

**Sno-Isle Libraries**  
**Issues That Matter forum, "Homelessness Here"**  
**Recorded Feb. 28, 2017, Mountlake Terrace Library, Washington**  
**Audio transcript**



**00:00:00**      *SUE COHN*

Thank you all for coming tonight. Now I would like to introduce Kathy Coffey to you.

Kathy is the executive director of Leadership Snohomish County, which is helping to build leadership skills for the region. She also serves on the Human Services Commission for the city of Lynnwood.

Please join me in welcoming Kathy Coffey.

[APPLAUSE]

**00:00:26**      *MODERATOR (KATHY COFFEY)*

Thank you to Sue and Chuck. I'm grateful to be here and honored to be a moderator this evening.

I would first like to extended gratitude to Sno-Isle Libraries because in a progressive world where we have more data at our fingertips than we've ever had, and information crossing our path on a daily basis, it is a challenge as an organization to be able to reinvent yourself to be a critical part of a community and something that is relevant and needed.

Gather here this evening in a forum like this is one example of how Sno-Isle has reinvented themselves to stay in line with how we get our information today, how we interact with each other, educating us, providing a forum for community to convene, and I think this is a vital part of what all of our communities need to be able to address the issues that face each one of you.

So I thank Sno-Isle for having us here and creating this forum.

Now in relationship to our topic this evening, there are few issues that permeate our culture on such a deep level. Homelessness is one of them.

Homelessness is widely considered a social crisis, an epidemic. The definition is vast and encompasses many facets of our population. No one is immune.

Solutions are not straightforward, and they're multi-faceted. Many of our good intentions are met with a true lack of knowledge for how to make a difference and what we should do.

I always cry when I talk, so I'm really not sure why they chose me.

[LAUGHTER]

Many of us know someone who is or who was homeless or who have been impacted on some level. There was a time in my life, over 40 years ago, where my dog and I lived in my car, and I used a hotel to shower a couple of times a week.

Our family knows a man that lived on the streets, and it wasn't until his late 50s, early 60s that he was able to be comfortable enough away from the community that he had found in the streets to even be able to have an apartment and not be homeless anymore. He would have little spells of success, but then always end up back to what had become comfortable and what he knew.

Currently, there's a woman I help in Lynnwood that was homeless in Lynnwood and Everett. I see her once a week. She now has an apartment. She doesn't have a cell phone. She doesn't have Internet. She doesn't have cable. But she has a roof over her head.

Those are just three instances that touch my life. I'm sure all of us have similar stories.

Tonight, all of you have come here with a desire, wondering, "What do I do?"

First, I encourage you to listen. Notice how this subject makes you feel. Where does it land? What do you think? How are you uncomfortable? How are you motivated?

There are lots of resources available -- we'll cover a lot of those tonight -- and a lot of individuals and organizations doing some phenomenal work.

Here's how we're going to proceed for the evening's events. Each one of our panelists will have an opportunity to speak and share about 7 to 10 minutes, and they're going to answer a question for you that says, from their point, "What would you like the audience to learn about homelessness tonight?" Then we'll open up and have some questions.

Right now, I'm going to introduce our panelists, and then we'll get going.

First of all, we have Kristen Cane, who is the director of development and policy for the Housing Authority of Snohomish County.

Next, we have Elizabeth Kohl, director of social services for Housing Hope.

Then we have Elysa Hovard, who's the director of outreach for Cocoon House.

Our male representative on the panel --

[LAUGHTER]

-- is Mark Waldin, program manager for South Snohomish County Emergency Cold Weather Shelter.

Going back to that question of what would you like our audience to learn about homelessness tonight, Kristen, would you mind getting us started?

**00:05:22**      ***KRISTEN CANE***

I would not mind at all. Thank you.

Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for coming to this event. This is a really important issue. We're hearing about it a lot more in the news, and we need people to be interested in it, in educating themselves, and also in contributing to the solution.

I wanted to thank Sno-Isle, and also the elected officials in the room. I think you're really key to doing something about this problem. We need champions for housing and homelessness at every level of government. So thank you for your presence here.

I work at the Housing Authority of Snohomish County. We also have the Everett Housing Authority. Our two agencies combined serve about 10,000 families throughout Snohomish County, including many in the city of Mountlake Terrace, and in Edmonds and other south county communities.

We're governmental organizations that have a board of commissioners appointed by the city and county council government. We have about \$60 million in annual resources that go toward supporting the 10,000 families that we serve.

Homelessness, as it was mentioned, is a multi-faceted problem. It's really a symptom of a lot of other social problems, and it's just the result of lots of different things happening to lots of different families.

Some of the causes of homelessness are domestic violence, mental health and addiction, and intergenerational poverty. But really, the leading cause of homelessness is an economic issue for people.

On the supply side, building affordable housing isn't profitable for the private market, so the private market doesn't build affordable housing for people. The private market builds high-end rental housing and single-family homes, which people at higher income levels can afford. But people that are at extremely low, very low, or low income generally can't afford what's provided by the private rental market.

Also, the public sector provides the affordable housing supply, but we have to do it with public money, and there's never enough public money to build enough units to meet the need.

On the demand side, you have folks that really want to pay for housing, but they just can't. They're willing, but they're not able. People make poverty wages. People that are making \$10 or \$12 an hour cannot afford an apartment in our county. People are unemployed. Then we have seniors and people with disabilities that live on fixed incomes that can't afford rental housing in our community.

Just to give you an idea, when I say "very low-income family," for instance a family of three, that is an annual income of \$40,000 a year, which is about \$20 an hour. So if it's a single-parent household that makes \$20 an hour or less, and they have two or more kids, they're considered very low income.

In terms of the scope of homelessness and housing stability, here are some national statistics. It's estimated that about 11 million people nationally are homeless throughout the country, and another 11 million are considered "housing-unstable." They're very low-income families that are cost burdened. They spend more than 50% of their income on housing.

For every 100 extremely low-rented households, there are only 31 homes available. So there's a significant gap between the need and what's available.

In Snohomish County, we have almost 4,000 kids aged 5 to 18 that are homeless in our school system, in our 15 school district. In the Edmonds School District, we have 661 homeless kids. In

Northshore, we have 202.

I'm crying too! Yeah, this is a difficult issue, and I work on it every day. It's heartbreaking. It's getting worse. Sometimes it can be really demoralizing because when you work towards something and you're trying to make a difference and you can't even keep up with the problem, it's really difficult. But then I come to things like this and I see that a lot of people care about it, so that helps.

In our county, depending on the count, there's generally anywhere from about 1,500 to 2,000 people that are homeless through the more restrictive definition, which doesn't include couch surfing. So that's people literally homeless, living on the streets, in emergency shelters.

That number has gone up and down over the years, but it has remained pretty stable.

The livable wage in our county to afford a one-bedroom apartment is \$18 an hour. To afford a three-bedroom apartment, it's \$30 an hour. As many of you know, there are a lot of jobs that don't pay that wage that adults are working full time and can't afford housing.

So what are we doing about this problem? Public housing authorities, counties, cities, nonprofits -- we all are working together to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. Like I said, homelessness is a symptom of other problems, and until we can solve all of those other problems, we're always going to have people that are becoming homeless. So we're trying to reduce the duration by providing housing.

We have a coordinated entry system in our county. So if you know someone that needs help, they can call 2-1-1. Just like calling 9-1-1 for an emergency, they can call 2-1-1, and if they need housing, they get connected with a navigator.

Now, we still don't have enough housing slots for everyone that needs them, but they can get connected with services in the meantime.

We have a housing continuum. When people move into housing, they can typically be in more short-term housing such as rapid re-housing or the emergency shelter system, or living in motels or hotels. People are then able to move into permanent subsidized housing, which is like the Section 8 program which housing authorities run, or public housing, or other federally subsidized rent programs. Then eventually, people can be able to move into affordable housing, which is more rent-restricted. It's an apartment. You still have to pay the full rent, but the full rent is below the market rate rent. Ultimately, you're able to move into private market housing and home ownership at the end of the spectrum.

It's really important that we make progress in each of these categories of the homeless housing system, because if we direct all of our resources into emergency shelters, then we don't have enough slots for people move into the permanent housing, and if we put all of our resources into subsidized housing, then we don't have enough workforce housing slots for folks that have a full-time job, they just can't afford the market rent. So we do need to focus on the entire housing continuum when we're doing our work.

I don't know if anyone's going to have any questions about this, but I just wanted to make a comment. At the federal level, the federal government typically funds a lot of the affordable housing in our community, and with the recent activity in the news, I think we can anticipate that we might have some funding cuts. I think at the local level, one of the best things we can do -- and

this is already happening in Seattle and other places -- is to really double over our commitment to affordable housing. If people have it in their hearts to support some additional local resources . . . We can't do housing without public money.

What you can do is educate yourself like you're doing today. Go to other events about this topic. Talk to your city council members, your state representatives, your congressional delegation. Explain the importance of this. Talk about personal stories of either yourself or people you know. Ask for additional funding for affordable housing and homeless programs, and policies that will help encourage them and make developments easier to build and happen in communities.

Volunteer with a nonprofit organization. We have some great ones up here that are going to be speaking.

If you're involved in a church, churches are so essential to the core of this problem. They provide meals, emergency shelter, cold weather shelter, and supplies. There's a lot that churches all over the county do for this issue. So if your church isn't already involved in this issue, maybe that's something to think about using your resources for.

And also, land for affordable housing. A lot of churches are starting to offer up their land or sell it for affordable housing, and then partnering with the owner to provide services and develop a really positive, supportive community for the folks in the development and in the church.

Even though what I presented maybe seemed kind of dire, I think there's a lot of opportunities. I think this is the beginning. As local communities, we can really work together to address this problem and make even more progress than we've already been making. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**00:14:34**      ***MODERATOR***

Next, we have Elizabeth Kohl, the director of social services for Housing Hope.

**00:14:43**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

Hi. Kristen does amazing with numbers, so I'm going to take a little bit of a different take on it.

I'm with Housing Hope. We are primarily a housing agency. We have a whole variety of housing, from shelter to a build-your-own home ownership program, along the spectrum that Kristen had mentioned.

As a housing agency in Snohomish County -- and we only serve Snohomish County -- last year, we served 650 men, women, and children that came into our program homeless. To give you an idea of who these people are, 271 of them had a disabling condition of some kind. 357 of those were children out of the 650.

So when we talk about homelessness, it hits every member of our society.

On your chairs, for those of you that were lucky enough to get a chair --

[LAUGHTER]

-- I left an internal document. I think they got put on the chairs. Yes. OK. It just shows, over the last four years, the number of children homeless in the school districts by region. Edmonds School District is in the south county region, and you can see how, over the last four years, the number of children attending school has continued to grow.

A couple of things to note when you're looking at those numbers is that "doubled up" means that one family owns or rents the house, and another entire family is living with them. I have worked with families where they might already have a family of six in a two-bedroom apartment, and have taken in another family of six just so they don't need to be on the streets.

I want more than anything for people to know that each person that you come across that is homeless isn't a problem to be solved; they're a person.

It often starts -- not for everybody, but for a lot of them -- with what we call "adverse childhood experiences," which is whole other conversation that could take a whole other hour. So I'll only briefly touch on it. But it's the idea that the more trauma you experience when you're a kid, the more likely you are to have negative outcomes.

For example, if you experience seven or more of these adverse childhood experiences, your chances of becoming homeless go from 1 in 100 to 1 in 3. It's a huge impact.

I want you to just imagine what it's like to be a child. I have a story of someone. As a child, they go to school, they're doing pretty well in school, they're making friends. On the outside, they look perfect. And at home, they're going home to watch their mom being beaten.

A lot of other traumas come through those experiences, from the decisions that parents that are really trying to do their best made. As that child grows up, it turns out that those experiences actually rewire their brain so that they respond to life differently. The things that people learn in a healthy home -- those people that experience those negative trauma experiences have to learn those skills as adults. Those are often the people that end up on the streets.

In my case, I ended up on the streets because of the experiences I had when I was a kid. I was on the streets from the time I was 16 off and on until I was 25. I struggled with mental health because of the experiences that I had in life.

And now, I have had the opportunity to be a business owner. I've raised six kids. I've been a foster parent to nine children. Now I'm the director of an agency with 66 employees that served 2,000 people experiencing homelessness or struggling with poverty last year.

[APPLAUSE]

What I really want you to walk away with today is that as we talk about this, every person is a human being that's redeemable. The numbers that we're talking about are people's sons and daughters and sisters and brothers. They're their moms and dads. They were childhood friends with somebody. These are real people that need real solutions. The only way that we're going to find them is by acting together, by reaching out and treating them like human beings when you see them on the streets, by going to your legislature, by going to your representatives and saying they we've had enough, that we want this change. And when we all come together, anything is possible.

[APPLAUSE]

**00:20:36**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

Hello. My name is Elysa, and I'm the director of outreach with Cocoon House. What we do is serve homeless youth ages 12 to 24 in Snohomish County. We do this through housing, prevention, and outreach.

I want to talk to you a little bit about youth. Chronic homeless adults report to us that oftentimes, the first time they've become homeless is actually at the age of 14 or 15. Those adults out there sleeping outside under bridges were homeless teens themselves. So if we want to talk about prevention and what we can do as a community, I really do believe we should invest in our kids.

Our kids, as Elizabeth touched on, come from horrific homes. We're talking sexual abuse, physical abuse. They come from poverty, parents' drug use. A lot of times, they're faced with the streets at the young age of 13 or 14. Imagine trying not to die at the age of 13 and 14, and trying to go to school, and trying to survive. It's really, really, really traumatic.

These kids come to us at Cocoon House, and we are there and able to wrap our arms around them and house them, clothe them, and feed them.

This is a great service that we provide the community, but it's really challenging working with homeless youth because once they get oriented to the streets -- I work in street outreach -- once they get on the streets, they get approached by predators. Oftentimes, our kids get approached by pimps and get sexually exploited. They get oriented to drugs. Heroin is very rampant in our community. And then they get kind of taken in by a street family. This street family now has replaced what they were missing at home. To reach them once they come to that point is incredibly difficult. They have this bond. Now they're addicted to drugs and being potentially sexually exploited.

One of the things that my team does, street outreach, is that we actually hit the streets. We provide hygiene packs to these young folks under bridges. We sit down on a curb and talk to them about what a life could be like not on the streets. We provide them with chemical dependency support and crisis response. It's a huge service and it's been really successful for us.

The other thing that we do in my program that's super beneficial is that we run a low-barrier drop-in center. Every day, I have 40 homeless youth literally sleeping outside who come into our doors, and we feed them, clothe them, house them, and tell them that they're important.

That is just in Everett. We have 40 kids with no place to go that have emergent needs, that are wet and cold, coming through our doors. There aren't a lot of other drop-in centers in Snohomish County, so I imagine the problem is a lot deeper than that. But there, they're able to get connected to resources as well.

One thing I would really love you to invest in is the youth. Cocoon House is one of the agencies, alongside Housing Hope, that serves this population. The ways that we need your support are 1) legislative advocacy, as they mentioned before, but 2) we're building a new building in Everett. We're undergoing a capital project right now for housing for under 18 and housing for over 18, and to expand our outreach services. We really need the community's support in raising those funds for this facility, so that would be one of the ways that you can definitely help us out in our endeavors.

That's all. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**00:24:49**      **MARK WALDIN**

Thank you for this opportunity as well. My name is Mark Waldin. I'm with the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter that operates in Snohomish, Edmonds.

**00:24:58**      **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Louder!

**00:25:00**      **MARK WALDIN**

OK.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm Mark Waldin with the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter. We operate out of the Edmonds Senior Center most of the time when we have a shelter open.

There are a couple of things I wanted to get across. But one of the things right up front is that when you're having a conversation on homeless people, you can't just talk about "homeless people." I don't know how many conversations I've been in where you finally got to a point where you're going, "Oh, you're talking about a whole different group than I am." It's almost like Eskimos and snow -- you have to have ten words for it.

We're heard about families. We've heard about kids. What I'm going to talk about is mainly single, adult homeless people. So you have to be really careful. I would just recommend to you, any time you get in a conversation, know what kind of homeless people you're talking about.

In a nutshell, here's what we do. We're 100% volunteer run. We have about 150+ volunteers. We open up when the weather turns 33° or below. We declare the shelter open and we transport people down to the Edmonds Senior Center. We provide a hot meal for dinner, a place to sleep overnight, breakfast in the morning, and a sack lunch to go.

It's 50% to get people out of the weather and to try and help them, and it's 50% to get volunteers in there who can get to know homeless people and get to understand the situation and the conditions and what's going on so that they have a better appreciation for our society in general and how we all can help each other.

I have a couple of other things. Just to give you the statistics: I started with this eight years ago. Five years ago, we had 412 bed nights. We had 19 people on average on a night. About 13% of them were women.

This year, so far we've had 1,200 bed nights. We've had an average of 33 people in the shelter, a high of 50, on a given night. About 25% of the people are women. A significant fraction of people are people that are living out of their cars that come into the shelter as well.

Again, they're pretty much single adults with a smattering of husbands and wives.

What I'd like to do is give you an overview of who these people are. Why are they homeless?



What is it about them?

First of all, there are a couple of generalizations I can make about the people in the shelter. One is kind of what I just said, but it kinds of hit you hard when you hear the statistic: we've had a 79% increase over the last five years in the number of people coming to the shelter on a cold night. That's a huge increase in the last five years. So it is definitely, as we've said all along here, a growing problem.

The people that come to our shelter -- you would think they're the ones out by the freeway, because they're single adults and those are the ones standing with the cardboard signs. But in the eight years that I've run this shelter, I only know one of person that I've ever seen with a cardboard sign. There are a lot of other people besides people that are panhandling.

Most of the homeless people that I know are local residents. I have driven homeless people around on and off. I'll often drive down the highway, and they'll go, "Oh, I grew up in that house," or "Oh, I went to that elementary school." They're very local.

Our guests are anywhere from 20 to 70 years old. They kind of span the gamut. It's inching older and older and older. We're seeing a lot more retired-age people in the shelter.

I know a large percentage of these people. Our volunteers know a large percentage of these people. We have a big heart for them. I can say almost to a tee that we're talking with really nice people. I mean, they're like everybody that's here. They're very amenable. They'll give you the shirt off their back. If somebody doesn't have any money and they have two bucks, they're handing it to them. "Oh, you don't have bus fare? Here, let me give you my bus ticket." They're very generous people. There's always the exception, but I'd say in general we're talking about some really nice people.

I think one big question I always ask myself and I think other people ask is: how come people don't just go out and get a job? I mean, come on! If you've ever heard of ABAWD, able-bodied individuals, gosh, let's get them off of welfare and make them go back to work. Well, I think what we've got is ABU, which is able-bodied unemployable. And we have a lot of people like that. Not everybody.

Some things make it very hard to get a job. For one, being homeless makes it hard right off. It makes it very difficult just to live through the day, let alone get a job. But there are other things too that we see. One that was mentioned -- it's rather a small fraction of our people, but we have them -- that's the working poor. I can tell you, just to give you exact examples, I have a hairdresser who doesn't make enough money to do anything except live out of a car. We have a Walmart cashier. We've had a Walmart stocker. A restaurant cashier in a fast food restaurant. We've got a person who's a janitor. A yellow pages delivery person that goes door to door and puts them on your doorstep. All of them are homeless.

It's just -- well, you heard it, I don't need to repeat it -- that the salaries just don't support enough money. And that's true also primarily of Social Security disabled. The amount of money somebody gets on Social Security Disability, at least the people I talk to, is typically \$735 a month. If you're disabled and you can't work, you're not going to find a place to live for \$700 and make it work.

Some of the other things: we have a number of people I've seen that are over 55. I don't care what your job was, there's a really good chance you can't find a job. I had one person who was a logistics manager, got laid off, and can't find a job. I have right now in the shelter an electrical engineer who's 68, who unfortunately didn't save any money and is now on the street looking for a

job.

Some of the other things: physical disability. Lots of people with physical disability. A big one is brain trauma. I've got people that have been shot in the head, people that have been hit with hammers, you name it. They have a disability where they just can't make it work with a job. I have a person with Huntington's disease who just doesn't have the capability to hold a job from living on the street. We've got two or three people with cellulitis, and they can't do anything standing up as a job because of the cellulitis.

Mental health sort of goes without saying, but it runs the gamut: everything from obsessive compulsive disorder to paranoia. I'm not a mental health person, so I'll probably use all the wrong words, but there are just a lot of different things that can get in your way.

It goes all the way down to some things that are mild, where you talk to somebody and you go, "Oh my gosh, this person should have a job." But then after you talk to them three or four times, 20 minutes apiece, you start getting the idea, "You could never hold a job because you have an anger issue," or "You're just hard to get along with, and I can guarantee you you're going to get fired in a week just because you don't have the social skills." So that comes into play.

Felony conviction -- we've had several people with felony convictions who can't find anybody that will hire them.

One issue that's a circle is a lack of ability to get a job that will break the homelessness. If you're homeless and it's really hard, and it's hard to get cleaned up to get a job and to stay in a job, and to sleep on the street and still show up awake for a job, and if you get that job, which will probably be a part-time job, and you're not going to make enough money to get a house -- why are you getting a job? You probably can't hold it down anyway.

I had a bunch of things here, but I'm out of time. There's one thing that I wanted to communicate that's different than maybe anybody here has ever heard. I say that because I read a lot about homelessness and I read a lot about funding and foundations and things like that, and everything I read is all about: "How do we fix homelessness? How do we get housing? How do we get out of homelessness?"

We never talk about a safety net for homeless people. We never talk about: "Guess what? There's thousands of homeless people and next week there will be thousands of them. What can we do to make their life better while they're homeless?"

There's a lot of things. "I can't get a mailbox. There's nowhere for me to get any mail. I'm carrying around 50 pounds worth of stuff all day long every day. I don't have a locker. I can't put it anywhere. I can't get to a shower." In Seattle it's the urban rest stop solution. But there's very little energy behind "How do we improve people's situations while they're homeless?" as opposed to "Let's take a small fraction of them and get them housing." So that's something I would like to leave everybody with.

We're always looking for volunteers to help us out, too.

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

**00:36:27**      ***MODERATOR***

Thank you so much to our panelists.

Now that you've had a chance to hear their perspectives, we'd like to hear some of your questions for our panelists. If you do have your questions, here's how we will do this. Please raise your hand. I'll call on you. And then we will take turns until everyone gets a chance. Please wait for the microphone to get to you.

[LAUGHTER]

Speak directly into the top of the microphone. Try to keep your questions on point so as many people as possible have a chance to participate. The gentleman over there in the glasses was our first hand up.

**00:37:13**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Good evening. I'm a driver with King County Metro. I have homeless people on my bus all the time. I always give homeless people rides, whether they can pay the fare or not.

[APPLAUSE]

As far as I'm concerned, it's public transportation and it should be public.

One of the things I experienced talking to some of the homeless people on my bus is that sometimes they accumulate money, from whatever source. They need to put it somewhere where it's safe. No one can open a bank account. They have no credit or ID. Is there any resource in any of the counties close by that actually will have some resource where they can put their money somewhere where it's safe, where they can identify it and get it back when they need it? These people are getting robbed on the street all the time.

Thank you.

**00:38:15**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

I'm hoping that somebody else has a better resource, but I'll walk you through something. The short answer to that -- I used to work in an outreach center, and I'm not aware of anything. Our job was to pick up resources and referrals.

I will tell you that they can go to DSHS and get a voucher to get an ID. There's a program in Snohomish County, actually in the Puget Sound area, called BankOn. You can ask a bank if they participate in BankOn.

The issue often is that you don't have good credit, and what you may not realize if you have good credit is that you actually need good credit to open a bank account. If you've had negative bank experiences in the past, then this can be an obstacle. BankOn was designed to help those people reengage in the banking system. They would need an ID, but again, you can get a voucher for that from DSHS.

There are resource centers and DSHS offices around the county that can certainly help point you in the right direction as well.

**00:39:25**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Can I ask a question about that, please?

**00:39:29**      ***MODERATOR***

Wait for the microphone, please. Thank you.

**00:39:32**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

With needing to put money in a safe place, is it possible for them to have it put on a debit card, or would they still worry that somebody would steal their debit card? That is a problem? OK.

**00:39:48**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

Yeah. You can get a debit card if you're receiving welfare, but you have to have a disabling condition, or you have to have children and you have to be consistently engaged in DSHS. A lot of the people that are on the streets don't have those cards to begin with. And you can't get a debit card if you don't have good credit.

**00:40:16**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Can credit unions participate in this as well?

**00:40:20**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

Yes. Some of them are participating. I don't have the list of names in my head, though. Sorry.

**00:40:39**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

You said this was live streaming on Facebook. Just really quickly, what was that page for the live streaming?

**00:40:45**      ***CHUCK PRATT***

Sno-Isle Libraries Facebook page.

**00:40:46**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

OK.

Also, not necessarily a question, but I also offer a resource much like the demographics that you guys do, but I target more of the newborns to 12 years old. I have a foundation called Babies of Homelessness. We bring essential items and care packages to little ones found in homeless encampments or living in their cars.

So if there are any school educators or school districts, anything like that, I would love to provide you guys with my information. We will actually bring care packages, clothing, diapers, wipes, formulas, baby cereal -- anything that they need. We have storage units full from donations. So that would be something you can pass on as a resource.

**00:41:32**      ***MODERATOR***

Great, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

The gentleman in the green shirt.

**00:41:52**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

I know that Everett has an initiative for this, but what do you four all think of the future of low-barrier sheltering for the hardest core people on the street?

**00:42:09**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

I operate a low-barrier drop-in center, and I'm really a fan of low-barrier housing for homeless individuals.

**00:42:19**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Can you define that, please?

**00:42:23**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

"Low barrier" means that there aren't a lot of requirements to enter into the program. You can come in under the influence, oftentimes. You can come in not treating your mental health. You can simply be there and engage in a place to sleep and a shower.

I think that this is powerful intervention because it builds the trust and relationship. It meets the homeless individuals where they're at in hopes that they can transition out of that. I think requiring them to be sober, to be on meds for their mental health, to function higher, is excluding them and forces them to be on the streets.

So that's my opinion on low-barrier housing. Do you want to add to that?

**00:43:15**      ***MARK WALDIN***

I'd just like to add one thing. Our emergency shelter is sort of no-barrier. You can come in in any form you are, as long as you're not belligerent.

One of the things we've seen, having done it long enough, is that we have seen homeless people degrade into substance abuse. They came in, they lost their job four weeks ago, and four years later, they're drunk half the time.

I've seen substance abuse be more of an outcome of being homeless than a cause of becoming homeless. I think the low barrier, getting out of it, is all part of that. A lot of that substance abuse is a coping mechanisms for dealing with the homelessness in the first place. It's very hard to break out of unless you can get off the street first.

**00:44:10**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

As you can see, we're all very passionate about this.

[LAUGHTER]

I would just like to point out something. I know people that are middle class, stable housed, who end up getting hooked on drugs after being on painkillers for an injury, and they have to go in and out of treatment several times before they're able to get to the other side. Now imagine doing that while living on the streets, peeing in the bushes, and not knowing how or where you're going to get the next shower or your next food.

So if they have a choice between finding food and fighting addiction, I can tell you that finding food and finding shelter is going to come first. If you want to help them, give them someplace safe they can go so they can take those next steps to treat the things that are keeping them from being successful.

[APPLAUSE]

**00:45:02**      ***KRISTEN CANE***

And just to add to that real quick too, so we could all have a comment on it . . .

[LAUGHTER]

If you're interested in this, this is also called Housing First. The idea is that housing is a platform for people to be able to address all of their other issues. Like Elizabeth said, dealing with an addiction problem is extremely difficult if you don't have housing. The thinking about this has really changed over the years. The Housing First model is being done all over, and it's showing very exceptional positive results for getting people off the streets and helping them address their addiction issues.

And I know it's very controversial, because if you think, you know, who wants to have something like that in their backyard? No one wants to have it in their backyard. But I would encourage you to research it further. If you Google "Lloyd Pendleton Utah the Daily Show," there's some actually really funny clips that get at what it's about and how much success they've had.

Often, the model will include very intensive supportive services, 24-hour monitoring, and if folks leave the permanent supportive housing facility and they're belligerent or they're having mental health issues, anyone in the neighborhood can call the facility and have someone come and help them. So there's actually a lot of services available to the community, and it helps get people off the streets. So if you want people off the streets, this is critical for people that are chronically homeless.

**00:46:27**      ***MODERATOR***

Nice. If we could get the gentleman that had the microphone with the green shirt, and then come over here when he's done. Thank you.

**00:46:37**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

I've actually been living in an RV since December 27 with no stable place to park. It's kind of

hard.

I have a full-time job. I don't have enough money to really get a place to stay. I was actually renting from a guy, and he decided that he wanted to sell his house, so I didn't have very long to find anywhere else to go. So I ended up buying the RV so I would at least have some sort of shelter.

It was pretty hard for a while. I almost decided to try and sell the RV and try to go back to my family and try to get them to help me out. In that process, I came in contact with a few families who had pretty much encountered a similar situation where they were renting a house and the owner decided they wanted to sell, and only had 20 days to get out. That's one paycheck. What can you do with one paycheck? How many of us are one or two or maybe three paychecks away from being homeless? That's a Washington state policy: 20 days. Can that change?

**00:48:13**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

I can answer part of that for you. The City Council need to change the zoning requirements on accessory dwelling units, and if they do that, then people can get motor homes and park them in their driveways and have homeless people live in the motor homes rather than live in their home, because they're afraid if they put homeless people in their homes, they're afraid. But if they're living in a motor home in their driveways in an accessory dwelling unit, they're not as afraid.

It's up to the City Council to set up the zonings for accessory dwelling units.

**00:48:50**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

OK. That kind of makes sense. But what about that 20 days? I mean, how many of you are renting a house somebody else owns? Somebody says, "I don't want that house anymore. I want to sell it. You've got 20 days to go." You've already spent your first paycheck of the month to pay rent, bills, car payment, whatever. You've got one paycheck. Most places, it costs, what, \$1600 to get in, first month, first and last?

**00:49:20**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Most places, it's three months on the sale. And in that three-month period, you might be able to make a deal with the new owner to live in the property [indistinct] or something like that to fix it up, just to stay in there and protect your property while you're there. This is something that the real estate agencies around here should talk over with all of the people buying and selling their properties.

**00:49:44**      ***KRISTEN CANE***

Yeah, so this is a huge issue, and even people with, say, a Section 8 voucher struggle with this all the time. They have a housing subsidy, they can afford an apartment, but they're given a 20-day notice that their lease isn't being renewed, and they have nowhere else to go. They don't have a first month's deposit that they can give. I mean, sometimes it costs a couple thousand dollars to just get into an apartment unit.

I think at the state level, I don't know how viable it would be to get that law changed. It's a state law that landlords have to give a 20-day notice at the end of the lease. But it is something that you can talk to your representatives about. Is 20 days really enough time? Especially in the type of

rental market that we have here, it's not. In Seattle, definitely not.

I would also say, there's some programs out there to help address this, which I think the other folks can speak to a little bit more, that help with first/last month's rent, damage deposit, that kind of thing, if that's what you need to be able to get into a unit. There's also a landlord liaison program that they can talk about too.

**00:50:48**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

How old are you?

**00:50:50**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Twenty-eight.

**00:50:51**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

OK. We help with first/last, but for 24 and under. Just curious.

**00:50:56**      ***MODERATOR***

OK, we have a question over here.

**00:51:02**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER BRAD SHIPLEY***

Brad Shipley. I work with Edmonds long-range planning. I'm curious about what cities could do that are more long-range in thinking. We explore multi-family tax exemptions, those kinds of things, but what have you guys seen working out there?

**00:51:22**      ***KRISTEN CANE***

I'm not a planner, but I do participate with the Alliance for Housing affordability. It's a coalition of most of the cities, including the city of Edmonds and the city of Mountlake Terrace, in Snohomish County. The whole goal is around sharing ideas about what cities can do to increase affordable housing. So I do think there are some really neat things being done out there.

There's a lot of new things happening in Seattle, but of course, that's a totally different market, and anything that cities do up here really has to take into consideration what the market will support. For instance, we can't do inclusionary zoning because -- we can't require developers to build affordable housing because cities are trying to get developers to just come and build housing. So we have to think more about incentives. Can you give density bonuses for developers to incorporate a certain percent of the units as affordable? Can you upzone some more areas so that more units can be built?

One of the things that I had mentioned is that it's a supply issue. There are folks that are sort of taking up slots in more subsidized types of housing that could actually -- if there were just more units on the market, they could move into that type of a unit to free up the slot for someone else.

So there are different ways to address it. But if anyone else is aware of any -- I know, for instance, in the city of Monroe, they have tax exemptions for new construction if it is for homeless families. So there's some programs like that that are already operating in the county and have been for a



while that have produced some units.

**00:52:57**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

I would add to that -- she certainly talks more intelligently about it, because I'm on the services side, not the development side, but we have had (at Housing Hope) a lot of luck working with many cities to get fees waived, or other programs going. The city of Monroe most recently was very helpful with us on that, which allowed us to build units there that opened last October.

I also would like to say that we're hoping to build out here in south Snohomish County soon, too. So, anything you guys plan here, just keep in mind that there are agencies that want to come into your communities and help you care for the homeless that are already there, and it starts by those decisions that take place at the City Council level.

**00:53:51**      ***MODERATOR***

Vicky? Wait for the microphone, please.

**00:54:03**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER VICKY KLEINMAN***

My name is Vicky Kleinman, and I'm with the Edmonds Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Edmonds. We opened a safe parking thing in our parking lot 15 months ago. It turns out we're the only ones in Snohomish County who have it, which is a big problem because a lot of the people who want to be in our parking lot have a job and business in Everett, and they can't afford the gas to go back and forth. So it would be nice if people in the north part of Snohomish County, some churches would do the same thing.

It really isn't that hard. We are very happy to help anybody who wants to do this and give them some hints on how it worked for us. Once it gets going, it's not that big a deal.

**00:54:50**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

Could I suggest something to you? Have you ever heard of the Homeless Policy Task Force?

**00:54:55**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER VICKY KLEINMAN***

Yes. We actually go to it.

**00:54:57**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

OK. Make sure that you're talking to the people there, because I know a lot of churches go there. And you're right, that is a great solution.

**00:55:05**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER VICKY KLEINMAN***

We're in the referral thing for 2-1-1, so we get a lot of people. 2-1-1 is great, but for the people who are homeless, it's not the greatest solution because they just get referrals, and when they call, it doesn't work out. They get a phone that only has so many minutes. They're on hold for so long, they lose their minutes. They have a meeting to be on a waiting list for housing. They drive up there and nothing can be done; the waiting list is full. They waste gas. It's a very, very discouraging way to live.

We started out by just wanting to have families from the Edmonds School District, but the families actually turn over very quickly because they are on the top of the list. The people we end up with - - we only have families. We take single women and people who are attached to a child. So it could be a guy and a child, a woman -- anybody who's attached to a child. We don't take single men and we don't take couples because of the dynamics and the domestic abuse that some of the women have been exposed to. It's hard for them to sleep next to people who are guys. Anyway, that's what we have.

The problem is, we can't move the single women out. They're in the black hole of housing. If you're not disabled and you're not a senior and you don't have a child and you're in your 50s or early 60s, you can't get a job. So we have to extend their stay a lot. There's no place for them to go.

Is there anything that you can offer that we can offer them that we haven't heard about yet?

There's no coordination between agencies here. I've been to the ones in King County, and Seattle has actually made a deal with Compass Housing so that they have one person helping them. In Snohomish County, that is not the deal. Is there any hope for us here in Snohomish County to make it more effective and easier for the people in our camp to get housing?

**00:57:20**      ***MODERATOR***

Thank you.

**00:57:22**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

Wow, that was a lot of questions.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm going to start with one, and certainly you guys jump in. Or not.

The system you're talking about is coordinated entry. When you call 2-1-1, it's a system that's going to help funnel you into prevention or connect you with housing services. It's a new system in our county. We've been running it for about two years, maybe three. I haven't been participating the whole time. It is actually a federally mandated system that says that if we receive money into the county, all of the people that are participating or receive any of that federal funding need to go through the coordinated entry system so that there is one place that somebody can call and get in to get to housing.

It's a great concept. We really would love for it to work more seamlessly. I can tell you that there is never a week that goes by that we are not having some conversation amongst all the homeless housing providers and Snohomish County, who oversees the coordinated entry system, on what's not working.

Serving homeless families for the last 12 years, I've seen several different systems, and none of them work effectively. All of them require a lot of work on the part of the person that has limited transportation, lots of barriers to getting someplace, and no alarm clock. We need a better solution.

The short answer is: no, I don't think it's going to be a problem we'll fix soon. But it is a problem that we continue to work on as a community that are serving homeless families. The blessings of

things like the Cold Weather Shelter is that they don't have to go through that system.

I think there was another question in there, but I forgot it. Sorry.

**00:59:32**      *AUDIENCE MEMBER VICKY KLEINMAN*

What do we do about the women who fall into the black hole of housing?

**00:59:37**      *ELIZABETH KOHL*

The best options for single women in our county -- we have a building called the Commerce Building. You can look at Housing Hope's main website. It is a wait list, but it is for single adults. You do not have to have a disabling condition. Most of them are either subsidized units or they're 40%. There's 49 units there.

Also, the Everett Gospel Mission.

**01:00:02**      *ELYSA HOVARD*

The Everett and Monroe Gospel Mission.

**01:00:04**      *ELIZABETH KOHL*

Oh, and the Monroe Gospel Mission is wonderful as well.

I will tell you that the city of Everett is working on a development that will have between 70 and 80 units for single individuals. That project is currently finishing up getting funding, and they will be starting that in the next two years. But that's a long ways out if you're already on the streets.

**01:00:42**      *MODERATOR*

We had a question over here.

**01:00:45**      *AUDIENCE MEMBER SEENA CONTEH [?]*

Hello. My name is Cena Conteh and I work with the YWCA, so I'm one of the agencies that you guys are talking about. I'm actually a coordinated entry navigator, so I'm a housing navigator. Here I am! Don't throw anything at me, please!

[LAUGHTER]

Actually, I just started doing this job in May. It's been an experience that I just -- forever, I'm going to advocate for homeless people.

It's a challenge. There's definitely not enough housing for people. The situation that the young man talked about, being in his RV, that's very real, and I thank you for sharing that.

It bothers me every single day when I go home that I can't help out more people get into housing. Housing is our shortage. We talk with people. We have lots of resources. I would definitely like to connect with you. We have lots of resources for people, but it doesn't help everybody. I love my job. I love connecting with the people, because I'm not far from that.

What do they call it? A "working wage"? A lot of us don't make a working wage. A lot of us in here might be retired. A lot of us aren't.

So it's very close. It's very dear and near my heart. Everything that you guys are saying, I'm sitting here shaking my head, like, "Yes, yes."

I believe I spoke to the gentleman before for one of the clients with Hutchinson's disease. And you know what? It's success stories like that when we can get somebody housed who hasn't been housed in 18 years, but yet he's afraid to go into housing because of these walls, or because he can't do certain things to survive in that house, but he knows how to survive on that street. Those are stories that I will never forget.

But you know what? They're resourceful out here. A lot of times, we have to say, "No, I can't put you in a shelter today." That's very hard for me to do. But you know what? I'm saying, "What else can I help you with? Can I help you with gas? Can I give you some food? Can I give you something?" Every day, there's somewhere for these people to go eat, and I'm really thankful for that. Every single day they can go eat.

So it's not that they need our food. They need shelter. However we as a community can help build that shelter, I know it's hard to bring people into your homes, but there's a way. King County is doing a lot. I'm here in Snohomish County, and I will not leave this county, because we need to do some work here in this county.

It's really good to see everybody here that's concerned. But my question is: why are you here? Are you here because you don't want to see the people?

[MICROPHONE CUTS OUT]

Because we're all here. There's enough of us here to make a difference.

[MICROPHONE CUTS OUT]

It's a lot of work, but it can be done. Things can change if we just all come together.

[MICROPHONE CUTS OUT]

[APPLAUSE]

**1:03:55        *MODERATOR***

The individual in the back with the glasses and long hair.

**1:04:02        *AUDIENCE MEMBER AMELIA***

Hi. Hi, Elysa. Hi, Joanna. Hi, Chuck.

I used to work at Cocoon House. My name's Amelia. I now volunteer with Interfaith Association of Northwest Washington, which runs The Family Shelter in Everett.

We've talked a lot about the kids. We've talked a lot about the single adults. Families are in great

need as well. And I believe, from my experience, a lot of times they get the biggest stigma attached to them because we want to blame the parents for being in the situation with their kids.

Right now, Interfaith is in the beginnings of their annual crowd-funding campaign. We just painted an amazing mural up in Everett right by the KSER radio station off of Wetmore. It's actually on the back of that church on Rockefeller. I can't remember the name. Check it out. Ryan Henry Ward is a very well-known muralist who donated his time.

One other thing I wanted to offer as a resource for people who want to get involved is to check out The Family Shelter for the crowd-funding.

Birthday Dreams is also an organization in Puget Sound that helps kids celebrate their birthday.

And also, as far as single elderly folks or older folks, SHAG (Senior Housing Assistance Group) is building a brand new place in Lynnwood, right across the street from the Lynnwood Convention Center, and there are other locations as well. That's one resource for low-income seniors.

If you have any questions about Interfaith, check their Facebook page out. It's The Family Shelter on Facebook. Thank you, everybody, for being here.

[APPLAUSE]

**01:05:53      *AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Real quickly, if I could share some resources that are available right now, they're not housing specifically, but the last Friday of every month, there's a group of social service providers that gather at Cascadia Community College in the Performance Center there on the last Friday afternoon of each month through May. It's accessible to a lot of people who live in our area who don't want to go all the way up to downtown Everett or downtown Seattle.

Accessibility to service agencies can be a problem. They're spread out all over the place where you can afford to actually have your offices. So bringing them together in one place where it's accessible to people who need that is really helpful. That's over in the Bothell area, the last Friday afternoon of the month. That's through the end of May, and then the last Thursday in June, there's a very large community resource fair for low-income and homeless people called Care Day. It's modeled after Project Homeless Connect up in Everett. It's the last Thursday of June at Northshore Junior High, which is on the border of Kirkland and Bothell. Both of those are on major bus routes that go up and down 405. It's just minutes from Lynnwood. It's minutes from Mountlake Terrace and the transit centers. So it's really not that far away, and it's very, very accessible.

At the one in June, there will be over 80 social service providers with food and health and dental and vision and housing and job coordination and haircuts. There's a number of resources there. Those are resources that are available today, once a month gathering together.

There is a safety net in our community. It's kind of spread out. Sometimes it's not really accessible when you live here in south county. But it does exist and it's available to our neighbors and our friends that are experiencing need.

**01:07:43      *MODERATOR***

Thank you.

**01:07:45**      **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

[INAUDIBLE, FAR FROM MICROPHONE]

**01:07:54**      **MODERATOR**

Will these resources be available online?

**01:07:56**      **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Yes. The Community Resource Day is at [communityresourceday.com](http://communityresourceday.com). If you look for that, if you just Google that, you'll find it. Care Day is [careday.net](http://careday.net). Two different websites.

**01:08:24**      **MODERATOR**

So, for the resources that are being given out, if you could catch a staff member, we have an Issues that Matter page, and there's also an Issues that Matter sheet that's being given out today, but for these new resources, please make sure that any Sno-Isle Libraries staff member -- they all have the pins on, they're all around the perimeter of the room -- have these resources so they can be added to the Issues that Matter page.

And if any of you have materials that were shared this evening, there are tables in the back, if you could leave any materials in the back. Otherwise, please make sure you connect with a staff member.

First, we're going to go over here where the microphone is.

**01:09:03**      **AUDIENCE MEMBER JIM FULTON**

Jim Fulton. I had a quick comment. Cocoon House, how do you get funded? One quick thing on that, then I want to comment on something else.

**01:09:11**      **ELYSA HOVARD**

We have city, county, state, and federal funding.

**01:09:15**      **AUDIENCE MEMBER JIM FULTON**

OK, great.

I'm glad the City Council is here. I'm a drug counselor in King County. I work in Pierce County and also Kitsap County.

It seems like Snohomish County is behind times as far as funding, as far as homelessness, bigtime, because I see it. I've been doing this for 15 to 20 years. I'm glad the City Council is here, because it seems like it is behind times, Snohomish County, and it's going to be a big issue here coming down the pike. We don't really understand that. I deal with a lot of drug addicts, so I see it in King County. There's a lot of funding and a lot of housing down there, in Pierce County and King County, and it seems like Snohomish is just kind of behind times. I don't know why that is. Is there anybody that could answer that? Is it because of funding? I don't know.

**01:10:02**      ***KRISTEN CANE***

Yeah, I can comment on some of that.

There's other communities that have pretty extensive levies that address homelessness and housing, and we have nothing like that in Snohomish County. In Seattle, they have a \$300 million seven-year housing levy that they just re-upped and doubled. They're also working on another \$275 million homeless services levy.

The population in Seattle is less than the population in Snohomish County. I realize our economies are different and we have different markets and things like that, but in the past, I understand that there's tried to be housing levies that have been brought to the voters, and they've always been shot down. I think we have a more conservative county. We have a county that isn't necessarily willing, at least in the past, to approve additional property tax increases to pay for these types of things. Everything we do costs money, and we can't help more people unless we have more money. So I think this is something that needs to shift if we really want to address the problem up here.

It also affects our ability to compete for other dollars that are available to us at the state and federal levels. Communities like King County and Seattle and Whatcom County can get state money easier than we can because they have all the money that is leveraged at the local level. We don't get a lot of projects done around here because we have maybe \$1 million a year that we can leverage. That's one project. That's just getting funding for one project. Other communities are churning out multiple projects every year. So it's huge.

I think it has to do with people's political leanings, potentially, or people's ability to pay. But I think at the city Council level, the other thing that happens in other communities is like the city of Bellevue. They contribute money out of their general fund. They appropriate millions of dollars out of their general fund to pay for housing. We don't have any communities in Snohomish County that do that. So that's really where talking to your City Councils and the County Council and talking to your friends and family about the possibility of approving a levy to address these types of things, because we're not going to be able to address it without more local money.

**01:12:11**      ***MODERATOR***

The woman in the teal sweater with the glasses on top of your head. You've had your hand up.

**01:12:20**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

I'm kind of going back to what she was saying with the parking. Sorry, I'm not going to stand up because I have to use a cane. I'm so sorry, I'm tired.

I was wondering what other resources there are. It sounds like she's saying that she's the only one. But I know a lot of people too that -- like, you said there's police here. How do you talk to the police about where you can go? I know they don't necessarily like the job of saying, "Hey, you've got to move it." There's a lot of people asking: Where do you park an RV? Where do you park housing? Etc. Where do you find parking? Where is it OK? Where is it not OK? Etc. Make sense?

**01:12:55**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Walmarts are always OK

**01:12:56**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Well, Walmarts are kind of OK. Here's the other problem: Walmarts used to be OK, but people weren't staying self-contained and cleaned. So that's a better question: if you are someone who can commit to being self-contained and cleaned and be respectful, where can you go? What if you are someone who wants to change your life?

**01:13:21**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

I'll answer it real honestly, and the answer is nowhere. In other counties, they have addressed this by doing some of the encampments. That's not the end-all, be-all solution. But the truth is that you have to move often, and it is the police's job to remove you from a place that is not yours. But the problem is, there isn't any place that is yours, is there?

We have had some very responsive, positive experiences with police officers who are really trying to help. The city of Everett has embedded some social workers in their police department. Unfortunately --

**01:14:08**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

How do you get to talk to them?

**01:14:11**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

The police officers in Everett will refer you to the social worker.

**01:14:19**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

We met police officers that didn't have any information for us. They were like, "Sorry, we can't help you."

**01:14:24**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

Was it specifically the city of Everett?

**01:14:27**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Yeah, we were in Everett. And it would be nice to know about Lynnwood specifically too. Who can we talk to?

**01:14:32**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

I'm not as familiar with Lynnwood. I do know that one of the things about living out -- I live in rural Snohomish County. I don't get to live among all you near the water and all the other people. I live out in the woods in the middle of nowhere, which I do enjoy, I have to admit, a little bit. But that's where a lot of people end up going is places into the woods. And they have encampments out there as well.

**01:15:03**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***



Yeah, but what if you have jobs in this area so you're trying to stay near because it's the only finances you have? If you move off, again, you can't afford the gas, and you end up losing the job if you can't make it in time. Anything that will help?

**01:15:14**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

My only suggestion would be -- because there really aren't places to go. I mean, that's the truth.

This is a community-wide problem. These are people in our communities and your community here and my community in Sultan, and they need real solutions. And churches are sometimes -- sometimes we have seen them allow people to stay, but this is not something we become organized around. And when we tried to bring tent cities up into Snohomish County, oftentimes in several cities -- I don't know about Lynnwood specifically, or some of the other cities down here in south -- there were actually laws created to prevent tent cities from popping up, even though the homeless already exist there. So the answer is that it's a real problem. We don't have a solution. This is something that all of you that are here that want to help and make a difference, this is a problem that you can solve.

**01:16:15**      ***MARK WALDIN***

If I can just -- it's not a positive thing, but one thing you have to be really careful of as well -- I know because of Lynnwood and Edmonds, although I find a lot of times the police, if you will, try and look the other way, but they can only do that as long as there's not a business or something complaining "I don't want this thing over there," and then they have to take action.

I know of several people who have lost their vehicles to an impound, don't have any money to get it out, and in fact I specifically know of somebody who was living in their car that was no longer living in their car because it got impounded, and now they don't have a car. So you need to be really careful if you're going to park a car in a place where it's not allowed to be, and leave it, especially.

**01:17:06**      ***MODERATOR***

OK, we have one more question, and then we're going to do a wind-up, and then have an opportunity at the end.

**01:17:13**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER LIZ VOGELI***

Hello. My name is Liz Vogeli. I have a group that gets together about once a month, and we fill bags with wool socks or fleece socks and other items, and I'm wondering what you think about -- so these bags are for our cars, and when we see somebody on a street corner holding a sign -- and me too, I also think they are people first, homeless maybe. What do you think about community members handing out stuff that is necessary for those people that need some help?

**01:17:53**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Ask somebody who's receiving.

**01:17:55**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Well, yeah, I am and I do. I've gotten a couple "Oh, no thanks," and that's fine. One of the ladies I

was talking to on an off ramp mentioned that there was a difference between junkies and homeless people, and that was interesting to me. She was apparently getting off of drugs. I don't know. Somebody else said, "Well, you should go to the organizations and make sure that the organizations are getting your stuff and getting your money." But I want to help that person that I don't know!

**01:18:36**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

I'll just say something really quick, because I apparently talk a lot.

[LAUGHTER]

I hear people often say, "You don't want to help them. You want to get them to go get help from the local services." Oftentimes, "They're going to sell it or use it for drugs," or whatever our thoughts are on that. But I can say that every time that you help that person feel like a human being worthy of a gift or worthy that somebody cared about you, it brings them that much closer to staying engaged with society so that they do stay out of trouble.

[APPLAUSE]

**01:19:25**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

I would just add, to the "stuff" -- keep it minimal. I mean, socks are like gold to homeless people, but as soon as those hygiene packs become huge, then it becomes litter in the community. I know the men's mission outside of Smith Avenue has that problem with people just coming in and giving. Cold weather gear is amazing, and tarps. So things like that I think they could really use, but just don't overpack those, because they get trashed.

**01:19:54**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Why don't cities provide dumpsters to homeless camps?

**01:20:00**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

Good question. It would be an easy trash stop.

**01:20:07**      ***MODERATOR***

I'd like to offer each of our panelists a chance to reflect on what's been shared tonight, some takeaways. If each of you could just take a minute or so to share a takeaway or something that you would like to leave the audience with this evening. Mark?

**01:20:38**      ***MARK WALDIN***

I just want to say that I think it's fantastic that all these people are here and concerned and have lots of good questions. I would just like to say that it takes people to do things, to make a difference. So if you can walk out of here tonight and think about one additional thing you could do, you'll make a huge difference.

**01:21:02**      ***ELYSA HOVARD***

I want to say thank you as well, but I think one of the things that really stuck out to me is policy and legislative advocacy at the city level and at the county level and at the state level. As you hear, these folks are sleeping in RVs and cars without a place. And that's all policy. We as service providers can't do anything about that. But we can do that as a community, and I think that's really inspiring to me. So thank you.

**01:21:32**      ***ELIZABETH KOHL***

I want to thank everybody for being here and Sno-Isle for putting this on.

Throughout the evening, we talked a lot about the shortage in housing stock. One way that you can help is if you know a landlord, whether it's a single unit or apartment or a room for rent, we're having an engagement event in June that many of the homeless housing providers are putting on just to talk about what it means to take a subsidy and the support services that come with that. So if you know anybody, please connect in with me. And remember that all the things we talked about today are solvable issues. Each one of you can contribute to that solution, and we can really make a huge difference.

**01:22:19**      ***KRISTEN CANE***

Thank you, everyone, for coming. I wanted to particularly thank this gentleman for sharing his story. I think that it makes it real for people. We all probably know someone that has either experienced homelessness is homeless, or we've been homeless ourselves, and it takes a lot of courage to stand up and share your story in front of the community. You are a part of our community just like we all are. Just because you don't have a home doesn't mean you aren't a member that is valuable and that we need to help.

I think there's been a lot of discussion about who homeless people are, and I just encourage everyone to be open-minded about those that live in our community. Like Liz said, these are folks that went to our elementary schools and went to our middle schools and went to our high schools. Some of them might not be from here, but there might be people from here that are homeless in another city too. It really is a human problem.

Also, I just want to mention something. I love that everyone wants to help, and I would just encourage people to think about both the short- and long-term solutions, and investing your time and energy in both. There's the immediate problem of, like, people who need somewhere to park their RV. But also, if we don't think long-term about how we can do this and encourage our policymakers to do things, then we'll just continue trying to address this on the short-term, like band-aid level. Both are important.

**01:23:49**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

I want to thank the panelists for showing up tonight, too.

[APPLAUSE]

[INAUDIBLE SIDE CONVERSATION, FAR FROM MICROPHONE]

**01:24:25**      ***MODERATOR***

Councilmember Hurst?

**01:24:26**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER GEORGE HURST***

Hi. George Hurst from the City of Lynnwood Council. There's been a lot of talk about appealing to the Council and to elected officials. This is a great turnout. And what we need really as elected officials is for people to come to our council meetings. In Lynnwood, we have business meetings the first and third Monday, and we also have meetings on the second and fourth Monday. Rarely do you have anyone come to these meetings and talk to us. We might have two or three people who regularly come and talk. And talk . . .

[LAUGHTER]

This is a great group. You guys are passionate about this. Cina asked a question: Are you here to help? Are you here because you're afraid? Are you here to learn? But if you come to the Council and start talking to people who are elected, they will listen, especially if there's a group of you that come and express passion about a topic. We will listen and we will act. But we can't do it in a vacuum. We do our best. We have limited resources. The state is focused on McCleary as far as funding. There are cities like Bellingham who had a ten-year levy to defeat homelessness. This is the type of stuff we need on a local level, but the Council is not going to act unless we really know that people want that action.

**01:26:08**      ***MODERATOR***

Thank you, Councilmember Hurst.

[APPLAUSE]

**01:26:13**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Do you need to be a resident of Lynnwood in order to come to the meetings?

**01:26:18**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER GEORGE HURST***

No.

**01:26:19**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Could you repeat the times when you meet?

**01:26:21**      ***AUDIENCE MEMBER GEORGE HURST***

Business meetings are the first and third Monday of every month.

**01:26:27**      ***MODERATOR***

We have the City of Mountlake Terrace here. We have the City of Lynnwood. You can look on any of their websites for the cities and find the council meetings.

I want to quickly be able to say that the panelists are going to stay for 15 minutes to be able to address any questions you have or continue further dialogue. I regret that we didn't get to everybody in the room.

If you're looking for more resources, once again the Sno-Isle Libraries website is a tremendous resource. Connect with individuals around the room if you have added resources around the room that they could use. If you have any ideas on the Issues that Matter topics that you'd like to have for the future, please fill out a survey. Please be part of that.

**END OF RECORDING [01:27:16]**