different properties. These impacts will continue to grow as the project grows.

According to Shinn, there are less than 100 chronic homeless persons in Tulsa. The community wants to get to zero. How will that happen?

It is imperative that leaders in the business, government and independent sector focus and coordinate efforts on common goals: providing access to people who are homeless, preventing additional homeless and preserving affordable housing.



Cedars Apartments undergoing rehab



Bradstone Property



Cedars Apartments before rehab

# Creative Solutions

## Thinking and Acting Differently

Community-wide efforts are necessary to substantively impact homelessness in our neighborhoods, cities, counties and states. But many organizations and individuals are finding ways to do their parts, however small, to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors in need. In fact, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless, we can help end

homelessness by simply **CAREing**. (Contribute, Advocate, Reach out and Educate).

Here are just a few innovative initiatives that illustrate ways to **CARE**.

Perhaps they will spark ideas for ways that each of us or our organizations can make a difference in our communities.



**Denver International Airport** is asking travelers to donate their spare change to Denver's Road Home, an organization that helps the homeless. The program began with four containers: one each at the north and south screening checkpoints and two before the A-security screening checkpoint. [www.flydenver.com](http://www.flydenver.com)



**Open Table Nashville** is a non-profit interfaith community that disrupts cycles of poverty, commits to "relational outreach to unhoused and precariously housed" individuals and families and provides education about issues of homelessness. [www.opentablenashville.org](http://www.opentablenashville.org)

**Project Night Night**, a children's charity, began in San Francisco when parents Kendra and Billy Robins saw a need and figured out how to fill it. This organization provides Night Night Packages, free of charge, to homeless children from birth to pre-teen who need childhood essentials to feel secure, cozy, ready to learn and significant. Each Night Night Package contains a new security blanket, an age-appropriate children's book and a stuffed animal. [www.projectnightnight.org](http://www.projectnightnight.org)





**InvisiblePeople.tv** uses the power of video and social media to share the compelling, gritty and unfiltered stories of homeless people from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. The vlog (video blog) interviews veterans, mothers, children, layoff victims and others who have been forced onto the streets by a variety of circumstances, proving to a global audience that while they may often be ignored, they are far from invisible.  
[www.invisiblepeople.tv](http://www.invisiblepeople.tv)

## From the Experts Who Helped Us Get Answers

# Funders Together to End Homelessness

Anne Miskey, Executive Director



When Anne Miskey became Executive Director of the national organization **Funders Together to End Homelessness (Funders Together)** in 2010, she was already committed to a belief in true collaboration through her work in the corporate, non-profit and foundation worlds. Ms. Miskey knew that funders can play a catalytic role to find solutions-based outcomes for social needs in communities. Yet too often philanthropy continues to make investments that produce

little change so problems remain or become worse.

The issue of homelessness, however, seemed to be one area where communities were actually “moving the needle” and numbers were going down. Why? Ms. Miskey states “it was directly a result of the systems approach versus a programmatic approach.” Creating systems that focus on best practices and collecting systems-wide data works best for the population a community is trying to serve.

In addition, the philanthropic community, sometimes conservative in terms of change, was beginning to look at homeless initiatives differently. They were taking a critical look at the systems that allow homelessness to continue and working in tandem with the government to rethink these systems. This shift brought about a change in the way a community operates around this issue.

Recognizing that they were working towards similar outcomes,

*Continued on page 24*

six large national funders came together at a conference around supportive housing. They decided to work together. As they pooled resources and shared what they were doing around the creation of permanent supportive housing, they launched the Partnership to End Long-Term Homelessness in 2004, focusing on chronic homelessness. This informal network then re-launched in 2010 as an independent 501(c) (3) organization with 160 members representing corporate funders, individual philanthropists, family and private foundations, United Ways and Community Foundations.

**Funders Together** is the only national network for grant makers working to end homelessness in America and to harness philanthropy's expanding potential, impact and ability to bring about needed change. The funders' commitment is through leadership, education and advocacy, strategic

collaboration and grant-making; and effective promotion and replication of best practices in communities across the nation.

#### What They Do

- 1) **Promote effective, strategic and innovation solutions to homelessness, particularly those that align with the "Housing First" approach**
- 2) **Advocate for increases in and more efficient use of local, state, and national resources dedicated to ending homelessness**
- 3) **Educate funders and other stakeholders about homelessness and related policies and programs and the need to align public and private resources toward common goals**
- 4) **Advocate for the research, data, and evidence needed about what works to solve homelessness and what**

**doesn't, and share such information broadly**

- 5) **Convene funders, providing opportunities for them to share lessons learned, ask questions, seek advice, get recommendations and identify collaborative opportunities**

**Funders Together** advocates for the vital role that philanthropy can and must play in communities if we are to end homelessness in our country. Philanthropy must continue to advocate for best practices and work to act as a bridge and a relationship builder in the community between service providers, government, the business and faith communities and funders themselves. They believe that the best way to solve the problem of homelessness is true community collaboration in which everyone is willing to give something up, and everyone is willing to share both the goals and the credit.

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# U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

**Barbara Poppe, Executive Director**

**B**arbara Poppe, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICOH) oversees the federal response to homelessness by working with 19 federal agencies to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to prevent and end homelessness in the nation.

Barbara has over 25 years' experience working on issues of homelessness and is a nationally recognized leader in creating collaborations and building innovative solutions. Since 2009, she has led the USICH and has a national view of the critical success factors that have to be present in a



community to end homelessness. According to her research, the following five areas are critical:

- 1) **Using data that can inform decisions and drive results**
- 2) **Fully integrating mainstream services and programs with homelessness services**

*Continued on page 25*

- 3) **Seeking innovative solutions to applying existing resources to achieve better outcomes**
- 4) **Ensuring outcome based measures are in place—implementing and funding what works**
- 5) **Seeking creative and new investments that are strategically deployed based on community needs.**

These factors are important building blocks for creating a community plan that brings all stakeholders together, and moves a community from independent, “siloed” organizational actions, to a collaborative model of shared goals, shared resources, and shared outcomes.

In addition to these success factors, at a recent conference on ending youth homelessness, Barbara outlined some core principles that are used by USICH Council members

when they commit to a goal. They are important principles for community stakeholders to consider if progress is to be made on ending homelessness:

- **Be honest about what we know and what we don’t know.**
- **Don’t let the absence of good numbers get in the way of leveraging investments to act more strategically.**
- **Fill in the gaps in knowledge with more research on effectiveness of interventions.**

# Conclusion

## How Communities Are Making a Difference

A survey of best practices is enlightening. Very different communities across this vast country have made great progress in meeting the challenges of homelessness. A Mayor might have led the initiative in one community where in another, that task fell to a business person. One city might enact a special tax to build supportive housing units where another utilized a Request for Proposal process to better leverage existing dollars. There are several thoughtful approaches found in these “best practices” which the reader may wish to replicate or find out more about.

But choosing the specific answer is not as important, nor as hard, as the community finding ways to work together. And that is the dilemma in

writing a paper like this. When we write of building leadership or breaking down silos or sharing better data, it sounds so basic, perhaps too simplistic, but it is the truth. Each one of the communities we surveyed spoke of how a passionate and credible leader focuses the community’s attention on homelessness; how collaborative teams use data, engages citizens and manage change, and how important the involvement of the business sector is.

Successfully addressing the homelessness challenge is not about finding the silver bullet; it is about building a broad community ethic. It is not “those people” anymore; it’s us and we need to care. Homelessness drains a community of dollars and of

sense. Ignoring it just costs more and eats away at our moral foundation to take care of others.

It is a community problem and a leadership opportunity. The communities we’ve highlighted in this paper are doing what they can and are doing it well. None would ever suggest they’ve solved the challenge of homelessness but each is encouraged by the progress.

We are deeply grateful for those who have given their time and wisdom to make this paper possible and we are honored to share their thoughts and stories.

*Glenda Hood  
Shelley Lauten  
Steven Seibert*





An initiative of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness

255 South Orange Avenue, Suite 108  
Orlando, Florida 32801  
321-710-HOME (4663)  
[www.ImpactHomelessness.org](http://www.ImpactHomelessness.org)

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