

Hidden Homelessness

~ raising awareness and promoting change

JUNE 2022

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Lived Experience Voice

"Being doubled up means that we are always invading someone else's space. It makes things incredibly stressful and my kids are constantly on edge and anxious that we will be kicked out. If we were in shelter we would at least have our own space and there would be less anger. But we can't get into the shelter... "

~ Madison area single mom of two that has been doubled up and self-paying in motels. She recently had to send one of her kids out of state temporarily due to the stress of their living situation.

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Getting to Know You:

Diane Nilan

What is your job, and how long have you been in it?

I'm the founder and president of HEAR US Inc., a one-woman national nonprofit started in 2005 to give voice and visibility to families and youth experiencing homelessness.

What does a typical day look like?

Nothing typical about my job! I may be filming interviews, editing videos, writing blogs, giving talks, and a lot of driving...never boring!



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(Click on link below to be taken to the article)

Four Ways HUD Can Help Improve K-12 Education

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What's on Deck...

Join Diane, featured in this newsletter, for a reading and discussion of her book *Dismazed and Driven: My Look at Family Homelessness in America* – an account of her work and travel experience, followed by a screening of her short film *Not Homeless Enough* – which features the stories of four families in Madison and Dane County who have experienced homelessness.

June 13, 6pm

Madison Central Library

June 15, 6pm

Sun Prairie Library

(Click on the dates for links to the library web pages)

Uncovering Hidden Homelessness

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Introducing Diane Nilan (Continued from page 1)

What is the best part of your job? The hardest part of your job?

Best is knowing that I'm facilitating the connection between those who are invisible and those with the power to make life better for homeless families and youth.

Hardest is hearing the families' grueling stories and knowing that it's a tough climb out of the vortex of homelessness.

If you could change one thing about the service system, what would it be?

I would align HUD's narrow, unrealistic definition of homelessness with reality, and have them expand to include families doubled up and in motels on their own dime.

One random fact about you!

I was once described as a "dog with a bone." I guess that's true!

One thing you want people to know about doubled up homelessness in our schools/community?

Doubled up masks the reality of the difficulty of families to escape homelessness. It's expensive, stress-inducing, and fuels the trauma already present. Practically every family I've interviewed has described doubled up as "walking on eggshells." Those of us with our own homes need to absorb what that means. Stability, a core need to function, is but a dream. Families deteriorate in doubled up situations at least as fast as those in shelters.

Define It

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What does **McKinney Vento** mean?

The definition of homelessness used by all public schools in the United States is called McKinney-Vento and includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition specifically includes children and youth living in shelters, transitional housing, cars, campgrounds, motels, and sharing the housing of others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons. This is the same definition of homelessness used by Head Start, federally-funded child care programs, child nutrition, and other federal family and youth programs.

Why is the number of homeless children and youth reported by schools higher than the number reported by homeless and housing agencies? With few exceptions, the HUD definition of homelessness only includes people living in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets or other outdoor locations. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) use different definitions of homelessness, as well as different methods of collecting data. (From [SchoolHouse Connection](#))

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Ways to Help...

Reach Dane

Reach Dane provides high-quality early childhood services to over 1,000 underserved children ages 0-5 in Dane County.

Over 30% of the children they serve are homeless. Help support their work by volunteering as a community member for the Head Start Policy Council to review and give input on a wide variety of programming topics. You can also donate funds to help support basic needs of homeless families. For more information on volunteer opportunities please email

jeverson@reachdane.org.

To learn more about Reach Dane's work or to make financial contribution, please visit <https://reachdane.org/>

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This newsletter is brought to you by the Doubled Up Workgroup.

Since 2019, we have been working to raise awareness about doubled up homelessness in our community and advocating for resources to support this population.

Questions or comments?

Email us at doubledupworkgroup@gmail.com

