



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, jumping from place to place. But 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

families now that do the exact same thing. They're really trying. No one wants to lose their housing, no one wants to be on the street, especially if they've been there before.

I have 93 people on my caseload now. I see five people per day to make sure that I connect with everyone monthly. I go to your house, I do home visits, we do lunch. There's nothing like having somebody that supports you, that believes in you. It's a missing part of the equation.

I see families all the time and their kids get off the school bus and go right up into a tent on Division under the bridge. These kids grow up so fast. They have no choice but to fend for themselves. A lot of kids go to school, but then they have to come home and teach their parents how to read, how to write, how to do mathematics.

Families tell their children not to tell anyone they're homeless for security. Sometimes a school knows, and sometimes they don't. If you talked to my daughter at a school alone and she told you we're homeless, I don't know if you're going to take her or report her. So there's reasons to not tell anyone. But then by not telling they don't get the help they need."



Denis Theriault

Communications Coordinator, Joint Office of Homeless Services

www.multco.us/joint-office-homeless-services

"The floor is falling out. People don't have a place to land anymore when they used to have a place to land. The rent is going up faster than your wages are, and your wages aren't starting from very much in some cases. And when you're in that situation, if your car breaks down, your kid breaks his leg, you gotta miss work, maybe you go through sick time, start losing money, the car, hospital bill...all that stuff adds up. You could end up in a shelter, you could end up in a tent, you could have a partner who spends the money they're not supposed to spend and then you're a mom with

her kids and you're outside.

We're all a tragedy, a paycheck away from not having somewhere to go or a support network. It's easier to think 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 or 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 giving 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."



Matt Olguin

Director of Shelter Services Transition Projects Inc.

www.tprojects.org

"You have this perception that all homeless people are drug addicts or criminals. The difference is that the people we see who are experiencing homelessness that are bad actors and using drugs or committing various crimes - we see that specifically because they are homeless and don't have another place to do those things. But criminals walk all facets of life whether they're experiencing homelessness or they're in housing. So it's trying to separate out those two things where it's bad actors and criminality, versus people who are experiencing homelessness and more often than not are the victims.

We who are housed come from a level of privilege and we have to acknowledge that sometimes and show a little more empathy. You see someone experiencing homelessness and you think they had the same experience you had growing up, and therefore this is their choice that led them to where they're at but it's not taking into account whatever their experiences were.

People are homeless because they have no other options. Some people have no options 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 the drivers that led them to be homeless are different. The vast majority of people became homeless here in portland. It's a portland problem. That myth that the homeless are moving to Portland because of good services isn't true."

Portland, Unhoused: The People on the Front Lines

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



Jason Jones

Acting Sergeant, Central Precinct Portland Police Bureau

"Law enforcement is only one aspect of what we do. We're the fingertips of government. We're also social service providers, and we are public safety. We're a tool for the community and we have to problem solve together, build relationships with diverse groups and

figure out how we can partner with one another to solve complicated problems.

The issue of houselessness is not one-dimensional. It's very complicated and it's very different for different people. If you go out there and ask 10 or 15 people on the street, you'll get 10 or 15 different stories. Every solution is going to look a little different, and that's

what makes this issue so difficult. We can't broadbrush paint this thing.

People who are unhoused are human beings. We as a society tend to objectify and forget they're human beings with feelings and with rights, dignity and respect. We cannot forget that. As such, any solution that's crafted has to involve those who are affected.

It feels like the boat is moving further from shore. We have a lot of programs out there but a lot of them aren't synergizing and working well together. Our resources need to collaborate better, streamline together so we're not duplicating efforts, not competing, but cooperating. We need a vision that puts all of this together which unites all of these strategies and gets us all together in the same direction."



Larry Turner

Founder & President, Fresh Out Community Based Re-entry Program

www.facebook.com/FreshOutPDX

"It's hard to be homeless without doing something to change the way you feel, especially if you can't find a place to live. Then we got people who, due to the recession, became homeless and have never rebounded because the prices of housing went up so high they can't get living wage jobs to support them and their families to get back into housing. Then if you add a prison record to that, it makes them even less attractive as renters.

Living on the streets is a traumatic thing. Then being treated badly because 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 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.

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 them 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."



Leo Rhodes

Homeless Advocate

"One of the biggest misconceptions of homelessness is that everyone's on drugs, alcohol, mentally ill, because the decision makers are catering to that. They're saying we need to [treat] the most 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 psychology of it all. People are downgrading you, saying yes you can sleep here, no you can't sleep here; you can rest here, no you can't rest here; you can eat here, no you can't. The psychological part of it, that's what people don't understand. It gets you down, and you have to bring yourself back up. It's a constant thing.

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 grieve all the homeless people that I knew that 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

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 both 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

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 homelessness and there would not be addiction.

Children that have adverse childhood experiences - if you have been homeless, abused, witnessed abuse, a child of a 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 mentally ill, more likely to use drugs and to abuse others or to be a victim of domestic violence. Less likely to have a good education, less likely to have a good job, less likely to have good social skills 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."