



Artists Helping the Homeless

September 2023

Douglas County Drug Court
Presents Award Too AHH

The Douglas County Drug Court
program team recognized [Artists
Helping The Homeless](#) today for their

partnership with the court. The nonprofit agency provides respite housing services for individuals who have been discharged from the Douglas County Correctional Facility and who are entering homelessness with a substance use disorder and/or mental illness. Artists Helping the Homeless provides wrap-around support services and transition services to support an individual's recovery and to promote independence. Several AHH residents successfully graduated from the court. Participants often describe the agency's support as life-changing.



Back on Track (Resident story)

The new year brought Bryan to Concord House, fresh out of detox. Like many new residents, he worked with Woo in assisting the area homeless in various ways, seven days a week. He noted, “that experience bore witness to where he was headed if he didn’t get his life back on track.”

After some soul-searching, Bryan decided to apply for a sales position with a prior employer. Cars were something he knew and enjoyed. Bryan has become one of the top salesmen at the upscale dealer using his interpersonal skills and genuine care for his customers to avoid the stigma of being a car salesman. Google reviews often cite his “above and beyond” approach. That enabled him to recover a car that had been repossessed, one of his first goals.

That job enabled him to repair his relationship with his friends and family. While things are much better with his father and ex-wife, he’s most proud of the growth he’s experienced with his six year old son. Now six months sober, Bryan has the energy and clarity to go the lake, trampoline park, Science City, movies and other things both he and his son enjoy.

Now 18 lbs lighter, thanks to a rigorous diet and daily workout before work, and in the best shape of his life, he’s regained a level of confidence lost during addiction. Bryan is truly back on track.

Transportation Challenge

Housing is the top need for unhoused people in the communities we serve and they are doing something about it. That started with the “tiny houses” for veterans in Kansas City. Lawrence has embarked on a “palate homes village.” And Johnson County just appropriated funding for a shelter. Even Woo is looking for an “ideal house.”



Transportation is cited as a close second need. Lack of transportation to get people to housing, medical, legal, other services and jobs on time is often a barrier to necessary services. Bus routes may be miles away or at other times than needed. Uber, Lyft and taxis can be expensive.

AHH fills this gap for clients and residents. Last year, the AHH fleet traveled over 250,000 miles taking people to work, school, shelter and services. That’s the equivalent of driving around the world 10 times and then some. The annual cost of gas in 2022 was \$50,800 with another \$30,000 spent to maintain the fleet, the newest of which is a 2020. Add in insurance and drivers' salaries quickly doubles the total cost. At that, AHH turns away more requests that its small fleet can accommodate.

Those trips enabled unhoused hospital patients to realize placement in facilities conducive to their recovery and to follow-up with treatment. They enabled AHH residents to get jobs in fields of their interest, not necessarily the first available or nearest. Residents also went to school and posted better than average grades.

While transportation is a critical need for unhoused persons in our community, it remains a service that isn’t covered by insurance or funded by grants and similar funding sources. It remains a gap in the local safety nets.

AHH HAS a New Website

The [AHH has a new website](#). The site was developed by AHH inhouse with the help of clients and former clients. The new site is a way to learn about programs and meet some of the staff. The site also has a Resource page which is indeed a resource for anyone looking for assistance.

Let us know if you have any questions or suggestions.

IT WAS TIME (Employee profile)



Michael Escobar walked into Bodhi House in April 2018 with a decade and a half of drug use issues behind him and multiple legal charges in three different counties looming. With jail time likely, Michael decided it was time to make a change.

Michael was serious. He mended relationships with family, obtained his high school diploma, enrolled in college and completed drug court which resulted in all his charges being expunged. He also started working as an AHH peer monitor at Bodhi. When AHH replicated the program in Douglas County with Kairos House, Michael became night manager and got his Kansas Peer Mentor Certificate. He continued to progress getting KCPM Supervisor Certification and becoming Douglas County Community Manager two years later. Today, Michael is Community Manager for Johnson and Wyandotte Counties which include AHH's most recent respite house, Concord, and its beds at Salvation Army Harbor Lights in Kansas City, Kansas.

Michael had found a passion, well two. Professionally, he's earned Missouri Peer Specialist, Associate Drug and Alcohol Counselor and Medication Assisted Recovery Specialist certifications. He also oversees AHH staff training and development. Health, fitness and wellness is Michael's other passion. Since walking through the doors at Bodhi, Michael gained 70 lbs (all muscle) and now can lift 535 lbs. He's instilled that culture at Kairos, and now Concord. Oh yes, he recently got engaged.

Michael hit the reset button and today serves as a role model for AHH residents and staff as well as proof of what can be done when one decides "It is time."

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A Major Contributor to AHH

Artists Helping the Homeless

3625 Warwick Blvd.
Kansas City, MO 64111
[816-668-1007](tel:816-668-1007)
ahh.org

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