

Goza & Honnold Newsletter

Homelessness in Johnson County, Kansas

In the January 2019 edition of our Newsletter, we take a look at the issue of homelessness in Johnson County and share an experience that moved us to action in our community.



Homelessness is a hidden but surprisingly pervasive problem in Johnson County, Kansas. In the state's most prosperous region, growing numbers of people are losing safe, stable places to sleep. Johnson County has varied resources for families and adults with minor children, but homeless single adults have few options.

In November, we saw how difficult it can be for a single adult to find safe shelter in Johnson County. On a night with temperatures expected to be well below freezing, we noticed a woman on a public bench across from our office. She had been there for hours by the time we started home for the night. After talking to her, we found she had nowhere to go.

In offering assistance, we quickly found out that few shelters took in single adults, and all were either full or unreachable. We were fortunate that night to learn about Project 1020, an Olathe-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing safe cold-weather shelter to all adult homeless persons in Johnson County. After a phone call, Barb McEver, an

organization founder, arrived across from our office in her van. McEver took the woman to the Project 1020 shelter, where she stayed every night for the next three weeks.

Johnson County Homelessness by the Numbers

As required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Johnson County Continuum of Care annually completes a “point-in-time” homelessness study. On one night each year, the Continuum of Care identifies homeless or unsheltered persons in the county. The study on January 23, 2018, found [168 people](#) in Johnson County who were homeless. This represented a near-30 percent increase from the previous year.

United Community Services of Johnson County now estimates the median age of someone experiencing homelessness in the county is 28 years — a change in demographics that shows more young adults are losing their homes. Fifty-four percent of homeless individuals in Johnson County are age 25 years or older.

Resources and Shelters

The Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, and several other organizations provide valuable assistance for homeless people in Johnson County. Facilities in the county aid all unsheltered persons but will only house couples and adults with minor children. And while 62 percent of the homeless population in the county — based on the 2018 Continuum of Care study — are in households with minor children, that leaves 38 percent with little access to necessary resources.

The Johnson County Interfaith Hospitality Network provides some housing space for homeless single women but not enough to meet the need in the county. Homeless single men have the most difficult time finding short-term emergency housing.



Project 1020

Project 1020 is trying to fill the unmet need in the county by housing single homeless men and women during the coldest nights of the year. The organization runs entirely on

volunteer help and transports people to its shelter at a Johnson County church each night. The shelter has found that its operating timeframe (nights when temperatures fall below 21 degrees) grows longer each year, and the number of its nightly occupants is ever-increasing. In addition to shelter, Project 1020 offers much-needed nutritious meals, served by volunteers.

Project 1020 was founded by Barb McEver, who recently received the Citizen of the Year Award from the United Community Services of Johnson County. The shelter's 85-year-old co-founder, Dean Askeland, can be found every night setting up cots, arranging food, and providing support to those in need.

The entire Goza & Honnold firm has committed to support Project 1020 in the form of direct financial contribution, food supply, warm clothing, and volunteer service at the shelter.

How You Can Help

There are several ways people who live and work in Johnson County can help its homeless population. Volunteerism has the largest effect, as the majority of people who keep resources alive in the county are unpaid. You can visit the following links to learn



more about volunteer opportunities:

- jocogov.org
- homelessshelterdirectory.org
- project1020.com
- jocoihn.org
- catholiccharitiesks.org

In addition, organizations and facilities helping the homeless in Johnson

County are always looking for donations of money, clothing, food, and hygiene products. You also can keep blankets, bottled water, and unopened, nonperishable food items in your car to pass out to people in need. And the simplest way to make a difference is to treat your homeless fellow Johnson Countians with dignity and kindness.

This winter, we would encourage all of you to consider providing service and support to the

homeless in our community. By working together, we can help assure that everyone has something to eat and a safe place to sleep, especially during the cold winter months.

***Goza & Honnold thanks you for entrusting your cases to us,
and we look forward to working with you in the New Year.***

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