



Bringing Family Homelessness into Focus

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National Award Honors Organizations and Individuals Working to Support Families Experiencing Homelessness

NEW YORK (January 23, 2020) – Family homelessness is a national issue with locally-tailored solutions affecting children from rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. With implications that go far beyond the immediate crisis of housing instability, children experiencing homelessness are also more likely to face food insecurity, higher rates of anxiety and depression, educational disparities, and chronic health problems. Across the country, schools, non-profit organizations, local governments, and individuals are working tirelessly to help prevent and mitigate the effects of homelessness on children in their communities. At **Beyond Housing: A National Conversation on Child Homelessness and Poverty**, the sixth biennial conference hosted by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH), three organizations and two individuals were honored for their work in reducing the impact of homelessness on children and their families.

The **Beyond Housing Award** honors people and organizations whose work exemplifies the idea that homelessness is much more than a housing issue. Recipients' work goes "beyond housing" to provide services and support to homeless families while keeping the needs of children at the forefront.

One **2020 Beyond Housing Award** honoree, the **Queens Public Library (QPL)**, exemplifies the spirit of community-driven support for families experiencing homelessness. Since 2016, QPL's outreach initiatives have served nearly 1,400 children and adults residing in family shelters in Queens, NY through use of their Bookmobile, a mobile library designed to connect underserved communities with the wider library system. QPL also maintains an outreach team dedicated to effectively connecting underserved communities not only with library resources, but with support and information regarding public benefits, job training, immigration services, case management, healthcare, education services, and referrals for legal assistance and housing assistance.

Three **2020 Beyond Housing Award** honorees work directly with families experiencing homelessness in the area of service provision. **WellSpring**, a **2020 Beyond Housing Award** honoree, is the largest provider of services and the only shelter for families experiencing homelessness in the rural community of Morgan County, Indiana. WellSpring aims to coach families along "7 Dimensions of Wellness," encouraging them to create individualized goals in

areas such as physical, emotional, and occupational wellbeing. They also offer families comprehensive educational programming, including an after-school program that has maintained a 100% graduation rate over the past four years.

“While we want our families to become independently housed, that is not the end all be all,” says Bob Goodrum, Executive Director of WellSpring. “We desire for them to reach physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental, and occupational wellness. Our hope is that this episode of homelessness will be their last.”

Another honoree is the **I.M. Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, Inc.**, which provides comprehensive housing and services to women, children, and men experiencing homelessness in Jacksonville, Florida. In 2018, in response to the community’s need for more resources designated specifically for women and children experiencing homelessness, Sulzbacher opened a new campus, the Sulzbacher Village for Women & Families, a sprawling initiative consisting of 50 units of short-term emergency housing, an eight-room medical respite unit, an eight-room female veterans’ suite, and 70 units of permanent housing for families with children. Sulzbacher Village is also a holistic center for services, boasting a commercial kitchen, a pediatric health clinic, and extensive education and employment services.

“Sulzbacher is the largest and most comprehensive provider of services for homeless men, women, and children in Jacksonville, Florida; a community leader in advocacy; and has a proven track record,” says Andy Barber, Senior Director of Program Funding at Sulzbacher. He describes Sulzbacher Village as “an extraordinary project” and notes that while residing at Sulzbacher, all families have access to “health care services, meals, clothing, job training and employment assistance, daycare for their children, and more.”

Susanne Blue, CMSW, an individual honoree, has been serving as Executive Director of Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach (MTKO) in Lincoln, Nebraska since 1999. Over her past 21 years as Executive Director, Blue has expanded MTKO’s organizational scope from a hunger relief organization to one offering comprehensive housing, case management, substance abuse counseling, and nutrition programming for families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Blue spearheaded the development of MTKO’s Life Skills Program and Homeless Identification Project, which assists families and individuals experiencing homelessness with obtaining vital identification documents. She also oversees MTKO’s First HOPE program, providing permanent supportive housing to families and individuals, and its city-wide Homeless Diversion Program.

“Susanne has over 30 years of volunteer and professional experience in community organizing, advocacy, crisis support, program planning, program evaluation, and grant writing,” says Susie Wilson, Coordinator of Communications & Grants at Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach, who nominated Blue for the **2020 Beyond Housing Award**. “Her primary focus with these efforts has been on behalf of the homeless and working poor in both Omaha and Lincoln. Susanne’s career in human services is remarkable and ongoing, and her commitment and passion for serving the homeless is a gift to our entire community.”

Another individual honoree, **Barbara Duffield**, is Executive Director of SchoolHouse Connection, a national nonprofit dedicated to overcoming homelessness through education. For more than 20 years, Duffield has been working at the intersection of education, housing, and

homelessness. Beginning her career in 1990 as a tutor for children experiencing homelessness, she served as the Director of Education for the National Coalition for the Homeless from 1994-2003 and Director of Policy and Programs for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth from 2003-2016. As Executive Director of SchoolHouse Connection, Duffield has advocated for the passage of critical legislation concerning the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness, and has provided extensive practical assistance to schools, providers, families, and young people on the navigation of these policies. Duffield has also served on a number of advisory groups, contributing her expertise to Sesame Street Workshop's Trauma Initiative and the National Commission on Children and Disasters education group.

The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) is a New York City-based policy research organization focused on family and child homelessness in New York City and throughout the United States. Learn more at www.ICPHusa.org.