

(In)visible

Homelessness in Appleton

What stories would you tell if given the opportunity?

Homelessness in Appleton is often described as invisible, but the struggle for steady housing and employment has been a challenge for many residents in the past and present.

Portrayed as outsiders or insignificant, the overlooked homeless in Appleton have a story to tell. What does homelessness look and feel like in our area?

In November 2015, area individuals who are homeless or on the edge of homelessness, were given cameras and journals to record snapshots of their lives. Told from the margins of society, these are their stories.

Michael

"I hope someday I can pay them back for all they have done for me."



"Every morning I walk by these tracks. I always wonder where they lead to."



"This park bench is the first place I slept after losing my house."



"I wonder if this empty building feels as lonely and useless as I do sometimes?"



"I used to stay here with my ex-wife from time to time. I can't afford a candy bar now, let alone a room here."



"The biggest challenge is walking everywhere... ICE!"



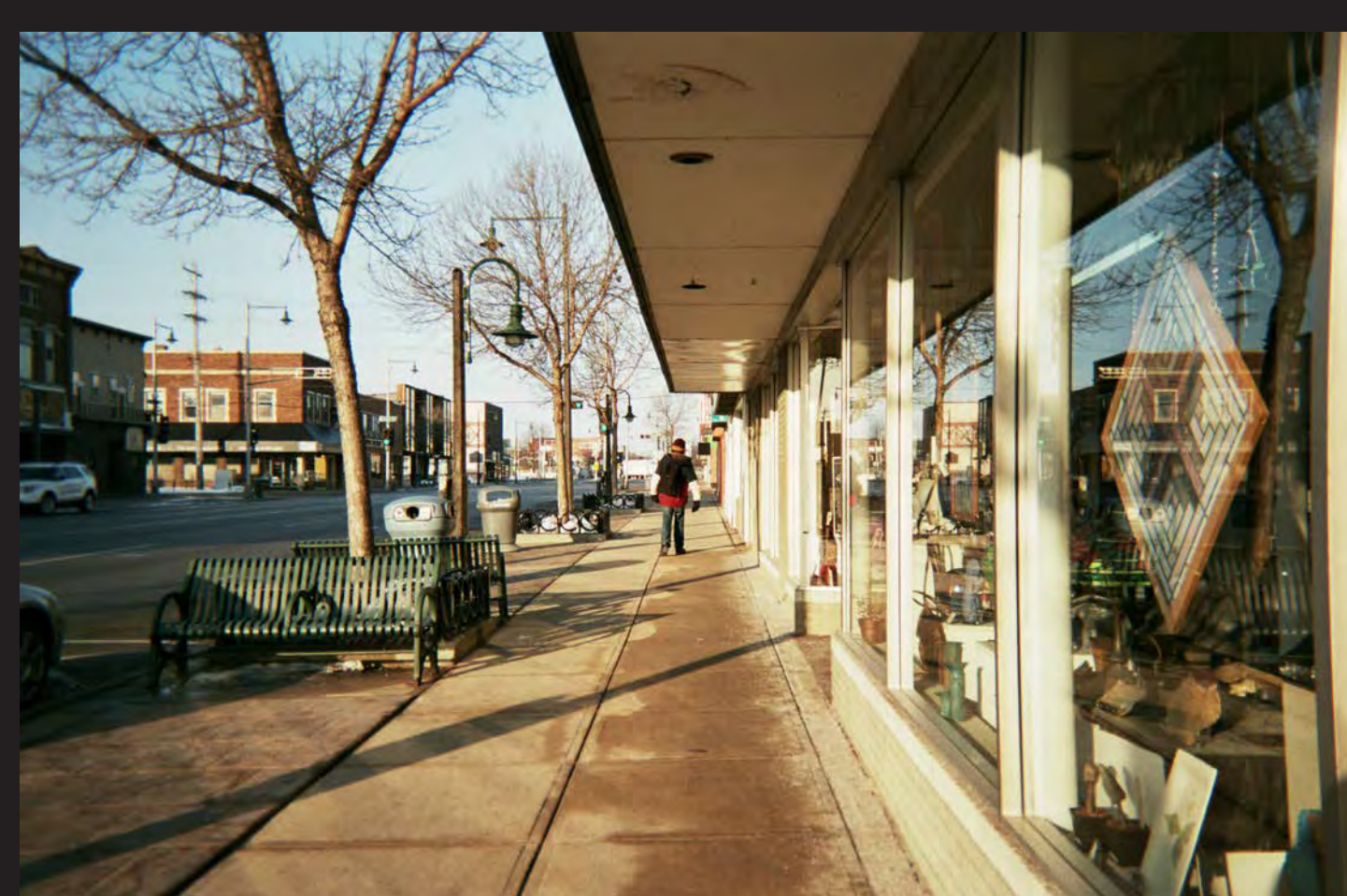
"Salvation Army has literally saved my life. A wonderful woman there gave me info on how to get into a shelter and how to apply for assistance."



"When I get to a busy intersection like College and Richmond, I find I hang my head hoping no one I used to know sees me. There is a certain amount of shame being homeless."



"If not for her, I truly believe I'd be dead right now. I hope someday I can pay them back for all they have done for me."

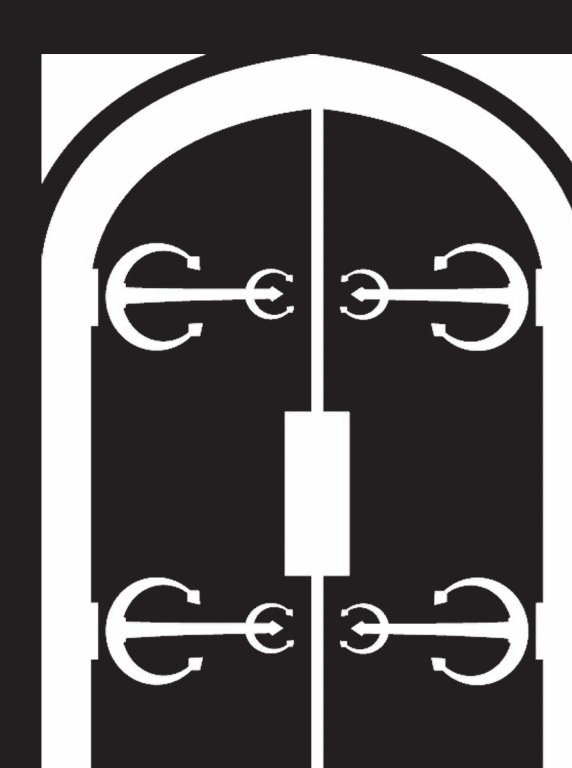


"I used to take my smoke breaks here. Now I look for cigarettes that people haven't completely smoked and hope I'm not caught by one of the people I used to work with."



"The face of homelessness. I'm not an addict. I don't drink yet. I am a perfect example of how by not getting help to face your demons, those demons can ruin your life."

"When you're homeless chances are you also don't have a vehicle so if you need to get someplace you walk. If you have a vehicle and you need to walk for some reason it seems horrible. When you lose everything just being able to walk seems like a blessing." -Michael



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REVEALING THE PROBLEM

What do we know about the struggle for housing today?

Area agencies frequently conduct studies to learn more about homelessness. The data are shared throughout the exhibit.

- **Point-In-Time:** Twice annually the Fox Cities Housing Coalition holds a Point-In-Time Count to identify the number of homeless individuals and families in the community. Recent counts produced an estimate that 350-360 individuals are currently struggling with homelessness in our area.
- **Project RUSH (Research to Understand and Solve Homelessness):** This 2015 study focused on better understanding the current need and availability of affordable housing in the Fox Cities. The data were gathered from 500 people who struggle with stable housing.

Each Experience is Different

Project RUSH stressed that housing instability manifests itself in several ways, including these categories in the Fox Cities:

- **Unsheltered Homeless:**
Living on the street, locations not intended for human habitation or hotels/ motels.
- **Sheltered Homeless:**
Staying in some type of temporary shelter or transitional housing program.
- **Doubled Up:**
Living with other individuals or families due to economic reasons.
- **Precariously Housed:**
Living in own home or apartment, but at risk of eviction, and/or paying such a high amount toward rent or mortgage that other basic needs are unaffordable.

Historical Evidence and Terminology

Only glimpses of historical data about people who were homeless exist for Appleton. Sources like the census, police arrest logs, newspapers, and state records inform this history.

People in the 19th century used a variety of names to describe homeless persons. In Appleton, the terms most commonly used were transients, tramps, hobos, bums, and vagrants. Often these terms were used as slurs, but sometimes the terms were also claimed by people who were homeless.

Download the
Project RUSH
booklet.



Each word had distinctions: hobos and transients wandered to find work, tramps and vagrants worked to enable wandering, and bums neither wandered nor worked.

Spider

"There are a lot of different places that will help people that are homeless."



"I am homeless myself and I receive SSI and disability but it is not enough to get a place of my own."



"The city gives the homeless bus tickets but they are sold at a cheaper price so they can buy cigarettes and beer."



"They also hang out at the parks around town drinking beer and getting into trouble."



"When they are not sleeping at the shelters they are sleeping in the parking ramps around town."



"Some that do have income spend it on fancy clothes and shoes that cost a lot and believe that it doesn't matter because they can always go to the shelters."



"I feel like the shelters should be more strict on the people who spend their money foolishly on clothing and on motels."



"There are a few churches and outreach places that help by serving breakfast and lunch but there is no place that people can sit to warm up or to do things that they need to do as far as filling out applications or to plug in their phones to receive calls for jobs or other business type things."

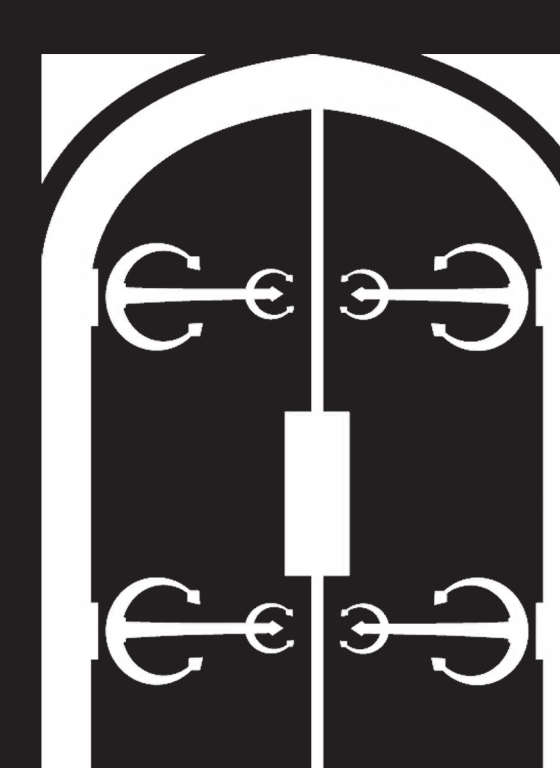


"Some of them have an income but it is not enough to get a place to live. I feel that the city should find an abandoned building or hotel for just that reason."



"There are a lot of different places that will help people that are homeless if they just take the time to go there and do what they need to do with that."

"Our neighborhood (the sidewalk between the library and transit center)." -Anthony T.



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A LONG STRUGGLE

What does homelessness and the precariously housed population look like today?

Homelessness has many faces. Young or old? Married or single? New to the area, a longtime resident, or returning after being away? Housing instability affects people regardless of race, gender, or educational status.

Project RUSH

When did homelessness become an issue in Appleton?

The struggle for permanent housing has been a problem from the beginning. An early group of laborers was indispensable to the local economy. In the 1840s, Irish and German transient workers built the canals and dams which led to the city's growth. Every summer, seasonal laborers called "harvest hands" passed through the area to assist with farm labor.

Oneida Indians from the neighboring reservation were among the earliest described on city streets as homeless and destitute. Loss of tribal lands and economic instability forced the Oneida to search for help off the reservation beginning around 1870.

In the past, who was homeless in Appleton?

Historical demographic data is inconsistent, but the Appleton Police Department arrest ledgers provide some answers.

Before 1960, over 95 percent of persons arrested for vagrancy were single men aged 25 to 60. The arrested persons claimed a variety of ethnicities and races.

How can you help?

Learn how you can volunteer or donate.



Demographics

The following demographics help us better understand "what this population looks like." In short, there is no one picture or type of person-housing instability impacts all persons, regardless of race, gender, education, relationship status, and length of time in the Fox Cities.

Question	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
Male	68%	61%	44%	37%
Female	30%	39%	56%	64%
Average Age	40	41	40	45
Caucasian	70%	72%	62%	67%
African-American	13%	24%	27%	13%
Never Married	58%	65%	66%	44%
Have children under the age of 18	32%	36%	25%	37%

Housing History

Question: How long have you been living in the Fox Cities?	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
Less than 1 year	26%	18%	14%	9%
1-2 years	13%	18%	6%	10%
3-5 years	24%	18%	13%	15%
6-10 years	8%	6%	19%	12%
11-19 years	5%	12%	8%	15%
20+ years	24%	29%	41%	39%

Chronic Nature of Housing Instability

	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
Average number of times homeless in past three years	2.7	2.6	3.0	*
Average number of times homeless in lifetime	4.7	4.9	5.6	*
Average age when first homeless	29	32	**	*

*Precariously housed participants were not asked any of the above questions
**Doubled up participants were not asked this question



"I took a picture of my Christmas tree. I've never had my own tree before. Never got to pick out my own decorations before. I bought it (tree and decorations) for about \$20 on a night when I was so sad, I couldn't see straight. It helped a bit. The little red cardinal was my favorite ornament when I was a little kid." -Ann

Ann

"Being without my car is tough, though. I feel like I spend 98% of my life either waiting for the bus or riding in it."



"I work all the time (I'm just under full-time); I just started school (I'm in the paralegal program at FVTC); I love to read and learn new languages."

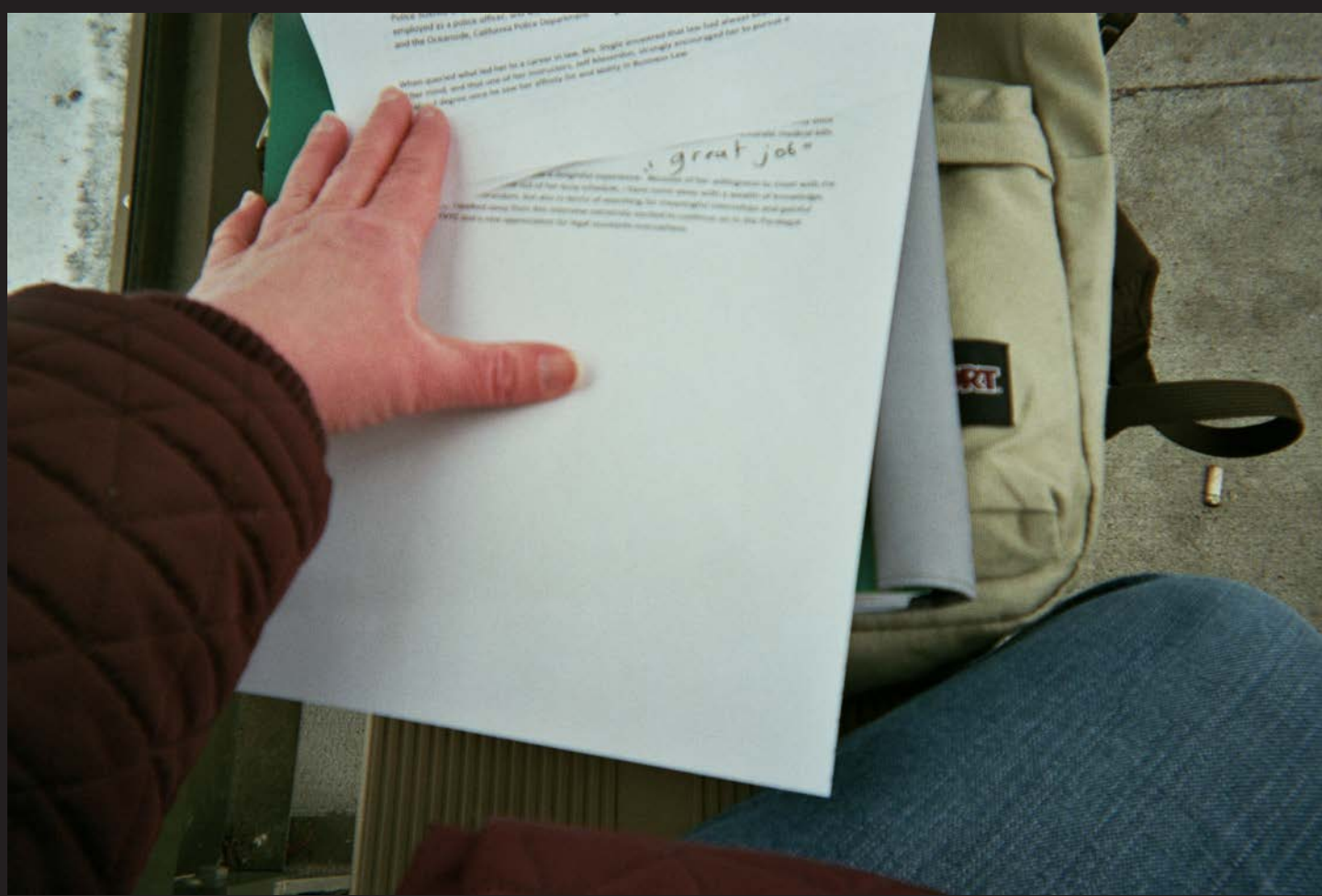
"I went to Acoca Coffee earlier to study and then walked down College Ave. It was dark out. I've never before been afraid to be out at night and I'm still not expressly afraid. Let's just say that since my car died and I became homeless, I feel wary. When I'm out after dark, I feel very small and vulnerable, conspicuous and lonely. That's the biggest thing I've learned about since becoming homeless: the loneliness never goes away."



"I miss my car. I miss the convenience. Most of all, I miss the freedom it gave me. There are so many places I want to go but can't, because the bus doesn't reach that far."



"Being without a car means walking in all kinds of conditions: heat and disgusting humidity, rain, sleet, ice, snow. It's rare to find a clean and shoveled sidewalk."



"My paralegal class is bringing out a competitive streak in me that I didn't realize existed."

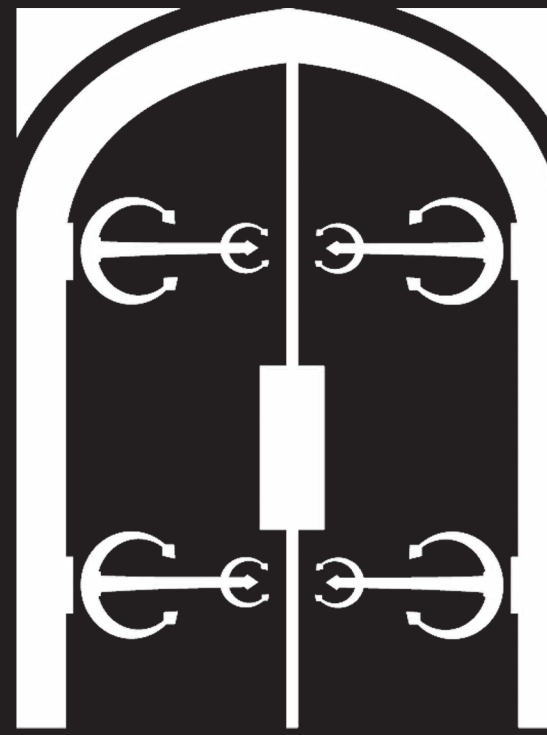


"Whenever it snows I can count on my feet being cold and wet all day, even after changing shoes and socks."

"I love to read and learn new languages; I'm having a dickens of time trying to quit smoking. I have my keys and cellphone with me at all times. If I lose one or the other, I'm sunk. The buss pass is pretty self-explanatory. Lord, how I miss my car. The nail polish instills a modicum of femininity - I am a girly girl." -Ann

"Also, like the literature and my textbook, the nail polish shows what I ultimately want to be: educated, cultured, elegant. It's easy to lose your femininity in a situation like this. It's so easy to just give up. Screw that." -Ann

"In the immortal words of Admiral David Farragut, 'Damn the torpedos, full speed ahead!'" -Ann



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CONTINUUM OF CARE

Non-profits focusing on social services began to emerge in greater numbers in the 1960s. New organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous and Goodwill helped target root causes of instability.

Many of today's recognizable agencies such as Homeless Connections (1981) and Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities (1987), started in the 1980s. Together with Habitat for Humanity (1993), COTS, Inc. (1998), Fox Valley Warming Shelter (2008) they form a continuum care system. Each agency plays a role in the pathway to housing stability.



Appleton Children's Home

From 1888 to about 1924, 8 to 15 orphans at a time were clothed, fed, schooled, and housed at the home. Donations to the facility came from many individuals, churches, and businesses in the community.



"Anybody who lives or works for a time in Appleton knows this is the Post Office drop-off and the view in the photo can come from only one place." -Anthony T.

Aid for the Poor

Appleton followed national sentiments about aiding the poor. In the late 1800s, most people expected local government to help. Some residents received funds to house people who were poor or disabled as tenants in their home.

After the Civil War, the city considered ways to help select groups they considered to be "deserving poor:" young mothers, orphans, and the elderly. Other people who were homeless were largely overlooked.

Immigrant aid societies and churches also helped people within their faith and ethnic communities. The St. Joseph Ladies Aid Society was formed in 1913 to help German Catholics who were poor. In 1966, Father Orville Janssen of St. Bernard Catholic Church pioneered efforts to house men who were homeless by offering shelter in his rectory. Soon after, Father Timon Costello and Tim Garvey created Villa Hope and Villa Phoenix. Both halfway houses are still in operation.



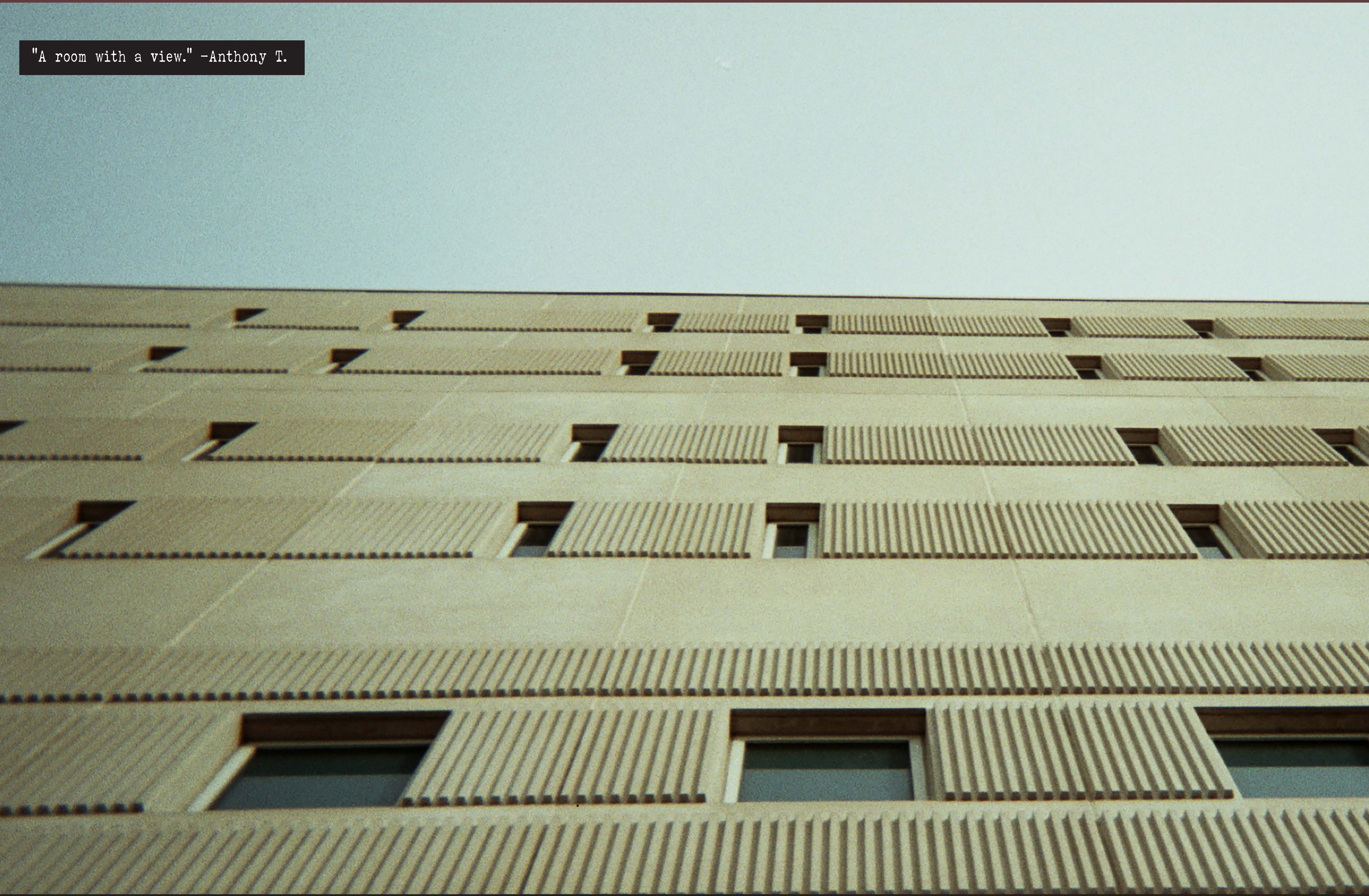
Appleton Poorhouse

In 1868, the city established this small public facility as a temporary home for about 25 young pregnant women and elderly persons. Inspections from 1923 to 1938 indicate the facility was often in disrepair. Residents worked on a small farm at the home to fund their stay.



"Many of us homeless would go to the Salvation Army for lunch. I know I appreciated it." -Todd

"A room with a view." -Anthony T.



HISTORY MUSEUM AT THE CASTLE

INVISIBLE BARRIERS

Unstable employment is often a root cause of homelessness.

Levels of education, emotional health, physical health, and mental health all contribute to employment success. Fifty-one percent of Project RUSH participants indicated a desire to pursue an advanced education despite significant barriers to their enrollment.

Project RUSH

Highest Level of Education Completed				
Question	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
8th grade or less	5%	2%	6%	5%
Some high school	37%	35%	38%	21%
High School graduate	32%	25%	26%	26%
Some college, but no degree	18%	23%	19%	30%
Completed any college degree	8%	16%	11%	19%
Currently employed, full- and/or part-time	26%	24%	27%	37%
Median monthly income from all sources (excluding food stamps)	\$335	\$200	\$507	\$846
Having an emotional, physical, or mental health condition does appear to have an effect on participants' employment status:				
Potentially limiting condition?	Unemployed and not looking (N=127)	Unemployed, but looking (N=213)	Employed (N=152)	
Has a limiting mental health condition	86%	56%	48%	
Has traumatic brain injury (TBI) symptoms or diagnosis	47%	38%	38%	
Has an addiction that is negatively impacting finances	19%	25%	30%	
Is chemically dependent	16%	24%	24%	

Peaks and Valleys

The local economy has followed national economic downturns. During the Panic of 1893, Wisconsin's unemployment skyrocketed to 18%. The peak years of unemployment were 1929 to 1944 during the Great Depression, which gradually dropped with the National Recovery Act and the start of World War II.

During the recession that began in 2008, the Outagamie County unemployment rate peaked in February 2010 with 9.8% out-of-work people. Unemployment hovered around 3.9% in February 2016.

Each economic panic forced many families into unstable housing or onto the streets.


How can you help?

Learn how you can volunteer or donate.




Anthony M.


"This is our city."



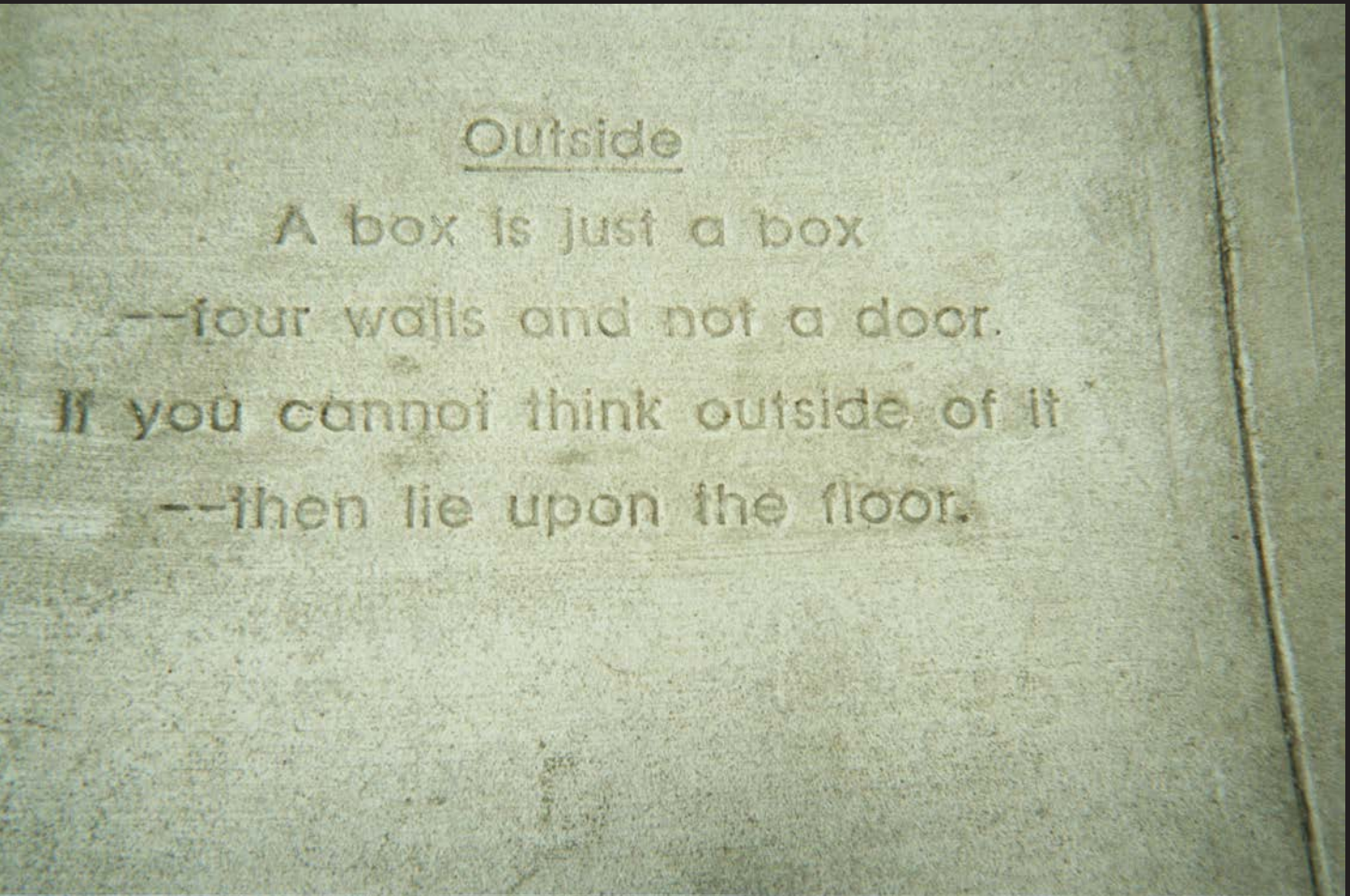
"Freedom."




"No where to go."




"There is a second chance."



"It speaks for itself."



"Keeping up with my faith."



"This is our city."

Greg

"A Homeless Day in Appleton."



"A stop at the smoke shoppe where all the popular brands can be found."



"A little online gambling at the local library / casino."



"A great place for art?"



"This is right where I took the previous picture."



"Exploration. The city bus system is the best way to find out where things are and most bus drivers are a wealth of information."



"Home sweet homeless. Homeless Connections is a safe and friendly place to stay temporarily and a good source of programs."

"I've only been in Appleton a few weeks, but in that time I've learned that if you want to find out about the homeless situation in Appleton, talk to the homeless, that is how I found out about most of the programs available."



"Homeless people stick up for each other." -Del

UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING



Historically, Appleton only had one low-income tenement for the working class. Shown in about 1900, this building was located in a portion of the ravine that would become Jones Park.

Project RUSH

Unaffordable Housing

There are over 94,000 households in the greater Fox Cities area, with a projected increase of over 700 households per year through 2020. Thirty-one percent of households in the Fox Cities are renters.

Fox Cities Households by Size (2010 U.S. Census Data)

	1-Person	2-Person	3-Person	4+ Person	TOTAL
Owners	12,586	25,127	10,775	17,005	65,493
Renters	13,268	8,215	3,820	3,953	29,256

Annual Household Income Distribution

Since 2000 the Fox Cities has seen increases in very low income households as well as high income households.

	\$0-\$14,999	\$15,000-\$24,999	\$25,000-\$34,999	\$35,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$75,000+
Number of Households (2000)	7,156	8,713	10,196	15,240	21,400
Number of Households (2013)	8,089	9,038	9,138	13,971	20,815
Change from 2000 to 2013	+933	+325	-1,058	-1,269	-585
Percent Who Rent (2013)	68%	58%	47%	38%	26%
	8%				

Housing Cost Burden

The commonly accepted standard is that housing costs (rent or mortgage plus utilities) should require 30% or less of household income to be considered affordable. Once housing costs rise above this level, the household will need to make significant tradeoffs with other necessities (e.g. food, health care, transportation). Housing burden data for renters is shown below. In addition, over 14,000 home owners have a housing cost burden greater than 30%.

Annual Household Income	Housing Cost Less Than 30%	Housing Cost Greater Than 30%	Percent with Cost Burden
\$0-\$9,999	189	2,181	92%
\$10,000-\$19,999	620	4,646	88%
\$20,000-\$34,999	3,217	3,465	52%
\$35,000-\$49,999	4,518	669	13%
\$50,000+	7,785	105	1%
Total	16,329	11,066	40%

A Constant Struggle

Affordable housing has always been a struggle in Appleton.

To make housing affordable, a common historical practice was for homeowners to rent a room to one person or a group of boarders. In 1900 about 468 boarders lived in Appleton comprising about 3% of the population. They worked in low-paying factory jobs or were day-laborers who sought short-term jobs.

Other individuals who could not afford housing struggled to find shelter. Starting around 1941, some chose to live in a shanty community in Koehnke's Woods known as the "Hobo Jungle." In 1960, the Sheriff's Department destroyed ten shacks in the woods, and reported the location was popular because of the proximity to the railroad. This area continues to be used for unsheltered housing.

The Fox Cities are one of the largest metropolitan areas in the state, but people are still challenged with finding affordable housing. There are over 94,000 households and that total is expected to increase by more than 700 households through 2020!

Allen

"Thank God for his mercy and grace in providing for my life. Without those people he has sent me, I would have perished for sure."



"This is where I awaken every morning and begin to start my day."



"This is the street where I live - North Division, Appleton, WI."



"This is Mission Church where I go to worship."



"This is one of my favorite hangouts. And not only a hangout, it's where I do most of my studying and researching, socializing, and reading."



"This is my main source of transportation since I have car. Bus passes are provided free for me. Again, thank God for the people he placed in my life to help me."

Thirty-one percent of households in the region are occupied renters.



"I stop here to have lunch, socialize, and join a bible study group on Tuesdays."



"This is the free laundry service where I live."



"If you saw me on the street, would you think that I am homeless (living in a shelter)?"



"Lunch line at Mission Church. Every Thursday at 2:00pm."



"This is my new / future home. Thank you Homeless Connections. You gave me the second chance that no one else would have given me!"

"I go here many times when I need to be alone for a while. Sometimes my little corner of the world gets the best of me." -Allen



SHEDDING LIGHT ON BARRIERS

There are many barriers to stable housing and some of the root causes are health concerns. Many people who struggle with housing cite a challenge in accessing and navigating health care and support services.

Project RUSH

Physical Health

About 49% of RUSH participants have a physical or other health condition that limits the kind and amount of work they can do. The national average for accessing emergency room services is 19% for the general population, but 36% of RUSH participants received emergency room care in the past six months. The cost of emergency care spirals out of control.

Question: "Do you feel that you now need to see a health professional about..."				
Problem	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
Tooth or gum problems	58%	59%	40%	51%
Physical health problems	40%	36%	37%	48%
Emotional or mental health problems	41%	39%	32%	36%
Drug or alcohol problems	16%	14%	6%	9%

Question: "What factors prevent you from getting the health care you need now..."				
Problem	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
No money	40%	25%	30%	34%
No insurance	24%	17%	18%	21%
Lack transportation	13%	14%	12%	10%
Don't know where to go	11%	12%	12%	10%



Mental Health and Substance Abuse

A drastic contrast between people who are homeless and the general population is the prevalence of mental illness. About 6% of the general population report a significant mental health condition, but 57% of RUSH participants have formal medical diagnoses.

Question	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
Have significant mental illness	61%	57%	54%	56%
Are chemically dependent	32%	32%	15%	12%
Have either mental illness OR chemical dependency	71%	63%	57%	60%
Have BOTH mental illness AND chemical dependency	21%	26%	12%	8%
Have attempted suicide	26%	24%	22%	21%

Traumatic and Adverse Experiences

For many, homelessness is the latest in a chain of traumatic experiences that began at childhood. Adverse experiences negatively impact a person's ability to process, cope with, and overcome daily stressors.

Out-of-Home Placements					
Questions: "Have you ever lived in a..."	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed	Of those who said "yes" to living in a residential or institution, the below % indicated that they received NO aftercare or follow-up services upon discharge
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	21%	33%	16%	16%	33%
Halfway House	11%	23%	14%	12%	65%
Facility for persons with emotional, behavioral, or mental health problems	11%	20%	15%	19%	58%
County Jail	76%	68%	51%	47%	88%
State or federal prison	13%	69%	56%	49%	68%

Social Isolation				
While many participants indicated that their friends and family were sources of strength, a large percentage indicated that they never engage in friend/family social events or community events. This degree of social isolation from support networks that could be healthy and encouraging can have a detrimental impact on an individual's ability to cope with daily stressors.				
Question	Unsheltered Homeless	Sheltered Homeless	Doubled Up	Precariously Housed
Family/friends are source of strength	40%	46%	52%	51%
"Always" have someone to encourage you when you feel down	53%	56%	58%	64%
"Never" attend social events with friends or family	37%	35%	20%	14%
"Never" attend community social events	60%	43%	51%	40%
"Never" attend other support group meetings	86%	74%	83%	86%

"Alone....watching time go by." -Del



How was mental health and homelessness dealt with in the past?

Unlike "vagrants," if people were arrested for public "lunacy," "insanity," or extreme cases of substance abuse, officials sent them to an asylum. By 1889, this system was expanded locally with the opening of the Outagamie County Asylum for the Chronic Insane. The categories of vagrant and "insane" were unscientific, often only interpreted by the arresting police officer.

"Homeless man on bench at a park." -Keith



(In)visible

Homelessness in Appleton

Todd

"Footsteps of a homeless veteran in the Fox River Valley."



"I came back to the Valley in December 2013. My homelessness started in September 2009. I arrived at the Warming Shelter and resided there for two weeks."



"During my time I was homeless the bus station and library became hubs for me. It did for others as well. I don't drive. Never have had a license."



"For me the library was a source for online access. Others used it to be drunk in and also to sleep. That is offensive to me."



"A popular gathering place for the homeless in Appleton. The church provides coffee and pastries for anyone there. Certain days they provide luncheons."



"This is the view I see almost every day when I'm waiting for the bus. If you see me in my common spot, don't be afraid to say hello."



"This is in Menasha. I was here often. This complex has more than Goodwill here. At Goodwill I could get clothes. For others it could be a source of employment."



"The Partnership Community Health Center is here. That's where I got my health care. The Department of Workforce Development has a nice computer lab for those looking for jobs."



"One day the manager at the Warming Shelter told me there were 13 opening at what was then called the Emergency Shelter. I went there immediately and applied and was accepted."



"I was a resident here for 4 months. Longer than the average stay. My case manager used his connections to get me an application for a housing program called It Takes a Village."



"While a resident at Homeless Connections I joined this church. It is Family First Ministries. The Pastor is Alvin Dupree. A career Marine with a Ph.D. A great man!"



"St. Joseph Food Program and Clothes Closet. A person in need can get food and clothing here. This is on Midway Road in Menasha."



"I got enrolled in a housing program called It Takes a Village by Ryan Community. I moved into the second floor apartment on April 14, 2014. Thus ending my homelessness."



"Through my case managers of It Takes a Village, I was able to find part-time employment here. I started here on December 2, 2014."

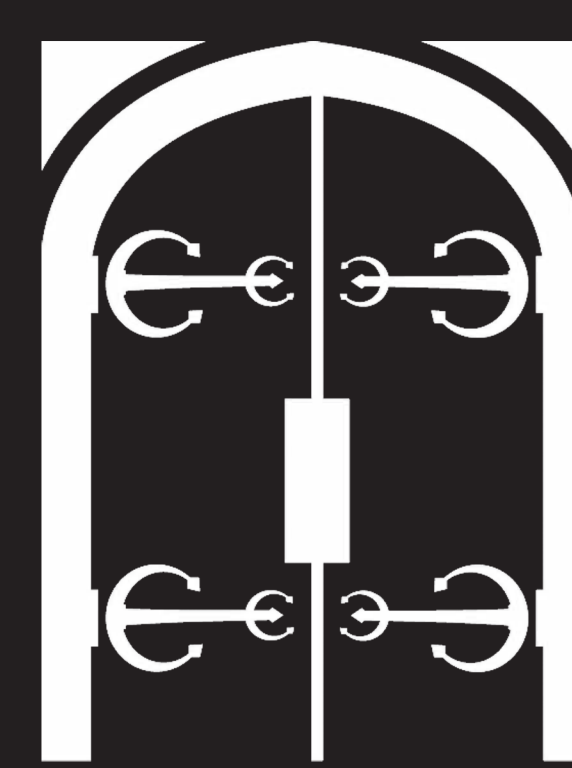


"I am presently working here as of this photo project. I am an Organizational Support Representative - I'm a receptionist."



"My home. Starting June 2015 I started collecting Social Security. With the back pay the courts awarded me, I purchased this mobile home in Little Chute on October 1, 2015."

"Two more organizations right near St. Joe's: LEAVEN and United Way." -Todd



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Mike Zuege

Partnering Organizations



Anita's Family

"Being homeless has made me stronger. Being at Homeless Connections has taught us that there is a lot of help for people like us. I've learned a lot from being homeless. It has changed the way I think about life. It makes me appreciate everything so much more. I'm more determined and committed to doing what I have to for myself and for my family." -Anita



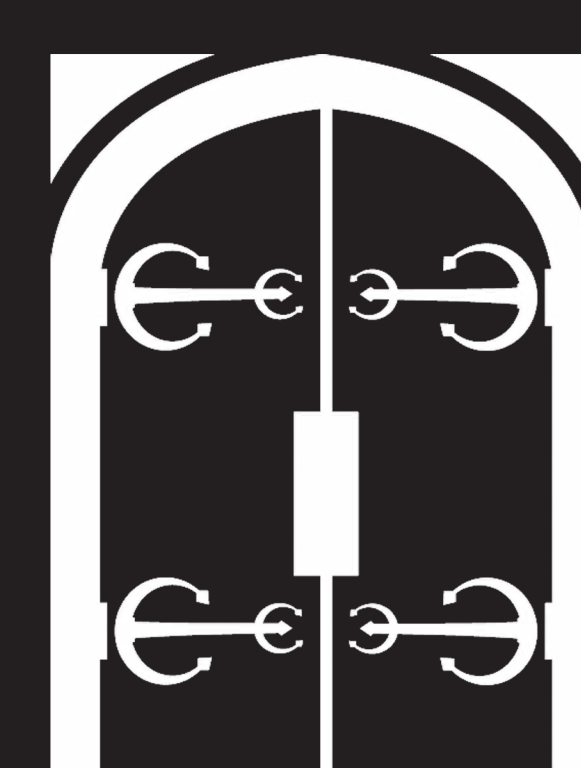
Anita's Family

How can you help?

Learn how you can
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Anita's Family



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