

Homecomer

A publication of DRC Solutions - Community Solutions to End Homelessness | Fall 2021

A LOVELY DAY ON QUAIL TRAIL

The great American poet Bruce Springsteen once sang, "It's been a long time coming, but now it's here."

This sentiment was echoed on Wednesday, September 1, 2021 as the first residents of the **4444 Quail Trail** apartments left their camps and, after a long time coming, moved into their new homes.

The 4444 Quail Trail apartment complex is a labor of love of **New Leaf Community Services**, a nonprofit founded by **First Presbyterian Church of Fort Worth** specifically to address the need for permanent supportive housing (PSH). PSH allows people who have experienced chronic homelessness to receive housing along with ongoing case management and wrap-around services which have proven to increase the success and duration of housing. And, it costs less than traditional shelter.

But this day was not about definitions or recognition. This day was about tears of happiness, smiles of relief, and the pure joy of finally going home.

The DRC had worked through the Tarrant County Continuum of Care to identify people who would be good fits for the new apartments and prepare them to move in. "These residents have worked hard to get to this point," said Kristy Hroch, the DRC's director of client services. "They've been through so much, and they've all done whatever we asked of them to prepare for this day."

The day started with DRC street outreach staff visiting camps around Tarrant County to pick people up to take them to their new homes. There was a lot of anticipation. "My heart is just pounding," said Billy, who left his camp to move into Quail Trail with his wife Lori and their dog Patches. "I'm nervous and excited."

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DRC

Community Solutions to End Homelessness

Housing First makes housing last.

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Interested in board service?

The DRC is actively seeking board members. Interested? **Contact Bruce Frankel.**

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A Message from Bruce

Dear Friends,

While the temperatures won't be dipping any time soon, we are heading into fall. School is back in session, and people will be looking ahead to the holidays shortly. 2021 somehow is passing by very quickly and very slowly at the same time!

At the DRC, your cherished support is keeping us going despite the lingering challenges of the pandemic. The mobile outreach program is proving to be exceptionally successful in placing people out of unsheltered homelessness into homes, and we are working with new households in permanent supportive housing.

You'll find in this issue a summary of Texas House Bill 1925, also known as the "Camping Ban." Please know that while we at the DRC are not fans of this bill, we are working closely with local law enforcement through the Fort Worth Police Department's HOPE Unit to quickly place people out of camping situations in to homes of their own, and our mobile street outreach team goes all over Tarrant County.

One of these housing opportunities is the 4444 Quail Trail apartments. I cannot say enough about how amazing this project is. We are absolutely thrilled to be serving as the housing placement and case management partners at this complex for New Leaf Community Services. This development was made possible by many people, organizations, and agencies working together with one vision: to provide housing opportunities to the people in our community who are the hardest to house. Our dream is that this complex becomes a national model for what is possible, and that many more similar developments are undertaken in Tarrant County. Truly, the solution to homelessness is a home.

Everything we do is made possible by you. Your gifts and support are changing dreams into reality every day. Thank you for your steadfast belief that together, we can build a safer, healthier, more vibrant Tarrant County where everyone counts.

And before I forget, we are currently planning our 2022 Breakfast with the Mayor, and sponsorships are now open. Grab yours today! Mark your calendars for Friday, 3/4/21. We are planning (fingers crossed!) to be back together in person with our new mayor, all for the same great cause. We hope to see you there!

Thoughtfully yours,



Bruce Frankel, Executive Director

P.S. Need a Zoom or in-person guest speaker? I'm available to present about homelessness and visit with your group!



2021 YEAR-TO-DATE

Critical Document Replacement

Helping people prove who they are



2,618

Documents Replaced

Permanent Supportive Housing

Helping people overcome high barriers



113

Households Served

Mobile Outreach

Taking services to people living unsheltered



856

Individuals Served

Rapid Rehousing

Quickly placing people into temporary housing



38

Households Served

Inclement Weather Shelter

Providing safety in extreme temperatures



354

Individuals Served

Learn More



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BREAKING DOWN THE "CAMPING BAN"

Texas House Bill 1925 was signed into law by Governor Abbott on June 15, 2021 and took effect on September 1, 2021. There has been much public discussion about this bill; however, many people do not understand what the bill actually says. For full text, visit <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/pdf/HB01925F.pdf>.

Bill Summary

At its core, HB1925 makes camping in an unapproved public place by people experiencing homelessness a Class C misdemeanor. Class C misdemeanors are punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or arrest.



The state defines "camping" as creating any type of shelter against the weather and cooking, making a fire, storing personal belongings, digging, or sleeping in any place where they have not received consent to camp from the government entity which controls the space. Consent is only legal if camping is for recreational purposes, part of an approved plan to shelter people experiencing homelessness, or in response to a natural disaster.

To designate campsites, cities or counties may submit a plan for approval from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. The plan must include provisions for healthcare access, public transportation access, indigent services, law enforcement, and mental healthcare options. Public parks cannot be approved for campsites.

Cities or counties cannot opt out of the ban. They may not discourage enforcement of this ban or simply ignore it. If they do, the state may take them to court and/or withhold state funds. Cities or counties may choose to divert people from campsites or provide services instead of issuing citations or arresting people.

Before or at the time they issue a citation, peace officers must tell the person camping about local government and/or nonprofit resources for homelessness, inform them about human trafficking risks, and let them know about any other available service which might help end their camping. However, if the peace officer determines there is an imminent threat to the health and safety of the person camping or anyone else, they do not have to tell the person about these services. If a person is arrested for camping, the peace officer must ensure the person's belongings are secured and stored. No fee may be charged for the storage of the belongings.

Our Response

As a policy, the DRC does not take a formal stand on political issues. That said, there are concerns about the effects of this bill on the people in our community who are living unsheltered. Adding fines or arrests to the records of people already struggling will create additional barriers to housing. Additionally, there are not enough available housing units, or even emergency shelter beds, for all those experiencing homelessness. Where are people to go?

People choose camping over emergency shelters for a variety of reasons. Many people experiencing homelessness are in family units and do not want to shelter apart. Many people have companion animals that cannot be taken into emergency shelters. Many people have had negative experiences in shelters they do not wish to repeat. Many people simply want to maintain some semblance of autonomy over their own lives. There are a myriad of reasons why people choose to camp instead of enter emergency night shelter.

However, there are inherent negative issues associated with camping, including unhealthy conditions where trash attracts vermin or illness spreads quickly. Camps can decrease property values, lead to increased crime,



put stress on first responders, and are unsanitary and unsightly. Business and neighborhoods are left to deal with the consequences, and this is unfair to everyone involved.

The DRC has professional staff embedded with Fort Worth Police Department's HOPE Unit. DRC staff is out with police officers every day, offering services to people camping. Our mobile assessors form personal connections with people who may be distrustful of the system, and help to get them into the housing pipeline as soon as possible.



What is the solution to homeless camps? Homes.

What You Can Do

While the new camping ban may be distressing to many people, there are things you can do to help people move out of unsheltered homelessness and into housing.

- **Stand up to "Not In My Back Yard"** attitudes which create barriers to new housing opportunities. Help others to understand that the solution to homelessness is a home.
- **Contact your elected officials.** Express your support for housing over incarceration or fines and for more public funding to increase available housing units which are prove to be cheaper than jail or shelters.
- **Speak out** to your neighborhood, colleagues, friends, and family. Express your support for housing instead of punishment for people who simply have no place to live.
- **Financially support local nonprofits** which are helping to get people off the streets and into housing.

Together, we can make home happen for people experiencing homelessness right here in our community, while simultaneously relieving stress on taxpayers and first responders. 🌟

YOU MAKE HOME HAPPEN

BREAKFAST *With the* **MAYOR**

BENEFITTING  **DRC**

Featuring
FORT WORTH MAYOR
Mattie Parker

FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2022

7:30 AM to 9:00 AM

The
ASHTON DEPOT

Honorary Event Chairs
KAREN AND LARRY ANFIN

Sponsorships now available
DRC-Solutions.org/BWTM
breakfast@drc-solutions.org



HAPPENINGS!



Many thanks to the great people at **Incora** for donating water to help people experiencing homelessness stay hydrated this summer! What an amazing group effort. We appreciate you! BRAVO!



The amazing members of **First Congregational Church** in Fort Worth collected bug off, sunscreen, and new socks for distribution through the DRC's street outreach program.

Summer months are very difficult in North Texas for people living unsheltered, and we are so thankful to FCC for their generosity and kindness. Thank you!



Thank you to everyone who voted for the DRC in **Tom's Mechanical's** July "Tom's Cares" program. Tom's CEO **Rick Ashton** visited DRC Executive Director Bruce Frankel to personally award a generous gift! 🌟



Ladonna spent nine years at a shelter. Today, she holds the key to her future.

Join the DRC Home Makers today, and make Housing First last for all.

DRC-Solutions.org/home-makers

Did you know... Housing prolongs lives?

The average life span of a housed American is 78.54 years.



But for our neighbors experiencing homelessness, the average life span is shorter by about 17.5 years. The average age at death of a homeless male is 56.27 years old, and 52.00 years old of a homeless female.

When you support housing, people live longer! 🌟

"A Lovely Day" (continued from p.1)

The atmosphere was electric as each new resident entered his or her new home to sign the lease and receive their house key. "This is so nice," Lee said with a big smile. "And look at this bed!" New Leaf had ensured that each apartment was stocked with not only furnishings, but linens, housewares, toiletries, and full pantries and freezers, and even fresh flowers! The number one refrain from each new resident on the hot day? "I can't wait to take a shower!"

Pride Property Management personnel showed residents how to work their thermostats and televisions. Aaron sat on his couch, looking at his new place. "It's a lot to take in. I'm still processing," he said, his eyes wide. "I slept in a parking lot last night."

When full, the 4444 Quail Trail will be home to 48 households and served by two DRC case managers.

"The DRC is proud to be the housing placement and case management partner for this amazing apartment complex," said Bruce Frankel, executive director of the DRC. "This is the culmination of so much hard work, and exactly the type of housing options that will make a real difference in Tarrant County. I want to congratulate not only New Leaf and everyone involved with making Quail Trail a reality, but all those who moved out of homelessness today. Welcome home!"

As night fell, new residents found themselves in their own beds, in their own apartments, for the first time in years. It was a long time coming, and a lovely day indeed.

To see more photos, visit drc-solutions.org/4444quailtrail. To learn more about New Leaf Community Services, visit newleafcs.org. 🌟



DREW THOMAS WATER DRIVE RESULTS

Since his 8th birthday, **Drew Thomas** has been collecting bottled water and raising funds to purchase water for his friends without homes.

Drew's efforts have been amazingly successful. Through 2020, Drew's drives contributed over 170,000 bottles of water to the homeless in Fort Worth. Drew has received several recognitions for his efforts, including the 2019 Tarrant Churches Together "Positive Change Award" and the 2017 "Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy," an honor from the National Philanthropy Day Awards presented by the Fort Worth Metro Chapter of the Association of

Fundraising Professionals.

This year, Drew renewed his efforts and chose to again stick with the financial-gifts-only model. His goal was \$5,000. However, to date, you all have given over \$7,500 to Drew's drive, enabling the DRC to purchase over 72,000 bottles.



Join us in congratulating this outstanding young man in all his efforts. And THANK YOU for supporting Drew's water drive year after year!

Says Drew, "It was another scorching summer in north Texas, and the need for water was as high as the temperature. I am very grateful to all of the donors this year for caring about the people experiencing homelessness in Fort Worth and for making this drive another successful one."

Drew's drive is still open. Visit his page at drc-solutions.org/drew to support his efforts and learn more. 🌟



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Restored to Dignity: Edwin's Story

Imagine CPS calls you to come to Fort Worth to pick up your child, and while you're here, a hurricane back home leaves you homeless.

This is what happened to Edwin. His son's mother had custody but had abandoned the child. Edwin came immediately to pick him up, but while he was here, he lost his home to Hurricane Erma. As he was now homeless, he was unable to take custody of his child.

Edwin found housing in Tarrant County, but his disability income did not cover the rent, and he soon was on the streets. Most recently, he was sleeping behind a convenience store. It couldn't even be called a "camp," he was simply sleeping in his wheelchair, out in the elements, alone.

Edwin heard about the work you make possible at the DRC, and contacted us for help. DRC Mobile Assessor Ashley sprang into action! She located Edwin behind the store, worked with him to get him into the Tarrant County Continuum of Care system, and just three weeks later, he was assigned to a housing program through Fort Worth Housing Solutions.

Ashley helped Edwin locate a property that would work for him with his wheelchair. DRC document specialist Denise helped replace Edwin's identity documents. DRC partners When We Love helped to furnish his apartment and provided a welcome basket of household necessities. Now Edwin is stable and working toward reuniting with his son. "Thank you to Ashley for everything you have done to help me," says Edwin.

Without you, there would be no Ashley to help Edwin and so many more like him who are in desperate need of the hope of home. Thank you!

