

HOMELESSNESS UPDATE A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK

UNITED WAY REGIONAL COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS • JUNE 2010 • UNITEDWAYATLANTA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS

Formerly homeless men take on outreach roles

Horace Anthony, Tim Henning, Kinte Rollins and Russell Williams know a thing or two about living on the streets. Each of these four men was once homeless — fighting to cope with the harsh conditions of street life. Now they are using their life experiences and training to help others end their homelessness and begin lives of self-sufficiency.

“I was out there with them. I slept with them, and I woke up with them,” Russell says. The team of men frequent locations around metro Atlanta that are known to have high concentrations of homeless people. They spend time building trust with the men and women they encounter and offering a way out of homelessness through housing and case management support.

“I know that I was scared, so I know they are too. I really try to get to know the person and identify with them,” explains Kinte. This relationship-building approach has proven effective. Since April 2010, Kinte and the others have successfully placed many of the most fragile people in transitional housing.

For Horace, Tim, Kinte and Russell,



ABOVE: (Left-right) Tim Henning, Russell Williams, Kinte Rollins and Horace Anthony are part of the Commission's outreach work.

RIGHT: Tim, Russell and Horace discuss plans during one of their outreach efforts.

getting involved with street outreach has given them the opportunity to return the help they once received. “The satisfaction of making an individual go from being dependent to self-sufficient is truly wonderful and amazing,” says Russell.



Peer-to-peer Case Management Academy trains local managers

Case management is the critical piece in helping a homeless person recover and become self-sufficient.

In 2008, the Commission established the Case Management Training Academy with the goal of providing local case managers access to continuous learning opportunities in a peer sharing forum.

The Academy includes a series of monthly workshops that trains case managers in

topics that improve their skills and extend their knowledge of issues affecting the homeless population.

Since implementing the Academy, the Commission has:

- held more than **42 workshops**;
- trained more than **200 case managers**; and,
- had more than **50 nonprofits** participate in the Academy.

For more information, contact Terri Crouch at 404.527.7297.

Volunteer: Help us celebrate formerly homeless individuals

When a homeless person achieves self-sufficiency, it is cause for celebration.

Through the **Celebrating Success** Program, our volunteers strive to tell the stories of formerly homeless men and women through words, photography and film. By telling their stories accurately, the public gains a better understanding of life on the streets and the collaborative approach it takes to help someone out of homelessness.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Protip Biswas at 404.527.7237.

Opportunities increased with access to benefits

The Commission recognizes the important role benefits, such as social security, can play in helping a person end their homelessness. Many individuals need assistance with the application process.

Organizations such as **First Step Staffing** and the Georgia Department of Human Resources' **SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery** (SOAR) program have helped countless homeless people access benefits and begin the path to independence.

BENEFITS RESULTS

86 percent approval rate to receive benefits for homeless individuals applying with assistance from First Step or SOAR, compared with 15 to 20 percent for those who applied without assistance.

Average wait time of **119** days for approval of Social Security benefits for homeless persons, compared with more than two years for those who applied without case managers.

More than **300** homeless individuals approved since January 2008 for SSDI/SSI benefits.

Generated more than **2.5** million dollars in combined income for homeless individuals with mental illness.

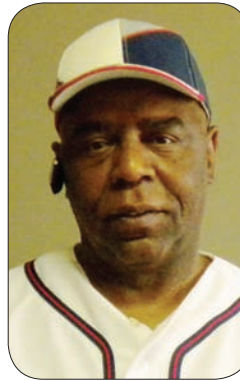
SUCCESS STORY: RONALD MAYES

Ronald Mayes always worked hard. From working at a steel plant to driving a taxi, Ronald was accustomed to providing for himself. However, the economic downturn left Ronald unemployed, and years of physical labor had left his body weak. With no source of income, Ronald could not keep up with his mortgage payments and soon became homeless.

With nowhere to turn and an aching body, Ronald knew he needed help. Ronald was referred to **First Step**, a United Way community partner that helps staff, house and acquire benefits for formerly homeless people. First Step knew Ronald needed

his social security benefits to become self-sufficient. Although previously denied benefits, First Step helped Ronald obtain his monthly benefits.

Ronald now has a regular source of income, which he used to purchase a car, furniture and other household items for his new apartment. He also is able to receive treatment for his health issues.



SUCCESS STORY: MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

Michael Montgomery, a disabled veteran, was born in Cuthbert, Ga., and moved with his family to Atlanta when he was four years old. As a young adult, he served in the military for three years and later attended Temple University in Philadelphia.

Upon returning to Atlanta, Michael opened a paint store. His business became very successful, but his success led him down the wrong path. Michael began using cocaine — and his addiction grew with his business success.

Eventually, his drug habit caught up to him. Michael lost his home and business, and he was forced to live on the street for more than 10 years.

Michael decided to turn his life around on his 47th birthday. Feeling

lonely, shameful and miserable, he started rebuilding a relationship with his family. Michael also sought help from the **Veterans Affairs Hospital**, and later moved into **Hope House**, a United Way grantee that provides transitional housing for men battling drug addictions.

Michael now lives with his stepfather and is very happy and optimistic about his future.

He volunteers as a guest speaker with the Commission and looks forward to also participating in its mentoring program.



Hospital to Home shows promise

For those suffering from chronic health conditions, living on the street makes these problems even harder to manage. Without primary care doctors or access to clinics, homeless people often seek primary care in emergency rooms.

Juanita Dawson, a social worker at **Grady Memorial Hospital**, says that some of the same people come to the ER anywhere from three to 20 times a month for minor issues such as back pain or a toothache.

To address this issue, the Commission developed Hospital to Home, a pilot program where hospital social workers identify homeless people and refer them to agencies that work to find transitional housing and to secure social security, disability or retirement benefits for clients.

Since beginning the program, 66 homeless people have been housed and 37 percent have discontinued their use of the ER, representing a savings of about \$150,000. Additionally, 17 percent of participants were reunited with their families.

Street to Home: The success continues

The Street to Home program continues to show great success. Nearly 1,000 clients have been served through the program at a 79.5 percent success rate, making it one of the Commission's most successful strategies to ending homelessness.

RIGHT: A homeless woman who has chosen to enter transitional housing packs up her belongings.

BELOW: An outreach volunteer assists a woman who has chosen to enter transitional housing in filling out paperwork.



SUCCESS STORY: SHARON HUDSON

On the surface, Sharon Hudson's life had all the trappings of success. She was a paralegal at a prominent Atlanta law firm, wife of an attorney and mother of two. Unfortunately, she also struggled with an addiction to alcohol and prescription drugs — a habit that began when she was 11 years old. What seemed to be the perfect life to outsiders was actually a life of depression, loneliness and many years of drug and alcohol addiction.

After losing her family and career, Sharon sought help. In the summer of 2007, Sharon enrolled and finished a treatment program at **Saint Jude Recovery Center**. "I was able to open

up about suicide for the first time in my life and be honest about my feelings. I realized I wasn't the only screwed up person in the world, and I didn't feel

alone anymore," says Sharon. She later enrolled in the **Breakthrough House** recovery program and was accepted at **Another Chance**, a residential treatment program for women. After finishing the program, she was hired as an administrative assistant and now works as an office manager.

Sharon has been clean for two years and three months, and is passionate about giving back to others. Sharon has her own apartment and, recently, has adopted a "homeless" neighborhood cat.



STREET TO HOME RESULTS

991 clients have participated.

79.5 percent remain off the streets.

39.7 percent graduated to independent housing or were reunited with family and other support networks.

39.8 percent are in supportive housing or moved on to other programs.

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

19.7 percent are senior citizens.

18 percent receive SSD/SSI benefits.

13.7 percent are employed.

— Results based on May 2010 scorecard.

— Written by Jenny Morgan, Woodruff/Whitehead Foundation; Dina Romeo, Ridgeworth Capital Management, Inc.; and Angelle Cooper, United Way Smart Start

**SINCE OUR START
IN 2003...**

More than **2,000** supportive housing units exist for the chronically homeless.

Another **620** housing units exist specifically for women and children.

More than **1,800** people have found employment.

More than **12,000** people have reunited with family or loved ones.

More than **200** case managers have received training through the Case Management Training Academy.

More than **265** volunteers have participated in the Street Outreach, Celebrating Success and Mentoring to Success programs.

An additional **550** volunteers participated in the inaugural Atlanta Homeless Connect event on Sunday, October 25, 2009.

New co-chairs welcomed following Sibley departure

The Commission welcomed three new co-chairs this year: **Ray Buday**, executive director, Marietta Housing Authority, **Shirley Franklin**, former mayor, City of Atlanta, and **Jack Hardin**, senior partner, Rogers & Hardin, LLP. With these three chairs and United Way, the government, business and nonprofit communities are all

represented — reflecting the collaborative vision on which the Commission was founded.

After seven years of service, **Horace Sibley** stepped down as chair of the United Way Regional Commission on Homelessness in October 2009. Under his leadership, the community has made great strides in ending homelessness in Atlanta.



BUDAY



FRANKLIN



HARDIN



SIBLEY

Leadership Atlanta class lends expertise to Commission work

A small group from the Leadership Atlanta Class of 2010 has provided guidance to the Regional Commission on Homelessness on how it can improve its relationship with the business community.

The group recommended creating a Business Ambassadors program that would allow Leadership Atlanta members and other key stakeholders to raise awareness of the issue, share their personal experiences and foster a better understanding of the Commission's role in solving the problem of chronic homelessness.

The Business Ambassador program launched in early Summer.

LEADERSHIP ATLANTA SMALL GROUP MEMBERS

- Sunny Burrows**, The Lookout Foundation
- Cindy Cheatham**, Georgia Center for Nonprofits
- Chuck Hodges**, Chamberlain Hrdlicka White Williams & Martin
- Don Lancaster**, UPS
- Charles Moore**, Emory Healthcare/HEAL
- Phaedra Parks**, The Parks Group
- James Powell**, KPMG
- John Stephenson, Jr.**, Troutman Sanders
- James Washburn**, McKenna, Long & Aldridge
- Mark Weinstein**, firstPRO, Inc.
- Kathy Colbenson**, Chris KIDS (Alumni Project Liaison)

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK
AND FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED,
VISIT US AT UNITEDWAYATLANTA.ORG/HOMELESSNESS**

THANK YOU

During the past year, the Commission's work has been generously supported by:

- Anonymous Foundation
- Cousins Foundation, Inc.
- David, Helen and Marian Woodward Fund
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation

- The Kendeda Fund
- The Rich Foundation, Inc.
- Sartain Lanier Family Foundation
- Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation

**GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.
LIVE UNITED** 

Regional Commission on Homelessness
United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta
100 Edgewood Avenue, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
404.527.7200 • unitedwayatlanta.org