

Artists Helping the Homeless

Artists Helping the Homeless began as a grassroots initiative and has grown into a comprehensive social service organization providing transportation, discharge planning, transitional housing, and long-term supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Operating in both Kansas and Missouri, Artists Helping the Homeless plays a vital role in bridging fragmented service systems, meeting people where they are by navigating and responding to urgent needs without barriers or delays. In 2024 alone, Artists Helping the Homeless served 1,498 unduplicated individuals, housing 245 through its programs.

Innovative Model of Care

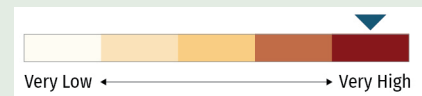
What makes Artists Helping the Homeless unique is its nimbleness. Originally created to provide transportation for individuals discharging from hospitals, Artists Helping the Homeless has become what many call the ‘safety net for the safety net’ and improves local social services by removing barriers to treatment and services and customizing support for the individual person. This flexibility allows them to address the whole person rather than a single issue.

Staff and leadership emphasize that their success is rooted in building individualized supports. As Kar Woo, program director shared:

“Getting ourselves out of the way and doing what is best for the people is what truly matters. Building a client-centered, case-by-case referral system has provided better longer standing success.”

County Context

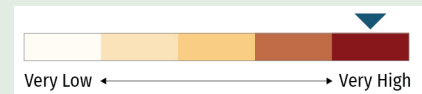
Douglas County



18% increase of deaths caused by drugs or alcohol from 2022 to 2023.

Naloxone distribution reaches only 20% of need.

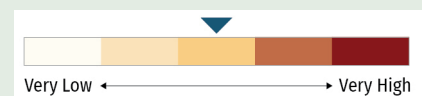
Wyandotte County



17% housing insecurity.

30% increase of deaths caused by drugs or alcohol from 2022 to 2023.

Johnson County



92% of those with a substance use disorder diagnosis not receiving services.

Deaths caused by drugs or alcohol
27 per 100,000 people.

Artists Helping the Homeless directly addresses these challenges by ensuring that vulnerable individuals are not lost in transitions between hospitals, shelters, treatment locations, and other social resources. Their peer-driven, case-by-case approach creates a model that is replicable and deeply responsive to community needs.

Community Impact

Artists Helping the Homeless works to reduce hospital readmissions, prevent justice system involvement, and provide immediate stability for people exiting crisis. Their ability to rapidly deploy transportation ensures individuals can attend medical and behavioral health appointments, access shelter, or reach safe housing. Their transitional housing is paired with peer mentorship and flexible case management, building long-term stability.

“Empathy is the ultimate weapon in combating SUD. SUD is a disease. These people are sick, not morally deficient. They need treatment, not punishment. They need help, not judgment. Every human being has a story, and many of these people are judged without ever knowing what happened to them. Sometimes one act of kindness and encouraging words can give a person just the right amount of hope to inspire change.”

Kar Woo, Program Director