



I am not invisible

She doesn't have a mental illness, drug addiction or criminal record. She could be your friend, neighbor or aunt. Because of the recession, it could be anyone.

Donna's descent into homelessness began in January 2005, three months shy of her 20-year anniversary at a Dallas law office. She was fired because she wasn't keeping up with her duties. Donna concedes she probably returned to work too quickly after being diagnosed with diabetes in March 2004. She searched for jobs all across the city, but found nothing. Her entire 401(k) savings eventually dried up and she became homeless and sought shelter at Austin Street Centre.

When Donna found work in September 2008 at a car auction in Oak Cliff, her life appeared to be back on track. However, her car was repossessed in November so she could no longer drive to work. With her resources exhausted, she became a guest at The Bridge in January 2009. After months of looking, Donna found employment as a dishwasher at The Second Chance Café, the dining hall at The Bridge. It's an adjustment for her, but she says she is just happy to have found a job.

The photo and story are not of the same person, but are from former guests of The Bridge who are now living successful lives.



**Homes for
Our Neighbors**

*A joint initiative of Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance and
Greater Dallas Justice Revival*

Working together we can change our city and those who call Dallas home.

WELCOME TO THE BRIDGE

The Bridge is a campus of comprehensive services that provides basic care as well as transitional assistance to overcome homelessness. The five building campus looks more like a community college than a shelter. The list of on-site service providers is impressive:

- AIDS Services of Dallas
- Association of Persons Affected by Addiction
- City of Dallas
- First Presbyterian Church, Dallas / The Stew Pot
- Dallas County
- Metrocare Services
- Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
- Parkland Health & Hospital System
- LifeNet Community Behavioral Healthcare
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Transicare
- WorkForce Solutions Greater Dallas
- Union Gospel Mission
- U.S. Social Security Administration

There are showers, meals, a barbershop, laundromat, mail service and even a kennel. There is a storage building accommodating up to two bags per guest allowing for guests to feel safe and secure.

Services are provided cafeteria style and staff engages each guest in patient and caring way. While interested, guests can be fearful and wary. The skilled staff work to develop a plan for achieving permanent housing.

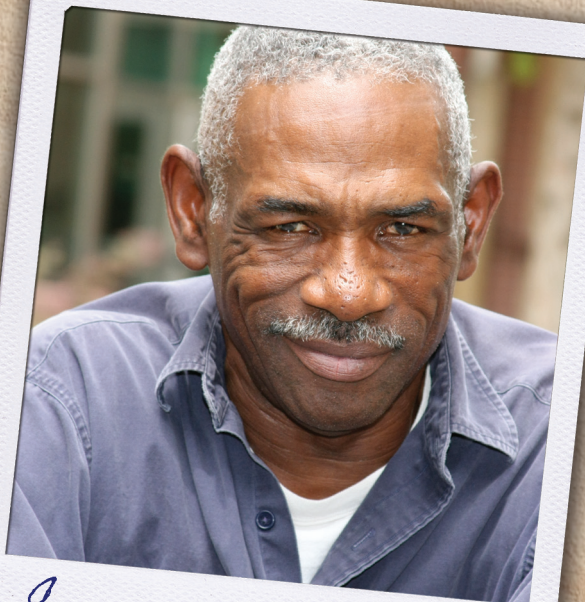
The Bridge is operated by Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance under contract with the City of Dallas. Since opening, the Bridge has achieved over 1,500 job and 750 permanent housing placements. With an annual budget of \$8.5 million, government funding accounts for approximately half, and MDHA is responsible for raising the balance. Built for a daytime population of 600 and nighttime population of 325, The Bridge regularly sees 1,200 - 1,400 guests daily.

The Bridge needs your help in a wide variety of areas. Please visit the MDHA website for more details on how this successful program is making a huge impact.



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Joe came to The Bridge when it opened in May 2008. A loner who refused to talk to anyone and kept his head down most of the time, he only wanted something to eat and a safe place to sleep. The Bridge staff tried repeatedly for more than three months to engage him, but to no avail. One day Joe finally opened up to staff and it became clear that he suffered from a mental illness that was causing a number of obsessions, hallucinations and/or delusions.

Eventually, he agreed to see the doctors in the on-site mental health clinic and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. After starting medication he talked easily with others, revealing that he was estranged from family. Joe's care manager contacted his family and they were reunited.

His family reported that Joe had been a practicing medical doctor in a complicated specialty. Seven years earlier, his untreated mental illness took control of his life, causing him to lose not only his judgment but also his family and hard-earned profession.

Joe participated in the transitional shelter program at The Bridge and found housing in a Permanent Supportive Housing program, where he receives Social Security Disability Income. Even though Joe is now stable and relieved to be rid of his symptoms with the benefit of medication, he will never practice medicine again. However, he hopes to return to the field in some other capacity since helping others has always been so important to him.

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WHO ARE DALLAS' HOMELESS?

People just like you and me.

A census conducted in January 2010 by Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance revealed the following information about Dallas' homeless population:

- 20% of our homeless population are children.
31% of those children are under 4.
- 40% of the adult homeless population are aged 50 or older.
- 59% of our homeless population attribute the cause of their homelessness to unemployment or job loss.
- 20% of our adult homeless population served in the military.
- 33% of our homeless population have either some college education or a college degree or diploma.
- Nationally, 25% of children that age out of the foster care system will become homeless.

Other common backgrounds include mental illness, substance abuse, and incarcerations.

Those who are homeless have had circumstances come into their lives which have caused them to lose their housing stability, but they are just like the rest of us.

The Bridge Homeless Assistance Campus, operated by Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance, welcomes them all and prepares individuals that have experienced homelessness to be successful in new housing.

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home.



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Leah arrived at The Bridge in the summer of 2009 from Denton hoping to escape a 20-year crack habit. She had resorted to theft and prostitution to support her addiction. Full of remorse, Leah wanted the chance to get her life back.

Leah immediately began attending Association of Persons Affected by Addiction (APAA) meetings at The Bridge. She met all the requirements for care management and was approved to move into The Bridge transitional housing facility in October 2009. During this time, she completed community service weekly in the Guest Giving Back Program, attended three APAA meetings a week, attended outside NA meetings at Central NA, made all of her doctor's appointments and began re-establishing contact with her sisters and daughters who were still living in Denton. She became a role model for other guests in the TR Shelter and always maintained a positive attitude.

Leah was proud when she was accepted for the LifeNet Pebbles Park housing program for women and children in November of the same year. Leah is still living at the Pebbles apartments and now has plans to go back to school. Recently engaged, Leah now looks forward to the future.

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A COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM

Upon entering the Bridge for the first time, guests are directed to the Welcome Building for intake and encouraged to sign up with a care manager. Care managers team with the guests to design an individualized plan to overcome the obstacles that have brought them to The Bridge. One goal remains the same: to achieve housing.

Many service partners located at The Bridge help the guests. Behavioral healthcare providers work to stabilize those needing mental health services, the Parkland clinic is available for physical health matters, The Second Chance Café ensures that all guests have three nutritional meals every day, and at the end of the day, guests have a safe place to sleep. Overcrowding at The Bridge has led to a close partnership with Union Gospel Mission (UGM). UGM picks up guests at The Bridge nightly and returns them the following morning for day services.

A Bridge guest preparing to move to permanent housing may take advantage of the on-site offices of The Social Security Administration, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission, the City of Dallas housing department, Veterans Affairs, and the MDHA Supportive Housing Specialist.

Volunteers from various community and faith based organizations including the Dallas Furniture Bank and Ladies of Charity work with MDHA staff to help guests prepare for their move into housing. Furniture, household items and food are accumulated so that on “move-in” day the new home has the basic essentials.

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Terrence was the very first client in the Housing Crisis Center's (HCC) Permanent Housing Services (PHS) program. He first became homeless due to substance abuse issues and remained homeless for many years. He stayed at The Bridge for almost one year where he began going to the AA several times per day and turned his life around. When he moved to HCC's program in January 2010, he reported the last time he used drugs was in February 2009 and he has passed every urinalysis test given to him.

Terrence is currently working at the Stewpot. He started as a volunteer in February 2010 and has worked himself into a permanent position. His jobs duties include filling orders for clients that need assistance with food and other items. His case manager is proud to report that he recently earned a promotion.

Terrence continues to be active in recovery groups. He does not have a problem holding himself or his peers accountable for their actions, which is a tenet of recovery groups. He believes his life of drugs and alcohol are over, but he takes one day at a time. He often states he is enjoying life sober and drug free - in a different (and better) way than before.



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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING WORKS!

- 93% of Bridge Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) placements are intact at 6 months.
- 89% are still intact at 2 years.
- Supportive and transitional housing created an average annual savings of \$16,282 by reducing the use of public services:
 - 72% of savings from a reduced use of public health services;
 - 23% from reduced shelter use;
 - 5% from reduced incarceration of the homeless mentally ill.
- An analysis found that supportive housing improved neighborhood safety and beautification, increasing or stabilizing property values in most communities (Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program.)
- A NYU Furman Center study concluded the values of homes near supportive housing do not suffer because of their proximity to the supportive housing.¹

With the focus on PSH, Dallas chronically homeless population has decreased 57% since 2004.

¹ Furman Center Policy Brief, "The Impact of Supportive Housing on Surrounding Neighborhoods: Evidence from New York City, November 2008.



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You would never imagine the trials Donald has experienced. His easy laughter and the quiet song he sings reveal a man who has found peace. When trouble found him, it blew in like a hurricane.

In those days, he owned a ranch and two successful businesses. Then suddenly, he lost everything. The accident happened so fast that Donald hardly had time to react. Two surgeries followed, but they did little to help. Donald's doctor told him that from then on, he would only be able to work part-time. He was angry and grew depressed. Donald's 27-year marriage ended, he had nothing, and nowhere to go.

He headed to Dallas. Before long, he was sleeping in his truck and spending his days on the streets. How can such a man call himself "lucky"? He answers that he had hope. "I had signed up with Central Dallas Ministries."

The application process wasn't easy. Donald had to pass criminal background and credit checks, and then he had to wait. But he was accepted into Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) where residents receive help with housing and essentials like food, clothing, medical care, and furniture.

Trained staff help the individuals living in PSH find educational assistance, counseling, and job training and placement if needed. Studies show that up to 85 percent of Permanent Supportive Housing residents escape homelessness for good. Donald, for one, is home again.

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HOW DO WE SOLVE HOMELESSNESS?

The answer to homelessness is homes - affordable housing for those that can be self-sufficient, and supportive housing for those with disabilities that can use a hand. Dallas lacks affordable and supportive housing, which creates a bottleneck at The Bridge, where homeless guests are fulfilling health and housing plans in preparation for permanent housing.

Supportive Services typically include

- Case Management
- Life Skills
- Mental Health Care
- Education & Employment Training

These housing plus services arrangements are known as Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).

HOW ARE THE LOCATIONS FOR PSH CHOSEN?

The two most important criteria are:

- Affordability – each unit of PSH must be subsidized using the current Fair Market Rent (FMR) as determined by HUD. Many units in the Dallas area charge rents well above the FMR and are therefore not feasible for PSH.
- Amenities - proximity to public transportation, grocers, retail, and other social and cultural activities. Crime rates and condition of the property are also considered.

Sound similar to your residential decision making process?

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

In order to live in PSH, residents must:

1. Be homeless at the time of admission.
2. Suffer from a disabling condition. A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.
3. Suffer from other barriers to housing – sometimes PSH is made available to residents with other significant barriers to housing, such as criminal backgrounds

PSH residents can be alone or part of a family. In some cases, one or more children may suffer from a disabling condition which qualifies the family for PSH if the child's special needs are such that the parent(s) cannot leave the home to work.



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At 39 years old, Stacy was a crack, alcohol, and cigarette addict who also happened to be a prostitute. Talk about having a lot of strikes; she went to jail two times in one month before realizing she needed help. "I found ABC Behavioral Health through Nexus Recovery Center. After a 25-year substance abuse habit, I thought my life was over. ABC picked up this broken woman in mind, body and spirit."

"They talked and counseled me as I cried and inspired me to keep coming back. I also applied for social security benefits as I continued to battle the cravings. The people at ABC should get an award for the kind of support I received and didn't even know I needed for mental health recovery."

"Through the meetings I've attended I have healed. I've been clean three years and I'm not stopping now. ABC helped me in every way. They helped me with housing, food stamps, furnishing the house, inspections, and random drug UA's. I have also had a chance to give back some of the encouragement to the newcomers that come to my new program group. Yes, ABC hired me! I still attend group. But you couldn't pay me to be anywhere else at this time. This is the best program a person who wants to recover could ever come to, because they help us when we can't help ourselves."



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IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Many different partners are required to make Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) a success. Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA) works to increase the stock of PSH and the goal this year is 300 new units. The Bridge, operated by MDHA, prepares the homeless for housing success with individualized plans coordinated with 14 service providers co-located at The Bridge.

Non-Profit Organizations, Service Providers and Faith-Based / Community Agencies are the backbone to PSH. They provide support services necessary for residents to remain housed long-term.

Current PSH providers in Dallas include:

- ABC Behavioral Health
- AIDS Services of Dallas
- Central Dallas Ministries
- City of Dallas
- Dallas County/Central Dallas Ministries
- Dallas Housing Authority
- Housing Crisis Center
- LifeNet Community Behavioral Healthcare
- Metrocare Services
- Operation Oasis
- Operation Relief Center
- Prince of Wales SRO
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Greater Dallas Justice Revival is a coalition of over 200 churches with shared goals of improving public education and supporting permanent supportive housing (PSH). They are helping the homeless by educating the community about PSH and linking local churches with their new neighbors.

The team also includes:

- Government
- Property Managers
- Private Funders
- Private Citizens Like You
- Housing Developers
- Housing Authorities
- Businesses
- Faith Communities



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