

September Newsletter



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Board Member Spotlight: Brad Spielman



Why did you join the Continuum of Care Board?

As a college administrator, I have a professional interest in higher education policy. A research issue that is finally gaining national attention is housing instability and food insecurity for college students. As someone who has a passion for these research topics and desire to impact change, I feel service on

the Continuum of Care Board will allow me to gain broader understanding of community homelessness while also bringing my higher education policy and administrative perspective to the work of the Board.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I am incredibly fortunate to have a brilliant, dedicated, and innovative team whom I serve alongside every-single- day. Their commitment to our students and continuous improvement energizes me, even in the most stressful times. Additionally, the opportunity to positively impact the lives of our student population is true reward. Knowing you played a small part in the success of a student is greatest of professional rewards.

What's the most challenging part of your job?

Part of my responsibilities at DMACC-Urban is to handle judicial affairs. Meaning, instances of behavioral misconduct, academic misconduct, and investigating potential Title IX violations are part of my role. Those cases and investigations are never pleasant, but represent a critical part of maintaining institutional integrity and ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for everyone at DMACC-Urban campus.

What do you aim to accomplish on the board?

My hope is to raise awareness of homelessness in our college-going community while positively contributing to CoCB's mission of providing a safe place for everyone in Central Iowa to call home.

What is the most important part of ending homelessness in central Iowa?

I believe it is critical that we strive to end the stigma associated with homelessness and focus on educating our citizenry on the systematic challenges Central Iowa faces with regards to housing insecurity.

Organization Spotlight: Primary Health Care

Primary Health Care's Homeless Support Services works to give Polk County homeless and near homeless residents access to a community health center, one that provides medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmaceutical services to those in need. As the Homeless Centralized Intake provider for Polk County, Primary Health Care (PHC) collaborates closely with the CoCB, which provides some funding to support the program.

Every day, PHC's Homeless Support team works diligently to better the lives of families and individuals who are homeless or are in unstable housing environments. Many of these individuals are facing challenges such as mental illness or substance abuse issues. PHC collaborates with many different community partners across Polk County to provide the right resources at the right time for the clients that come through the Centralized Intake program. The resources and services provided often help to put clients on the path to a brighter future.

Additionally, Primary Health Care advocates for increased affordable housing in Polk County, so that each person has a place to call home. PHC believes that through community effort and greater access to housing, we can put an end to homelessness in central Iowa. To learn more about PHC, please see their website at www.phciowa.org.

Summer Point in Time

The United States Department of Housing and Urban development requires Continuum of Care to track the number of the homeless population. This summer, the Continuum of Care used Point in Time data to analyze the differences across years and seasons:

The total number of homeless people in Polk County in summer 2017 was 665. This is a 72- person decrease from the previous summer, and an 11- person decrease since winter. This decrease may have resulted from a loss of beds. Although this shows a positive progression, the number of unsheltered people has risen by 33 percent since last year, perhaps because of a mild summer. There is still work to finish, as seen by our 2020 goal of 464 people, a 201 decrease from this summer's count.

What is Needed as we go Into Winter?

As temperatures change and Iowa's notorious cold starts to move in, you may find yourself putting on more layers and cozying up to a warm fireplace. While you may be able to find ways to beat the cold, others may not. As winter approaches, there are many important things that can be done to help out those who must survive the cold. Here are some organizations with ways you can help!

Getting involved can include anything from donating items to becoming a volunteer at an organization such as Central Iowa Shelter and Services. CISS offers many different ways to become a volunteer. You can assist with providing dinners, organizing, picking up food donations, making crafts, and lots more. Commitment, interaction, and training levels all vary so there is something for everyone. If volunteering is too much of a time commitment, CISS has a Top Need list of items that can be brought to the shelter and donated, which becomes increasingly important as cold weather approaches.

As these winter months arrive, so does the holiday season. So how can you spread the cheer? Joppa, a local organization focused on direct interaction experiences, offers a myriad of ways to

help out. Participating in events is one great way to get yourself involved and provide some warmth this season. Joppa is hosting the Down&Out fundraiser as well as the Homeless Christmas Celebration this year. Down&Out raises money for housing and rebuilding of lives for homeless people, which is very important for the winter season. The Homeless Christmas Celebration invites the homeless, volunteers, workers, and any sort of providers, so you can make that connection face to face and give back during the holiday season. Finally, CoCB extends sincere thanks to all who volunteered time to complete the count and to the many individuals and organizations that donated supplies.