

"She's a Godsend:" Lansdale angel is saving grace for those struggling with homelessness

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Local News

LANSDALE, Pa. (CBS) -- She's affectionately known as the Lansdale angel. A woman who has become the saving grace for many dealing with homelessness in the area.

Yet despite her efforts, she said she feels the problem is only getting worse.

Linda Rowland could be considered an emergency responder. She's on call 24/7, driving around Lansdale all day and night, to help rescue as many people dealing with homelessness as she can.

"And sometimes I have to go out at 3 a.m.," she said. "It all depends on the need."

Over the past four years, Linda said she's helped nearly 100 people living on the streets of Lansdale.

She provides them with clothes, food and other resources. Linda said she uses money out of her own pocket and donations she's raised to fund the effort.

On Wednesday, Linda caught up with a man named Brian who she said she's been helping for three years. Brian said he doesn't know what he would do without her.

"It means everything. It's my survival every day," he said. "She's been a Godsend."



CBS News Philadelphia

Brian is just one of many people Linda is currently helping. She's also providing hotel rooms for eight different people including Jessica Schatz, Johnathan Polukis and their service dog.

"It's brought tears to our eyes," Jessica said about the help she's received from Linda. "We have never had somebody turn around and care so much about people.

The lack of affordable housing options and live in shelters are two reasons why Linda said the issue of homelessness is a major problem.

But there is another reason the problem isn't getting back, and it started a couple of years ago. She said the closure of the largest and only live in shelter for adults in Montgomery County was when the issue went from bad to worse.

"It's unbelievable how many more people are out here now," she said. "It breaks my heart."

Now, Linda is calling for more affordable housing units and more shelters that will operate when there's not a code blue and when temperatures are at or below freezing. She is also calling on local and county officials to step up and do more.

Until then, Linda said she will continue to work to help as many people as she can.

"The incentive is the hugs, the smiles, the tears and the thank yous," she said. "And knowing I made someone's life just a little bit more comfortable."

We took Linda's concerns directly to Montgomery County Commissioners Jamila Winder and Neil Makhija.

"The state of homelessness in Montgomery County is an unfortunate one," said Winder.

More than 350 people were struggling with homelessness during the county's last count in January 2023.

Winder and Makhija said they are working to resolve the problem, saying a program called "Your Way Home" has helped rehouse 8,000 people since 2014. The two also said the county recently launched a new call center under the same name to help connect people with resources.

"In the years to come and during our term is to figure out how to provide more shelter options and how to address housing affordability as a whole," said Makhija.

Both admit the county can do more to help those dealing with homelessness.

They said closing the shelter only added to the problem. But they also said it's going to take officials in communities throughout the county to come together to get people off the streets and into homes.

"It's going to really take our friends and neighbors, who are sitting on our school boards, sitting on our township boards to really agree to partnering with us to think of innovative ways to build more shelters and build more affordable housing," Winder said.

The county is also looking to see if they can use pandemic relief funds and opioid settlement money to help address the issue, Winder said.

But both commissioners also said homelessness is a complex problem that will require complex solutions.

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