

Andrew Konopelny 2013-2014

In my view, the overarching mission of the Welcome Home is to build genuine, direct relationship with others. For me, the major change of being a live-in member of the Welcome Home community, as opposed to a volunteer or observer, was that it emphasized *knowing* the poor and most abandoned, and being in community with them. This truly had the impact of changing my perspective from a concern for the poor and most abandoned, and what I would call "surface" ways of helping those in the community to real, tangible relationship with those people.

It is through those relationships, that I was better able to listen and understand the needs of those in our community. It became more than just "helping" those in need with something visible, such as food or clothing, or a ride home. Of course, ministering to those needs is part of the Welcome Home's mission. But for me, the greater challenge, and the greater triumph, was from meeting the "invisible" needs of those in the community – listening, and, ultimately, being a friend to those in the community. Being able to count those who I came to know through the Welcome Home community as friends, is not only the most valuable thing I think I was able to offer as a community member, but the greatest gift being a community member has had in the years that followed my time at the Welcome Home.