



(Click on a link below to be transported to the article)

[Celebrating Urban Triage’s opening of a new Youth Drop-in Center, part of their Unhoused Youth Initiative](#)

[Why Madison rents are rising so fast and won’t slow down](#)

[Check out this quiz to test your knowledge of early childhood homelessness and learn some new facts!](#)

[Looking to understand ways your early childhood center can be more responsive and supportive to homeless students? Use this self-assessment tool!](#)

1

Getting to Know You:

Christie Howell-Yrios



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

I have worked at Animal Crackers, Inc. childcare center since 1993, and I have served in many different capacities. I currently serve as the Executive Director and 4K Teacher, but have also served as a Summer Camp Counselor, a School-Age Teacher, a Preschool Teacher, the Financial Administrator, and the Assistant Director.

What does a typical day look like?

Animal Crackers, Inc. is a City of Madison Accredited/ 5 STAR Program. The Center’s philosophy is to offer all children an educationally and emotionally balanced program in a safe, child-centered environment of warmth and friendliness. Children are given opportunities to explore, experiment and question while engaging in hands-on active learning activities. This approach is integral when supporting families facing hardships, especially homelessness. No two days are the same, which makes this work both challenging and exciting. I work with a great group of people who are dedicated to the empowerment of all families.

How does your work intersect with homelessness in our community?

Our center prioritizes families who are facing all types of obstacles and barriers, homelessness being one of them. When children’s families facing homelessness, we work with them and other service agencies, to assist in finding adequate and affordable housing. The staff here have supportive, trusting relationships with the families. Animal Crackers, Inc. is a TEP (Transition Education Program) site and has trained staff to assist families in navigating the resources related to housing, shelter, food sources and tuition assistance. We maintain relationships with key service agencies, allowing us to respond as quickly as possible.

3

Seeking artists for Homelessness Awareness Month!



The Homelessness Awareness Month workgroup is seeking submissions from community members, especially those with lived experience, to produce art pieces that will bring to the community in a visual way what homelessness looks like in our state. The goal of this project will be to capture the human element of what homelessness is beyond the stigma’s and stereotypical views that is often presented via the news media.

The art might be displayed at the state capitol for the month of November, during our Statewide Homeless Awareness kickoff. There may also be local opportunities for art displays in November.

We are looking for all hands on with this project and if interested please fill out the below form with what role you would like to play in this Statewide effort.

Please submit this interest request by June 15th. Art should be ready for display by mid October

[click above for information on how to register](#)

Uncovering Hidden Homelessness

~ raising awareness and promoting change ~



Introducing **Christie Howell-Yrios** *(Continued from page 1)*

What is important for other childcare centers to know about supporting families who are homeless?

Over the last 30 years that I have been in the field of childcare and education, it is evident that the face and structure of homelessness has changed. Service based support is more important than ever when addressing physical health, mental wellbeing and mitigating the risk factors for families who are facing homelessness. It is important that teachers and other staff are trained in supporting children and their families, responsive in addressing the trauma that occurs during homelessness, and have access to professional development in the area of trauma informed care. Animal Crackers, Inc. has a commitment to ongoing and increased collaboration between early childhood programs and service providers to support childcare programs that are serving families facing homelessness. Some of the systems level indicators we use to reflect our commitment in this area are our willingness to:

- Share our budgeting and finance strategies
- Share operational systems that have worked for our agency
- Share any knowledge our agency staff currently has to provide strategies when working with families facing barriers associated with homelessness
- Assist with program policy development
- Provide trauma informed care strategies

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

The best part of my job is working with a dedicated team of people who always believe we will find a way. Supporting families on multiple levels also affords my ability to work with amazing people in the service community.

The hardest part of my job is having to put families on the waiting list with no definitive date for enrollment.

One random fact about you!

My husband and I went to Preschool together!

One thing you want people to know about doubled up homelessness in early childhood. How can people in the community help?

Unfortunately, homeless numbers will always be inaccurate because there remains an unknown number of doubled-up families that are not counted. It is important to understand that the numbers and percentages given for the homeless population will always be greater than is reported. Reach out to policymakers on a regular basis. Get involved in local organizations whose mission is to work on the expansion of affordable housing and always keep this conversation going, as our community has a long way to go in supporting children and families facing homelessness.



4

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



5

Summertime!!!

There's so much space...find yourself a piece.

Here is a link to start you off....

<https://www.visitmadison.com/things-to-do/summer-activities/>