



Tent village: The home of the homeless



Photo credit Ashley Medrano

By Ashley Medrano

Near the University of Houston-Downtown, there is a small family of three who live on the abandoned grounds of a development. Dave, Linda, and Micah have created a haven safely tucked and hidden from the dangers of the streets. Although the woody area would frighten most, the surrounding trees provide a safety barrier around

their tented village. The area was not always accommodating, roughly six months ago the area was trashed by litter, the construction tools left behind by the workers, and the wild forestry absorbing the abandoned area. Dave's vision of a safer place, however, disregarded the overwhelming task and within two days he cleared out the area and watched his vision become reality for him and his family.

Contradictory to the standard definition of family, the three are not tied by blood or marriage. Instead, their bond was cultivated by the sleepless nights from the frigid cold, the rough textured cement mattresses of the streets, and the pain of an empty stomach. Each member has experienced the different dark shades of the streets, but they have ultimately found trust within each other.

In order to maintain the peace, however, rules are set to avoid confrontation. No drugs, alcohol, or strangers are allowed on the premise. Far from the contemporary homes of the suburban life, Dave, Micah, and Linda also rely on the shelter from tents and the privacy provided by the trees that act as barriers. Similar to any family, everyone plays a role inside their home and each member of the group brings their own strengths to keep their home safe.

Dave: "The fixer upper"

Before becoming a family, Dave, the 63-year-old veteran, had lived on the streets alone for almost a year. When he met Micah and Mary, however, he was never alone again. Together the three slept next to each other on the sidewalks, until he found the clearing. Dave saw the land as an opportunity to have something of his own and for his new family. According to Micah, Dave is "the fixer upper" of the group who handle the maintenance in order to continue living there. Despite Dave being a man of little words, his actions make up for the lack of sound. When a tent is torn, or something is broken, Dave immediately is the one who fixes it without being

asked to.

Also the architect-like figure of the group, Dave, recycled the materials from the abandoned development site to build this home. Due to his strong desire of having a home outside of the streets, he has placed a shower and restroom inside the area. For both Micah and Linda, however, their favorite "Dave project" is the pizza he makes. Depending on the situation, each member takes turns cooking meals on their grill. Although the living arrangement is optimal for their current situation, Dave still hopes to one day have a home. His goal is to save up his disability checks to one day have a roof over his head that will no longer need daily improvements.

Linda: "The mother"

The 62-year-old retiree has been homeless for a year. Before meeting her now family, Linda had been betrayed. She lent most of her money to a close friend, but when she needed help, the friend cut ties and never paid her back. Eventually the lack of income affected her, but instead of down spiraling, Linda learned from the experience

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To step outside: Being on my own

By Joshua Williams

In 2014 I became homeless. Just several months after I was accepted to study at the University of Houston, I found myself outside of my room and board, wondering when I was going to get back on my feet. But I never became someone who slept on the streets, no. Luckily I found a place to sleep and eat, a old motel near UHD.

I wanted to head out on my own after a few semesters at Houston Community College. Be the person in charge for once. Have my own place. My mother warned me about the responsibilities of renting an apartment, especially one that is near downtown. I understood her concern, but I just needed to step out on my own, to allow myself to have free space.

I arrived at the University of Houston with no idea what I was getting into. The crowds, the classes, even the walk to the library seemed a bit too long. Everything became overwhelming the second I entered orientation, but I kept a straight head for the sake of having my own apartment. I did not want to give up what I had worked so hard for and just watch it all fall apart because I was afraid.

It was not until much later that I lost the ability to manage my funds. I decided to leave my room and board. Get ahead of the eviction notice and just walk out. Stupid mistake, of course. Back then I could not trust anybody. Having been abused by a stepfather for many years prior, I constantly avoided people. Looking people in the eye was a challenge I could not over-

come. Each time I was amongst a crowd of people again, I felt overwhelmed. So I did not ask for help, I just could not.

For many months I struggled to understand why I allowed myself to be outside the walls of a prestigious university. Questions and answers swirled inside my head, and never had I felt so hopeless. I went back to the beginning, from when I was just a freshman working my way through Houston Community College, and only having just 20 credits under my belt before transferring over to the University of Houston. I remember how proud I was of everything and how let down I became whenever something bad would come my way. I was the type of student who strived for perfection, and if I did not get it then I often left the college campus

feeling depressed. Somehow I got it inside my head that having a room and board, being a student at a prestigious university, and having no one to guide me through life's challenges was the definition of perfection.

I later decided that my best course of action was to stay somewhere close to downtown. A motel was taking in people for just \$600 a month, or \$150 a week. Across the street was a Jack in the Box and one homeless man always sitting down in the middle of the road just waiting. I stayed at the motel before, so I knew how the procedure worked and how it looked from the inside. The hardest part was not knowing how long my temporary stay was going to last.

The room I stayed in had a shower with cold water, one fridge, one dresser with a

few roaches crawling inside, and a lamp. Above me hung a ceiling fan which turned on with the use of a switch by the front door. There was no stove inside and the microwave my mother gave me before I headed off to live on my own was still inside my room and board at the university. Yes, I ran off without making sure all my belongings were off the property first.

The first night, I tried continuing my studies online. I had to drop one Economics class before leaving the university, but I still had to travel there to take a Pre-Cal class which seated over 50 students. When money became tighter and the thoughts of failing grew, one by one I started dropping all the classes I had left. This

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Causes and effects of homelessness

By Sara Ali

Homelessness is increasing in our society, and it is still expected to rise by 2.5 percent in the next five years, despite the efforts of various organizations trying to combat homelessness. One of the major problems that virtually every society suffers from is homelessness. There can be many factors that can contribute to homelessness, but the main reasons are insufficient income, lack of affordable housing, and poverty. For many women, the cause of homelessness is due to domestic violence.

Each year at least 2.5 to 3.5 million Americans sleep in shelters...

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty states, "Each year at least 2.5 to 3.5 million Americans sleep in shelters, transitional housing, and public places not meant for human habitation." The article continues to express that 7.4 million people have already lost their homes due to economic necessity. For people that express homelessness it is about a lack of security, lack of belonging and often being sick, cold and isolated.

A recent annual survey by the U.S Conference of Mayors, noted that major cities reported the top causes of homelessness to be lack of affordable housing, unemploy-

ment, poverty, mental illness, substance abuse and the lack of needed services. Data collected by HUD over the course of 2012 noted that the "sheltered" homeless population was 63% male, 37% female, 83.7% non-Hispanic/non-Latino, 38.9% White, 5% other single race, 63.1% single-person household and 38.6% disabled.

One of the leading causes of homelessness is insufficient income, impact of racial disparities, and escaping violence. The National Alliance to End Homelessness, states that "Low income households are typically unemployed or underemployed due to a number of factors, such as a challenging labor market; limited education; a gap in work history; a criminal record; unreliable transportation or unstable housing; poor health or disparity." Low income and the inability to find affordable housing leaves many people with the risk of becoming homeless. Minority groups in the United States experience homelessness at a higher rate than whites and they make up a large share of the homeless population. These minority groups include African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders.

Furthermore, several consequences that can lead to homelessness are health consequences. Homeless people have a higher premature mortality rate than those people who are properly housed, with injuries, unintentional overdose and there are extreme weather events that contribute to this mortality. The

homeless people have a lower quality of life which includes chronic pain that is associated with poor sleeping conditions and limited access to medicines and other resources. Homelessness is a challenge. It threatens health by presenting challenges to the homeless, its consequences, and the way that we envision solutions. Some of the health diseases that many homeless people suffer from are tuberculosis, nutritional deficiencies, and sleep deprivation. Some other health problems that are caused by homelessness are traumatic disorders, disorders of skin and blood vessels, respiratory illnesses, chronic diseases. Homelessness can not only cause health problems, but studies show there is a relation between mental health and the likelihood of becoming homeless.

Despite, the consequences faced by homelessness there can be several solutions to resolve them. Some of these solutions are through housing, services, social connectedness, services, and prevention. Housing is the essential foundation for ending homelessness, because it provides a stable launchpad for people. It allows them to keep a job, address mental illness, substance use, take care of their health and nutritional needs, and find purposeful roles in the community. Having housing is a basic human right, without which people cannot lead stable and connected lives.

Another way which we can end homelessness is by

having services for these people, which can provide stability and prevent future homelessness. Homeless people would need services such as quality health-care, childcare, transportation, and stable employment. Just focusing on housing cannot end homelessness, people need these basic amenities so their needs for survival are fulfilled. There needs to be a way with which these services are available, accessible, and affordable across their lifespan.

Social connectedness is another way to resolve homelessness. A great way to bring about an end to homelessness is by creating a strategy for social inclusion and social connectedness. Another idea called Homelessness Prevention can be a great way to bring an end to homelessness, which means more than just providing a short-term subsidy to stabilize a family who is about to be thrown out of their place.

We should place all our attention and focus on homeless prevention. If we figure four simple things out such as housing, services, social connectedness, services and prevention, then we can figure out a way to put an end to homelessness.

Sara Ali is majoring in Technical Communications. She enjoys reading, writing and experiencing many stories. She loves writing and thinks of it as a way to find her voice. Her hobbies include reading, writing, cooking, gardening and enjoys playing video games.

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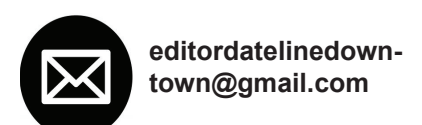
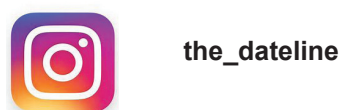
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and was able to manage well for months alone on the streets. However, unlike most homeless cases, Linda's living situation is by choice. Unable to survive check-to-check, she decided the best way was by living on the streets while saving her retirement checks to ultimately have her own home.

Although her situation is by choice, her greatest fear was formed from sleeping on the sidewalks, Linda says she remembers, "being so cold [she] couldn't sleep" and being afraid

We found each other because we speak the truth

she was going to die. Now safely within the tent village Linda is regarded the protective mother figure of the group. As a response to the potential dangers, or threats to the group Linda says, "If you mess with one of us, you mess with us all". In this strong familial bond, trust conquers all, and it is seen in the responsibilities each member is given. For groceries, the money between the three of them is combined and then given to Linda to complete the

shopping task. Linda's role is also seen in the way she is perceived, according to Micah, "Linda is the most positive person you will ever meet". After all of the experiences from the streets, Linda is still able to maintain a positive light heart, which enables the other two to feel the same.

Micah: The humorist

Micah, the youngest of the group and a 56-year-old veteran, has been on the streets for nearly seven months. Before becoming homeless he lived with his brother and sister-in-law in an apartment. Unfortunately, unbeknown to Micah, every check he would give to his brother for the rent was used for gambling, which eventually led to an eviction, and then the streets. Then, on one of the many nights of sleeping on the sidewalk, he was beat senselessly and robbed. Despite Micah's negative experiences that would deter many people from ever trusting again, after meeting Dave and Linda he stated, "We found each other because we speak the truth". Micah's humor, respect, gratitude, and honesty have played a great role in the group. Quick to give other compliments and to assist with any chore, Micah



Photo credit Ashley Medrano

admires the people he lives with. Due to his experiences, he is aware that everything can be lost within moments. From the lessons learned from life and the streets, Micah now holds two things sacred: his family and his phone. Micah explained, "My phone is extremely important to me, it has pictures of my mom and dad". The safe he has is now all he has left and he

wants to maintain it like that. Now Micah's goal is to save up his disability checks to one day

If you mess with one of us, you mess with us all

be able to afford his own home without struggling financially,

or to buy a mobile home to travel with his family around the country.

Any passerby of the thicket would not assume there are people living amongst the wilderness, but those are the intentions of the three. The surrounding trees conceal the tent village, but the noisiness of downtown Houston drowns out the laughter and the talking from within. More fortunate than most homeless people, Dave, Linda, and Micah have found their happiness within each other and plan to keep it safe inside their haven. Although physically homeless by definition, the group has already found a home within one another.

Ashley Medrano is a senior in Interdisciplinary Studies. After 7 years of following multiple four-year degree plans, she is finally going to graduate in December 2018. When she is not aimlessly taking classes and spending money on them, she enjoys reading and being with her family. She hopes to one day work in the competitive publishing field as an editor, but is hopeful that if it goes astray she will edit 2nd graders' papers for the rest of her life.



Photo credit Ashley Medrano

To step outside: Being on my own continued from page 1

resulted in me having to owe the university all of my financial aid money that was given to me. Back then, I did not know the consequences of leaving school abruptly. To me it was something I thought I could brush off. I laid down on my motel bed staring at the ceiling fan and wishing I had my motivation back. It should have come back to me, it needed to, but I became too complacent.

One night, at nearly 3 a.m. I heard soft knocking on the door, it was somebody wanting to talk, and I knew who it was. Outside there were several homeless women checking anyone who lived inside the motel out. All of them looked unhealthy. All of them looked desperate. I never opened the door once for them, instead I waited until the person outside stopped knocking.

Ikea Houston was my

only saving grace. I worked there as a cashier, but the weekends were hectic. People who I never met came to me with their items, asking me to go faster, faster, faster, but they never asked what my name was. I wondered who they were, these people who just wanted me to go faster on the cash register, although I barely had any training. Good people? Bad people? People who had much more important lives than me?

And then I lost my job at Ikea Houston. I remember having to walk out of the store after just receiving the news that I had been fired for a making a dumb mistake. A person took advantage of me and stole money while I was again overwhelmed with so many customers at one time. Since I did not have a car, I walked all the way to the nearest bus station, and I stared at every incoming car and

cried. In my head I was thinking how all of those cars were passing me up, going somewhere forward while I was walking backwards.

For weeks afterwards I relied on METRORail to get me to where I needed to go. February was income tax month, so I waited desperately for it to become my next saving grace, my final check from Ikea. Days went by and my patience was wearing thin. I finally had the nerve to call my mom for assistance and she graciously helped me pay the weekly rent. Unfortunately, my income tax check was not a lot and food was running low. My mother made the suggestion of coming back home to her and I took it without hesitation.

I can never take back what happened in 2014, all I can do is move on from the past and focus on the future. What this

story taught me is to never let your guard down, no matter what situation you find yourself in. I thought it would be okay, more than okay when I arrived at the University of Houston, but I was mistaken. Sometimes a person needs a little help to step outside their comfort zone. Being homeless does not exclusively mean not having

four walls and a roof, it can also mean not being surrounded by the ones who care for you.

Joshua Williams is a current UHD senior expecting to graduate in the fall of 2019. His passions include playing video games and spending time with his family. He's also a huge fan of online movie talk shows on YouTube.

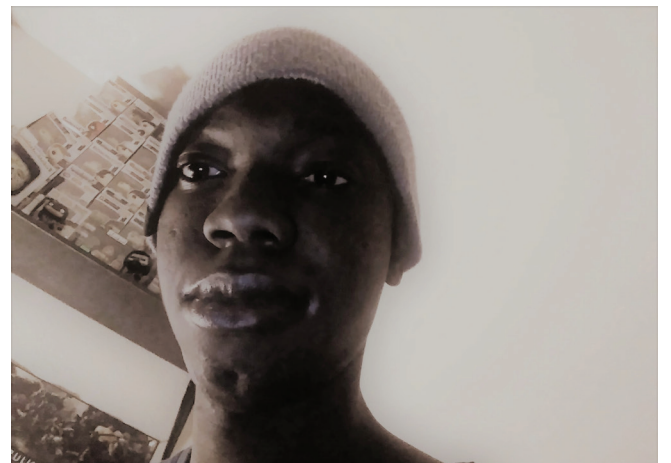


Photo credit Joshua Williams

UHD alumni, Food Not Bombs feed the hungry

By Emily Christiansen

At least once or twice a week, UHD alumni Rebecca Lavergne serves food in front of the downtown Houston Public Library with Food Not Bombs, a grassroots foodshare program.

Lavergne has volunteered with Food Not Bombs in Houston for four years, beginning while she was an undergrad at UHD. She joins a rotat-

His shoes were falling off of his feet by the time a volunteer was able to get him a new pair.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Lavergne



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Lavergne
ing group of 10 to 25 volunteers to help feed the hungry. She is deeply involved in ending social inequality in all forms and felt this was a way to help hunger at its root. Lavergne assists many of the regulars she meets at Food Not Bombs with resources such as finding shoes for a new job, getting a ride to an emergency shelter, or locating clothes for the children of these families. When Hurricane Harvey was hours away she drove around getting people to shelter at George R. Brown, then came

back to volunteer there while the flood waters were still rising. Lavergne often brings her son and daughter with her to volunteer. She teaches them how to give back to their community in regular action.

Roughly 100 to 175 people come to eat each time Food Not Bombs serves dinner. Lavergne explained that these people come from all backgrounds. Some are

the one thing that they all have in common is that they want to be seen; they want to be treated like people.

homeless and some are merely hungry. She says "the one thing that they all have in common is that they want to be seen; they

want to be treated like people." Lavergne told of one man who used to walk from Rosenberg to downtown Houston to eat. His shoes were falling off of his feet by the time a volunteer was able to get him a new pair. One homeless family with four children were regular visitors to Food Not Bombs. Lavergne described how they got an apartment, but still come to eat a few times a week.

Food Not Bombs began in Massachusetts in 1980. They believe that food should not be wasted and every person has the right to eat regardless of their status. Food Not Bombs recovers food that would otherwise be wasted by arranging pickups at local grocery stores and restaurants.

They argue that America spends money on the military that could be better used to help end hunger. An poster they used at their first gathering captured that sentiment as it read "Wouldn't it be a beautiful day if the schools had all the

money they needed and the air force had to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber?" Because it is a grassroots movement, no national leadership exists. Rather, Food Not Bombs depends on independent local groups to uphold their principle of ending poverty rather than just cared for it.

The Houston chapter of Food Not Bombs serves food four times a week in front of the Houston Public Library at 500 McKinney St. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, they begin at 8 pm and on Sundays, they eat at 7 pm. They welcome all volunteers. To read more about how Food Not Bombs works, visit foodnotbombs.net.



Photo courtesy of Food not Bombs

Sexual Assault: How it affects the homeless

By Aansa Usmani

A contributing factor for homelessness is sexual assault; victims desire a healthier living environment free of abuse. It negatively impacts one's life because it causes a loss of support (whether material or humanly), furthering one's trauma. According to the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, 92 percent of home-

92 percent of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual violence in their lifetime

less women have experienced either severe physical or sexual violence in their lifetime with 21 to 42 percent of homeless

youth reporting sexual abuse before leaving home and up to 38 percent identify sexual abuse as a reason for leaving home. These cases demonstrate how sexual assault has affected them and their current situations.

Mechanisms used in dealing with trauma is often through self-medication of either drugs or alcohol. A reason for dependency is due to dealing with the trauma of sexual assault. According to a study by Wenzel, Leake, and Gelberg, homeless women who had experienced either physical or sexual violence in the past month were three times more likely to report drug or alcohol abuse compared to homeless women not abused. Substance abuse may lead to a higher risk of victimization, potentially causing a homeless to be further abused or traumatized. Drug use also impedes a person's mind, affecting how they perceive or view other people around them. Drug dependency affects the homeless because they want to

Understanding how trauma impedes a homeless person's life can help overcome emotional barriers and restore a feeling of support.

be accepted by the community yet through their dependency, it causes more conflict and issues to arise.

Understanding how trauma impedes a homeless person's life can help overcome emotional barriers and restore a feeling of support. According to the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care and Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint (NCTIC), "The principles of a trauma-informed approach and trauma-specific interventions are designed to address the con-

sequences of trauma in the individual and to facilitate healing." Trauma-informed care demonstrates how one is affected by the triggering, painful memories experienced in their daily lives; psychological and sociological practices are used to understand a person's needs and emotions, furthering one's healing. These methods help one transition from dependency and fear to a life free of traumatic impediments. Organizations such as Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offer trauma-informed care, an evidence-based practice at service providers and organizations. They strive to help the homeless cope with trauma and help them live a life worth living.

If you or anyone you know is suffering from substance abuse or trauma (related or unrelated to being homeless) you can contact SAMHSA via email, postal or call. Details are listed below:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Telephone Numbers: (both are toll-free):
1-800-662-HELP (4357)
TTY: 1-800-487-4889

Aansa Usmani is a first-year college student attending the University of Houston-Downtown. She is a Political Science major with plans to run for political office. She identifies herself as a social justice warrior, advocating for women, LGBT, immigration, and other liberal causes. Alongside politics, her passions include photography, writing, and debate. Although relatively young, she has demonstrated literacy competency, writing about topics ranging from homelessness to sexual assault.



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Commerce Building (C443) Tues. & Thurs., 4 - 7pm

Northwest (Bldg. 12, Rm. 333) Mon. - Thurs., 3:30 - 8pm



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A reporter's perspective on the homeless count

This article is being republished from Volume 54 Issue 2 in 2015. We included it to show how Dateline: Downtown has reported on homelessness previously.

By Joshua Burgman

At the end of January I had the pleasure of accompanying members of the UHD student body as the city of Houston made a count of its citizens who are homeless and precariously housed. What I encountered was the most humbling experience of my life.

The homeless count, or Point in Time count (PIT), its official name, is a nation-wide effort to account for these citizens for the purpose of allocating funds to accommodate the needs of the city's less fortunate. The count is a requirement made by the federal government on all communities receiving funding from housing and Urban Development (HUD).



Photo courtesy of Blake McDaniel

In Houston, the community organization, Coalition for the Homeless, spearheads the effort. Their May 2014 PIT Enumeration Executive Summary, prepared by Dr. Catherine Troisi and the Coalition, reviewed the count conducted last year. According

to the report, "of the total of homeless persons, 2,291 [or 43 percent] were unsheltered." The reality of that number was way more shocking than I could have imagined.

The evening began with a mandatory training held at Houston's Neighborhood

Resource Center. UHD's First Lady, Dr. Bezette Flores, attended the meeting, along with SGA President John Locke and members of his administration. After the training, students gathered at UHD's Commerce building to regroup and split up into teams.

The group I traveled

with included SGA member Nayolis Palomo, faculty member Consuela Cooper and Dateline: Downtown photographer Blake McDaniel. We were tasked with surveying the area in and around Houston's downtown library, and were stocked with water, snacks and five-dollar gift cards to McDonalds.

When asked about the night, my recollection is that it was beautifully melancholy. It may sound wildly poetic, but after becoming a student at UHD I began to become intimately acquainted with our wonderful city, that night more than ever. It was like taking a closer look at a beautiful painting that I have seen for years, but never really looked at. When our city lights up at night, there is an energy that stirs passion and evokes pride, but as you take a closer look at the canvas, that is our streets, it is easy to see that

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Kristopher Sharp: A profile on overcoming homelessness

This article is being republished from Volume 53 Issue 4 in 2014. We included it to show how Dateline: Downtown has reported on homelessness previously.

By Ted Schull

Senior Kristopher Sharp is sometimes known as the "best dressed" man on campus. Last year, as the student-body Vice President, Sharp showed up to classes in three-piece suits, always looking like a man with somewhere to go. Kris' story was not always this bright and illustrates major life struggles he had to overcome.

While Sharp is on an incredible trajectory of success, he shared openly of his precarious upbringing and periods of homelessness to illustrate the plight of many college students who go completely unnoticed but are among us daily.

Sharp says, "I've lived in 24 different foster and residential homes and went to 25 different schools. I moved to Houston at the age of 16 and it was great, I was finally placed in a home for over a year, which gave me some stability and al-

lowed me to make some friends, which is rare in the foster care system. I aged-out of the system when I turned 18 and there weren't any transitional living facilities, they simply kick you out because the money stops flowing in."

Sharp was offered the chance to go back to the Texas panhandle to a shelter, where his foster care journey began, but made the decision to stay

in Houston because he had recently identified himself as a member of the LGBT community and had made some friends that accepted him for that.

He lived on top of a northside Houston shopping strip for nearly six months. He bluntly states there are three ways to survive in the street economy: become a violent criminal; participate in the drug trade or practice survival sex,

which is what Sharp "naturally gravitated to."

Sharp had a unique admission experience to the University of Houston-Downtown. He wandered on campus in search of a restroom during an admissions' fair where they offered him food if he signed up for classes.

After receiving his financial aid refund, he began the process of transitioning into an

apartment. "I spent the majority of my first semester homeless because it's hard to get your first apartment without understanding the process," he says, adding that he had no one to call to get advice on what kind of apartment he should apply for.

One adjusting to college life, he decided to major in social work, or "the family business" as he calls it. "About 80 percent of former foster care kids decide to major in social work, because of their life experiences that make them feel like they are especially suited to make an impact."

Upon graduation, Sharp plans to attend law school to work specifically on public policy and legislation surrounding homelessness and increasing the public's awareness and access to social programs.

"If you're in college but have uncertain living conditions, don't give up hope. It's hard to work yourself out of these situations, but it will ultimately be worth it. I don't regret any of my past experiences because they all have combined to make me the man I am today and have given me the character and worldview I have now."



KRISTOPHER SHARP: A PROFILE ON OVERCOMING HOMELESSNESS

Photo courtesy of Dateline:Downtown

Houston Recovery Center serves vital need in Houston

By Emily Christiansen

Leonard Kincaid, co-founder of Houston Recovery Center, spoke about the work the center does to help with addiction and recovery in Houston as part of UHD's Vital Voices series.

HRC is best known as a sobering center in Downtown Houston. Police can drop off intoxicated individuals who would otherwise go to jail. Once there, they are watched over by trained staff. The clients speak with a recovery specialist to decide if they want to pursue recovery options or simply leave after they sober up. If the clients want to begin a recovery program, the staff works to place them with one of the community partners.

The idea for HRC came from Kincaid and Houston Police Lieutenant Mike Lee. They were inspired by San Antonio's Haven for Hope, a program for the homeless which offers a multitude of services. After approval by the city, the sobering center opened in 2013. Kincaid, a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor with over 30 years of experience, explained that their next step was to begin Partners in Recovery in 2014 which helps with the lon-

ger term solutions to recovery and sobriety.

73 percent of HRC clients only use the center once or twice; they come from all backgrounds. The remaining 27 percent are primarily homeless and a portion of those are the ones who come back to HRC repeatedly. Although everyone who needs HRC's services is welcome, the target population is the uninsured and underinsured. Kincaid said that many of these people use services such as emergency rooms or have law enforcement encounters which are costly to taxpayers, and HRC looks to reduce that cost.

When HRC first opened, the only way for people to get admitted was to be dropped off by the Houston Police Department. HRC has expanded to work with many organizations now, including 30 law enforcement agencies. Clients can walk up and ask for admission and they can be referred from drug court. HRC works with hospitals and Harris County Jail to offer their services to individuals with substance abuse issues. HRC also has a street outreach team that keeps in contact with the homeless community and offers

transport for anyone who wants treatment. These efforts are supported and paid for in part by the Downtown Management District and the Midtown Man-

Public Intoxication arrests have dropped 94 percent from over 20,000 in 2010 to less than 900 in 2017

agement District who recognize the impact that HRC is making.

HRC was begun to reduce the jail population and save law enforcement and medical resources while helping people "escape the revolving door of jail and addiction" according to Kincaid. It has been remarkably successful. Public Intoxication arrests have dropped 94 percent from over 20,000 in 2010 to less than 900 in 2017. This is possible because Public Intoxication is a Class C misdemeanor which allows for the individual to be released to a responsible adult instead of going to jail.

Kincaid described HRC's future plans. Many

homeless clients use different agencies and have multiple case managers. He said that these agencies are working together to streamline the case management process because to "the degree we can stabilize this population, these resources will be saved". They are also preparing for the opioid crisis by partnering with UT Health, Baylor College of Medicine, and the head of EMS to make a comprehensive plan.

HRC is realistic. They recognize that many clients do not get sober the first time around. HRC remains hopeful though because statistics show that 80 percent of people that stay engaged in recovery for three to five years make to long term recovery. Kincaid said "addiction doesn't define anyone and recovery is a slow process". They continue to welcome clients back each time. The results are encouraging. HRC has found a model for definite change and is seeking to improve it while staying true to its values of compassion, dignity and respect.

HRC is located at 150 North Chenevert St and is open twenty four hours a day.

Emily Christiansen is a third year Technical Communication major. She enjoys reading Piers Anthony books set in Xanth and comics. She spends nearly all of her time with her boyfriend and kids playing board games, going to parks, or the library. She plans to work as a technical writer or editor after graduation.



Photo credit Emily Christiansen

Homeless count

continued from page 6

our portrait is flawed. That night I learned the true meaning of the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words;" each person I came in contact with had a story on their face that could write a book of a thousand pages.

The first man I spoke with was a 52-year-old war veteran who did not wish to be named. After fighting in the Gulf War, he now resides on the outside steps of the library. As I approached him, he looked upon me with suspicion, but accepted the offer to be surveyed. He asked that I not print his name or take his photo because of the stigma toward homeless people, and told me that he would not want a future employer to know that he was homeless for fear of being turned away. When I shook his hand, and turned to leave I thought of my father, who is the same age.

One of my last encounters introduced me to a man who called himself "Rob," and his wife; who was apparently having a conversation with participants who were silent,

of the total of homeless persons, 2,291 [or 43 percent] were unsheltered.

and not present. He explained to us that their home had just burned down just months before we met, and because they did not have homeowners insurance they were, "stuck out in the cold."

As we were leaving a man approached us in a wheel-

chair asking if we had gift cards left because he was "starving." To our dismay, we were completely out, but in one of the most unselfish acts I had ever seen, Rob came up to us and handed the man in the wheelchair the only plate of food he and his wife had just received from another kind person. That simple act of generosity and sense of community has made me examine and redefine my understanding of the word humanity, and it is something that I will never forget. I found that their will to survive stems from a lack of alternatives. The count may not be exact science, but it goes a long way in trying to satisfy the needs of our community.

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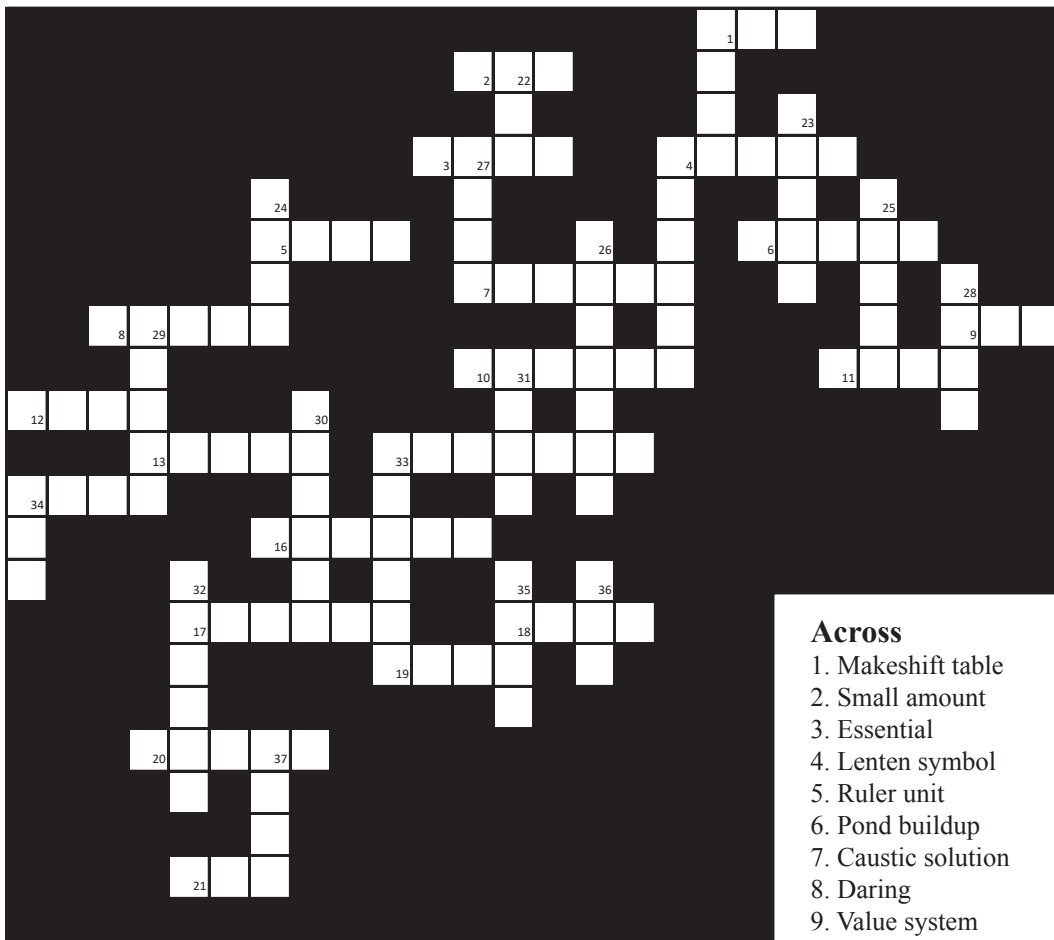
Contact

Quintin Coleman

Email

editordatelinedowntown@gmail.com

Join us on Wednesdays @ 11:30 am – 12:45 pm in S-260



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			3					
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2					1		6	

Across

- 1. Makeshift table
- 2. Small amount
- 3. Essential
- 4. Lenten symbol
- 5. Ruler unit
- 6. Pond buildup
- 7. Caustic solution
- 8. Daring
- 9. Value system
- 10. Cauliflower bud
- 11. Fabricated
- 12. Job for a body shop

13. Tedium

- 14. Hearth's need
- 15. Many miles off
- 16. Gave a piercing look
- 17. Hard to rhyme
- 18. Bad day for Caesar
- 19. Poet's contraction
- 20. Sweet oblong fruit
- 21. Was idle

Down

- 1. Ship's journal
- 22. Pub order

23. Nametag word

- 4. Habitual user
- 24. King or queen, in beds
- 25. Iraqi port
- 26. Blocked a blow
- 27. Barcelona pronoun
- 28. Monopoly card
- 29. Aquatic mammal
- 30. Strings instrument
- 31. Margarita garnish
- 32. Depart (2 wds.)
- 33. Rug
- 34. Cross-examine

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