



# cornerstone

A PUBLICATION OF THE **DOWNTOWN EMERGENCY SERVICE CENTER**

Issue 23 / Spring 2012

## 700 SUPPORTERS ROCK OUT TO END HOMELESSNESS



photo by Christopher Daniel Photography

### *Gimme Shelter raises over \$31,000!*

On Friday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 700 Seattle music lovers and DESC supporters descended upon Showbox at The Market to enjoy the diverse talents of seven bands. Together they raised over \$31,000 to support our mission to end homelessness, surpassing our \$25,000 goal! The Showbox was packed with people new to DESC, many of whom came simply to hear the music, but who left with something more. The crowd also included dozens of people who have been loyally helping DESC end homelessness for decades. The annual event was put together and hosted by headlining band, The Dusty 45s. This event is close to front man Billy Joe Huels's heart, as his brother Matt lives in DESC's supportive housing. Gimme Shelter is Billy Joe's way to give back to the organization that lifted his big brother off of the streets into a new home and community, a brother whom he has looked up to his whole life.

*guests swing the night away to Davidson Hart Kingsbery*

A family affair in many respects, the Huels family was well represented with siblings and cousins coming from as far away as Oregon and Illinois. Most importantly among the audience was the family matriarch and patriarch, Rita and Matt Huels Sr. Mayor Mike McGinn introduced the talented group of musicians, well known on the Seattle music scene, who came together for this important cause.

The event was sponsored by Key Bank, SMR Architects and Walsh Construction. For pictures and more information about the bands that provided support for this event, go to the Events page on our website: [www.desc.org/events.html](http://www.desc.org/events.html).

FIND US ONLINE:   AND [WWW.DESC.ORG](http://WWW.DESC.ORG)

### DESC

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DESC works to end the homelessness of vulnerable people, particularly those living with serious mental or addictive illnesses. Through partnerships and an integrated array of comprehensive services, treatment and housing, we give people the opportunity to reach their highest potential. At DESC, uncommon efforts produce uncommon results that eliminate homelessness, one person at a time.

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1811 Eastlake	The Morrison
Canaday House	Rainier House
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Kerner-Scott House	Scattered Site Housing
Lyon Building	

### CLINICAL SERVICES

Chemical Dependency Services  
Crisis Respite Program  
Crisis Solutions Center  
Employment Services  
HOST - Outreach and Engagement  
PACT - Assertive Community Treatment  
SAGE - Mental Health Services

### EMERGENCY AND ENTRY SERVICES

Emergency Shelter  
Connections

### SOMETHING OLD/SOMETHING NEW THRIFT STORE

200 Third Ave S / (206) 748-9080

Later this month DESC will host the first national Housing First conference in New Orleans. There are over 600 people registered to attend and they are coming from nearly every state in the US



Bill Hobson

and also include several from Europe, New Zealand and Canada. Our conference co-host is Pathways to Housing in New York City. DESC and Pathways are early national pioneers of Housing First -- we both began putting it into practice in the mid-1990s.

Because of outstanding evaluation research, Housing First has now become the preferred model of permanent housing for homeless persons living with major mental disorders and addictions problems. Governments at the local, state and national levels that provide funding for housing have enacted policy positions expressing preference for this model and in the past several years governments across the nation have allocated literally tens of millions of dollars to local housing organizations to produce Housing First projects. Now, almost every organization in the country doing homeless housing claims it is basing their projects on the Housing First model.

Some government officials are beginning to question whether or not those housing organizations are actually implementing the principles of Housing First in their projects. In 2010, Dr. Sam Tsemberis, the founder and Executive Director of Pathways, and I were asked by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct workshops on Housing First at two national HUD conferences. HUD officials were interested in educating state and local officials about the principles of Housing First (you can find those principles on our website at <http://desc.org/housingfirst.html>). The idea for a national conference grew out of those HUD gatherings and the feedback we received from attendees.

Most established local housing organizations across the country have historically selected tenants according to pre-conceived notions of housing "readiness" -- a person living with a psychiatric disability must be enrolled in services at a mental health agency; a person with an addiction history must be abstinent. Housing First ignores "readiness" because research has shown that predictions of readiness have little correlation with housing success. Instead the Housing First

continued on next page

# WHY I SPENT A COLD JANUARY NIGHT OUTSIDE, AGAIN

BY MARGO BURNISON, DESC'S HOST PROGRAM PROJECT MANAGER

Why would anyone crawl out of their cozy warm bed at 1 a.m. on a cold January morning just to walk the dark streets and alleys of Seattle to count people who are curled up in doorways and cardboard boxes, sleeping in their rusted out vehicles, or riding the night owl buses?

I don't know that I have a convincing answer for you, yet I've done exactly this for the past five years, along with nearly 800 other volunteers who participate in our community's One Night Count (ONC) of people who are homeless.

As someone who works with men and women who have been homeless and disabled for many years, I find participating in the ONC to be a visceral reminder of why I come to work everyday. It's my way to gain empathy and understanding of what someone who is living on the streets is going through - the challenges they face, the hopelessness they experience, the physical pain and discomfort they endure.

*“This is a visceral wake-up call for you and me to end homelessness right now!”*

The ONC provides far more than just a motivating experience for me, however; it provides vital data that helps us form strategies and policy for addressing homelessness in our community and around the country. It identifies who is homeless, new patterns evolving in homelessness, and where these men, women, and even families are living. As a member of our HOST (Homeless Outreach Stabilization and Treatment) program, my team and I use this information to help focus our outreach skills and best assist people in getting off of the streets. This year's ONC found 2,594 people had no shelter on

January 27th, a slight increase over the previous year's count. At its core, though, the results of the ONC are the same as years' past - thousands of people in our community lack safety and security.

The ONC, organized by the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness along with partners such as DESC, is a point in time survey that started in 1980. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development mandates that a homeless count be conducted within the last 10 days during the month of January. This allows us to capture data at a time when shelter use is at assumed to be its peak due to cold, wet weather. King County has one of the best established counts in the United States.

Why do I wake at 1 a.m. to count people out in the cold? To remember how important it is to end homelessness right now!



photo by David Entrikin

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (cont'd)

model is predicated on the idea that removal of the individual from the chaos of homelessness leads to faster and more enduring clinical and social stabilization.

DESC has long been committed to the importance of sharing our experience with others serving disabled homeless folks. We have done that through technical assistance and research publication and now have the opportunity to do it a bit more efficiently through this national conference. For more information, visit our website: [www.desc.org](http://www.desc.org).

# NEW STUDY SHATTERS MYTH THAT HOUSING WITHOUT CONDITIONS IS HARMFUL

You are walking to work and you see a man huddled under a cardboard box in a doorway, clearly drunk. If you are like most people, you may wonder if conventional wisdom is correct. Would housing that allows him to continue to drink alcohol only enable him to drink more, and potentially hasten his death?

In January, the *American Journal of Public Health* published a research study of a DESC Housing First program, 1811 Eastlake, which demonstrated just the opposite is true. During their first two years in the building, residents cut their heavy drinking by 35 percent. Residents' alcohol-related health problems decreased as well.

People tend to think that homeless people with severe alcohol problems are unable to control their drinking. Instead, this study shows that they are "human beings who are capable of change if they are given the same chance as the rest of us," said Dr. Susan Collins, researcher at University of Washington and lead author of the study. "People can moderate their drinking once they are housed."



*1811 Eastlake residents make healthier choices to enhance their health*

Housing for chronically homeless people usually comes with many conditions, including abstinence from drugs and alcohol and compliance with psychiatric and substance abuse treatment. But such requirements can become barriers to staying in housing. This more traditional 'housing readiness' approach stems from an idea that people must be 'ready' in order to make good use of housing. Inherent in this conventional thinking is a moral objection to rewarding bad behavior, and the belief that housing people with addiction problems will encourage continued drinking. However,

many vulnerable people experiencing homelessness are unable to cope with the rules of such programs. In fact, they often do not qualify for housing and are sent back to the streets.

*Over two years, 1811 Eastlake's residents chose to drink less and saw alcohol-related health problems decrease as well.*

Dr. Collins said that she and her team witnessed the resilience of the residents of 1811 Eastlake. "When they were on the streets, they were in dire straits and did what they needed to do to survive," Collins said. But with steady housing, they were able to have a more normal existence. "Participants in the study told us that they're happy to have a home, and happy that they no longer have to drink to stay warm or to put themselves to sleep or to forget that they're on the streets."

DESC was the first to pioneer the Housing First approach in the region, 15 years ago. This approach removes traditional barriers to housing so chronically homeless people can be provided with stable, permanent housing immediately. Medical, psychiatric and substance abuse problems then become manageable.

"A lot of people believe in the 'enabling hypothesis' – that allowing homeless, alcohol-dependent individuals to drink in their homes will enable them to drink more, and their drinking will spiral out of control," Collins said. "But instead what we found are across-the-board decreases in alcohol consumption and problems."

1811 Eastlake is the first Housing First program for people with primary alcohol addictions in the United States to be scientifically studied. A 2009 evaluation published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that, in its first year of operation, the project saved Seattle taxpayers more than \$4 million in costs from publicly funded services. This new study shows that residents also decrease their drinking significantly.

This innovative, successful program could not have opened or thrived without the advocacy and support of the many people across our community who shared our vision. To those of you who believed, like us, that providing housing could lead people to make small, powerful steps toward health and stability in their lives, **thank you!!**

# JUDGE RULES: DESC ADDRESSES “DESPERATE NEED” THROUGH CRISIS SOLUTIONS CENTER

Following nearly a year of opposition from a handful of neighbors in the Jackson Place neighborhood, King County Superior Court Judge Susan Craighead rejected their complaints that our proposed Crisis Solutions Center (CSC) is nothing more than a jail masquerading as a treatment facility. In her ruling issued this January she noted that it is ineffective and expensive to use hospital emergency rooms and city and county jails to hold nonviolent people experiencing behavioral crisis simply because they lack the resources for proper mental health services. Judge Craighead acknowledged that the new Crisis Solutions Center will address a “desperate need for alternative care”.

Our Crisis Solution Center will provide a more therapeutic and appropriate place for people experiencing a mental health crisis than jail. It is a place where police and other first responders can bring people for temporary accommodations, assessment and a treatment plan. If a person experiencing crisis has a home, they will be returned to their residence following treatment; if they are homeless, a housing situation will be found for them.

In the past people in behavioral crisis were cared for in mental health hospitals. When “main streaming” became the mantra of the 1980s and public funding was dramatically reduced for such facilities, the only solution remaining was to get such people out of the public eye by placing them in jails or emergency rooms until the crisis subsided.

In October of 2010, King County awarded funding to DESC to develop a crisis diversion facility. Identifying an ideal location at 1600 S. Lane Street near the intersection of Rainier Ave. S. and S. Dearborn Ave., DESC and the county held a series of community

meetings to inform the public about the joint project. As we began the planning for building renovation, a neighborhood group called the Jackson Place Alliance for Equity worked to derail the project by filing a lawsuit against the CSC, alleging zoning and permit violations. This has kept the project in limbo for many months while people in behavioral crisis continue to cycle in and out of costly emergency rooms and jails with little treatment taking place.

King County officials estimate that the delay in opening is costing taxpayers about \$20,000 a day.

DESC already launched the non-facility-based aspect of the Crisis Solutions Center, known as the Mobile Crisis Team (MCT), as a pilot project in September 2011. The MCT accepts referrals from first responders with the goal of diverting people in crisis from unnecessary jail and/or hospital emergency room admissions. The Team does this by providing immediate on-site crisis intervention services and referrals to community partners. However, the pilot phase of MCT is limited.

Now that the court has ruled in our favor and no appeal has been filed by opponents, King County has granted us the go-ahead to proceed with retrofitting the building space for the two facility-based components of the Crisis Solutions Center! The current schedule is to open by the end of summer. Meanwhile, we completed the work of forging a Good Neighbor Agreement, thanks to the efforts of a group of dedicated neighbors, DESC staff and board. For more information and updates on the CSC, please see [www.desc.org/crisis\\_solutions.html](http://www.desc.org/crisis_solutions.html).

## MEET DESC’S YOUNGEST DONORS: WILL AND CARTER CAST

Needless to say, we were thrilled to receive a generous cash gift from these two fine young gentlemen. When asked why they chose to give to DESC, this is what we learned:



*Will and Carter show off the money they collected for DESC*

“We each have two piggy banks. One for ourselves and one for others. Every time we get money - for allowance or from our relatives - we put some in our own and some in the “Others” piggy bank. At the end of the year, our moms let us choose where we wanted to give the money. We wanted to help homeless people, so Mommy searched on the internet, and we found DESC. We watched the videos of Dodge, Shellie and Al and knew we wanted to help other people get help like they did from DESC.”



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Help stop duplicate mailings. If you receive more than one copy of DESC's Cornerstone, please send an email to [kulrich@desc.org](mailto:kulrich@desc.org) or call **206-515-1518**. Thank you!

## WANT TO HELP END HOMELESSNESS TODAY?

Text **DESC** on your mobile phone to  
**50555** to donate \$10.

When prompted, **reply with YES**  
**to confirm.**

You can donate up to three times a month!

*Message & data rates apply.*

## IT'S JUST THAT EASY!

## COMING SOON

### LEARN THE INSIDE SCOOP! **DESC'S 2012 CHAT SERIES**

Join us for informal gatherings to  
discuss what DESC is doing to end  
homelessness in our community.

*Dates and locations coming soon!*

### CELEBRATE!

### **DESC GALA**

OCTOBER 11, 2012

AT THE

SEATTLE SHERATON HOTEL

FIND US ONLINE:   AND [WWW.DESC.ORG](http://WWW.DESC.ORG)