If 2020 has taught us anything, it has shown us the importance of a home. Many Iowans turned to their homes to socially distance and to work remotely during the height of the pandemic. Not everyone had that luxury.

At Central Iowa Shelter & Services, helping our homeless clients develop a plan to find a job or housing, or both, is what we do. Every person that walks through our doors is assigned to a case manager who works to find the best solutions for the situation. Everyone is met with understanding and together we help them get healthy and determine how best to move forward. David and Derrick are two of our success stories for the year.

“When you do the appropriate work, this place (CISS) can help you…”
David, 46, found himself back in his home state of Iowa after being gone for several years. Homeless, he turned to Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS). A lover of history, research, and the Bible, he put his faith in the system at CISS as he listened to his case manager share how the Shelter's 90-days of training and counseling would help him find housing.

“I checked into the emergency shelter in January, and by May I was in one of the on-site apartments here – I had to do the work, and by putting forth the effort, I am now in my own place again.”

David went to work in CISS's job training program, working in the Green House program. His background in landscaping came in handy as he started plants from seeds, transferred them to the greenhouse and then cared for them throughout the summer. He typically works 30 hours per week making $8 per hour. This consistent paycheck allowed him to move into one of the efficiency apartments on the second floor of CISS when one became available.

“I really like having my own efficiency apartment – it is quiet.” Having the support of the Shelter's community kitchen for meals and the regular counseling sessions to help him set personal goals has given him the support he needed to get back on the road to self-sufficiency.

Derrick, 45, has a passion for cooking for others. He has put his skills to work at CISS working in the Mulberry Café (our community kitchen) and has been instrumental in bringing our Summer Meals program to the community.

He found himself homeless after taking care of a family member for an extended period of time. “I wouldn't trade that time for anything” – but the sacrifice led to unemployment and when he returned to Des Moines, he checked into the emergency shelter.

Not afraid of hard work, Derrick works 30 hours per week in the kitchen job training program and then works helping a friend with a moving company on the weekends. He moved into his own apartment in April. He continues to work in for CISS in the kitchen and has become a mentor for other homeless clients going through the food service job training program.

Both David and Derrick worked through the job training programs offered at CISS and found their way to employment and housing. Your donation today helps others like them, needing a place to stay, warm, healthy meals and the support to set a plan to move forward. The old saying, “if you work the plan, the plan works” is alive and true at CISS.

Melissa O'Neil
CEO Central Iowa Shelter & Services