

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

The Housing First Revolution & What It Means

by LeAnne Kerr and Chelle Samaniego

Things were different in the 2000s. Government agencies funded emergency shelters. Men and women who wanted to leave the streets went into transitional housing programs, and then, with pomp and circumstance, clients entered the reality of permanent housing.

With economic downturns, the face of homelessness changed. Single females, mothers and fathers with children, and grandparents with grandchildren began to dot the landscape, changing the idea of what we considered "the homeless." Emergency shelters traditionally did not accept women, children or pets, so many living in transition chose to continue living on the streets, or lived in their cars to keep their families together.

See "Housing First" on page 2

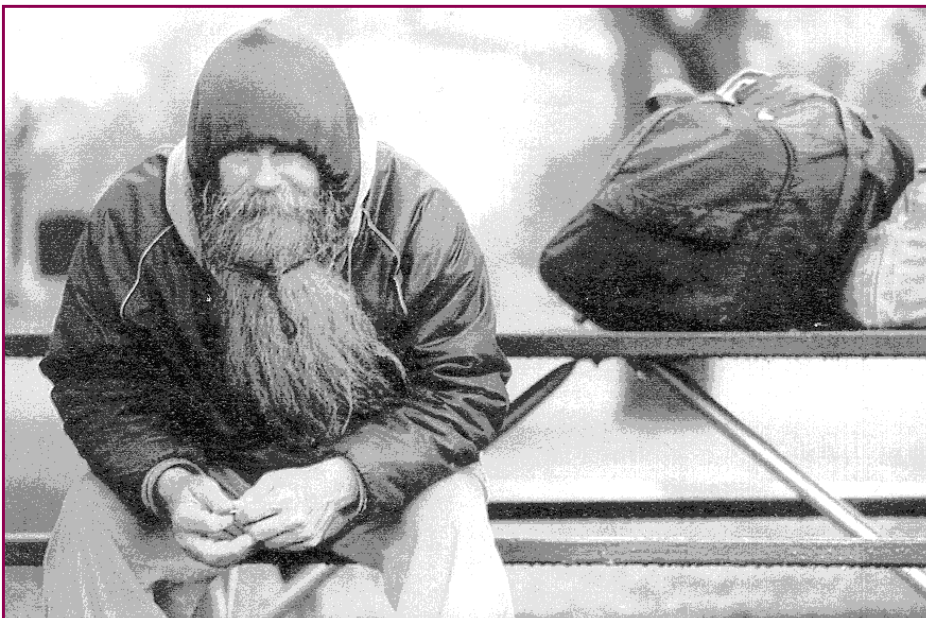


Photo by John Langford

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Housing First

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Transitional housing organizations tended to focus on a certain demographic, so women with families and those escaping domestic violence could find a safe and stable place to rebuild rental history, credit and seek employment to regain independence. The concept of transitional housing focused on this question: What is keeping people homeless? Is it drug or alcohol abuse? Is it mental illness? Whatever was delaying permanent housing, then, was addressed first. Then, when these were no longer hindrances, the client—in a sense—graduated to permanent housing.

Transitional housing programs also had rules and timelines. Typically, these programs tested for alcohol and drug use, and if discovered, clients were immediately released from the program. Services usually lasted no longer than two years, as grants would no longer pay for services after that time period.

This was for many years the most popular pattern for ministries seeking to help homeless people get off the streets. Recently, however, in California, Alabama, Florida, Texas and many other states, transitional housing programs have suffered major drops in funding. This is due to the support of a new housing model favored by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

This model, called “Housing First,” at first seems like a radical transition from our normal plans of housing our

nation’s homeless. The reasoning behind this holds tight to the belief that shelter is a basic human right, and before those who are homeless can start a new life, they need a home. The model does exactly what it says: House a person first, and then let’s work together to keep them in housing.

And, it seems to be working. According to a plethora of reports, the Housing First model has an 85- to 92-percent success rate. “If you can keep someone in housing for two years, they are far less likely to return to homelessness,” Jennifer Caballero, the former Director of Social Work for Salvation Army in Waco, TX, told us.

Some may argue that residents in these programs need restrictions and guidance, but people who support this model believe that having a home is first priority, and then the residents can get help for whatever problems they face.

Whether substance abuse or mental illness is apparent is not in question. “The crisis they are dealing with is that they need housing,” Caballero said. In a sense, alcohol or drug addiction isn’t keeping the person from getting housing; not being able to keep the housing is what keeps the person living in homelessness.

Paul Hanneman, who recently retired as director of the Urban Ministry Center in Charlotte, NC, and a strong proponent of the Housing First model, said this:

Housing First works because it starts from the principle that people who are housed and surrounded by services and resources—social workers, health professionals, psychiatric and addiction resources—often begin to work on the issues that made and kept them homeless. Instead of requiring that folks be clean and sober and on their meds, we house them as they are and offer them assistance then in working on their issues. The results are startling.

Hanneman continued, saying that many organizations now need to “re-think their programming,” which is what HUD seems to be requiring of emergency shelters and transitional programs across the nation. “The federal government has recognized the significance of this approach and is now providing communities with funds based on how many people are moved into permanent housing—not shelters, not transitional housing, but places of their own.”

However, HUD spokespeople say that the agency’s change in focus is not quite as drastic as it would seem. In a recent article on the HUD Exchange website¹, Ann Marie Oliva, the Director of the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, addressed the question of the removal of transitional housing programs:

Three Housing Models

• EMERGENCY SHELTER *(also called a Homeless Shelter)*

A place for people to live when fleeing a crisis situation, such as a personal or family crisis, a natural disaster or domestic violence. Shelters usually provide beds on a first-come, first-served basis and typically only serve unaccompanied men and women, not families. Pets are usually not allowed. Length of stays in a shelter are determined by each individual organization.

• TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

A supportive housing program that focuses on issues preventing a person from achieving permanent housing, such as substance abuse or mental illness. A person lives on-site while receiving case management and needed services. Alcohol and drug use is prohibited and use results in departure from the program. Programs typically last from two weeks to 24 months. When completed successfully, clients transition into permanent housing.

• HOUSING FIRST

A method of responding to homelessness based on the philosophy that shelter is a basic human right. The Housing First model provides housing for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. This approach prioritizes client choice in both housing selection and in service participation. Clients must adhere to a lease agreement and be good tenants. Participants usually pay 30 percent of their income for rent.

Some people think that HUD simply wants to get rid of this type of housing altogether.... HUD does not advocate the wholesale removal of one type of homeless resource in a community (like emergency shelter or transitional housing) with the replacement of another (like rapid re-housing). That would be shortsighted, and does not take into account the specific needs of communities.

But looking at HUD's funding streams and grant approvals would make it appear that Housing First is clearly favored. In Waco, TX, one transitional and emergency housing program, My Brother's Keeper, had been expecting this drop in funds for some time. Its funding dried up when its last transitional client entered into permanent housing. Federal funds made up almost 80 percent of the program's transitional housing annual budget.

During this time, the organization will decide whether to continue functioning as long as it can with the lack of funds or make a change to the Housing First model. My Brother's Keeper provides 56 beds as emergency shelter care. When the change in focus for federal funding became evident, some Salvation Army sectors (for instance, in Texas, Colorado, Utah and Montana) started the switch to rapid re-housing programs.

Another successful transitional housing program in Waco, Compassion Ministries, has chosen to remain in its current model and seek nongovernmental funding. Still, the trend toward the Housing First model is very strong.



art by Gertrud Nelson

cost the citizens of Charlotte \$39,000 per year. This is for one person without a stable home. Now, imagine a city with 100 or 600 or 10,000 people who are considered chronically homeless and who are being treated in crisis situations daily.

The UMC's HousingWorks program costs \$39 a day. That translates to \$13,983 annually and provides stable housing and case management for each resident. The center reports an 81 percent housing-retention rate among its residents.

Where transitional housing addressed the personal issues keeping someone homeless, Housing First essentially teaches clients how to be good residents. Therefore, the Housing First models focuses on lease agreements and education. As Jennifer Caballero explained, "There is a lot of education surrounding lease agreements and what exactly the tenant is signing. It addresses what happens if you don't pay your rent, noise violations and subleases." Many clients can get housing, but keeping it long term seems to be the issue.

No timelines, no restrictions, no controlling factors, just be a good resident, respect your neighbors and adhere to a lease agreement. Housing First has shown over and over again in communities across the nation that it can work and it will work. Housing for those who are considered homeless has a new ally in town. And now, thanks to like-minded organizations and the federal government, permanent housing can be a reality for even our most vulnerable neighbors.

—Chelle Samaniego is a freelance writer and social media specialist living in Waco, TX. She worked with the Waco Homeless Coalition as a VISTA volunteer and is an active member of the McLennan County Hunger Coalition. She is also the Seeds of Hope Social Media editor. LeAnne Kerr hails from Shreveport, LA. She is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University and was a Seeds of Hope intern during the summer of 2016. Sources: the National Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org); the Charlotte, NC, Urban Ministry Center (www.urbanministrycenter.org), including correspondence with Paul Hanneman, former director; interview with Jennifer Caballero of the Salvation Army; the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (www.hudexchange.info); Waco Tribune-Herald.

“Instead of requiring that folks be clean and sober and on their meds, we house them as they are and offer them assistance then in working on their issues. The results are startling.”

—Paul Hanneman, former director, Urban Ministry Center, Charlotte, NC

This model initially appeared in 1988, and the first Housing First Program began in Los Angeles, CA. Today, there are Housing First centers across the country, and the model is being implemented in a growing number of cities.

The housing provided is permanent, and the tenant is expected to pay 30 percent of his or her income toward rent, making it affordable. The model is aimed to house disabled, older and more vulnerable homeless people, but it is open to those who follow the three guidelines: (1) The tenant must pay rent, (2) The tenant must not disturb other tenants, and (3) The tenant must allow a case-management provider to do home visits and provide guidance.

The Urban Ministry Center (UMC) in Charlotte, NC, maintains that the Housing First model saves both lives and tax dollars. According to the UMC, when you calculate the costs of hospital stays, ER visits, court costs and jail fees, as well as shelter costs, one chronically homeless person can

Can We End Hunger by Eating Bugs?

One Man Says Yes

by LeAnne Kerr

If someone had come to me a few years ago and said, “Hey, do you think we could end hunger if we introduce bugs into the average daily diet?” I would have thought they were crazy. But Little Herds, an organization located in Austin, TX, is changing the narrative on eating bugs.

Robert Nathan Allen, the founder and president of Little Herds, believes in its mission wholeheartedly—to educate and empower communities, locally and globally, to support and promote the use of insects for food, as an environmentally sound and economically viable source of nutrition.

“Bugs are just one piece of the food puzzle in a broken system,” Allen said. “People have been doing this for thousands of years, and in more malnourished areas, it’s common to eat bugs from the wild. Domestication hasn’t been explored there, and if we fortify foods that contain little nutrition with the nutrients from bugs, people can be fed well.”

So, why is this idea so exotic? Because bugs have a stigma. People don’t think of them as a food source.

Allen compared bugs to sushi, or kale, saying, “Sushi was just raw fish in the 1960s, and it was considered bad for you—until a high-end chef in Hollywood created the California Roll. Kale used to be the garnish on fruit and cheese platters, but now it’s a super food.”

Like these foods, bugs are just another form of nutrition that seem taboo at the moment, but, given the research and effort in the kitchen, they could be the next source of protein outside of meat since tofu.

Allen has been amazed at the response, especially from kids. “They are more receptive because they haven’t grown

up enough yet to know the stigma. If kids grow up with bugs in their diets as a normal thing, there may not be a stigma someday,” he said, with a hopeful tone.

Allen says there is ample research going on now to make even more bug-incorporated food items like cricket milk or ice cream. “Insects are healthy, and you get a lot of nutrients when you eat them, but there is always some regulatory uncertainty that we are trying to clarify,” he said. The FDA helps with these regulations for stores and restaurants, but the underlying taboo is still there for most.

So how is Little Herds helping to change the narrative? Allen calls the approach “Bottom Up, Top Down.” From the bottom, people with lower incomes, who live in food deserts or who have little access to affordable, nutritious meals, will one day be able to afford the same food, but it will have been enhanced with the nutrition from insects.

“Because insects aren’t a commodity, there are no tax subsidies, so they’re expensive right now,” Allen explained,

Bugs are just another form of nutrition that seem taboo at the moment, but, given the research and effort in the kitchen, they could be the next source of protein outside of meat since tofu.

but insects are easier for everyday households to domesticate and harvest in less time and with less effort than raising cows or chickens.

From the top, getting the word out to celebrities and top chefs about how edible, safe and tasty bugs are is where the entomophagy industry can hit the ground running.

Little Herds



“A year ago, Questlove [the band leader from *The Tonight Show* with Jimmy Fallon] went to South by Southwest¹ and ate toasted crickets on a salad because Little Herds had worked with the chef at that restaurant,” Allen said, giving one example of the Top Down approach. He said that bugs in the food industry is uncharted territory and chefs who want to explore the limits of food have the opportunity to play with

Allen says that people with lower incomes, who live in food deserts or who have little access to affordable, nutritious meals, will one day be able to afford the same food, but it will have been enhanced with the nutrition from insects.

many species of edible insects. They can then inspire each other to use bugs in everyday cooking.

Beyond the food industry, Little Herds is also moving into the feed industry. Scientists are conducting research on a soldier-fly larva that feasts on household, restaurant, and any other kind of compost. These larvae eat compost and waste at a compelling rate, and can then be made into feed for livestock. This means that waste and compost will be reusable and recycled. In this way, corn and wheat used for livestock feed can be replaced and given to hungry people to eat.

“We’re getting a do-over. We get to discover this resource that has been ignored because we have seen the pitfalls of mainstream agriculture, and we can do it right this time,” Allen said. Little Herds and organizations like it hope to push for strict regulations, safety for insect farmers, good wages and access to all social levels.

“There is no ‘old-boys club’ controlling the system. This industry is funded by the public that sees the importance of rewriting the mistakes of the past.” One of the many pitfalls of mainstream livestock agriculture is a frequent disregard for animal welfare.

According to Allen, insects naturally prefer dark, tight spaces, so they are space-efficient. Insects also grow into adulthood quickly, and then are put into hibernation before they are used for food products, so there is no violent death in insect harvest.

Robert Nathan Allen shows cricket flour to a child at a Little Herds demonstration.

Participants reported that they were pleasantly surprised at the taste of cookies made from cricket flour.

Photo courtesy of Little Herds.

Little Herds participated in a crowdfunding campaign last summer and surpassed its goal within the first few days. Money was raised that will cover operation costs, research and collection of data from other companies to show a broad level of the insect industry for the public.

Allen also said that Little Herds is partnering with Farm for Orphans where funds will go towards starting cricket farms in orphanages around the world. From there, when these orphans grow up and leave the orphanage, Little Herds plans to provide vocational training for them to make a living by farming insects on their own.

The mission of Little Herds began as a local outreach, but has expanded since its founding in 2012. Allen says that, in five years’ time, he hopes to see Little Herds active in every state in the US, and to have international hubs. The Board of Directors for Little Herds has expanded this year, alone, to Los Angeles, Denver, New York, Switzerland, Rome, and Shanghai. This non-profit has gone from educating the local community to the global community.

“We hope to be available everywhere to everyone as a resource. We have to plan for what to do when we become irrelevant,” Allen said. He hopes to work himself out of a job, once insects become a norm in the food industry.

—LeAnne Kerr hails from Shreveport, LA. She is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University and was a Seeds of Hope intern during the summer of 2016. During her exit interview, when asked what she most enjoyed working on, she replied that it was this story.

Endnote

1. South by Southwest is a large annual convergence of film, music and art festivals in Austin, TX.



Reflections from a Poverty Simulation Weekend

by Layton Coker



The term “life-changing” gets thrown around a lot. Critics may describe a particularly enjoyable movie, novel or barbecue sandwich in this way, when, in fact, the lasting impact is rather minimal. You might not even remember the last time that you described something as life-changing, but I vividly remember the last time that I did.

The day I completed (or as some might say, survived) the poverty simulation organized by Mission Waco, my dad asked me to describe my experience. Given the fact that participants are instructed to withhold specific information about the simulation so that details are not leaked to possible future participants, I could think of only one appropriate response.

“It changed my life,” I answered. That statement was immediately followed by a sense of humility. I’m only 16 years old. Who am I to say that this experience changes lives, when I have lived (hopefully) not even a quarter of my life? All I knew was that the previous weekend had heightened my awareness

of the troubling rate of poverty in our community, and opened my eyes to the alarming apathy of privileged, Western society towards our brothers and sisters living in poverty around the world.

In three short days and two long, cold nights, I was able to witness the effects of poverty within my own community of Waco, TX. In Waco, a city situated along the Brazos, in Central Texas, 29 percent of the population lives below the poverty line—84 percent higher than the national average. As one of the other 71 percent, I found myself becoming more conscious of the parts of my life that I take for granted, such as a warm bed and guaranteed medical care.

Though one weekend could not completely replicate an impoverished existence, the Poverty Simulation exposed me to the harsh reality that is occurring literally down the road from my house. The Mission Waco Poverty Simulation has

prompted me to think in ways I have never thought and called me to act in ways I have never acted. I have a deeper sense of empathy for those in need and a stronger commitment to be involved in work that makes a difference for them. So I believe I can say with confidence that this experience was life-changing, and I will be forever grateful for it.

—Layton Coker is a junior at Rapoport Academy in Waco, TX, and a member of the youth group at Lake Shore Baptist Church. He participated in Mission Waco’s Poverty Simulation along with several local youth groups. His youth minister, Zach Helton, asked him to write about his experience.

Editor’s note: Mission Waco has been conducting Poverty Simulation weekend experiences for 30 years and has provided a model for many such efforts across the country.

Transform My Discomfort into Kindness

by Zach Helton

Editor’s note: The following reflection by Zach Helton, youth minister at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX, was sent out to the church as part of a Weekly Youth Update, following the youth group’s participation in Mission Waco’s Poverty Simulation.

After a very long day of walking across Waco in search of food, quarters, a Bible, and a dry place to open our Bibles, I slipped into my sleeping bag and felt the hard, damp ground against my back. My body aching, my sleeping bag zipped up to my neck, looking up at the stars through the tree branches, it occurred to me that I hadn’t made the time for any kind of evening prayer. I reflected over the strange day for a moment, considering what my prayer might look like. As I reviewed, the Spirit’s voice reverberated off of the experiences of my day to sound this prayer:

God, transform my discomfort into kindness. Redeem my pain; make it love.

I found myself praying this prayer over and over again. Every bodily ache reminded me of the work God was doing, re-setting the broken bones in my soul. I prayed it for myself. I prayed it for the Lake Shore youth. I prayed it for everyone on the hard ground around me.

Transform our discomfort into kindness. Redeem our pain; make it love.

By God’s grace, this is what I hope happens over the next few weeks as we begin to navigate life after the Poverty Sim. With eyes opened to new chances to incarnate God’s love in our community, may God turn our holy discomfort into self-giving love.

—Zach Helton, who hails from Pensacola, FL, is a recent graduate of George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, TX, where he lives with his wife Claire and his young son, James.

Resources & Opportunities

Developing a Heart for the Hungry...



*...a hunger emphasis primer
for beginning churches*

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We're collecting sermons about hunger.

Thanks to a grant from the H.C. Gemmer Christian Family Foundation, we are working on a second edition of *Speaking of Hunger*, our popular collection of hunger sermons.

If you have preached or written a good sermon about hunger and the church's call to respond—or if you've heard a good one—please let us know. Contact us at seedseditor1@gmail.com.



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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group seeks out people of faith who feel called to care for poor and hungry people; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed.

—Herman Melville

There is always more misery among the lower classes than there is humanity in the higher.

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

History is written by the rich, and so the poor get blamed for everything.

—Jeffrey D. Sachs

We must powder our wigs; that is why so many poor people have no bread.

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Extreme poverty is not only a condition of unsatisfied material needs. It is often accompanied by a degrading state of powerlessness.

—Peter Singer

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

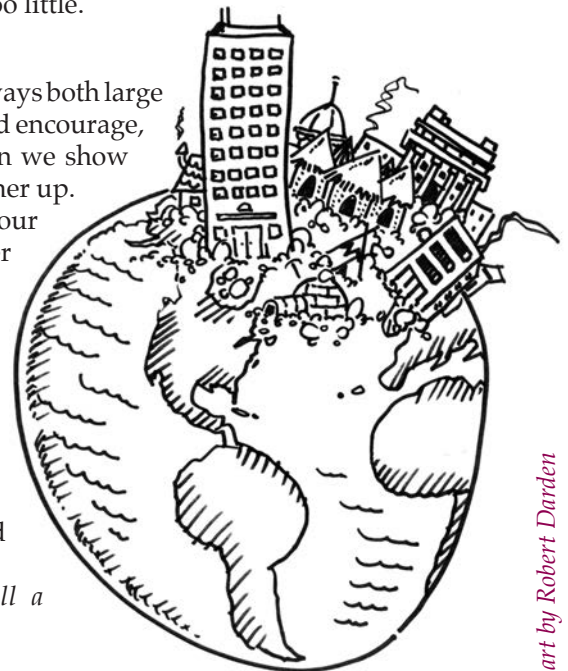
—Franklin D. Roosevelt

God's love is made visible in ways both large and small—when we bless and encourage, accept and understand. When we show up, pitch in and prop each other up. When we open our homes, our hearts, and our spirits to other pilgrims on the journey. We call it *church*.

—Judy Prather

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.

—Atticus Finch, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee



art by Robert Darden

Editorial Address

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Advent, Lent and an annual Hunger Emphasis—with an attitude “toward justice, peace and food security for all of God’s children.” These include litanies, sermons, children’s and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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