

# We're Not Doing Enough to Help the Homeless

Youth Services System Inc. is seeking input from the local homeless population with the goal of bringing some of them to the table alongside representatives from local nonprofits, government agencies and offices, law enforcement, churches and the public for a restorative justice event in 2021.

To lay the groundwork, Caryce McGurn, an AmeriCorps VISTA with YSS, asked a few nonprofits who work with the population for their input. Below are some of my answers, which I am sharing in hopes of reducing stigma and challenging us all to consider the hardships our neighbors experiencing homelessness face.

**What are the main issues keeping people from obtaining permanent housing?** Mental health issues, especially substance use disorder (SUD) and developmental/learning disabilities. These are typically manifestations of early childhood trauma. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scores are well documented as one of the key predictors of chronic health problems and addiction.

**Why do people experiencing homelessness return to the streets, even after they have found housing?** Two im-

portant reasons: loneliness and neurological impairment. It is not uncommon to find many people in a newly-housed person's apartment. For instance, a 60-plus-year-old man who recently found housing is letting five other people stay in his apartment. He doesn't bat an eye but invited them in because he felt bad for them, due to a kind of "survivor's guilt," for which he could be evicted.

Secondly, neurological impairment can lead people back to the streets. The body, in a sustained "fight-or-flight" mode, is altered by the increased presence of cortisol, a hormone released when we are stressed. On a cellular level, stress changes our DNA. On a neurological level, pathways built over a time of extreme duress/trauma are resilient. It is hard to unlearn survival behaviors learned on the streets. Increased cortisol levels can further exacerbate mental illness, and people often return to old coping mechanisms.

**What are we doing as a community that is keeping these folks from reaching their goals?** The goal for many on the streets is essentially "pain management." People need goals, but the obstacles seem insurmountable. You



need an ID to obtain employment and many social services. To get an ID, you need a birth certificate, Social Security card, and proof of address, all of which have their own challenges for acquiring. It makes working toward goals feel like a futile effort. Frankly, it's easier to be homeless than face continued rejection, and people sometimes end up accepting a state of worthlessness.

**What is our community as a whole doing to create a lasting and stable solution for our neighbors on the street?** Nothing. Increasing rents, lack of access to mental health facilities and treatment for SUD, and poor-paying jobs are all barriers.

However, there are many great people in the area who work to build meaningful and lasting relationships with people experiencing homelessness, which is a good first step.

**What are potential roadblocks you foresee as we progress in working to get**

**our neighbors into permanent housing?** The general public sees rewarding failure as an affront to our sense of justice. Much anger and criticism of people experiencing homelessness is rooted in this sense. However, when we begin to understand the nuances and complexities that lead a person into a state of homelessness, the neurological science behind trauma, and the systems that have failed individuals, we begin to see someone who has fallen into a cycle of survival-at-all-costs.

The person who is homeless is not a failure, but is someone who has been failed by systems. There are mechanisms in place to help people, but the presence of homeless encampments — regardless of where they are located or moved — shows us how big the gaps are in those mechanisms.

Finally, almost all organizations fail to consider the complexities of their programs. The learning curve is very steep, and we must allow people to fail.

If we expect perfection from people who have relied on survivalist coping mechanisms for most of their lives, we will continually be disappointed.

**Are there steps you feel will**

**be easy to accomplish?** Nothing about this topic is easy. People want off the streets until they don't. Again, the setbacks people face in attempting to gain stable housing are extremely demoralizing. Having said that, making barriers low and assistance high will encourage people to come in off the streets and in many cases, get clean, seek treatment and go on to become productive members of society.

Homelessness is a complex issue, with roots that run deeper than most of us realize. My perspective comes from many years of working with people on the streets, knowing their names, stories, idiosyncrasies, joys and pains. Before we begin to address this issue in our community, we must be unafraid to address the people. We must be willing to say "yes, yes, and yes again," to people who have so often known only rejection and pain.

*Nic Cochran has lived at the House of Hagar Catholic Worker in East Wheeling for five years and works seasonally at the YSS Winter Freeze Shelter. He is the assistant director of YSS Recovery Homes. He earned a bachelor of science in psychology from Wheeling Jesuit University.*

## Cameron Dragons Ready to Play First Home Game of Year



Cameron High School's football team is looking forward to this coming Friday.

The Dragons are hoping they can play their first home game of the season, an event which will include Homecoming.

The opponent on Friday will be Bridgeport, Ohio.

CHS, like others in the Ohio Valley, has had to switch teams and games for different reasons which had resulted in the Dragons being on the road for the first seven games.

At least two of the away games were held on a turf field, at Monarch Stadium in Moundsville.

By the way, Cameron has a turf field for the first time in its history.

Speaking of football history, Cameron High School played its first football game in 1907.

Before I go any further, the Dragons this year are 4-3.

They opened the season with a win at Hundred, while picking up a victory against Valley at Moundsville. That was followed by a loss at Frontier, at East Fairmont, and against Pendleton County at Moundsville. The Dragons have won their last games at Tyler County and Clay Battelle.

East Fairmont and Pendleton County were not on the original schedule.

Three teams that were originally scheduled and not played were Trinity, Paden City and Beallsville. The Dragons will close out their regular season on Nov. 6 at home against Weirton Madonna.

In addition to the new turf field at Dragon Field, another improvement going into this year is the enlargement of what is now called The Fieldhouse. It has been converted into a two-story facility.

The building is now larger on the first floor as the result of digging into the hillside, which has enlarged the concession area, along with the home and visitors' areas and the coaches' room. Game officials will be glad to learn that the size of their facility is some three times larger than previously.

As to the top floor, when it is completed, will be utilized for such sports as archery and wrestling and for other events involving seventh and eighth grades.

Getting back to game itself, because of COVID-19 the number of persons to be in the stands will be limited to parents of players, cheerleaders, the band and members of the Cameron American Legion Post No. 18's Honor Guard.

Of course like fans of other high schools in the Ohio Valley, the Cameron faithful will find locations outside the gates

where they can get a good view of the field.

By the way, if you might have forgotten the name of the area where the high school and football field are located, and where across Dragon Highway is the city of Cameron's recreation facility, it used to be known as Clouston.

Getting back to the American Legion's Honor Guard, one of its five members will be observing his birthday next Friday.

That individual happens to be Bill Harris, who will be 96 years old.

He has been bringing the colors up Dragon Field for the past 51 years.

This U.S. Navy veteran is the commander of Post No. 18, a position he has held for past 20 years.

Harris also had the distinction of having served as commander when the American Legion observed its 50th and 100th years of existence.

Most individuals in Marshall County know the names of national, state and county candidates who appear on the Nov. 3 ballot, but I wonder how many Moundsville voters are aware of those seeking council seats.

The city of Moundsville has seven council members, with four of those seats up for election this November.

These include the First Ward, Third Ward and two Council-at-Large Seats.

The candidates are: First Ward — Carole Blake Wood and incumbent Judy Hunt.

Third Ward — Eugene L. Saunders Sr.

Council-at-Large — Brianna Hickman, who is serving an expired term; Denny Wallace; incumbent Philip Kevin Remke; Randy Chamberlain; and David Seum. (Vote for two).

The winners will assume their duties on July 1, 2021.

Marshall County voters residing in Benwood and McMechen will have the opportunity to cast a ballot pertaining to the Ohio Valley Regional Transportation Authority.

The councils from both cities passed ordinances relating to this levy, an extension of a current levy.

The extension of the levy, if passed, would be in effect from July 1, 2021 through July 1, 2023.

Speaking of voting, I've been told that three individuals were at the front door of the Marshall County Courthouse at 7:30 a.m. on this past Wednesday, the first day to cast ballots in the early voting process.

Of course, the courthouse doesn't open until 8:30 a.m., and by that time the trio of voters-in-waiting had been joined by several others.

For the early voters, they must enter the front door of the courthouse and once they are given the go ahead by the security guards, they will go ahead will make their way to the lower floor where the poll-



Among those participating in a recent 50-year event at the Washington Lands United Methodist Church were from left, Beth Daugherty, new Pastor Mark Harris and Norman Rhodes.

ing place is located.

Although there has been a Methodist church in the area of Washington Lands for more than 100 years, the congregation of the Washington Lands United Methodist Church recently held a 50th anniversary event for their "new church" of 1970.

The congregation also welcomed their new pastor, Mark Harris.

Among those in attendance were church historian Beth Daugherty and lay leader Norman Rhodes. The original celebration took place on a Sunday afternoon with members of the various groups within the church each turning a shovel full of dirt "grateful for their heritage, aware of the sacrifices of their fathers in faith — dedicating themselves anew to the worship and service of Almighty God."

As part of the anniversary celebration, the congregation took part of the litany that had been shared 50 years earlier and promised to rededicate themselves for service to God and each other.

The original groundbreaking was led by then-District Superintendent of the Wheeling District, Rev. Wendall Eskew and Rev. Arnold Huck. The Koon Construction Co., of Wheeling was the general contractor.

Plans are under way for the 2020-2021 Marshall County 4-H year.

While at this time, it will not be the traditional community club meetings, 4-H leaders are very excited to offer a new virtual challenge platform to kick-start the year, and to provide positive youth development.

The first step is to welcome members ages 5-21 to join the clubs.

This year, all enrollments will be done online, using a new enrollment and member management program called 2 Suite. The program can be found at <https://4-h.2suite.org>.

To register, a person must first create a household in the system and then add each child's enrollment. This will involve three sections: personal information, waivers (drop down each one and complete), and club section (where the person adds projects as well).

noon until 4 p.m.

In addition, next Saturday children are invited to stop by the Farmstead during their Trick or Treat for a special treat.

Today (Saturday) is the final day for the annual Marshall County Fall Dumpster program. Dumpsters will be at Sherrard Hilltop Elementary School and the Limestone VFD Headquarters from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

There are some restrictions on what items which will not be accepted. They include tires, white goods, scrap metal, car parts, fuels, hazardous chemical/materials or household trash.

The dumpster program again this year was sponsored by the Marshall County Solid Waste Authority and the Marshall County Commission.

It was announced at this past Tuesday's Moundsville Lions Club meeting that the "Wreaths Across America" program to place wreaths on veterans' graves, has reached its goal, and that any leftover wreaths will be utilized for wreaths to assist the same program at the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va.

Letters from the Salvation Army were received this past week from Capt. Mark VanMeter, the Wheeling Corps Officer, who oversees the Moundsville Headquarters, asking for a monetary donation to assist the SA at Thanksgiving.

The letter in part states, "By making a gift today, you will allow us to supply food, shelter, clothing, utilities, comfort, spiritual guidance and more to our neighbors in crisis, here in Marshall, Wetzel and Tyler counties. And this year, because of the pandemic, more people are turning to us than ever before."

He continues, "This year, we'll provide 185 Thanksgiving food boxes to people in need."

### Online Poll

Today's Results

Did you watch Thursday's presidential debate?

**Yes: 50%**  
**No: 50%**

Tomorrow's Poll

Have you voted yet?

Tell us what you think. Register your answer at [www.news-register.net](http://www.news-register.net)

Polls are not scientific and represent only the opinions of internet users who participate.