

What has and hasn't worked when you talk about homelessness?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 12.8.23

A Litany for Survival

[...] when the sun rises we are afraid
it might not remain
when the sun sets we are afraid
it might not rise in the morning
when our stomachs are full we are afraid
of indigestion
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
we may never eat again
when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid
So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

"A Litany for Survival." 1978 by Audre Lorde, from The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde, *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*

<https://electricliterature.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/silenceintoaction.pdf>

Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984

"When I dare to be powerful — to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

From from a 1979 New York women's conference. Audre Lorde

What Works

- Tacoma Reads and giving folks A Place Called Home was helpful and powerful, potent for people who don't know anything about homelessness.
- More people have strong opinions have this than about almost anything.
- I often use the same skills that I use for crisis de-escalation, as well as, "yes, and" language.

- I've faced people angry at me for outreach work and been able to lower the temperature and have constructive conversations.
- I have stats that help, such as about misconceptions regarding age, mental illness, drug use.
- I do ask if people are willing to hear information. I feel that many people are willing to hear about this topic. But haters are going to hate, of course.
- Often, when in a group or with a friend, I'll bring this up and ask how people feel about homelessness. I share real stories of real people. Usually, they don't match the paradigm that folks hear on the news. This encourages me.
- Making a commitment to engage with publicly elected officials makes it possible to not be silent about this. This is an ongoing challenge.
- I think it's such a complex issue with huge impacts that folks don't understand, like about families that are homeless, kids.
- Elevating empathy is so important. When I go out with mobile outreach, I talk about how expensive everything is and how easy it would be to fall into homelessness.
- Lead with empathy and then tie back to upstream, systemic things that can help us all.
- Don't don't try to paint unhoused folks as 100% innocent, acknowledge property damage etc, and then talk about how we need to address the higher-level structural issues to help us ALL.
- Engage with folks who are on the fence, low information, but open to conversation; don't waste too much time with folks who have their heels 'dug in'

And Does Not Work

- There's so much negativity around this topic. Folks will repeat old/outdated/inaccurate information.
- People in the faith community give items like clothing and food but don't have enough exposure to actually folks with lived experience, that would help them to understand the issue on a deeper level

Notes and Resources List

New and Notable

Homeless Memorial Service at Shiloh, Dec 21, 5pm,. Please attend one of the services to bear witness to this terrible loss of life among our unhoused neighbors.

2014 legal paper on the criminalization of homelessness.

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/no-safe-place-criminalization-homelessness-us-cities#:~:text=Imagine%20a%20world%20where%20it,the%20point%20of%20being%20ludicrous.>

Safe Parking in East Pierce County

<https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/puyallup-herald/ph-news/article282487133.html>

Interested in spearheading a local Laundry Love?

Contact Theresa Power-Drutis. <https://laundrylove.org>

Receive updates and be able to apply for County funding:

<https://procurement.opengov.com/signup> to:)

Department of Licensing helps organizations to request some mobile support with getting IDs. More info here: <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driver-licenses-and-permits/dol2go-mobile-unit>

Funding ideas for how to use the Maureen Howard Act funding:

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/132641/for-public-comment1590-Advisory-Expenditure-and-Implementation-Draft-112923>

If anyone has need or share items to add to the outreach supply list, please drop them in the chat, or in this form:

<https://forms.gle/2zfK8Y5JvC1K5eXLA>

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

<https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/injury-and-violence-prevention/suicide-prevention/988-suicide-crisis-lifeline>

Pierce County Budget ordinance.

<https://online.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/council/model/otDocDownload.cfm?id=34690844&fileName=2023-44s2%20Final%20Ord.pdf>

South Sound 911 has a new non-emergency phone number: 253-287-4455.

This number – or its in-state toll-free counterpart, 800-562-9800 – should be called instead of 911 when the situation does not require immediate police, fire, or medical response. Using the non-emergency line helps keep 911 available for true emergencies – imminent threats to life or property, or in-progress crimes.

More info here: <https://southsound911.org/new-number-connects-callers-to-non-emergency-police-fire-and-medical-assistance/>

Select Committee on Homelessness:

https://online.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/council/iview/committeeMeeting.cfm?committee_cd=HC&meeting_dt=Dec%2013%202023%20%201:30PM

Donate Your Small Talk: <https://wearein.org/donate-your-small-talk/>

I have posted a Holiday Resources list on the Coalition website. Please email me with additions or changes that need to be made. Here is the direct link:

<https://www.craft.me/s/6e5XXbbHre1xss>

You can find Narcan vending machine info on our webpage also:

<https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-people/provider-resources/homelessness-providers-toolkit>

Community Spotlight Opportunity: Tell the coalition about your organization's good work. Contact tpdrutis@nctacoma.org to schedule a brief presentation. 😊

Ongoing Resources and Needs

SVdP is willing to store any items for sharing- including massive amounts of socks. We have systems in place so outreach workers can pick up supplies every day between 10am-5pm. Just text Dionne. 253-355-5868

Link for the Coalition's cold weather resources page: www.craft.me/s/f0GVFmAubX8YUg

Outreach and Supply Need/Share Form:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Kh2OBOLT-SXN8cq7L7Z1Bb04iXxCf6Nfv_RBP-F0SZk/edit?usp=sharing

Free Food & Resources Market, Saturdays, 10-12 AM, 4819 S 12th Tacoma WA. everyone welcome. You can pick up food for others.

Free wound care clinic every Friday afternoon, TNE clinic at the STD room at T-PCHD on S 37th & Pacific. Spread the word.

Safe Sites

<https://ss4a.pchomeless.org>

Outreach Supply Need and Share form: <https://forms.gle/2zfK8Y5JvC1K5eXLA>

Please sign up to the inclement weather listserv at

<https://www.pchomeless.org/Home/Listserv>

Pierce County Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness can be found here:

<https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7309/Comprehensive-Plan-to-End-Homelessness>