



Who are our Friends Without an Address?

One question that I get asked all the time is "who are the people that hang out at the Phoenix?" It is natural to be curious about our friends without an address: How did they become homeless? How long have they been homeless? Are they drug addicts? Why can't they find a job? In a city full of apartment buildings, why can't they find housing?

The answers to these questions are usually far more complicated than a one or two sentence reply. Many of the explanations to these questions require a background story about a specific individual or family, followed by a list of complications and barriers that they struggle with on a daily basis that prevents them from "just going out and getting a job" or "finding an apartment and signing a lease."

As you may already know, the News Gazette recently published a piece on our friend, Tim. Tim comes to the Phoenix every day. He usually arrives right after we open our doors and sticks around every evening to help us clean.

Tim is just one of our friends without an address who comes into the Phoenix every day. He is one of our "regulars". Tim explained to the reporter that he had been in the construction field for many years when he was hit by a car as a pedestrian. The accident left him unable to work construction as he used to. This led to job loss, which led to income loss, which ultimately led to homelessness. Tim has applied for and has been denied Social Security Disability assistance and continues to struggle making enough money to live on. There are many who, like Tim, come to the Phoenix every day that we are open and stay the entire day.

SNEEK PEAK

03 OWN & Giving Tuesday

04 What are you thankful for?

Some people will come in and hang out a few times a week. Some come a few times a month. A few of our friends will hang out at the Phoenix for two weeks straight and then I won't see them for months. Some come into the Phoenix for a specific purpose; to get a referral, help with a state ID, connection to resources, to use the phone, take a shower, do some laundry, drink a cup of coffee, and some come in simply to be around other human beings who care that they exist.

I have had conversations with women who are escaping a domestic violence situation and have nowhere to sleep. I have had conversations with families who have been staying in their car for two months. These are always the conversations that wreck me. A parent, working full time at a minimum wage job, cannot make enough money to house his or her school-aged children, so they literally live in their vehicle. Single mothers with babies, couples with so many children that they struggle to find a shelter that can accommodate them all, let alone find suitable and affordable housing. There are many people (with and without children) who sleep a few nights with a friend, then they stay a week with their Aunt, then they stay with another relative and continue to bounce back and forth where ever they are able. No stability. No consistency. No comfort.

These are our friends without an address: the countless individuals, couples and families who come to the Phoenix for help every day. Some are homeless because they were living in an already unstable situation and then they lost their job. Some of our friends suffer from substance abuse issues or mental health issues and struggle to make good life choices. Some of our friends have no social supports to help them when they fall on hard times. Some have suffered medical issues and have struggled with massive hospital bills. So many of us live paycheck to paycheck and without social supports, one financial blow is all it takes to

go from having housing to losing it all. Sometimes it's that simple.

From my experience, the one thing that many of our friends without an address have in common is that if they felt confident that something they did would end their homeless situation, they would. So many of them feel utterly hopeless. The systems that are put in place to help are often so difficult to navigate, even for those who have reserves of patience and resiliency! There is a HUGE shortage of affordable housing, especially if you have an eviction or felony on your background. There are very few employers in this community that are willing to hire someone with a felony conviction on their background. There are so many obstacles and barriers to obtaining the help they need, but the biggest obstacle, I find, is the loss of hope. The feeling that no matter what they do or try, nothing is going to help. And then they give up.

That is when we step in. Our friends without an address come into the Phoenix without hope and we try to give a little bit of that hope back to them. So no matter what stage in life they might be, whether they need housing or a job or a LINK card or an ID or a shower, we try to get to know them, care about them, love them, and offer them a little bit of hope.

By: Kelly-Jane, Phoenix Coordinator

Snapshot of Services at The Phoenix Daytime Drop-In Center in October



628 opportunities



101 Showers



55 Loads of Laundry



ONE WINTER NIGHT

DOWNTOWN CHAMPAIGN • FEBRUARY 1, 2019

If you are new to our newsletter or C-U at Home, One Winter Night is our annual community awareness event that provides a powerful opportunity for our community to learn about homelessness, raise awareness for our friends without an address, and experience what it might be like to live outside, overnight, in the coldest part of winter.

One Winter Night season is definitely in full swing! This past week on November 27th we took part in Giving Tuesday, a global giving movement that takes place after Black Friday and Cyber Monday. It's a day to encourage all of us to give to local charities and non-profits, in the midst of a season of buying. Our goal for the day was to inspire people to give towards our One Winter Night box dweller participants. We showed our Facebook community different box dwellers they could donate to, and posted a series of videos of a "Day in the Life" of one of our friends without an address. If you didn't get a chance to view the videos, head on over to our Facebook page to take a look! We are thankful for Anthony Zilis at the News Gazette who made our "Day in the Life" videos possible by producing an original fourteen minute video of our friend Tim (in addition to a front page article that came out on November 18th). To view the entire video, visit <https://bit.ly/2SiR8oy> or to read the article, visit <https://bit.ly/2A1SJrn>.

On Giving Tuesday, we were able to raise almost \$3,000 in donations for One Winter Night! Wow! We are so thankful for each and every donation that

was received during the day. Beyond Giving Tuesday, we have been busy adding new box dwellers, business sponsors, and volunteers. Our Executive Director, Rob, and a few staff members have been visiting churches each week to share more about the ministry and how they can get involved with One Winter Night. We have had the privilege of visiting Cornerstone Fellowship Church, Bondville United Methodist Church, Three Hierarchs Greek Orthodox Church, Stratford Park Bible Chapel, and Quest Church so far. If you would like to sign up to be a box dweller, volunteer, business sponsor or donate, check out: www.cuathome.us/one-winter-night/. We would love to have you join us!

Fast Facts About One Winter Night 2019

Amount Raised: \$33,825 of \$230,000

Box Dwellers: 122

Business Sponsors: 15



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

Executive Director CORNER

What are you THANKFUL for?

Dear Friend,

It may sound cliché but this is truly the most wonderful time of the year. The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays give us a golden opportunity to slow down and appreciate all that we have. What is it that YOU are thankful for? This too may sound cliché but when was the last time you stopped and thought about this question? And I mean really thought about. It's funny how the things we are thankful for change as the years pass. My four-year-old son is thankful for "mommy and daddy." (Almost brought a tear to my eye when he said that). My nearly two-year-old daughter is thankful for her blanket that she calls "baby."

As we get older, these priorities change and maybe we are thankful for our faith, our freedom, our jobs, our families, our friends, our pets, our health, our possessions, and our homes. Approaching life with a grateful heart is an incredible way to inspire those around us. I feel we can often complicate things when in reality, gratitude is a simple action word.

I grew up on "Veggie Tales" and one line that stands out to me even now as my children watch those same episodes I did is, "A thankful heart is a happy heart." These words come from the episode, "Madame Blueberry" where our main character is unsatisfied with her lot and spends most of the episode as a "very blue berry." In the end, she realizes something so complex but so intuitive at the same time. "I'm glad for what I have, that's an easy way to start." I encourage all of us today, as we get ready to turn the calendar to December, to take some serious time and think about what we have to be thankful for. And please be in prayer and consider how you can share those blessings with others.

In His Service,

Rob Dalhaus III

