

# THE Amplifier

A Voice for Social Change

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Over the next several issues, The Amplifier will be running a series of articles on Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries (KARM). This paper exists to provide a platform for Knoxville's homeless community. The stories and information are based on personal accounts from the homeless community – drawing upon their perspectives and experiences. The Amplifier is a place where those experiencing homelessness can fight back against the systems and powers in place that perpetually oppress them. We have no reason to suspect that these accounts are not accurate simply because they are told by the homeless. It is not our intent to bring slander upon KARM; most people only hear KARM's side of the story. This is a small venue designed to give voice to the homeless.

- Eddie Young, Publisher

## RULES OF AN EMERGENCY SHELTER



by Vivian Swayne, Managing Editor

People without their own private space deserve the right to exist in public space. However,

the City of Knoxville has created a predicament for those without secure housing who turn to public spaces to escape the natural elements.

The city hands the homeless eviction notices and bulldozes tent cities, which drives the homeless to go down endless paths in search of other sources of shelter. It is the city's responsibility to protect its citizens, yet the city relies on a variety of non-profit and faith-based organizations to provide services and shelter. For decades, this has created a slew of issues for those who are homeless.

Ideally, the city would provide services in order to protect the human rights of its citizens. However, as it is, the homeless are forced to depend on organizations like KARM, which come with "built-in" rules and restrictions based on the organization's Christian philosophy.

Due to KARM's strict rules, the homeless who go to them for assistance are likely to feel frustrated, confused, and even further marginalized. One of Knoxville's homeless citizens, Johnny, says, "I heard people complain about them [KARM] being so-called Christian and then they, they get mad and throw you out..."

KARM is not subject to any oversight from the city and the organization implements its rules and regulations unchecked. Knoxville must be pressured to fulfill its civic duty in providing adequate and unbiased emergency shelter to its homeless citizens. KARM's stipulated rules provide an idea

of the difficulties the homeless might face when attempting to access KARM's emergency shelter services:

1. You must possess a government-issued ID to check-in.
2. You may have to pass a breathalyzer test.
3. If you are a husband or father, you will not be allowed to stay with your wife or child, nor can you visit them to say "goodnight," etc.
4. You will have to leave your bags outside through the check-in process, unguarded and subject to being stolen.
5. If you are gender non-conforming, Trans, or any other known member of the LGBTQ+ community, you may be asked to leave.
6. You will not be able to bring your pet without documentation proving it to be a service animal.
7. Clients must arrive between the hours of 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
8. You may be asked to leave if you have a mental illness, especially if you do not have access to or do not take medication.
9. If you need assistance with a physical disability, you will be asked to leave.
10. If you have a criminal record, you may be denied shelter.

The Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition's 2016 Biennial Study states that in 1985, 25

surveyors were appointed with the task to make recommendations for social services and study the extent of homelessness in Knoxville.

The first study was conducted in 1986, and the Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition was officially formed.

The coalition determined three major responsibilities to serve Knoxville's homeless, according to Homelessness in Knoxville-Knox County 2010 report. The responsibilities were as follows: "... (1) to ascertain the extent of homelessness in Knoxville, (2) to determine services available to the homeless and make recommendations concerning deficient or nonexistent services, and (3) to increase communication and coordination of services among existing agencies and organizations working with the homeless..."

Around a dozen of Knoxville's social service providers such as KARM, Salvation Army, Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC), the Helen Ross McNabb Center, etc. came together with the intention to better serve the homeless population.

Their plan of action was to determine what service each provider would offer. This way, providers would not be duplicating services, and people's specific needs would be met by organizations that specialized in that specific area.

As a result of the plan, according to the Home-

lessness in Knoxville-Knox County 2010 report, The Salvation Army discontinued its emergency shelter services, allowing KARM "to assume total responsibility for emergency shelter" throughout Knoxville.

With the establishment of a formal collaborative effort among service providers, one would think that Knoxville is on the right track to end homelessness. Right? Well, not exactly. KARM has failed to fulfill its obligations to the coalition, and more importantly the organization has failed the community it is supposed to serve.

KARM implements unofficial and discriminatory restrictions that force the homeless to make personal compromises for shelter. KARM is privately funded and has the right to choose who they serve and in what manner. Other shelters have discontinued their emergency shelter services due to KARM, and the city itself relies on KARM to do its job. KARM, however, continues to duplicate the services that other organizations are supposed to provide.

The start of their LaunchPoint program is a prime example. This program focuses on the case management services that the VMC is responsible for providing. KARM refuses emergency shelter and meals to those who elect not to have all of their needs met through its services. For instance, under the bridge where many gather on Wednesday nights, the Lost Sheep Ministry event serves anywhere from 100-300 meals to the homeless community.

People get a nice meal, and sometimes the opportunity to receive things such as clothing, blankets, personal grooming services, and medical care. However, KARM has a rule that if you attend this event, you are not allowed to stay in their shelter that night. -AMP

**KARM is privately funded and has the right to choose who they serve and in what manner.**

## YOU ARE NOT WELCOMED!

an interview with Herman Rudd

Herman is an Amplifier vendor. I caught up with him and his friend Troy one afternoon at The Half Barrel and asked them a few questions about their experiences with KARM.

Eddie: Have you ever been banned from KARM?  
Herman: Yes.

Eddie: You said that KARM barred you because you got in an argument, is that right?  
Herman: That's right.

Eddie: You said...that you had said something about being a veteran, and they said they didn't give a rat's shit.

Eddie: What were you arguing about? Do you remember?  
Herman: I had been drinking.

Eddie: So you got into an argument because you were trying to get in and you'd been drinking and they didn't wanna let you in because of that?  
Herman: Yeah.

Eddie: Would you say that you had just been drinking? Or would you say that you were drunk?  
Herman: I had just been drinking.

Vivian: You were walking and talking and...  
Eddie: And you told them that up front?  
Herman: Yeah. What it was, I walked in the front door and they got one of those scanners, and I

said, "Look, I got a pacemaker, I can't do that." And I said, "No!" Well, I ain't gonna lie, I had a bottle and they seen it, and then they turned around and poured it out and said, "You're not welcome here." And I said, "Okay." And then I said, "But I'm a veteran." And that's when they said they didn't give a rat's shit.

Eddie: Okay, well let me ask you this. Was there ever a white flag night when you tried to get in and they wouldn't let you in?  
Herman: Yeah.

Eddie: Did they consider you dangerous?  
Herman: No.

Eddie: Did they say anything to you that would indicate that they thought you were dangerous?  
Herman: No.

Eddie: They just wouldn't let you in.  
Herman: No.

Eddie: Was it a cold night or a hot night?  
Herman: Hot night.

Eddie: A really hot night.  
Herman: Yeah.

Eddie: And they had the white flag out.  
Herman: Yeah.

Eddie: And they wouldn't let you in.  
Herman: No.

Vivian: Did they give you a reason?  
Herman: They said when I got barred that first time, they said "I don't want you here no more."

And it really got hot outside. I said, "Damn, I ain't dangerous." They said, "Don't care, you can't be here." So I go inside and this guy, I don't know what his name is, he says, "I don't like you!"  
Eddie: He said, "I don't like you!"  
Herman: That's what he said.

Eddie: That was a staff member?  
Herman: Yeah! I said, "What do you mean?" And he said I'd have to go see Pastor Mike. Well, every time I wanna go see Pastor Mike, he's gone.

Eddie: So every time you wanted to go see Pastor Mike, he wasn't available?  
Herman: Right.

Eddie: And he's the guy who could let you back in? He's the guy that makes the decision?  
Herman: Yeah. They got a board...

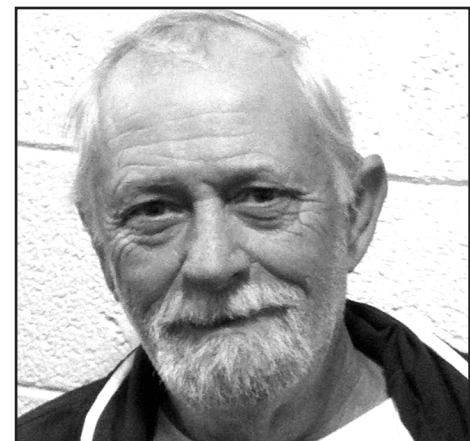
Eddie: It's almost like a parole board, isn't it...  
Herman: Yeah!

Eddie: I've heard you have to prove to them that you've changed your ways.  
Herman: Yeah.

Eddie: Let me ask you a question..  
Herman: Alright.

Eddie: Do you consider yourself a Christian?  
Herman: Yeah!

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Photos by Eddie Young

Rudd discusses his negative experiences at the KARM shelter.

## Sidewalk Interviews



Photo by Vivian Swayne

Knoxville Homeless Collective Member shares his story about being banned from public space during a Sunday morning meeting in Market Square.

Day after day, in the shadows of KARM and settled on the sidewalks, are often a hundred or more people who have nowhere to go. Concentrated in the 'Mission District' because they are driven from public spaces, they settle only yards away from meals, showers and beds that many of them cannot access. We are collecting self-reported data on the numbers of homeless who have been banned from KARM, along with the reasons why.

I spoke with a few of them who wanted to tell their story. We are keeping their identities protected out of respect of their fear of repercussions.

Interview One

Eddie: Okay, so you're saying...

Woman 1: I was being taken by an ambulance cause I have an upper respiratory infection and I have PTSD. When they were strapping me in, I was freaking out and I'm telling them – I've got PTSD, don't do this to me, don't hold me down, you know. Three cops, three Knoxville cops, yanked me out of there, beat the heck out of me. Yeah, I spent two weeks in jail. I had two aggravated assaults cause I went after them when they went after me. When they went after me, I went after them. So I got two

aggravated assaults.

Eddie: You went after them because they were assaulting you? You were defending yourself?

Woman 1: Yeah! I saw the lump here a month later. My whole face was out to here. My attorney took their body cameras and showed it to the judge, he threw everything out. But when I came back, when I got released from jail two weeks later, they wouldn't let me in. Because I...

Eddie: Did they say why?

Woman 1: Because of my assault charges. Outside of KARM. Not on KARM property.

Eddie: And how long ago was that?

Woman 1: Not even a month ago

Eddie: So you're not allowed in.

Woman 1: I got back in, but I had to go to the Pastor. I had to apologize. I have classes I have to take.

Eddie: Lord, okay, alright

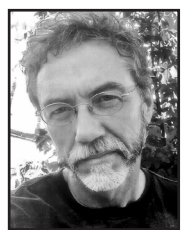
Man 1: Here's the issue. They wanted me to do this LaunchPoint program, which, from what I understand, they get granted \$2,000 per person

Continued on page 2



## A NIGHT AT KARM INTERRUPTED

by Eddie Young,  
Publisher



For years, I'd heard stories about it. So on Thursday night, August 11, I decided to go in and see for myself what a night at KARM would be like.

I was coming in late, so I entered in at the front desk rather than KARM's Crossroads Welcome Center. I would need to do that the following morning. The process for a one-night temporary stay was incredibly easy, and the person who signed me in was kind and polite.

Within five to ten minutes, I was given my temporary card and instructions for the night. I went back outside and across the street to talk with my friend Johnny. Johnny doesn't stay at KARM: he camps. But with his Homeless Management Information Service (HMIS) card he can have a meal, a shower, and check his mail there.

Johnny and I walked into KARM together and had dinner before going out the back to the small

**"I sat there, head in hands and in disbelief." - Young**

courtyard for a few cigarettes where he gave me the rundown of what I could expect and how to go about making sure I got a bottom bunk. They're preferable.

We hung out in the courtyard for the next couple of hours and the night was looking fairly uneventful until it happened. I saw through the KARM windows into the lobby area an altercation between a young woman and a security guard. It appeared that the girl was trying to pull away from the guard's grasp and several of the "guests" outside began to gather and watch.

After a few moments, the Knoxville police came on the scene and began to escort the girl out KARM's front door. It was 9 p.m. and Johnny was

heading in to get his shower. I couldn't imagine a scenario that would require the police, so I went in to ask around to see what had happened.

No one seemed to want to talk about it. They

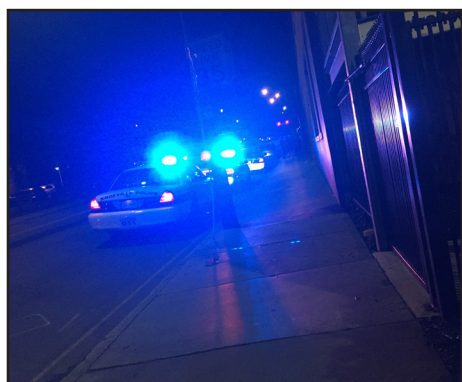


Photo by Eddie Young

Young went undercover to see for himself how KARM treats their "guests."

were nervous and speaking in guarded tones.

One "guest" however did tell me that the young woman was pregnant and didn't deserve to be thrown out to the streets. Another said the girl had cursed at the staff.

"This is a church, you can't do that. Would you cuss in a church?" he asked. I didn't say anything, because he wouldn't have liked my answer. "Just keep to yourself and be polite to the staff, and you'll be alright," he assured me as he walked away.

The person at the front desk called out for everyone to clear the lobby. At this point my intended stay was over. I knew I had to go outside and check on the girl, and because KARM's doors are locked at 6:30 p.m., I was not going to be allowed back in.

I walked out the front door to four police cars, lights flashing, and a group of officers huddled near the entrance. I looked around for terrorists in handcuffs, because I mean, surely to god an eighteen-year-old pregnant girl being asked to leave doesn't require this amount of force.

But everything was still and quiet, except for the young girl sitting on the sidewalk, about twenty yards away, and crying.

I walked over, sat down beside the girl and asked

if I could help get her a room for the night. "All I wanted was to get my book, have a shower and go to bed. I'm so tired," she said through her tears. We introduced ourselves to one another, and I asked if she felt like talking about what had happened.

"Look, if someone gets in my face and yells at me, I'm gonna yell back! I'm doing the best I can do. I take my meds," she said.

She was tired and traumatized and her trying to explain how this had come about was difficult to understand, but it had something to do with her wanting to go upstairs to the women's dorm to get her book. The last thing she needed at this point was someone trying to pull details out of her, so I just listened the best I could.

The girl told me that at some point early on in the altercation, presumably while being escorted back downstairs, the KARM guard threatened to pepper spray her in the elevator.

"Wait, he threatened to pepper spray you?" I asked.

"Yes! And how dumb is that anyway? We're inches away from each other in an elevator. He's gonna get as much of that as I am," she said.

Just then one of her friends came out and joined us. We introduced ourselves and I finally told them who I was and why I was there.

The girl's friend responded, "Really? I'd love to talk to you about all of this! I've known her since we were both eleven years old. She did not deserve this, no one deserves this. They threw me out in the middle of December because I wouldn't talk. I just didn't feel like talking to anyone that night and they said that if I wasn't going to talk then they couldn't help me and I needed to leave.

"And it was cold that night! It was so cold, that I walked over to the bus station and destroyed a newsstand just so I could get arrested and have someplace warm to stay."

She turned and asked her friend if she was okay, if she'd been hurt at all. Looking at me, she said, "They wrestled her to the ground."

"What? They wrestled you to the ground?" I asked her.

"Yes, the KARM officer cornered me in the chapel and wrestled me to the ground."

I sat there, head in hands and in disbelief. -AMP

## cont. Sidewalk Interviews

who goes through this LaunchPoint program. Which is something that teaches you how to get a job. Well, I've been working for thirty years straight. I had my own company at one time. I had health issues, this is how I got homeless. They were telling me, if I didn't take that LaunchPoint program, I couldn't be there. I said, well, here's your card.

**Eddie: So they're saying...**

Man 1: ...But, as soon as I said that, they were like, no, no, as long as no, no, no, as long as you come here and eat, you can stay there sometimes. Which, like I said, I've never stayed there one night. But I got with VMC and as long as I'm with the VMC program, which, those people are wonderful. I don't want you to ever knock down them.

**Eddie: I got no problems with VMC, and we're not trying to knock anyone.**

Man 1: No. They're absolutely wonderful.

**Eddie: They know what they're doing.**

Man 1: Yes. Also understand what they're dealing with here. But you're not going to teach me how to get a job when I've been doing it for thirty years. And, okay, I've got health issues, and this is why I can't work right now. And you don't make me take this course.

Woman 2: VMC came down here, pulled up...

Man 1: Lady in a BMW comes down here handing out pizzas to the homeless

**Eddie: Ohh, the cop who called them animals.**

Man 1: Yeah.

**Eddie: Oh yeah.**

### Interview Two

**Eddie: Do you know why they barred you?**

Man 1: Well, I mean, me and the staff got into a couple of fights.

**Eddie: Like, physical fights or arguments?**

Man 1: Arguments.

**Eddie: Arguments. That's a big difference. That's not a fight.**

Woman 1: Some guy tried to say that he came in with a gun. Like, where would we get a gun? Spend that kind of money on getting a gun? We're on the street!

**Eddie: Alright, so he said - so there was a staff member who said that he thought you had tried to come in with a gun?**

Man 1: Well, see, what it was is that I was barred at the time, and I told them I had to go in to use the bathroom, I had to do the number two, and he told me I couldn't use the bathroom at all and that kind of made me mad so I said that I was gonna use it outside in front of the door. And hell, I was like - you claim to be a Christian place, but y'all wouldn't know Christian if it hit you in the face. Matter of fact, when I catch you outside, I'm gonna hit you in the face. That's what I told him, and then I tried to go back in there a couple of days later and they told me - can't remember the guy's name, but he told the captain that I had told him I had a gun and I was gonna shoot him when he walked off the parking lot. And I just told him I was gonna hit him for not letting me use the bathroom.

**Eddie: Alright, well, why were you barred the first time?**

Man 1: For fighting

**Eddie: Like a physical fight?**

Man 1: Yeah, not a staff member, just a regular guy you know...

**Eddie: Yeah, okay. That's alright. People get in fights. Not a big deal. Alright. So at that point, they barred you.**

Man 1: Yeah

**Eddie: So they bar you for fighting, rather than just sort of breaking it up and saying, "Hey, guys, calm down." That sort of thing. You get into a fight, they just bar you?**

Man 1: They bar you for life.

**Eddie: They bar you for life?**

Man 1: Yeah!

**Eddie: This is important. If you get into a fight with someone, you're saying to me they bar you for life. You can never get back in.**

Man 1: You have to talk to somebody higher up, sign a piece of paper and all that stuff, and you have to wait like a week or two to get back in, but that's only if they allow you to get back there. You get in a fight or anything like that, bad enough argument with a staff member, they could bar you for life.

**Eddie: Do you know if it's a staff member's choice or decision to do that?**

Man 1: David Lay makes the decision to do that.

**Eddie: David Lay makes those calls? Alright, that's all I need to know. Have you ever been refused access to KARM on a white flag night?**

Man 1: Yeah, during the winter, yeah.

**Eddie: During the winter. When they have the white flag out?**

Man 1: Yeah.

**Eddie: And what they say is that they'll let anybody in...**

Man 1: Yeah, they say that.

**Eddie: But they wouldn't let you in.**

Man 1: No, they say if you get into like an argument, that's a temporary bar, but if you get in a fight, that's a lifetime bar.

**Eddie: So I guess they consider you dangerous?**

Man 1: They say no criminal trespasses. Even though it's below 32, they still won't let you in.

**Eddie: Alright.**

Woman 2: They're supposed to. I passed out in a stall. But nobody came in there and helped me. Nobody got me up. I popped right back awake like usually happens and walked myself right back out, and they barred me for being wasted. Now the down point on my side is that yes, I did have a bottle of liquor - a small bottle of liquor - anybody who knows me knows that if I had been passed out from being wasted, there would have been no getting me up or nothing. It was still halfway full. I had just got it and he had just brought it to me home from work. Had it inside my bra. Like I said, it was halfway full. Just gotten the thing, you know. I had a sip out of it, I can't remember who else I let have a sip out of it. You know how we are out here, we share stuff like that. Nowhere near what I'd be called wasted. Couldn't even possibly be called that. But this is what really made me mad, he literally reached inside my bra and grabbed the bottle out. Inside my boob, everything! And waved it around like he'd just scalped an Indian or something.

**Eddie: So what happened that caused you to pass out?**

Woman 2: Well, I suffered a concussion. A severe concussion. But it only lasts for like thirty seconds and then they always go right back away. They're like fainting spells, I would have them from just a severe concussion.

**Eddie: But they determined that, rather than a concussion, you were drunk.**

Woman 2: Yes. They said I was wasted.

**Eddie: Okay.**

Man 1: They're a Christian organization... when it comes to people - I mean, they put on a front when it comes to other people, but when it comes to us, they ain't a Christian organization.

### Interview Three

**Eddie: So you've been barred from KARM.**

Man 1: Well, yeah.

**Eddie: Can you tell me why?**

Man 1: Well, they gave us an agenda when you first get there and I opted not to have the classes. You know, they get you a license and your ID and they get you a job, they lay all that out for you, but they make a meeting date at that time, and I forgot that meeting day and I missed it.

**Eddie: A meeting for what?**

Man 1: To follow up on whether you're getting your stuff. They lay out an agenda, you're supposed to

get your - I remember a few of them: get a TB test, get a state ID, get your job, pay your child support.

**Eddie: Hang on for a second - so you have to get a state ID to stay in there?**

Man 1: No, they didn't say that. That was just part of my plan. They lay on...

**Eddie: Alright, let me stop again. When you talk about this plan, is this this 'Life Plan' they talk about?**

Man 1: Yes. I'm guessing that's what it is.

**Eddie: Alright.**

Man 1: They want to tell a 50-year-old man how to live his life, you know?

**Eddie: How long ago was this?**

Man 1: It's been about five months now.

**Eddie: Alright, so, this is what I'm hearing. Tell me if this is true. What I'm hearing is that in order to stay at KARM, you have to enroll in their LaunchPoint program or Life Plan or whatever.**

Man 1: Right, right, you can't just...

Woman 1: The Life Plan is 45 days!

**Eddie: The Life Plan is 45 days.**

Woman 1: Yes. The Life Program.

Man 1: You can't...like I said, I just wanted to go in there one morning and take a shower. It was quick - in and out - in the morning time, 6 to 6:30 or whatever. And they wouldn't even let me take a shower! I was like, "Dude, I need to take a shower. I haven't had one in two or three days, you know?" I don't want to have this funk all over me. It's hot outside. He was like, "You're going to get us both in trouble! You gotta get out of here. I'm gonna put a trespass on you." So on the weekends, I know he ain't there, and I go in there and take a shower and I try to arrange it through private homes, you know. But when you sit out here, you get so sick of this. It's hot, you get sweaty, you get stinky and nasty.

**Eddie: I know man, but what I'm trying to get at, though, is why did they actually ban you?**

Man 1: Because - I don't know what the thing was. When they ran my ID, they say that I have to go back and I have to come talk to somebody at CenterPoint, or whatever that's called.

Woman 1: Crossroads.

**Eddie: Crossroads, yeah.**

Man 2: Yeah, Crossroads.

Man 1: They won't even let me in, dude. I did that first, I wanted to go eat, then my card came up, they said that I had to go to Crossroads. But I try to get in there in the morning to shower one morning and it was the same thing. It's no fun.

**Eddie: Alright, I'm just trying to get this straight in my head, so let me ask you if I've got this right okay? Okay, let's just say it was me, I come to town. I'm homeless. I come out here and I think, okay, this is the emergency shelter. I wanna stay here.**

Man 2: You gotta have a state ID though.

**Eddie: You gotta have a state ID?**

Man 2: Cause you have to check in, and you have to have a state in order to have their card.

Man 1: Yeah, I guess he is right. You have to have a form of KARM ID or state ID.

Man 2: Cause you have to fill out your information to go in there. Two people tried the other day and, the police had brought them up I think, and they said they couldn't stay cause they didn't have a state I.D.

**Eddie: So if you don't have a state ID, you can't get out of the heat or the cold to sleep? That's what you're saying?**

Woman 1: Or eat.

Man 1: You can't eat there.

**Eddie: No services? No services without a state-issued ID.**

Man 1: The only bathroom they let you use is the one in the courtyard. Like, right now, I gotta go to the bathroom, I can't go inside and use the bathroom.

**Eddie: Alright. So let's say I come here. I got**

A voice for social change

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The Amplifier exists to give voice and economic opportunity to those living outside the mainstream of our community and to address the social issues that affect them.

Our Representatives buy their papers from us at four papers per dollar and offer them to the public for a suggested donation of one dollar per paper. All of your donations go directly to our Representatives. The money we collect from them goes directly towards our printing costs.

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a state ID. I enroll through Crossroads. Are they gonna tell me - you have to enroll in our LaunchPoint program?

Woman 1: Yes.

Man 1: They give you 45 days.

Woman 1: That's what they do.

Man 1: They give you 45 days. You gotta take those classes.

**Eddie: So you got 45 days to take these classes or you're out.**

Man 1: Exactly.

Man 1: Tell him what they did to you!

**Eddie: And that's what happened to you.**

Man 1: Yes.

Man 1: He had a great job and they told him not to work!

Man 3: They don't even want you to work, cause they do this class...

**Eddie: So if you got a job already, they want you to quit that job?**

Man 3: 45 days, you have to quit that job.

**Eddie: In 45....**

Man 1: That's unbelievable, isn't it?

Man 1: Unless you work like a night shift. You can't take it during the day. You have to go to classes four hours a day.

### Interview Four

**Eddie: Okay, so, you were barred from KARM for what reason.**

Man 1: I was barred from KARM because I was working a job at the time and they wanted me to quit my job and take their LaunchPoint program, which is like a little kindergarten-type class. The main things with that class is to get housing, something I wouldn't even qualify for, so I told them I'd rather keep my job. So I basically either quit my job and take LaunchPoint or my services are cut off. And I've seen people who've had fights with staff, everything, and are still going in there to eat. That's why I got barred.

**Eddie: So you got barred from KARM because you wouldn't quit your job in order for them to help you find a job. Right?**

Man 1: Basically. Later on in the job, I ran out of work, so then I could do LaunchPoint, but at the time, I had a hundred-dollar-a-day job, so taking a kindergarten class where I wouldn't even qualify for housing anyway. Seems like that could be worked out. Seems like they could work that out so that somebody in a job could stay and eat. I wasn't even staying inside. I was just barred basically for three meals a day.

**Eddie: Can you go in there and eat?**

Man 1: No!

**Eddie: You can't even go in there and eat?**

Man 1: No! I went in there before and I actually went in there hungry. And I said guys, can I get like a temporary pass. They said no, your services are barred. Had to turn around and walk out.

**Eddie: Did they say for how long you were barred?**

Man 1: Oh, I could go back and take their LaunchPoint and be back there.

**Eddie: You go back and say, basically, "I'm sorry, I've changed my ways. I'm a good..."**

Man 2: Yeah, I mean, really, it's true.

Man 1: I mean, I couldn't give up, \$100 a day. I'm homeless and on the street. Just my luck that work runs out shortly after.



## Poverty and Homelessness Among the LGBTQ+

by Juniper Stinnett,  
Vice President, Knoxville Trans  
Empowerment Project



Homelessness and poverty have plagued society since time immemorial. So long as their has existed a group to be seen as the "other," someone different, someone to vilify, there have been people that have gone without.

This rings all too true for our local LGBTQ+ community. In the past 5 years of my transition I have experienced homelessness and consistent poverty and witnessed many of my brothers and sisters go through the same ordeal, especially, and tragically, the youngest and most vulnerable of us.

It has been well documented that amongst homeless youth, LGBTQ+ kids make up approximately 40% of the population. Discrimination in hiring and housing make it uniquely difficult for young

queer people to get a foot in life. Because of this, we see many of our people, in their desperation, falling into a life of drugs, crime, prostitution, and human trafficking. This is especially true amongst trans women of color, who not only suffer the highest homeless rate amongst LGBTQ+ folks, but are also the most likely to be the victim of assault and murder.

Out of all LGBTQ+ people murdered last year (and this year), 74% of them were trans women, and out of those trans women 90% of them were people of color.

Statistics aside, I can speak from personal experience how simply attempting to exist as a trans woman in the South may as well relegate you to the status of an untouchable. I am from Kingston, a medium-sized town just a 40 minute drive west of Knoxville.

For the better part of 2015-16 I was living there taking care of my mother. I had graduated from college, I had a great work record pre-transition, and yet no matter where I went, no matter what I did, finding employment was impossible.

More than that, seeking work was humiliating.

Potential employers asked more questions about my transition than my college studies or my volunteer work. They relegated me to the "weird" and, naturally, I never got a call back.

As time went on and my desperation grew I decided that it would be better to roll the dice and come to Knoxville rather than sit in Kingston with a roof over my head and rot. I was one of the lucky ones, however, because I actually still had a family to go back to. Most of my sisters have no such love, being cast out, disowned, and reviled all too often in the name of piety and Christian love.

In fact, I can't think of any trans people I know that haven't experienced some period of homelessness. Which is why my comrade and dear friend Jack Knoxville started the Trans Empowerment Project, a means to lift our people out of desperation, to catch each other before we fall through the cracks, to connect us to crucial resources in the area so that Knoxville's rather sizable trans population can become autonomous and empowered to make their own decisions about their lives, to pursue their transition, and to avoid the many pitfalls of poverty.

Dear reader, whatever you may think of us,

whether you see us as freaks or friends, pariahs or people, know this. We are a part of the human condition; a facet on the beautiful diamond of human diversity.

We have existed for as long as human society has made distinction of gender (see the Hijra of India, the Gali of Ephesus, the Semnatatoi of Ancient Greece, etc.) and we will not disappear.

**"We are... a facet on the beautiful diamond of human diversity."  
- Stinnett**

We cannot be legislated away. We cannot be ignored into oblivion. We will live, just as every person under the sky has a right to live. Our lives are

*Continued on page 6*

### cont. Interviews

**Eddie:** Yeah, but that didn't matter in their decision. That didn't factor at all. Did they say why they want you to quit the job? Is it just because of the scheduling? Because we run this program during the day and...

**Man 1:** It's because they get funding for it.

**Eddie:** Well, I know that.

**Man 1:** All I was doing was giving up a \$100/day job to take their LaunchPoint, eat three meals here, sleep here.

**Eddie:** Well, let's say I have a job during the day. Couldn't they do their program at night?

**Man 1:** You think they'd do that

**Eddie:** To accommodate people who're actually working.

**Man 1:** Some people are even going around and panhandling. That's the prime time for them to get their money

**Eddie:** Yeah!

**Man 1:** So instead they want them to tie up that part of the day and then be in at 6:00 at night, so it only leaves those folks a couple of hours to go out and, excuse my French, but bum money, you know?

**Eddie:** There's nothing wrong with that. It's free speecch. If I wanna ask you for five dollars, it's no different than me asking you directions to Neyland Stadium. You can say no, you can say yes, or you can ignore me, but I still have the right to ask.

**Man 1:** There's people that are kicked out for fighting and fighting staff that are back eating. I got barred for not quitting my job, you know? And that's the truth.

**Eddie:** So you can't go in there tonight?

**Man 1:** No!

#### Interview Five

**Eddie:** Alright, so let me get this straight. You say about four years ago...uh...tell me again what happened.

**Man 1:** I came in too drunk to stay there, and I refused to go to the hospital, so they called the police to come and get me. In the process, I was trying to drink this bottle, this twenty ounce coke bottle and the guard grabs the top of it and pulls one way, and I pull the other and it slips out of his grasp and splatters on his shirt. And they said I assaulted him. And that's why I'm not allowed back in there. But I didn't go to jail for assault, just public intoxication.

**Eddie:** But they said you assaulted him, and all you were doing was pulling your bottle back.

**Man 1:** Yeah.

**Eddie:** And then it just sort of sprang forward on his shirt.

**Man 2:** What they do now is, you have to have a Life Plan.

**Eddie:** We've heard that.

**Man 2:** You have to have a Life Plan and enter their program.

**Eddie:** Or you're out.

**Man 2:** You're out. They give you forty-five days and if you don't have a Life Plan through one of their programs you lose all your privileges.

**Man 1:** That was Captain Lewis.

**Eddie:** So what I'm asking is...

**Man 1:** They did me wrong. I could understand being barred for a week or whatever, but not for good for spilling liquor on some guy's shirt.

**Eddie:** So, again, I just want to get this straight. So what happened was...when that happened, they called the cops on you and said you assaulted him.

**Man 1:** No! They called them cause I was drunk. They didn't tell the cops I had assaulted him.

**Eddie:** Ohhh, okay. Did they tell you that you were barred for life?

**Man 1:** Yes. When I went to court, the judge said don't get back on this property. And I said, "But it's a mission," he said, "I know."

**Eddie:** The judge said that?

**Man 1:** Yeah, not to be back on the property that I was arrested on, I said it was a mission, he said, I know. So when I got out I called them to check and they said I was barred for life. And I filled out a piece of paper to get back in and they wouldn't even talk to me.

**Eddie:** So can you go in on a white flag night?

**Man 1:** Nope.

**Eddie:** Do they consider you dangerous?

**Man 1:** Yeah.

**Eddie:** They consider you dangerous.

**Man 1:** Yeah, they consider me dangerous cause dude got liquor spilled on his shirt. I didn't hit the man, I didn't put up any resistance, he had me by the arm and I just stood there. You know, I don't want back in there, but it'd be nice to take a shower every now and then.

**Eddie:** You can't eat or anything.

**Man 1:** Nope.

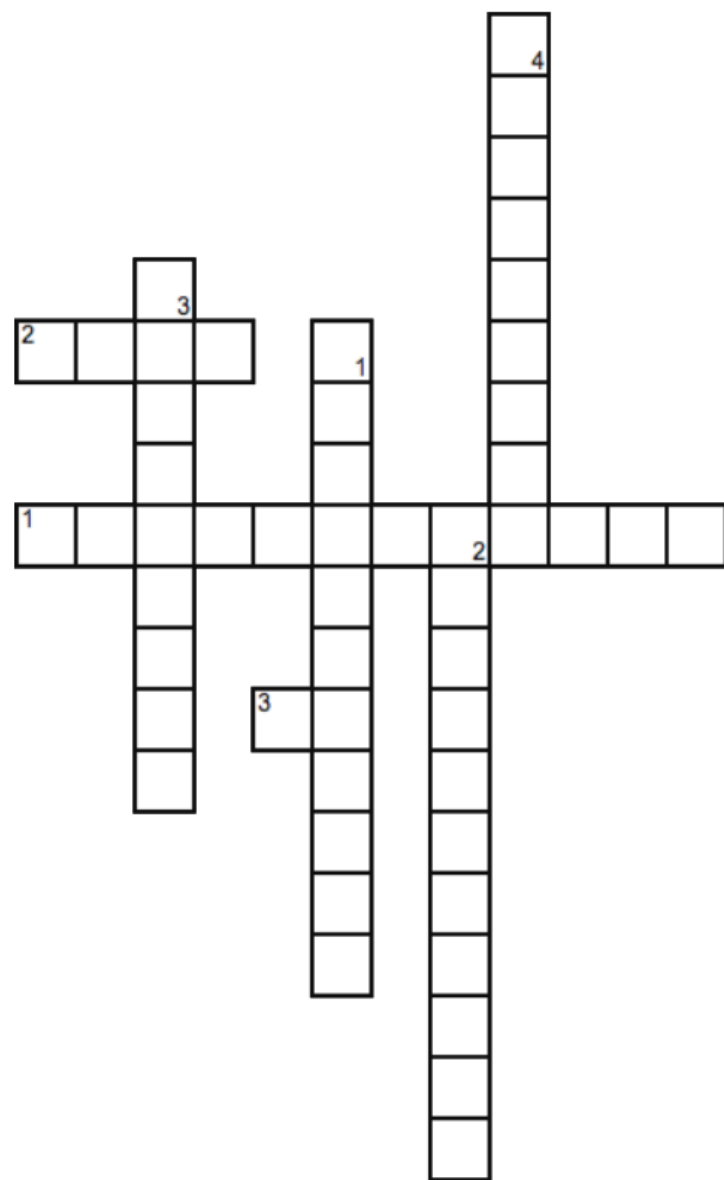
**Eddie:** When was the last time you tried?

**Man 1:** Oh, about two and half years ago.

**Eddie:** So you haven't tried recently.

**Man 1:** No.. I really don't ever wanna go back there again anyway. -AMP

## KARM ISSUES & HOMELESS



### KEY

#### Across

1. If you drink, you might have to pass this test with the police or to enter KARM.
2. An abbreviated name for Knoxville coalition of homeless-serving nonprofits and organizations.
3. You need a state \_\_\_\_\_ to get into KARM.

#### Down

1. Asking for money from passerby
2. This is a new KARM program to help find a job.
3. On this very hot or cold night, anyone should be welcome in an emergency shelter.
4. KARM is a this kind of shelter.

- ANSWERS:
- Across  
1. breathalyzer  
2. KCHC  
3. ID  
4. emergency
- Down  
1. panhandling  
2. launchpoint  
3. whiteflag  
4. emergency

## Water Into Wine?



Cartoon by Vivian Swayne



# Low Barrier Shelters: The Humanitarian Approach

## Low Barrier Shelter Criteria

1. The eligibility criteria to enroll in our shelter is low-barrier, and does not exclude people who have criminal histories, a lack of income or currently use drugs and/or alcohol.
2. Shelter participants are not required to participate in services or do chores to stay in shelter.
3. We do not permanently ban

by Eddie Young,  
Publisher

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) provides a self-assessment tool for homeless shelters in determining whether they meet the “low-barrier” method criteria.

A low-barrier shelter welcomes people and provides services with minimum requirements needed to be met. This method prioritizes the humanitarian crises of people who are exposed to the elements and are at risk of being deprived of life-sustaining rest.

It’s difficult to know whether Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries (KARM) meets a single one of the eight criteria of the assessment tool.

For example, Springs Rescue Mission is a low-barrier shelter in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From their website:

*Being a low-barrier shelter means we accept people as they are and provide a safe, warm place of shelter for those who may have no other options. While some shelters may require a homeless neighbor to be sober or pass a drug test, we don't. A neighbor experiencing homelessness can show up at our doors without an I.D., with a pet in tow and alcohol on their breath and they will find shelter with us.*

Humans require shelter, and a low-barrier approach addresses that need, whereas a shelter that is essentially a ‘live-in program’ comes with restrictions and qualifications that many can’t meet. The NAEH Assessment Tool identifies the following eight criteria in determining a shelter’s commitment to this humanitarian approach to providing shelter.

**1. The eligibility criteria to enroll in our shelter is low-barrier, and does not exclude people who have criminal histories, a lack of income or currently use drugs and/or alcohol.**

Criminal histories can contribute to homelessness. When a person commits a felony they are labeled for years and sometimes life. The offense can cause them to lose their job and their home, and the label can keep them from recovering either. Misdemeanor offenses can often have the same results, and with the growing trends in criminalizing homelessness – with arrests for panhandling, trespassing, public intoxication, vagrancy, etc., an endless cycle of disenfranchisement is perpetuated. A shelter that denies services to people with criminal histories participates in the marginalizing systems that often cause homelessness in the first place.

There are some shelters that require payment for staying, such as a nightly charge or a percentage of one’s SSI or SSDI check. A lack of income can leave one with no other choice than to panhandle for funds in order to access a shelter with a nightly charge. In most cities panhandling places one in danger of being fined or even arrested, adding unpaid court costs to one’s criminal history. A shelter that requires income can actually further entrench one in homelessness, as most people will do whatever is necessary to sustain life.

Substance abuse is most often a symptom of one’s trying to cope with stress and anxiety or feelings of hopelessness and despair. The abuse of drugs and alcohol can contribute to homelessness, but in many cases it is the result and not the cause. There is a stigma attached to people who suffer from substance abuse, especially among the homeless, that fails to appreciate and empathize with the root issues that can drive one there. Refusing them access to shelter and rest based on the symptom only reinforces the feeling of hopelessness and despair, and can result in devastating consequences.

**“Requiring one to participate in religious services or perform chores is exclusive and degrading.” - Young**

**2. Shelter participants are not required to participate in services or do chores to stay in shelter.**

Requiring one to participate in religious services or perform chores is exclusive and degrading. Forced participation in religious services can violate your conscience, communicate that one is morally or spiritually bankrupt or that they need to be aligned with the theology of the service provider in order to be worthy of assistance. It can also communicate that the cause of their homelessness, or the way out, is being determined by a higher power rather than the practical causes and solutions that humanity has control over.

Requiring chores can make one feel as though they are being punished for their homelessness, and can suggest that they are irresponsible and need to earn the right to shelter.

Ultimately, and what may be the primary goal, is that it supplies the shelter with free labor, asserts

people for anything other than violence or theft.

**4. Our shelter is compliant with the HUD Equal Access Rule and is open to all eligible individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.**

**5. Our family shelter space can accommodate different configurations of families, such as allowing a**

staff control, and reinforces socio-economic divisions of class.

**3. We do not permanently ban people for anything other than violence or theft.**

Banning people from accessing services with a shelter is the easy way out. It frees the shelter staff from having to engage with people who are tired, hot/cold, sick, anxious, understandably defensive, and scared.

Rather than taking the time and effort to understand a person and looking for ways to accommodate or ease their mood, it’s far easier to just kick them out. Even the mood of the staff member on a given day can result in one being banned.

It’s hard to imagine that an emergency shelter wouldn’t train its staff in conflict resolution and restorative relationship building rather than resorting to calling law enforcement and banning. However, according to the consensus of our local homeless population, the latter seems to be the preferred approach of Knoxville’s emergency shelter.

Shelters like KARM require you to enroll in a program to access their services. According to the consensus of our local homeless population, if you opt out of the program, you’re banned, if you try but don’t successfully complete the program, you’re banned, and even if you do complete the program, you’re then banned upon your graduation. It has become a program-driven shelter.

Banning a person over violence and theft can be an understandable way of protecting others and their belongings. However, a permanent ban still seems unreasonable. It communicates that the action defines you, that it is the sum of your personality rather than a possible moment of weakness, which we all are susceptible to. The concept of a permanent ban from a faith-based operated shelter like KARM, who claims to do what it does in Jesus’ name, would contradict His philosophy of forgiveness and discredits the shelter’s motives and reputation in the homeless community it exists to serve.

**4. Our shelter is compliant with the HUD Equal Access Rule and is open to all eligible individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.**

This is one of the many reasons why a city should see it as their civic responsibility to provide shelter for its homeless citizens. When you turn this responsibility over to a nonprofit, there is no oversight or accountability in areas like these. Homeless people who are discriminated against based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. To remove this vital safety net from them simply because of who they are promotes further systemic violence against them. (See Juniper Stinnett’s article on page 3 of this issue.)

**5. Our family shelter space can accommodate different configurations of families, such as allowing a male head of household or teenage son to stay in the same room with the rest of the family.**

Families are configured in many ways, and faith-based shelters can and do discriminate against those who do not fit the Western traditional model of a family. Regardless of configuration, the family bond is sacred and should be honored and protected.

Imagine a couple or a family vowing to one another that, “We’re gonna get through this together” only to be separated on arrival at the shelter.

Homelessness is already an intensely vulnerable state to be in and keeping couples and family units together should be a primary concern for shelters. The stability and security of family, when everything else in your life seems lost, is vital to maintaining one’s emotional and psychological wellness. When you separate families, you add to the fear and vulnerability that one is already experiencing, particularly when it comes to children. We’ve all seen the images of families being torn apart - children reaching and crying for their parent or sibling, and it moves us deeply because we’ve either experienced the trauma ourselves, or can empathize with their pain.

male head of household or teenage son to stay in the same room with the rest of the family.

**6. Our shelter is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide easy and immediate access for participants any time of the day.**

**7. Our shelter does not make people leave every morning at a certain time, stay outside until eve-**

ning, and line up for their beds every night.

When a shelter separates a family, the uncertainty that loved ones are safe and being properly cared for escalates fear and anxiety. Children are very intuitive and can sense the instability brought on by this separation. Childhood trauma can impact one’s mental and emotional health for years, even permanently in some cases. Losing everything and becoming homeless is a traumatic event that no one should ever have to experience, and a shelter should do everything within its power to avoid contributing to it.

**6. Our shelter is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide easy and immediate access for participants any time of the day.**

A shelter with “opening hours” can project an unwelcoming posture. For example, “opening hours” could exclude the following: people who work and can’t arrange their schedule accordingly; people who have just lost their home or who have just arrived into town and are disoriented and frightened; people who are trying to reach the shelter but are hindered by having to travel by public transit or by foot.

In Knoxville, people are released from the Knox County Detention Center as late as 3:00am and dropped downtown.

If they have no one to collect them, they are left with no choice but to walk the streets and chance being arrested again for vagrancy.

We can access almost everything we want or need 24 hours a day, surely shelter could be included on that long list.

**7. Our shelter does not make people leave every morning at a certain time, stay outside until evening, and line up for their beds every night.**

Why would a shelter force people out into the streets or into an outside courtyard in the morning and not allow them back in until evening? Are these tactics driven by the assumption that if you’re homeless, you’re lazy and “if we let you stay then you’ll just lay in bed all day?” I’m not sure what other conclusion to reach, unless it’s that the staff just really doesn’t want to be around the homeless any more than they have to.

If productivity is a shelter’s concern, then they might want to take into consideration that being fully rested can actually contribute to a better frame of mind for the coming day and allow for those who’ve worked late into the night to get the rest that they need.

Not only does this freedom impact the lives of those who are homeless in a practical way, it can also return a sense of autonomy by allowing them to determine the amount of rest they need. This can have an empowering impact on those who feel powerless to affect even the simplest things in their current situation.

**8. We provide training for board, staff, donors, and community members on why a low-barrier model is a more effective way to serve people who are experiencing homelessness in our community.**

If a shelter cannot meet the majority of the above criteria, then they obviously won’t meet this one – being committed to the model.

We need to retire the misguided and ill-informed argument that low-barrier assistance, from any and all service providing agencies, only encourages or enables people to remain in homelessness. This position survives on the unfounded assumption that homelessness is a choice. That it is a care-free life and that people are more than happy to remain homeless unless we make their day-to-day existence sufficiently miserable.

This position is partnered with another unfounded assumption, that the homeless are lazy and must be ‘taken by the hand’ or ‘driven’ towards jobs and housing. These assumed positions can affect the ways in which organizations provide services to the homeless population, and even how cities are trending towards withholding services.

For emergency shelters, the low-barrier method can actually provide a person with a sense of stability and empowerment, which promotes a positive frame of body and mind. Getting out of homelessness can be incredibly difficult and discouraging. Freeing one from unnecessary and burdensome restrictions can go a long way towards helping. The benefits however, should not outweigh our responsibility to provide our fellow citizens with the basic necessities to preserve life.

ning, and line up for their beds every night.

**8. We provide training for board, staff, donors, and community members on why a low-barrier model is a more effective way to serve people who are experiencing homelessness in our community.**

As I finish my thoughts, I’m aware of the state of emergency that Hurricane Harvey has thrust upon the residents of southeast Texas. The heartbreak moves me. The images of people losing everything summon the pain that we feel for them from our shared humanity.

I become an instant fan of the mayor of Houston as I hear him exclaim, with a sense of urgency and alarm, that the citizens of his city, “have nowhere to go!” I listen to him affirm that they are doing everything they can to make sure that everyone has

**“Why would a shelter force people out into the streets?” - Young**

shelter – everyone. And this means, he says in no uncertain terms, that they are not concerned with one’s legal status, referring to those potentially undocumented.

The humanitarian need for shelter rises above all other concerns, as it should. For the mayor of Houston, there is no low-barrier approach, but a no-barrier approach. I’d like to think that this was his posture to those experiencing homelessness in his city prior to Hurricane Harvey, but Mayor Turner revealed his plan to address homelessness in Houston earlier this year with a self-described ‘tough love’ approach.

Reading over the plan, there’s nothing there that most major and mid-major cities aren’t already doing, and his approach to those displaced by the hurricane represents a sharp turn away from ‘tough love.’

There are people who have been displaced and left with nowhere to go living among us on a daily basis, yet we don’t have any sense of urgency about it at all. I just don’t understand. Why do we see this crisis differently when it’s the result of a natural disaster?

If a natural disaster struck Knoxville and displaced thousands of residents, would we approach the crisis as we do now? Would we refer them to the nonprofits who would then vet them through restrictions and obligations through a Christian lens? Would we leave them to hide in the woods until and unless the resources available could come to bear on their lives? Would we separate families? Would we order people to get out at daybreak? Would we require people to enroll in programs? Would we refer to them as “animals” as did a KPD officer recently?

No. Wouldn’t we summon all civic, not nonprofit, but civic power to come to the rescue? Wouldn’t our local news networks commit 24/7 to covering this crises? Wouldn’t our mayor insist that we are going to shelter these neighbors of ours regardless? What is it about a natural disaster that changes our approach and raises our sense of urgency? Is it because we attribute the displacement to an event beyond one’s control?

According to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), generated by The University of Tennessee’s Social Work Office of Research and Public Service, these are the primary self-reported reasons for those experiencing homelessness in the Knoxville area for the second quarter of this year:

Mental/Health Reasons: 516  
No Affordable Housing: 308  
Loss of a Job: 294  
Domestic Violence: 234  
Eviction: 234  
Underemployment: 145  
Null: 130  
Criminal Activity: 98  
Other: 76

Eighty-five percent of the reasons for becoming homeless listed above are due to events beyond one’s control, like a natural disaster, only different in that it is one person or family at a time rather than thousands at once.

And according to the HMIS 2016 Annual Report, the top three self-reported causes for homelessness are: loss of job, no affordable housing and eviction.

The city of Knoxville has this information, so where is the sense of urgency? Why do we take such a relaxed approach to these displaced and homeless neighbors that live among us everyday? Is it a matter of not letting the facts get in the way of a good story - the unchecked propaganda that the homeless in our community have no one to blame but themselves? That they are lazy, irresponsible, or addicts and criminals? If that were true, it would certainly make us feel better about ourselves.

A low-barrier shelter doesn’t resolve the crises of homelessness. Like the victims of Hurricane Harvey, rebuilding one’s life after being displaced and becoming homeless will likely be a long and sometimes disheartening road. The truth is, rebuilding your life can be more difficult than the life you built

Continued on page 7



## Q + A with KARM

**1** **Word on the street:** You must possess a government-issued ID to check-in.

**KARM's commentary:** "All guests are required to have a valid state issued photo ID. It is important for us to be able to identify someone because we have women and children in the building."

"If someone does not have a state issued photo ID, we have other ways of identifying them if they have been arrested. Sometimes we will ask KPD for assistance in identifying a guest."

**The Amplifier's take:** It can be extremely difficult for those without a permanent address to obtain a photo ID, and recovering lost documentation is costly.

Homeless people may not have a consistent or

to stay together due to the physical limitations of our facility. Mothers and children can stay together in the emergency family area, and men are sheltered in the men's dorm.

"We make every effort to assist families in finding more suitable accommodations."

**The Amplifier's take:** According to the Knoxville Homeless Management Information System (KnoxHMIS), KARM has only met 100% capacity one month thus far in 2017.

It is illogical to argue KARM does not have space for families to be together. Even if they were at full capacity every single night, it becomes an issue of organization and regulation.

The number of people doesn't change, just where you place them.

according [to] their identity upon arrival. As an emergency rescue shelter with limited space in the facility, we have men's or women's dorms that shelter 300-350 people per night. There are no provisions for private apartments."

**The Amplifier's take:** Again, KARM's argument of limited space avoids the true question at hand. Does KARM discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community? We have heard stories of gender non-conforming people being put on the street due to their identity.

**6** **Word on the street:** You will not be able to bring your pet without documentation proving it to be a service animal.

**KARM's commentary:** "As an

individual which, sadly, leaves them on the street."

**The Amplifier's take:** Here's what this sounds like to us: "No one is asked to leave solely based on mental illness, yet we don't prioritize training our staff to assist clients in need."

**9** **Word on the street:** If you need assistance with a physical disability, you will be asked to leave.

**KARM's commentary:** "A guest must be able to reasonably care for him/herself to stay at KARM. If he or she [is] unable to do so, we will assist in finding an appropriate facility to receive the care needed."

**The Amplifier's take:** We have multiple accounts of KARM kicking physically disabled folks out of their facility.



Photo by Eddie Young

Knoxville's singular "emergency shelter" provider is Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries, located on N Broadway. They are not subject to oversight from the city.

reliable place to keep their belongings, including important paperwork such as their ID.

**2** **Word on the street:** You may have to pass a breathalyzer test, based completely upon the whims of the staff member.

**KARM's commentary:** "If someone is intoxicated, our staff makes every effort to ensure the wellbeing of both that individual and all our guests and staff by making sure the person is not a threat to themselves or others."

"If a staff member judges that there is a need based on their observation, a breathalyzer test may be administered. The results of the test allow the staff member to make a decision on how to respond."

"Breathalyzer tests are not administered to all guests. An intoxicated guest entering KARM may be asked to wait in the chapel for a brief time, or if there is a high level of intoxication, emergency services may be called due to the possibility of alcohol poisoning."

"Any guests that are routinely intoxicated may be counseled to enter our Intensive Outpatient Program for drug and alcohol abuse."

**The Amplifier's take:** A staff member's personal bias or prejudice could result in someone losing their bed.

Under the guise of a breathalyzer, it is undeniably simple for a staff member to discriminate against someone who had been drinking, but who was not a threat to themselves or others. With the power to breathalyze someone for initial entry, staff can use someone's drinking as an excuse to deny them shelter.

**3** **Word on the street:** If you are a husband or father, you will not be allowed to stay with your wife or child, nor can you visit them to say 'good-night' etc.

**KARM's commentary:** "KARM is full committed to keeping husbands and wives with children together. Husbands and wives are not currently able

**4** **Word on the street:** You will have to leave your bags outside through the check-in process, unguarded and subject to being stolen.

**KARM's commentary:** "Guests are allowed to store their suitcases, duffel bags, and belongings in a bag room that is open twice a day for their access."

"We do not allow backpacks in the building for a few reasons. First, there is no space in the lobby or dorms for storing backpacks or belongings. We routinely house 300-350 people a night. The men's dorm and women's dorm are single room dormitories and the number of bags would be overwhelming and would pose a fire and trip hazard by blocking aisles."

"Additionally, without such limitations of baggage in the building, the possibility of guests bringing contraband such as drugs, alcohol and weapons into the building drastically increases. Every guest is provided a 2.5 gal clear plastic Ziploc bag nightly so they can bring in any toiletries or a change of clothes they need for the night."

**The Amplifier's take:** If the government is not allowed to seize your private property, why is KARM? In order to take shelter at KARM, people must sacrifice their autonomy to access whatever few material possessions they own.

The Bag Room is infamous among the homeless in Knoxville who are familiar with KARM. What happens when you have to be at work when the bag room is open? Or you've been banned and can't get back to your things? The staff rotates people's belongings out of the Bag Room with insufficient notice to no notice at all.

People consistently report trying to find their things, and instead discovering their bags were thrown away, lost, or stolen.

**5** **Word on the street:** If you are gender non-conforming, Trans, or any other known member of the LGBTQ+ community, you may be asked to leave.

**KARM's commentary:** "Guests are housed

emergency rescue shelter for people, we do not have facilities for housing animals, with the exception of service animals which are allowed based on Federal law. A service animal must have the appropriate paperwork and shot records to be allowed to stay with their owner."

**The Amplifier's take:** See number 1 for issues the homeless might encounter with paperwork. Aside from that, there are shelters that allow people and their pets to stay in the building. Pets are family, and people should not have to choose between their loved ones and a roof over their heads.

**7** **Word on the street:** Clients must arrive between the hours of 4:30 pm and 6:30 pm.

**KARM's commentary:** "All guests are requested to enter the building by 6:30 PM if they wish to stay the night."

"If a guest provides proof they are attending church, working, or attending AA or NA meetings they are allowed to come in at an appropriate time following their activity."

**The Amplifier's take:** Does this account for time for transportation, especially if someone is traveling by foot? Or what if you have a family emergency or a friend needs you? Ideally, an emergency shelter would have 24-hour access to account for any and all unexpected life events.

**8** **Word on the street:** You may be asked to leave if you have a mental illness, especially if you do not have access to or do not take medication.

**KARM's commentary:** "No one is asked to leave based solely on mental illness. Because we are an emergency rescue shelter, a guest must be able to reasonably care for themselves and/or not pose a safety hazard to themselves or others."

"When this is compromised, our staff makes every effort to ensure the well-being of all of our guests. Sometimes this results in our referring a person elsewhere for services."

"We have occasions where our best intentions and offers for service have been declined by the

This has even happened on white flag nights, the hottest or coldest nights of the year. People have died due to KARM's lack of compassion and competent staff. A different-sex couple can't take care of each other within the walls of the shelter (see number 3), and without the help of staff, folks with physical disabilities are left to the streets."

**10** **Word on the street:** If you have a criminal record, you may be denied shelter.

**KARM's commentary:** "Yes, those with criminal records can receive services at KARM, with the exception of sex offenders. Because of state law and the presence of women and children in the building, sex offenders are not allowed to stay here."

**The Amplifier's take:** We do not sympathize with any abuse or harm one person may cause another, whether it be physical, mental, emotional. We have no way to prove KARM refuses services to those with other kinds of criminal records, although we suspect they might. In any case, surely KARM and others could make judgments on whom actually poses a threat instead of implementing a blanket ban. Other offenses such as assault or murder raise concerns, but these folks are not all blindly denied shelters? Sex offenders face a unique stigma that marginalizes them in an extreme manner.

"Sex offender" can apply to varying degrees of offenses (i.e. peeing in an alleyway, which is something someone experiencing homelessness might often have to do). We do not condone any kind of violence, physical or otherwise. However, people who commit heinous crimes are still people. And shelter is a human right. KARM's motto is "Restoring Lives in Jesus' Name." Casting a sex offender to the streets is not restorative. Denying them shelter only further propagates the prejudice and discrimination someone with that kind of criminal history faces daily.

If KARM were to focus on actually restoring folks' lives, perhaps offenders would have access to the rehabilitation and reconciliation they need. As it is, they don't even have access to shelter. -AMP



Photo by Eddie Young

No shelters in Knoxville welcome guests with a low-barrier approach, which is why so many people are living on the sidewalks up and down North Broadway Street.



# The Ones (De Ceux)

by Fauve  
translated by Laurel Sykes, contributor



Photo by Eddie Young

We are the ones you don't notice  
— The imperceptibles, ghosts, means  
We are the ones who aren't taken into consideration  
We are the ones you choose by default

We are the ones with dull skin, strained features, a dead look  
Pale-faced, grey-colored

We are the ones who wash themselves out from one day to the next  
We are the ones who have trouble hearing ourselves think

We are the ones who have no self-control  
We are the ones who feel uncomfortable in public  
We are the ones who trip in library staircases  
We are the ones who dance awkwardly

We are the ones who make love in a flash  
We are the ones who deal with others the wrong way round  
We are the ones you never bet on

We are the ones who don't know how to reason logically anymore

We are the ones who do everything as we should but never get it right  
Modern failures, semi-losses, spiritless victories  
We are the ones who don't hold up under pressure  
We are the ones who get endlessly brushed aside

We are the ones who get aided  
— Incompetents, cripples, weak  
We are the ones who take things to cope

We are the ones who don't know how to say no, who don't know rebellion, who don't look people in the eye  
— We are the ones who are done in

And yet

— We are the ones who don't give up  
Rabid dogs, badasses, determined

We are the ones with expectations, who become capable of putting up with anything  
We are the ones who draw up plans in the dark to take back control, to play according to our own rules and change the course of fate

We are the ones who have had enough of our own cruelty  
Tiger sharks on their last legs, thugs asking forgiveness, apprentice snitches  
We are the ones who are hell-bent on to beating up our dark side and silencing our dirty quirks

We are the ones searching to join the ranks  
Lions, members of the resistance, unyielding to emotion  
We are the ones who work for ourselves on our premises  
We are the ones who still piss in the shower but hope one day to piss upright

We are the ones searching to disarm death in a blaze of tear-gas grenades  
To scare her and keep her at bay

We are the ones who hope to bump into life one evening in the middle of an avenue  
To seduce her, bring her home, and make burning love to her

We are the ones who have our eyes wide-open all the time  
Flabbergasted, dumbstruck,  
Lying in wait for comets, planets, and epiphanies

We are the ones trying to dig up what is buried, what is hidden and demands to be brought out

We are the ones who want to re-establish contact with those who left us too early  
Because they didn't know there was a hidden end

We are the ones who keep running as if we were pursued by bullets  
Who never unclench our jaws except to bring out our fangs

## cont. You Are Not Welcomed

Herman: Yes.  
Eddie: Okay, now as far as you understand the Christian faith, is this the way you think Jesus would've treated someone?  
Herman: Look here, this guy says to me, not Pastor Mike but David, he comes outside the door when I got thrown out, and I said, "Look, Jesus was born in a manger..." and he said, "I'm through talking to you."  
Eddie: Do you remember a story from the Bible when Jesus was at a party and they ran out of wine and he's like, "This is no good, we got plenty of water, lemme just turn this into more wine so we can keep having fun."  
Herman: (Laughing) Yeah.  
Eddie: So, in your mind, would it be fair to say that someone who has a few drinks is cool with Jesus?  
Herman: If God, or Jesus, had wine, right? So anyway, I said, "You put me outside the door..." I said, "Look, God wouldn't put me out here."  
Eddie: Would you say, I'm trying really hard because I don't wanna put words in your mouth, so if the answer is, "No" then please say. So, would you say that oftentimes people are either barred or not let in just because the staff doesn't like them?  
Herman: That's true.  
Eddie: That's true.  
Herman: Know it for a fact! —AMP

## cont. Poverty, LGBT+

no less precious than those of any other person.  
I implore you to seek compassion for our fair city's homeless population. I encourage you to celebrate our differences and embrace our sameness. I dare you to reach out and lift up your neighbor who is hurting. No matter how broken they may seem. No matter how broken you may feel.  
The world awaits your liberating ministry, dear reader. Go and make the world a better place, sharing the truth that love can make us free. —AMP



Photo by Eddie Young

Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries hangs its White Flag on the hottest and coldest nights of the years. Despite the merciless elements, many homeless people are still turned away from KARM on these nights because of their discriminatory rules.

“ONE MAN, ONE FAMILY DRIVEN FROM THE LAND; THIS RUSTY CAR CREAKING ALONG THE HIGHWAY TO THE WEST. I LOST MY LAND, A SINGLE TRACTOR TOOK MY LAND. I AM ALONE AND I AM BEWILDERED. AND IN THE NIGHT ONE FAMILY CAMPS IN A DITCH AND ANOTHER FAMILY PULLS IN AND THE TENTS COME OUT. THE TWO MEN SQUAT ON THEIR HAMS AND THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN LISTEN. HERE IS THE NODE, YOU WHO HATE CHANGE AND FEAR REVOLUTION. KEEP THESE TWO SQUATTING MEN APART; MAKE THEM HATE, FEAR, SUSPECT EACH OTHER. HERE IS THE ANLAGE OF THE THING YOU FEAR. THIS IS THE ZYGOTE. FOR HERE “I LOST MY LAND” IS CHANGED; A CELL IS SPLIT AND FROM ITS SPLITTING GROWS THE THING YOU HATE—“WE LOST OUR LAND.” THE DANGER IS HERE, FOR TWO MEN ARE NOT AS LONELY AND PERPLEXED AS ONE. AND FROM THIS FIRST “WE” THERE GROWS A STILL MORE DANGEROUS THING: “I HAVE A LITTLE FOOD” PLUS “I HAVE NONE.” IF FROM THIS PROBLEM THE SUM IS “WE HAVE A LITTLE FOOD,” THE THING IS ON ITS WAY, THE MOVEMENT HAS DIRECTION. ONLY A LITTLE MULTIPLICATION NOW, AND THIS LAND, THIS TRACTOR ARE OURS. THE TWO MEN SQUATTING IN A DITCH, THE LITTLE FIRE, THE SIDEMEAT STEWING IN A SINGLE POT, THE SILENT, STONE-EYED WOMEN; BEHIND, THE CHILDREN LISTENING WITH THEIR SOULS TO WORDS THEIR MINDS DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THE NIGHT DRAWS DOWN. THE BABY HAS A COLD. HERE, TAKE THIS BLANKET. IT’S WOOL. IT WAS MY MOTHER’S BLANKET—TAKE IT FOR THE BABY. THIS IS THE THING TO BOMB. THIS IS THE BEGINNING—FROM “I” TO “WE.”





Photo by Eddie Young

Having shelter is a monumental part of someone's rebuilding process. Stable and affordable housing should be Knoxville's number one priority.

## cont. Low Barrier Shelters: The Humanitarian Approach

before the fall.

However, having the stability and security of shelter can make all the difference in the success of taking the first steps in this rebuilding process. Let's be clear though, even in the rare cases when someone has given up trying, which is understandable, they still deserve to be sheltered.

Currently, I know of no place in Knoxville that welcomes the homeless with shelter through a low-barrier approach, and this is the overwhelming reason why we have people living on sidewalks up and down North Broadway and hiding out in the woods.

This is unacceptable, and if we can't convince the nonprofit shelters to adopt this low-barrier approach, then we as a city should step up and provide it. However, this will require us to re-assess our sense of urgency, in light of the facts, and recognize that this is our collective humanitarian responsibility.

Other cities and organizations are dismissing the 'tough love' posture. This presumably is based on their recognition that the homeless population for the most part aren't to blame for their situation. People do desire the assistance needed to escape homelessness, contrary to what a spokesperson for our local Salvation Army was quoted as saying this past month.

Within the context of addressing people living on the sidewalks, he said, "There comes some challenges for these agencies because they provide these resources to the homeless, but 'these people' need the desire to accept that assistance."

Having local homeless service provider agencies operating on this false narrative only underscores the need for our city to either lead the way in correcting that narrative, or providing the service ourselves.

If you're reading this article, then you've purchased it from someone who has a vested interest in this issue.

I can provide data and make arguments, but I encourage you to take a moment and speak with your Amplifier vendor next time you see her or him. Chances are, they have no access to shelter or know of friends who don't.

I've used a lot of words to try and convince you of the need for a low-barrier shelter in Knoxville, but I'm just an advocate. This paper exists so that you can hear straight from those affected, both through the content they contribute and the personal interaction with your local vendor.

Take the time to listen to them and then demand that the local service providers that operate through your donations and your elected officials act accordingly. -AMP

## Untitled

by Juniper Stinnett,  
Vice President, Knoxville Trans  
Empowerment Project

*Why has the air  
fallen silent of bees?  
And why do I see  
screaming faces in trees?  
The grass, every  
flower  
it weeps in the light.  
I go around grinning,  
this world is too bright,  
Best thin it with  
venom,  
drain it of blood,  
Sheathe it in chromium,  
Oh, then it is good.  
Why does my sleep walking  
take me to water?  
Why are our hands  
red with yesterdays  
slaughter?*

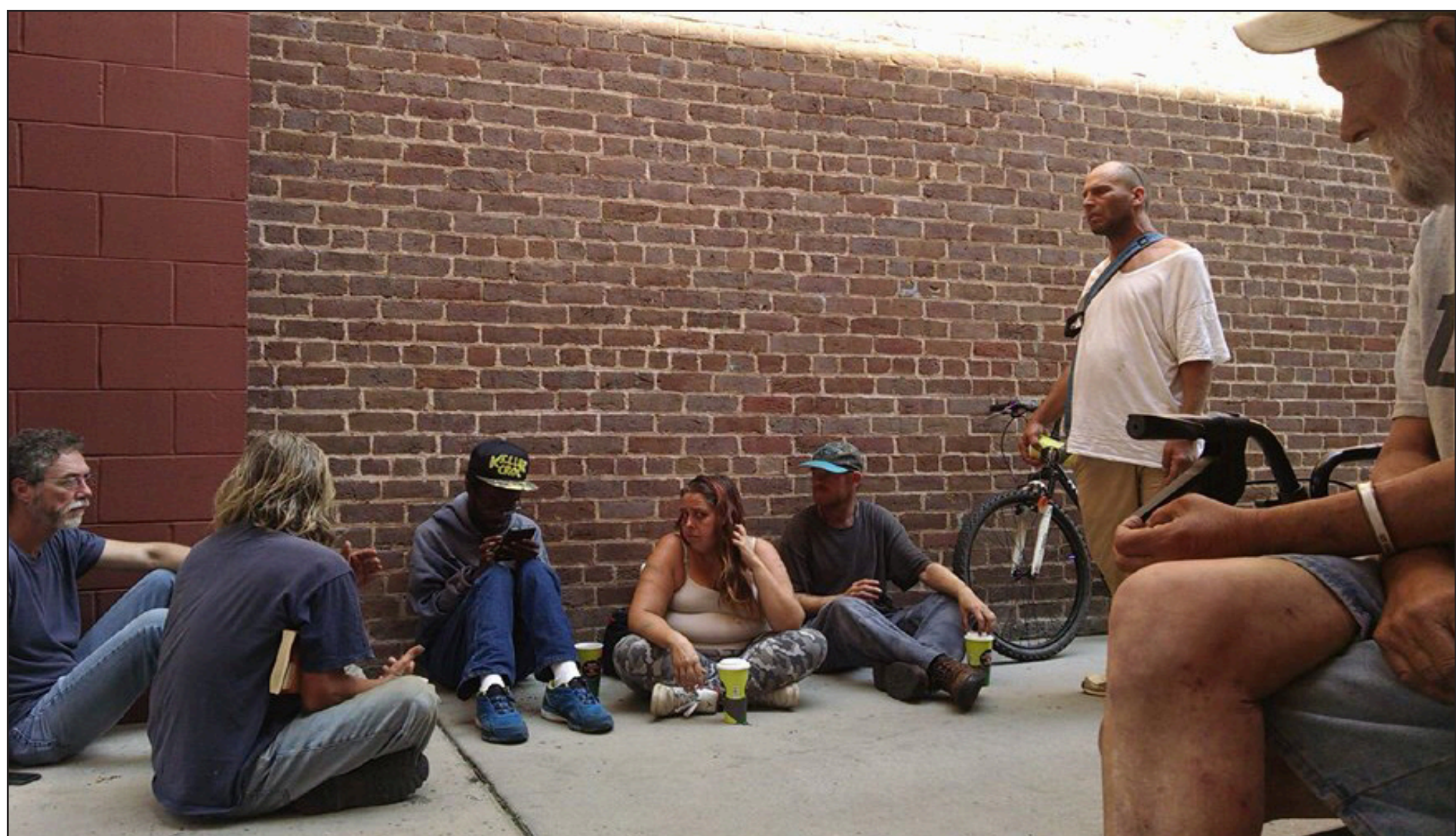


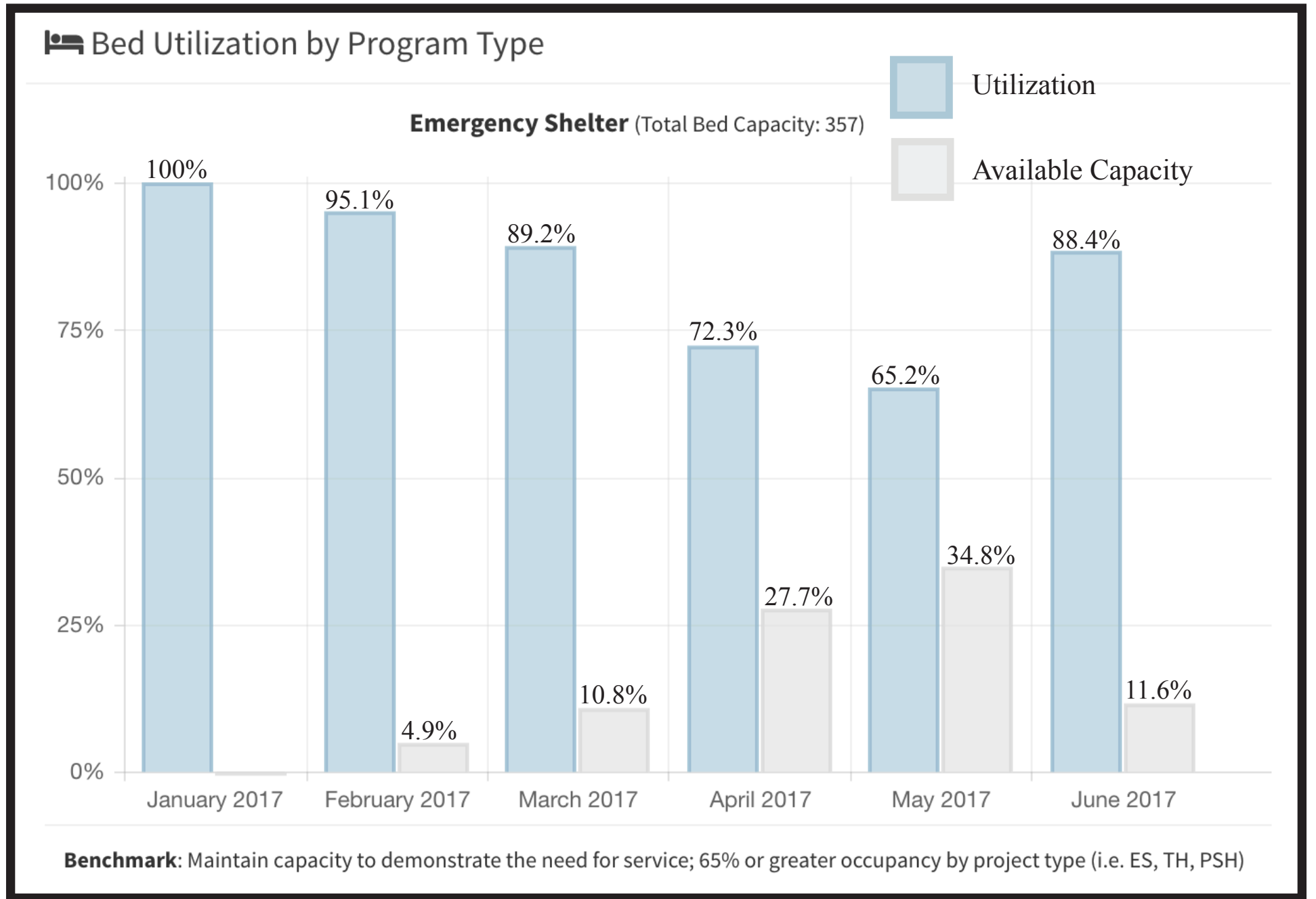
Photo by Vivian Swayne

After being discriminated against based on their housing status, The Knoxville Homeless Collective was forced to meet in an alley on Gay Street.



## HOMELESS IN KNOXVILLE STATS

All the statistics on this page are provided by the Knoxville Homeless Management Information System in conjunction with the Knoxville Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness



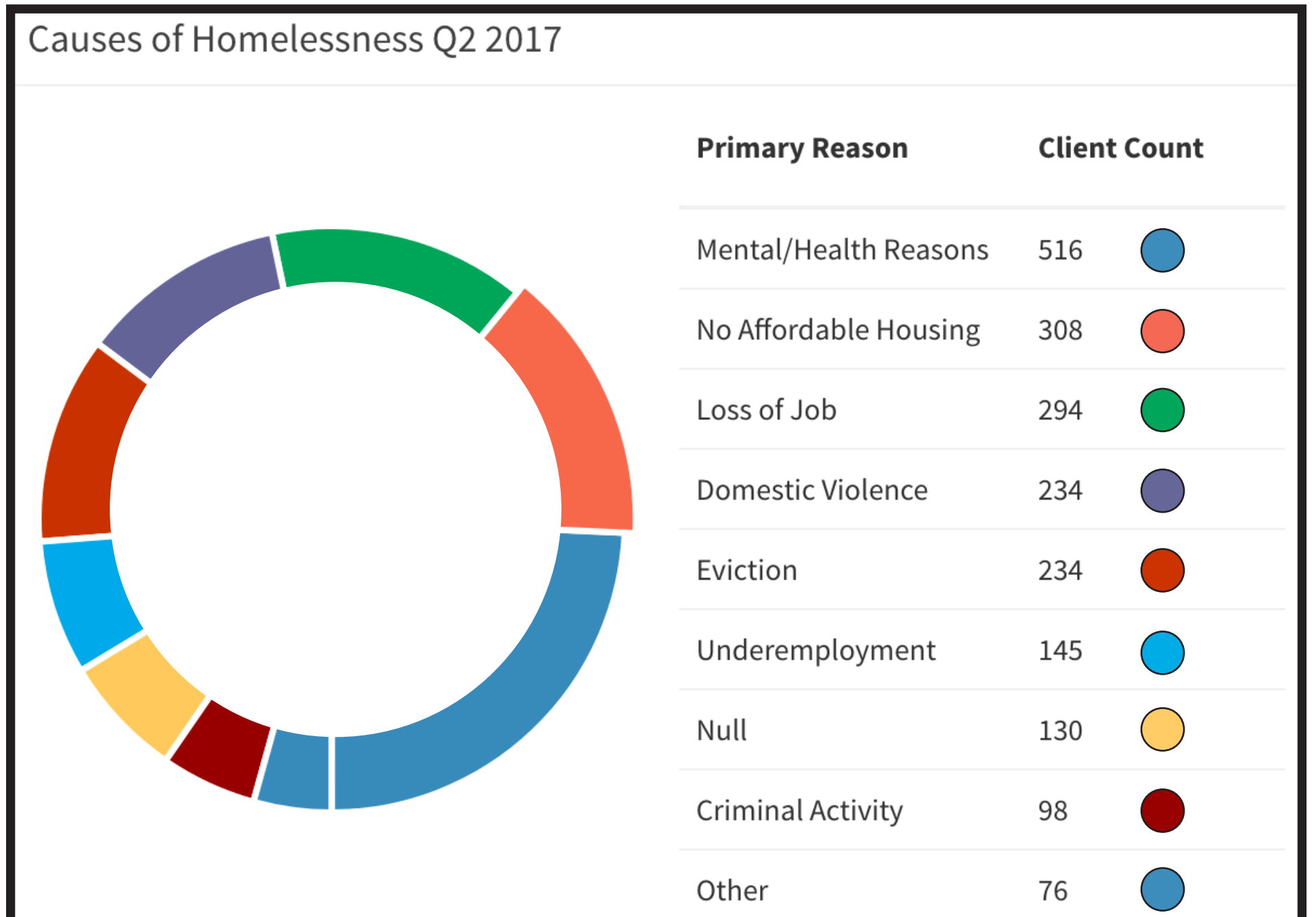
Bar graph from Knoxville Community Dashboard on Homelessness: Quarter 2 2017 (April 1, 2017 - June 30, 2017).

KEY: The blue columns (left) represent bed utilization. The grey columns (right) represent remaining available capacity.



Bar graph from Knoxville Community Dashboard on Homelessness: Quarter 2 2017 (April 1, 2017 - June 30, 2017).

Rapid re-housing emphasizes housing search and relocation services and short- and medium-term rental assistance to move people as rapidly as possible into permanent housing.



Bar graph from Knoxville Community Dashboard on Homelessness: Quarter 2 2017 (April 1, 2017 - June 30, 2017).

According to the Knoxville Community Dashboard on Homelessness, the main cause for being homeless is mental/health reasons. Criminal activity is last on the list.