Precious Lott

Currently Retention Case Manager, JOIN www.joinpdx.org

“Me and my daughter slept in our car from when she was two months until she was almost five, I had a daily routine: I would see my daughter off and then make sure I was on the grind looking for work or permanent housing. I have her kids and you’re outside. We’re a tragedy, a paradox, we’re so far away from not having someone go or a support network. It’s easier to think of less of those that are in that situation as a way to protect ourselves from the reality that it could be us. We see about 6,000 people a year who come in for first time rent assistance and eviction prevention. The number of people continuing to use that service after they first receive it - that number is going up. It tells you something about the housing market. And once we place people into housing, we know how many people we’re still getting retention services. And that number is going up also.

People think there isn’t work happening, that the money we’re spending isn’t doing anything. The reality is that the money is helping more people than ever, the things we’re doing are making a difference. There’s just so many people that still need help, it doesn’t feel like it. The reality is we know what works, and we need more money to fund what works.”

COMMUNITY

“Me and my daughter slept in a shelter, you could end up in the car, hospital bill...all that work, maybe you go through your wages are, and your rent is going up faster than that just adds more trauma to it. We need housing that’s staffed with professionals that help rent and supports and validate people and support them to make changes in their lives that are positive. If we can keep someone in housing and keep them working, the chances are pretty good they won’t go back to jail. If there’s someone living in a tent in your neighborhood, what are you going to do to help get that person out of your neighborhood and get someplace where they’re safe and comfortable and they’re not in front of anybody else’s home? How do you talk to the people who are camping in your neighborhood and let them know you care for them but we need to find another solution for you and how can I help you do that? Treat them like humans and see what you can do to support them.”

Matt Olguin
Director of Shelter Services Transition Projects Inc.

“People are homeless because they have no other options. Some people have no option to begin with, some have burned those bridges and they have to try to repair them later in life. But every experience of homelessness is different and children and the drivers that led them to be homeless is different. The vast majority of people became homeless here in Portland. It’s a portland problem. That myth that the homeless are moving here from places that is not true.”

Linda Jo Devlaeminck
Program Director Community of Hope www.communityofhopepdx.org

“The missing piece is relationships. If you’re going to break the cycle of trauma, the only way to do that is to help parents and children to have healthy relationships, to be able to give and take, to trust each other to know that they’re loved and be free to be who they are. Relationship ships are key positive relationships that are going to help heal from that trauma and support people in makin g healthy choices. You can’t make a healthy choice if you don’t have the wherewithal to do that, if you don’t have that background and support. If we could heal those relationships, and have a society where we love each other, then there would not be home lessness and there would not be addiction. Children that have adverse childhood experiences - if you have been home less, abused, witnessed abuse, a child of parents that are incarcerated or addicted - if you experienced these things you are statistically more likely to have poor health as an adult, even if those issues got resolved. More likely to be overweight, more likely to abuse drugs and to abuse others or to be a victim of domestic violence. Less likely to go to college, less likely to have a good job, less likely to have good outcomes; that’s going to help you be successful. Childhood trauma is the worst health issue in our nation, and maybe our world. It’s worse than cancer, worse than heart disease.”

Jason Jones

Living on the streets is a traumatic thing. The trauma is bad, but it’s bad for you, it’s bad you’re homeless is a traumatic thing. Then coming out of prison and being homeless, on top of that just adds more trauma to it. “We need” housing that’s staffed with professionals that help rent and support and validate people and support them to make changes in their lives that are positive. If we can keep someone in housing and keep them working, the chances are pretty good they won’t go back to jail.

Jason Jones

Homeless Advocate

“One of the biggest misconceptions of homelessness is that every one on drugs, alcohol, mentally ill, because the decision makers are catering to that. They’re saying we need more housing because we’re vulnerable, people that have problems, so people like me who are clean and sober are stuck, put way back on the back burner. It’s hard for us to see other people that have vices go and get rewarded with housing, when we’re trying to really be outstanding citizens. But it only takes one homeless person to screw up and all of a sudden we all get labelled as that.”

The hardest thing about homelessness is the psycholog y of it all. People are down, grad students, saying yes you can sleep here, no you can’t sleep there. You can rest here, no you can’t rest here; you can’t do this, you can’t do that. The psychological part of that, it’s what people don’t understand. It’s the fear component, and you have to bring yourself back up. It’s a constant test.

I pushed a lot of that away in order for me to do what I had to do and it took me a long time to settle down once I got housed. I had high walls, thick skin and I wouldn’t let it bother me. Then when I went inside I said “I’m gonna take one day for me to treat me like a human being, you know that I’m taking care of you that I know that I died and suffered out there. It took me five days when I finally got inside and it was so bad that I went into this deep depression because of that. But the walls got thinner, the high walls came down, and there was this tidal wave of emotion that came down on me.”

Linda Jo Devlaeminck

The missing piece is relationships. If you’re going to break the cycle of trauma, the only way to do that is to help parents and children to have healthy relationships, to be able to give and take, to trust each other to know that they’re loved and be free to be who they are. Relationships are key positive relationships that are going to help heal from that trauma and support people in making healthy choices. You can’t make a healthy choice if you don’t have the

Portland, Unhoused: The People on the Front Lines

See the video companion to this story at: necoalition.org/blog/pdxunhoused

мотрим на улицу и говорим: “Она опроизошла вместе с тем” то есть мы можем сказать: “Она появляется все больше и больше. Если вы видите, что что-то происходит, и вам это не нравится, вы можете сказать: “Я хочу, чтобы вы сделали это” и т.д. Но на самом деле это не так.”