

# THE HOMELESS VOICE

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Thirty-two cots in a Community Methodist Church in Missouri preparing for a storm | Courtesy of Taylor Pecko-Reid / KOMU8

## How Hurricanes Affect the Homeless

By Brett Loewenstern

**H**urricane season across the east coast is the one season during the year, from May to November, when the entire population braces for the possibility of destruction. Alongside those more and less fortunate, the most vulnerable are the homeless of the entire region. Without a roof to sleep under as it is, the dangers of staying in the streets amidst damaging winds and heavy floods are life-threatening.

Aside from shelter, they still need food, water, and most importantly, safety. Not knowing where a local shelter might be — or how to get there — makes the dangers even more imminent, especially for those with physical or mental disabilities. Many efforts have succeeded in assisting the homeless in these times, whereas others have caused more bad than good.

Some cities, like Miami, forced by law the homeless who didn't want to find shelter during Hurricane Irma to stay in one. The authorities prioritized safety over personal choice by invoking the Baker Act Law which states they can institutionalize and take into custody those who may be a harm to themselves or others. This could only be invoked when the person appears to be under mental distress, and Miami

authorities claimed that those refusing shelter had been struggling with an addiction or a mental disability of some sort.

**“ Although this was an effort to provide safety and even enforce it, it also was viewed as violating the rights of these individuals who might not have wanted to seek shelter. ”**

Although this was an effort to provide safety and even enforce it, it also was viewed as violating the rights of these individuals who might not have wanted to seek shelter. Additionally, different mental health and homeless advocacy organizations found this to be problematic beyond just enforcing a psychiatric stay. In a statement released by the National Association for Rights, Protection, and Advocacy, not only was this viewed as a violation, but also a way of equating homelessness to mental illness.

Taking it a step further, this was also seen as a representation of the way the government has not only failed those with mental illness, but also the homeless who suffer from it. The National Council on Disability found that during Hurricane Katrina, the rights of numerous homeless individuals with mental health issues were violated beyond measure. All of this together was seen as both a lack of preparation beforehand and attention to the finer details regarding the homeless and mental illness.

Aside from Miami, some measures by officials in other major cities during hurricane season took actions viewed not only as possibly more detrimental than helpful, but inefficient and even reckless.

During Hurricane Ivan, Mayor Patrick Rios of Rockport Texas advised those not evacuating the town to write their name and social security number on their arm in sharpie in order to be properly identified. The mayor is quoted as saying, “it's not something we like to do but it's the reality, people don't listen.” Although it may have been inefficient, the mayor saw it as his last resort due to the fact that those staying in danger were putting themselves in a position without immediate assistance.

Continued on pg. 4

# About the Homeless Voice

The Homeless Voice houses, feeds, and finds jobs for anyone who is homeless. We serve up to 500 homeless daily and serve over 45,000 meals each month.

The Homeless Voice distributes a street newspaper in all major cities throughout Florida including Tallahassee, Lake City, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando, Daytona, Ft. Lauderdale, and Miami.

**The Homeless Voice Newspaper has three functions.**

- 1) Educate the public on homelessness and poverty issues
- 2) Provide temporary employment to those without a job
- 3) Raise additional funds for the Florida based shelter

We have grown into a multifaceted agency that feeds, shelters, and arranges for each homeless person to receive the necessary access to social and non-compulsory religious services to enable a return to a self-reliant lifestyle.

For the small percentage of people incapable of living independent lives, we provide a caring and supportive environment for their long-term residency.

COSAC Foundation  
PO Box 292-577 Davie, FL 33329  
954-924-3571

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*Part of the International Network of Street Papers*

Cover illustration by Andrew Fraieli

## Current Country-Wide Homelessness 2018

Sheltered: 358,363 people

Unsheltered: 194,467 people

Total: 552,820 people

In Florida: 31,030 people

According to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



## ~Cathy's Prayer List~

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Jeff  
Betsy  
Romeo  
Maggie  
The Kalins  
Devon  
Diane Karm

Jefferson Wilson  
Amy & Mr. Jason  
Lorena  
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*Thank you for your support Angels! Your support keeps our doors open!*

In New Orleans, city officials performed an encampment sweep while preparing for Tropical Storm Barry. Although they intended to find shelter for the homeless, they did quite the opposite by sweeping everyone out of their tents, leaving them with only their personal belongings and nowhere else to go.

Private shelters and organizations, as well as local authorities, do also help people in the streets before, during, and after a hurricane. Every shelter opens to the public – including

to the homeless of the surrounding cities and towns – and many outreach programs will send people to places where the homeless congregate so to bring them to these shelters.

In addition to the efforts of organizations, there are public assistance programs designed to assist those in need during times of emergency. Continuum of Care is one such program that was implemented by the federal government in order to assess the needs

of the homeless population around the US.

A Continuum of Care is a local planning body of community leaders set up in regional zones in order to micromanage the homeless population within their own city and community. During times of hurricanes and emergencies, different

Continuums of Care have their own protocol, but they are all tasked to have a plan set in place. This includes working with first responders to reach out to those in homeless areas and bring them to shelters as well as creating plans and strategies for all case scenarios.


Aside from shelters, outreach, and

authorities assisting the homeless, many organizations take donations of all types in order to provide the necessities needed. Organizations like the Red Cross not only take donations, but also help provide rescue services and other forms of relief for the homeless and general population. Additionally, both the Red Cross and Salvation Army provide their own shelters that are not only open to the general public but most importantly the homeless as well.

The COSAC Foundation, of which the Homeless Voice

is a part, also has their own outreach program specifically for cold spells or hurricanes. They go out in a couple vans and their own ambulance – which says “Helping People In America Disaster Service” – to provide medical help and transportation to one of their shelters, if they accept it. They also open all their properties for shelter, including in Broward and Lakeland Counties and Jacksonville if it’s projected to hit north.

Many ways to help those in need include donating to charities like the COSAC Foundation as well as other charities that specialize in aiding the homeless. Aside from monetary donations, people can also donate non-perishable foods, water, and blankets to provide comfort. Also, volunteering for the COSAC Foundation’s outreach program or at a local homeless shelter can be an effective way of relieving the stress and trauma already endured.

In combination with all forms of assistance, there is hope for those without a home during hurricane seasons and all disasters across the United States. The main thread between the homeless and helping them is the community effort it takes to provide the care and resources needed. One community as a whole can make a major impact on the lives of the voiceless during times of disaster and all year-round. 

**// Although they intended to find shelter for the homeless, they did quite the opposite by sweeping everyone out of their tents... //**



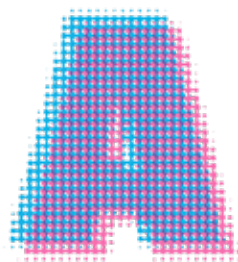
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INFORMATION ACCORDING TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT



By Andrew Fraieli

At what point does being homeless become homelessness? Federal law has a definition, and states have varying ones as well, but it's not as simple as that.

Living in a car, for example, is not considered a first choice, it's usually done from necessity. Van life, on the other hand, is the opposite — with vans purposely and pain-stakingly transformed into cozy and unique abodes on wheels. But wherein lies the difference? The circumstances? The sense of adventure rather than a forcing of one's hand? When do they become homeless?

To Channing Kaiser, who has spent months in the past living in her car to travel through national parks, it's a matter of perspective, "I guess for me, I think of the homeless as those not always having a choice, but when you're forced into it. My car really was my home for that stretch of time, but I had a way out of it if I wanted."

And this concept of "having a way out" can be significant.

"I've had varying degrees of housing insecurity since I was 17 (9 years), and the line I've found with homelessness is that, even if I knew rationally that something would eventually get me out of my car, out of couch surfing, etc., there seemed to be no end in sight," says Jay Mateo.

Mateo has traveled extensively in his car, sometimes by choice — like from San Diego to Boston and back — other times not, "[The road trip] was more of housing insecurity and very much a choice I made. In high school, though, I stayed in my car a lot and I'd consider that homelessness — I mostly had no options and definitely couldn't leave, and I think something about homelessness is it feels future-less and unknown."

They both agree in these grey areas of homelessness that it ends up being the emotions and options of the person that determines their homelessness to themselves.

It takes an emotional toll to become homeless without choice, and gives a very different mentality according to Mateo, "I very much wanted to be in my car this past year and I very much wanted to be in my car in high school, but the divide between the reasons is huge, there. The initial was safety, which I think led to my feeling most at home in cars."

The emotional toll can come for the lack of preparation for being homeless as well, and the laws that dictate where and how to be homeless. The example of living in a car is a significant one as it's common, and the legality is vague and changes depending on city.

Generally, the problems with living in a car is not the physical act of sleeping in it, but the numerous situations the

car can find itself in. Sleeping in a car in a personal driveway, or a consenting driveway of someone else, is not generally illegal. But parking a car overnight in a public park during its closed hours can also be considered trespassing.

The New York Times reported on a family that could no longer afford rent in Los Angeles after a raise in monthly cost, so were forced to live in their car. They had the worry of losing their two children by their living situation being deemed unfit, and they'd constantly worry when they saw a police cruiser that they might notice their lived-in looking car. The article says the mother was "overwhelmed with shame and anxiety."

This mental strain is different than voluntarily going into that situation, "The security about it, if it's a chosen thing, you know if things went wrong, you know you have that support. In general, I think some people who are homeless are because they don't have the support, which is a privilege we have that others don't," says Kaiser.

Part of that lack of support can be when the car someone is living in breaks down. Mateo says he's lucky and hasn't had a car completely stop working while living in it, but "definitely cried a lot over bills that were upwards of \$900." A broken car could be detrimental when it's also their means of transportation, "I definitely feel a lot more helpless when I can't have complete control over my housing."

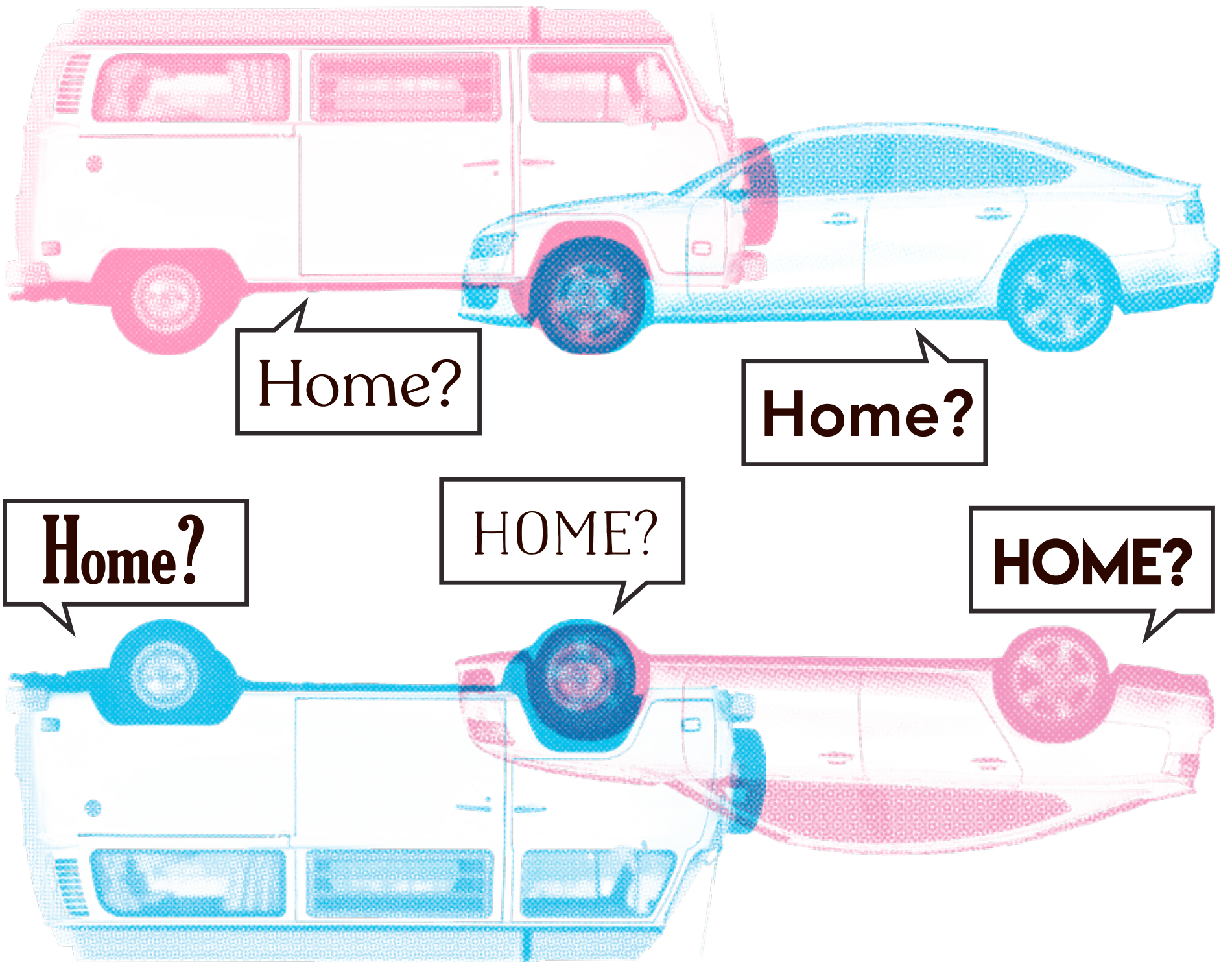
Part of the intensity of the worry for the family in Los Angeles was because their laws are more straightforward on the legality of sleeping in the car; a city ordinance was reinstated in July of this year that specifically bars sleeping in a car overnight in many parts of the city.

In other places it isn't as clear cut, so both Mateo and Kaiser have had to develop their own tactics, "I never park alone in a lot or on a street, so whenever the cops come it's always with not enough interest to bust everyone in the parking lot, they just say you can't be there," says Mateo. "I always knew the rules for parking the cars really well, so I knew I wouldn't get a knocking on my windows," Kaiser explains.

Continuing, she says, "Me living in my car was for a sense of adventure, and it's a popular phenomenon to live out of my car. If this doesn't work, I have money, I have my parent's home, I have that to fall back on unlike homeless people.

## Even if I knew something would get me out of my car, out of couch surfing, etc., there seemed to be no end in sight.

Home?



I guess it's a lot of perspective and knowing that you're choosing, like vanlife is a whole phenomenon and they don't see it through the lens of homelessness."

A more developed version of volunteering sleeping in a car, vanlife can seem luxurious through hashtags and Instagram filters that millions follow — #vanlife alone has 6,175,158 posts not including #vanlifediaries with 1,196,327 posts and #vandwelling, #vanlifeexplorers, #vanlifeurope, etc. Travel bloggers have made a living showing off their builds and documenting their journeys.

As Kaiser says, they don't see through the lens of homelessness, and when asked, neither does she for her travel, "I feel like it's because I have a stable family home to fall back on, and I've voluntarily left to travel so I don't identify as being homeless."

In Kaiser's case, she was traveling for a long period of time, it just happened to be in her car that she slept. It was not

the attitude of being forced to do it out of necessity, or running from something — which she was misconstrued to be doing multiple times in her journey. This long-term traveling though leads to another dichotomy.

If someone purposely throws themselves into a long-term travel situation, far from home, with little money, are they homeless? This person can easily be someone in a down-and-out type situation, but they may have

done it on purpose.

Kaiser comments on an example of through-hiking the Appalachian Trail — which generally takes about six months — saying no, "It's a chosen adventure, and you still have a place somewhere. So much of this is about choice and perspective."

"I think with traveling for the purpose of exploring qualifies more as minimalism," says Mateo. "...but it's hard to say. There is the case of migrant people who end up with gig work but that lifestyle is coded differently because they're usually people of color. I frankly don't know where homelessness begins and ends."

The concept of homelessness greys at the edges when it becomes an aspect of perspective. When people voluntarily go out with little resources it can be hard to be seen as homelessness, but if it suddenly goes out of their control,

like Kaiser's car possibly breaking down, it can become a different issue, and a different perspective for them.

Mateo does eventually elaborate on his thoughts further, "I'll say that, because of the cultural connotations of 'homelessness,' it carries a lot of weight to identify with that. So, even if someone is technically transient or address-less, I think the most important part of the classification culturally is the extreme poverty and that associated inescapable cycle."

This cycle can be stressful, not knowing where they can sleep next, not knowing if they'll have housing next month, or even next week. "I think it's a mindset for most of it, when your young too there's more adventure to it, you don't have to worry about changing school districts for your children. It's different as a short-term change, you're not looking for government support or anything," says Kaiser.

Homelessness is grey, it's a scale, people experience it differently. Some people have money to eat, even go to school, might have a job, but can't afford a home. Money is a huge factor where someone can have just enough to eat, but not a home. Maybe they're hopping couch to couch. Maybe their real home is too far away and they can't get there. The variation of issues that can cause someone to be temporarily homeless, or traveling homeless, or couchsurfing homeless, are wide and varied.

The line where someone can slip from feeling they have a way out to feeling trapped is easily made too by the stalling or impounding of a car, or a stolen backpack. There are people in these situations who have not voluntarily gone into them, who haven't decided to go travel, who haven't decided that living in a car is what they see as adventure.

"I think with homelessness there's an impulse to say 'well, it's not a choice,' as validation for those experiencing that level of poverty — but I think even if it is a choice — like sleeping in something that moves, it's born mostly of the fact that it's incredibly difficult to become stable or get an address in this money money money culture, the same culture that puts people on the sidewalk or staying on floors of their extended family's house," says Mateo.

For a lack of options or adventure, it's a significant change to go into any of these situations, and there are people, like Mateo, who have gone into it for both reasons. He made it clear though that they were different situations, and felt different. There won't be a single answer to where the limits of what's defined as homelessness are with these grey situations, but at least they can be seen. □

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Campbell's Soup Cans by Andy Warhol | Photo courtesy of MOMA | Photo illustration by Andrew Fraieli

*By Andrew Fraieli*

Everyday there is food wasted by large businesses, thrown away because boxes are damaged or they're close to their expiry dates, and everyday people go to sleep hungry who could benefit from this wasted food. Today, there is one more solution to this in the world, the Rose K. Boatwright Food Pantry.

Created a year and a half ago in Lakeland, Florida, the pantry takes this would-be-wasted food, as well as donations, and makes it available to the homeless and families in need.

The pantry operates different from others as it's run out of a furniture store, managed by Susan Stover – the daughter of Rose K. Boatwright. It's significant as without that aspect it could not possibly work at such a scale.

According to Stover, they pick up four to five thousand dollars of food per week – with about 2,500-3,000 ft. for freezers and pallet storage, completely using up one of their four furniture warehouses out back. "We're in desperate need of a walk-in freezer, but not we're not going to get it before moving because it needs to be permanent, we'll be able to save more and give more out," she says. "We feel like we've outgrown and need another location so we don't impose on the businesses around us, in parking spaces taken up etc."



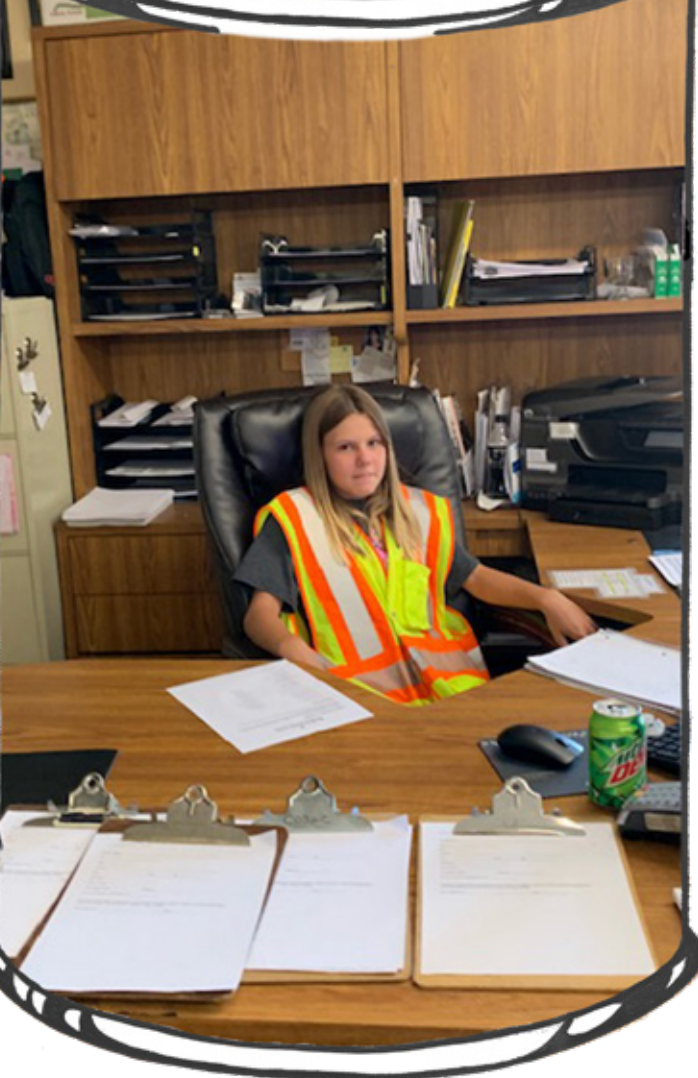
Hoyt by a new truck shipment in the rain



Dallar organizing shipments for Wednesday



Maddison at the front desk for check-ins | Photos courtesy of Susan Stover



The bulk of the food comes in the form of broken or damaged boxes or goods — donated from companies like Publix's if the trucks don't have time to return them. With her brother Dallar driving trucks of pallets — volunteering to unload them and take care of storage and freezers — and her nephew Billy — owning a trucking company, Barstow Transport, of 32 trucks on the road delivering to different businesses — the pantry can rack up 14 pallets of food a week.

These pallets of donated food could be hamburgers from Publix's, which can have 55 boxes with 24 burgers per case. Laughing, Stover says they got 48,000 hotdogs one time, 40,000 links of sausages once too. With different trucking companies, they can get microwave meals like Lean-Cuisine, which they usually keep for the elderly as easier to prepare meals, and "we try to keep peanut butter and jelly for kids, any extra treats like candy or marshmallows we put aside for them too."

With the donated pallets, along with the two food bank locations they pick up from and the bread store that donates as well, they receive anywhere from \$10,000 to \$22,000 of food per week total.

This much food isn't helpful unless there's an organized way to hand it out, and that is exactly what Stover, along with her family, have managed to do.

Every Wednesday the furniture store is shut down to allow them to pass out food all day long. About 12 people come to help, about nine of which are family, "my grandkids are in their little ducky outfits in the rain passing out food and water, and my niece and nephew, 12 and 14, help carry food to cars." One grandchild, Maddison, 11, handles the sign-in list as well — people have to sign-up for Wednesday's food pantry day, and give a name and show an ID before being marked off to receive food.

"Our [pantry] is different. We don't just hand them a pre-made box of food. We get our tables up and they get to pick and choose what they want. There's no point in giving them food they won't want and will throw away, I think this is why we are so successful," says Stover, describing their process. "We do limit how much so everyone can have something. People bring their own bags and get to see what they'll use."

These Wednesdays, almost 250 people come from all over — "we service the Lake City area and the local area here by the Polk County," Stover says — to collect food, some for their families, some for themselves, and some even for people going through rehabilitation. "Some people doing drug rehab, we help with their food so they can get what they need. We help some families where they may have lost their job and really need help, and some elderly who are in desperate need have food stamps that may only come out to 15-20\$ and can't get much."


The pantry heavily relies on the volunteer work done by Stover's family, herself included. Her brother Dallar "spends up to 18 hours a day in the food pantry, working with different case workers as well" whom the food pantry assists with getting their client's food. Dallar will also "drive 155 miles one way to unload a truck where food is needed, and drive back the same day because we have work the next morning" at the furniture store Stover says.

Stover says her sister, who works for the homeless coalition, handles the applications for the food on Wednesdays and she "mostly takes care of the business end." They do work the food bank seven days a week though, "even if it's night time we stop so we can help," she says.

The food pantry is named after her mother who frequently went to the COSAC foundation's old hotel shelter for the homeless in Fort Lauderdale. "My mother would go out to Sean's motel and my mother in the wheelchair always helped and taught us to help, if we can change anything, to try," Stover says. "She was 85 when she started going to the hotel, she would go talk to some of the homeless ladies. Come Christmas time she would give away a lot to help them."

Stover continues that "we were homeless ourselves sometimes growing up, and it was difficult as a single mother." The shelter came into being because of Sean Cononie, who is the founder of the COSAC foundation; Stover says, "Sean said one day, 'Let's make a food bank in the name of your mother'. And now we've outgrown it!"

The pantry also provides the food to the nearby COSAC Foundation shelters, including the Veterans Inn and the Motel 8, and assisted with building it up according to Stover, "It was our trucks that helped move everything into the Veterans Inn, all the equipment. There was a whole crew of us, we had an assembly line building bunk-beds."

The pantry has even been recognized by the community, receiving a "certificate of appreciation" and a free dinner from Sonny's BBQ on Nov. 5. 



# Want to contribute to the Homeless Voice?

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## Florida's Work to End Homelessness

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By Rupal Ramesh Shah

Florida's homeless population, as of 2018, was 31,030 or 6% of the total state population. With a homeless population that large, different organizations have developed across Florida – state and private – to help solve this problem of housing, hunger and safety over the years.

One of those organizations is the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness, of which acting on chronic homelessness is part of their mission according to David Swanson – the current chairman of the board. The organization was formed in 2003 in Orlando, Florida, says Swanson, “the organization has worked on strategy, public policy, and advocacy for the homeless ... with approximately 40 board members that represent elected political officials, members of the faith community, businessmen and women.”

Swanson says that the biggest issue they need to address is housing for the homeless, “therefore, the organization follows the Housing First model ... each person is assigned a case worker who works closely with them to ensure their medical needs are met, is in touch with their employer, and checks whether they are living well with their neighbors.” Swanson elaborates that the model has been successful for them and in the “last 3 years we have housed over 700 people who were chronically homeless.”

Housing First is not a necessarily experimental concept either, but has been factually proven to work according to the Florida Department of Children and Families Council on Homelessness report of 2017, “Housing First is recognized as an evidence-based best practice, is cost effective, and results in better outcomes as compared to other approaches.”

When reflecting on numbers, Kristy Lukaszewski, the policy and programs director of the commission, stated that it costs \$32,000 when someone is on the streets compared to \$18,000 when they are housed. In the long-term, housing the homeless saves not just lives but also money. Housing First now exists in some form in 17 states

The commission itself is funded by three counties: Orange, Seminole, and Osceola, with the rest of the funding from foundations and private businesses. The biggest challenge for the organization is funding

according to Swanson, since they house people through the Housing First model, they still have to continue to pay rent for them and maintain their housing, which he says is not easy.

**“ The Housing First model is cost effective and logical, as we can't solve homelessness without providing homes, ”**

They have also worked with many different organizations in the past who assist the homeless in different ways, such as the organization IDignity. IDignity works with the homeless to obtain identification cards and locate their birth certificates and other documents. If someone doesn't have an identification card, it's difficult to obtain food stamps and bus tickets among other things Swanson says.

The Homeless Services Network of Central Florida, a group that maintains and manages a database called the Homeless Management Information System, is another organization


that the commission works closely with. Volunteers go out specifically to gather information for this database, one such group being the Healthcare Center for the Homeless – locally based in Orlando. They go out into the community to talk to the homeless, and the information they gain they add to the database to help keep track of everyone and ensure they receive attention and care accordingly.

Shelley Lauten, who has a background in strategic planning in communities, served as the Chief Executive Officer of the commission for approximately three years. “There are phases of homelessness and each of them requires a different strategy to address, the Housing First model is cost effective and logical, as we can't solve homelessness without providing homes,” Lauten explains.

Under the former Chief Executive Officer of the commission, Andrae Bailey, the organization started focusing on research and strategic policy development to address homelessness, and, in 2016, she founded Rethinking Homelessness.

According to Bailey, they work all over the U.S. to “equip leaders at the national level so that they can work on homelessness in their communities.” She explains that part of that is advocating for the homeless, and they also “host webinars that focus on various topics related to homelessness, which are attended by leaders from all over the U.S.”

Lauten stated, “In community impact models, everyone has a role and the goal of The Central Florida Commission on Homelessness is to get everyone in the community involved. The organization wants to continue with this multi-dimensional approach as they continue to address homelessness.”

According to Lukaszewski, the commission has been focusing on research and best practices to ensure they bring diverse partners from all over the state to collaborate and that in order to address homelessness, a collaborative approach is better than an individualized approach. As they continue to bring more organizations together to work on homelessness, they have had more success. The organization's long-term goal is to continue the state-wide efforts in creating an awareness about the issues related to homelessness. 



Volunteers interview the homeless to determine their needs and arrange for services, Taken at Lake Eola park in Orlando | Photo courtesy of Central Florida Commission on Homelessness



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# ABC Roofing Corp

954-344-4622    [www.abcroofingcorp.com](http://www.abcroofingcorp.com)

ABC Roofing Corp. has been a family owned and operated roofing company for 29 years. We specialize in commercial and residential roofing, re-roofs, and repairs. We believe in supporting our community and are honored to work with the Homeless Voice in donating our services. Our customer satisfaction is of the utmost importance to us.

Call today to schedule a free estimate,  
we'll be happy to hear from you!

• **Broward** • **Palm Beach** • **Dade Counties**

Check out our new Homeless Outreach iPhone App!  
Download our app, snap a photo and tag your  
location

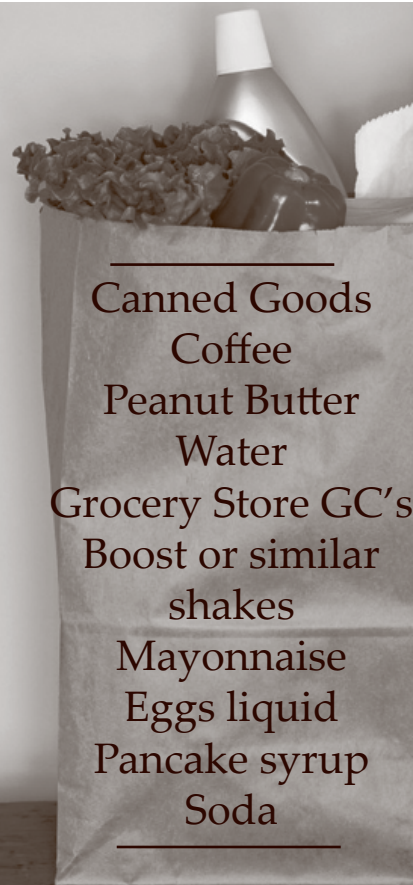
# THE HOMELESS VOICE



*HomelessVoice.org*

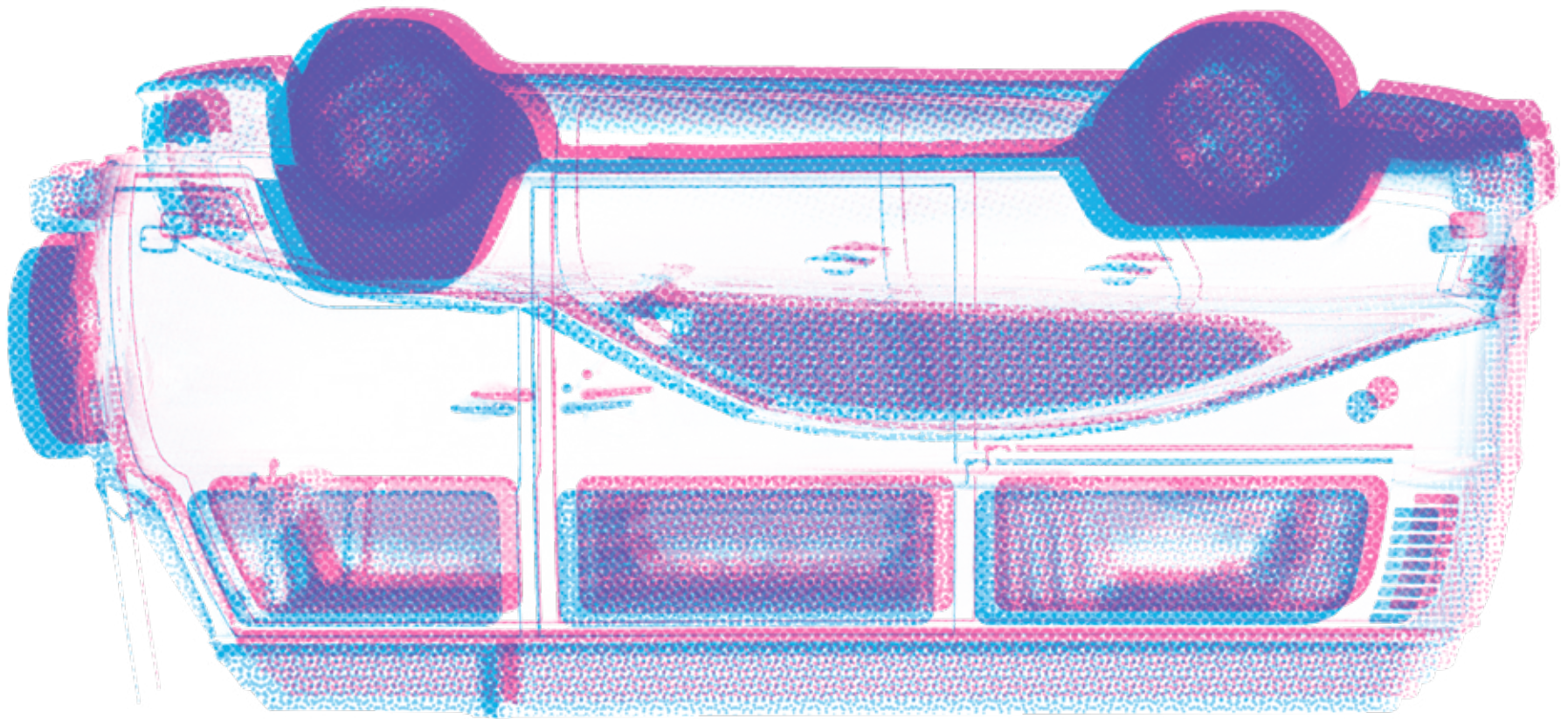
## We are in Need of Donations

4361 SW 25th Street-  
Fort Lauderdale,  
FL 33317  
Phone: (954) 924-3571



- Canned Goods
- Coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Water
- Grocery Store GC's
- Boost or similar shakes
- Mayonnaise
- Eggs liquid
- Pancake syrup
- Soda

Call or Drop off Tuesday-Saturday 11 am- 6pm



# HOMELSSNESS

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#Vanlife, or forced to live in a car? Shoestring traveling, or extreme poverty? When does it become homelessness?

# THE EDGES

THE  
**HOMELSS**  
VOICE

## BECOME A MONTHLY ANGEL

For only  
**83 cents per day,**  
you can keep a  
**homeless family off the streets.**

### Membership Benefits:

- Have piece of mind in knowing that you helped keep a homeless family off the streets.
- You or your business name will appear in the Homeless Voice Newspaper, which currently has over 100,000 copies in circulation.

**DONATE \$25 MONTHLY AT:**  
[WWW.HOMELESSVOICE.ORG/MEMBER](http://WWW.HOMELESSVOICE.ORG/MEMBER)



| Go to pg 2 to cut out the mail in membership form |  
| Or send your check to Angel Program \* PO Box 292-577 \* Davie, FL 33329 |