

Hidden Homelessness

~ raising awareness and promoting change



Lived Experience Voice

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DECEMBER 2022

Getting to Know You:

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Johneisha
Prescott



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

I am a Housing Strategy Specialist for households experiencing doubled-up (Category 3) homelessness in the Division of Housing Access & Affordability. This position was created due to advocacy efforts of the community – largely the Doubled Up Workgroup, and may potentially be the first government position to focus directly and only on serving this population in the nation. I began in January of 2022 after 7 years of experience working in other housing support programs.

What does a typical day look like?

Lots of reading/researching and idea structuring. I set aside time to exclusively look into funding opportunities and how programs to serve DU homelessness could meet application requirements. Sometimes that involves meeting with local agencies, sometimes its internal meetings within the Division, and sometimes it's going outside of the Dane community and seeing what is happening around the nation – some of those programs may not be DU focused, but there's some replication that may be possible.

There are project proposals that I work on, as well. I have to structure that work... many times over, and have it out for feedback to ensure that it's feasible, makes sense, and would be a useful tool to serve DU households. Sometimes those proposals may identify a potential funding source which creates a need to better understand eligibility, requirements and constraints.

How will Santa find me on Christmas?

My house has an exhaust pipe
Not a chimney,

So how will Santa find me and
will we celebrate Christmas?

I know things are not so good,
But that doesn't stop me from
wondering,
How does Santa do this when there are
no chimneys?

We put a bell on our windshield and a
ribbon on the trunk of the car.
Will that help?
I hope it doesn't snow so they show

Sometimes we have enough for a hotel
room,
I hope that is where we are on
Christmas eve
Because I'm pretty sure Santa could
find me there.

Once we stayed at Grandma's house
It was small but I had a space on the
floor and the front door was on the
bottom floor
Maybe Santa could find her small
apartment

This morning at school we wrote letters
to Santa
I worked hard to spell things right
and to make sure that he knew I might
not be where my letter says I am at
I hope he will know to look for me in
all the places I listed

I didn't ask for much
Mostly I want things to eat and a
blanket of my own
Something for my little sister and
Please a little something for my mom
She is so sad right now.

Santa, I believe in you
But I might not be where you think I
am
We don't want to miss you this year

A conversation with a young elementary student experiencing homelessness 2021

Uncovering Hidden Homelessness

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Introducing **Johneisha Prescott** (Continued from page 1)

A portion of my time is also spent attending meetings of the HSC subgroups and helping advance initiatives for homeless services in general. Beyond that – my days are never the same. I may be participating in a webinar; taking a data course; exploring a new program that I learned about and making connections with my work... there's no set day.

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

The best part: being a part of something that has the potential to positively impact the lives of people who are struggling with stable housing, AND helping to introduce a new way to go about doing that.

The hardest part: Altogether now: finding long term funding in which Doubled Up homelessness is an eligible activity

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

I won't squeeze the same turnip. I feel like anyone who works in services has the same issues with the system. One that I don't hear enough about though is the wage that is sometimes given to providers. Many times, they are on the frontlines of anti-poverty programs but experiencing it themselves.

I've driven across a County on Christmas morning, with my kid in tow to address a crisis for a family. I didn't do it for the \$1X/hour. Besides, it was my day off, but I didn't hesitate when I got the call. There are many workers in the field who have similar experiences – they deserve better wages.

It's a national issue that adds pressure to every service system, but I wish staff at non-profit agencies could be paid more. And I know that many agencies are struggling themselves... do more with less, right? Argh!

One random fact about you!

I'm very frugal. I refuse to buy anything at full price. It will go on sale, and when it does – I will be there with a coupon!

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

It can be an entry point into literal homelessness for many households. Once people start resorting to doubling up or motel staying – they may be one disagreement or missed payment away from street homelessness or the shelter system. I applaud the advocacy of the school programs and local agencies that want to implement interventions ahead of worsening occurrences of homelessness.

3 On the Radio...



Check out one of our very own Doubled Up Workgroup members on the radio!

Jani Koester appeared on WORT for the Sunday, November 13th edition of Her Turn. Follow this link <https://archive.wortfm.org/> to the WORT Radio Archives and scroll to Sunday, November 13th Her Turn (at 14:20 minute mark) to hear Jani talk about Doubled Up Homelessness in our community!

Define It

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What does Affordable Housing mean?

Housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30 percent of their income for gross housing costs, including utilities. ([US Department of Housing and Urban Development](#))

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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

