

EVERYONE  
SHOULD HAVE  
A HOME.



# 2021-2022

## HOMELESS SERVICES NETWORK OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

*ANNUAL REPORT*





A pair of hands is shown from a top-down perspective, cupped together to hold a small, green paper cutout of a house. The house has a gabled roof with a chimney on the right side and a window with four small square panes. The hands are positioned around the house, with fingers slightly curled. The background is a soft, out-of-focus greyish-blue.

*Home is where the hope is...*

# A message from our CEO

The woman sat, slumped, at a picnic table in a Central Florida park, a clear plastic hospital discharge bag at her side stuffed with paperwork. A small backpack held a dozen different prescriptions, each critical in the arsenal of chemotherapy against her growing cancer. The hospital ID bracelet was still affixed around her slender wrist.

Though the late February day was chilly, especially in the shade, she wore sandals, a thin T-shirt and a pair of shorts. She had no other clothing, no food, no car and no bed to call her own. She was homeless.

This just shouldn't happen in our community.

But it does.

And it's what we deal with every day as we fight to provide safe, dignified housing for thousands of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Central Florida and get them the resources they need to stay housed.

In fact, the Homeless Services Network of Central Florida has made important progress in tackling one of the most difficult issues of our time. We've moved from leading a region ranked near the bottom nationally in terms of housing people experiencing homelessness to the very top.

With our network of partner agencies, we've housed over 4,000 people since January 2021. And last year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ranked us No. 1 in the nation for our efforts to both house people and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We know that homelessness has become a national crisis. And while Central Florida does not have the number of unsheltered homeless individuals seen on the streets of some West Coast cities, we face our own significant hurdles, including a vast number of uninsured, working-poor families that are doubled up or living in rent-by-the-week motel rooms.

Our cost of housing is unusually high in relation to our median wage, and our affordable housing stock is exceptionally low. Tens of thousands of residents struggle to find a place to live – and once they do, they struggle to keep it. Roughly half of all households in the region are one paycheck away from being unable to pay their monthly rent or mortgage.

Or, put another way, one critical illness away from homelessness.

On that day in February, at least, we were able to find a place for a homeless woman fighting cancer. We were able to connect her to a warm bed, a hot meal, a social worker, clothing and a plan for long-term housing.

It is because of our supporters that we're able to do that kind of life-changing work. Thank you for joining us in being part of the solution.

*Martha Are*



**Martha Are, CEO,  
Homeless Services  
Network of Central Florida**



# Our accomplishments:

○ Last year, HUD named us and the network we lead **No. 1 in the nation** for our efforts to both house people and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

○ We've built a coordinated entry system for Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties that ensures the most vulnerable individuals and families are housed first.

○ Our housing operations team has built relationships with local landlords to increase housing options in a historically tight rental market.

○ We helped to house more than **4,000 individuals** between Jan. 1, 2021, and July 30, 2022. This includes hundreds of people with mental or physical disabilities, families with young children, former foster youth and military veterans.

○ Our funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has increased by **70%** since we implemented a Housing First\* strategy in 2015.

○ Funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has doubled.

○ Private funding, including a **\$5 million grant** from Jeff Bezos Day 1 Family Fund, has tripled.



\* **Housing First** is a model for addressing homelessness that prioritizes having a safe, permanent home. It is based on years of research showing that the old approach – requiring homeless people to get sober, get jobs or accept a particular faith before they receive housing – is ineffective at best and inhumane at worst. Once people have a place to sleep soundly, get clean drinking water, enjoy a regular meal, have some privacy and feel safe from the elements and strangers, they can then begin to heal from the traumas that led to their homelessness and try to address barriers to self-sufficiency. It is remarkable what adequate sleep alone can do for one's mental state.

[Learn more about Housing First.](#)



## A housing crisis meets a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has made everything about this work harder. Business closures and employee furloughs caused families that had never struggled before to reach out for help, and the job of providing safe, socially distanced housing to those who were unsheltered proved especially difficult.

Thanks to an influx of federal funding, the Homeless Services Network led an effort to secure 400 surplus hotel rooms to isolate homeless individuals and families infected with or exposed to COVID-19, and our partners were able to offer short-term rental assistance programs.

We also helped to distribute tens of thousands of supply items to prevent the spread of the virus: masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, face shields, thermometers, plexiglass barriers and rapid-result COVID tests.

Because we led a regional response to the pandemic, during the first and most deadly phase, the COVID-positive homeless population in the Central Florida region totaled 116 cases – a 2% positivity rate in a state and region that averaged 10%.

# The people

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



## We helped 6,604

people experiencing homelessness in Central Florida with housing or services. Of those:



had a chronic health problem or physical disability



were employed



had a mental health disorder



were veterans of the U.S. military



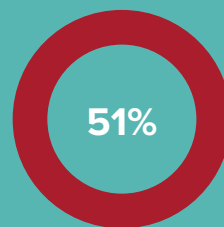
were children



were young parents (under age 25) raising children



were victims of domestic violence



were Black, despite being only 18.6% of the general population

Metropolitan statistical area data, 2019, U.S. Census Bureau

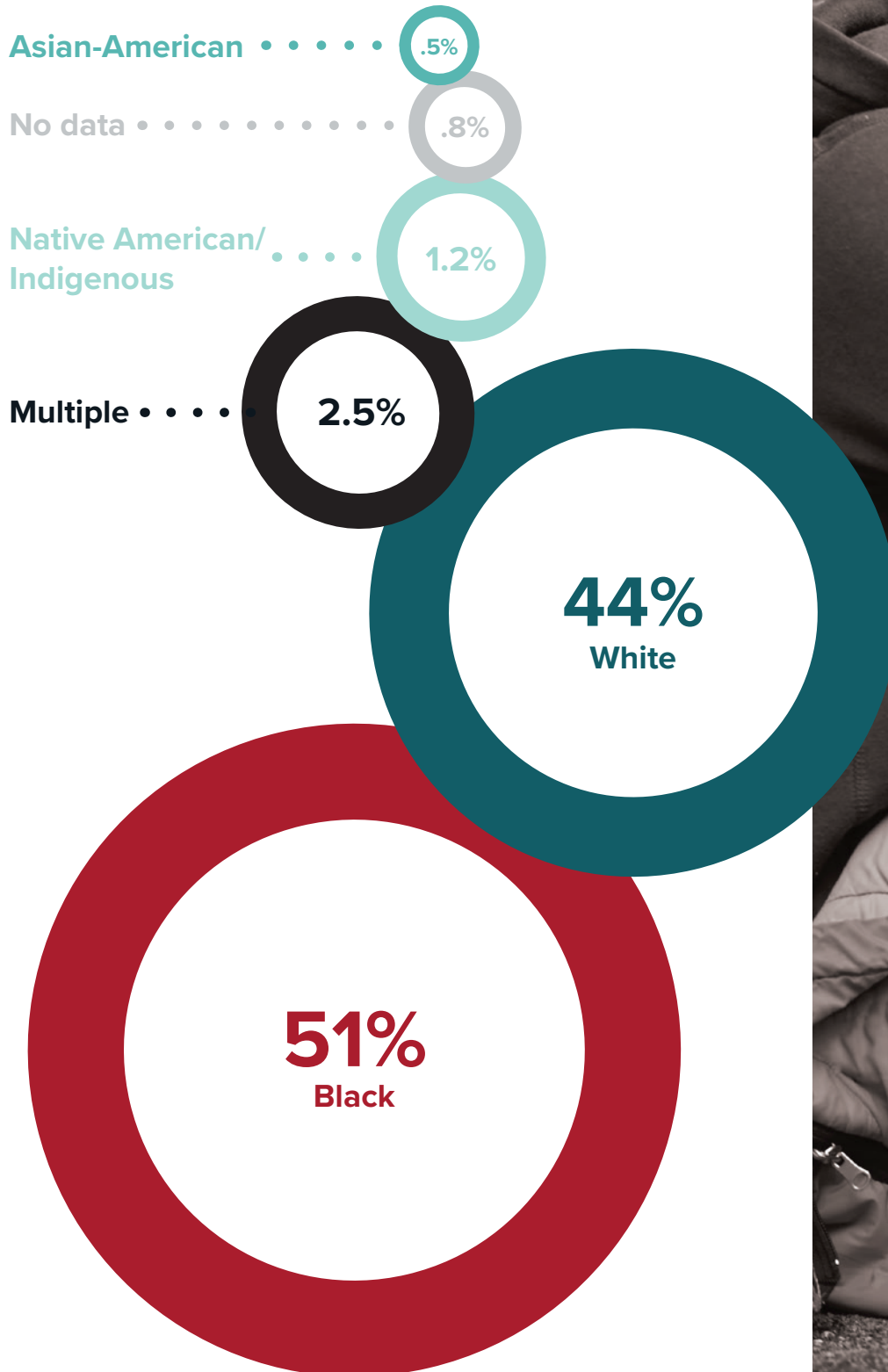


had been homeless for at least a year



# Homelessness and race

Black Central Floridians are disproportionately at risk for homelessness, the result of a long history of discrimination in housing laws, employment, education, the judicial system, health care and banking.

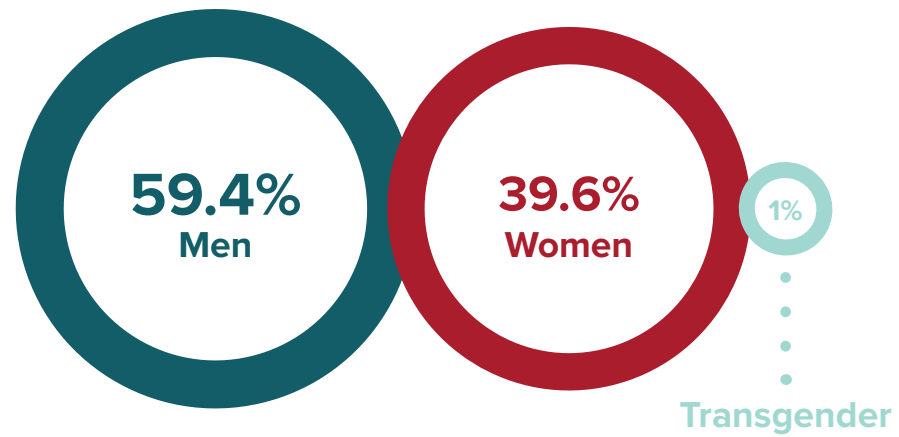




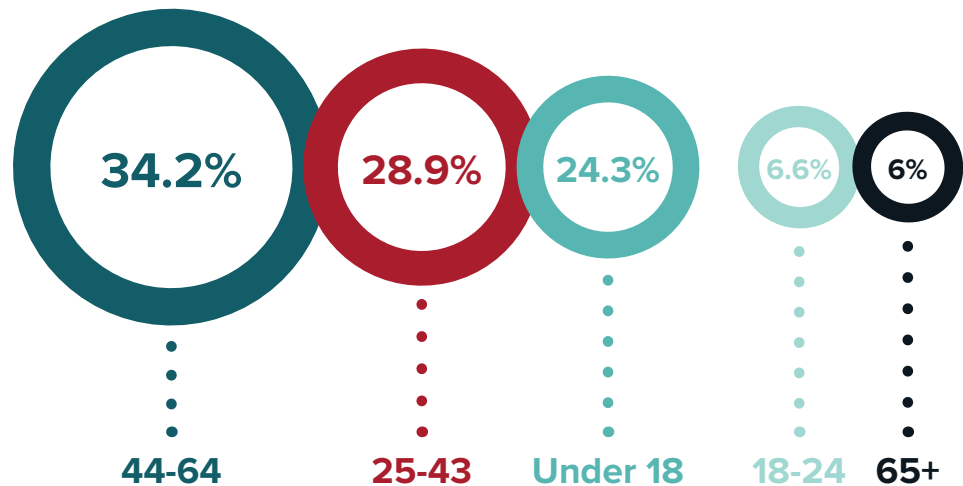




## Homelessness and gender



## Homelessness and age



“In 2006, our community made the audacious move of enlisting leaders from a three-county region of government, business, faith and philanthropy sectors to form the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. It was – and still is – a national model for cooperation on perhaps the most challenging social issues of our time.

Our region’s lead agency, the Homeless Services Network (HSN), continues to guide us with best practices, provide localized data to inform the work, and secure funding. The HSN team is devoted to the goal of finding safe, sustainable, dignified housing for the most vulnerable of our citizens.

Every day, it is helping to change lives.”

– Ann Reinert  
Chair, Central Florida Commission on Homelessness, and  
head of Market Leadership Teams, JPMorgan Chase & Co.



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## The Central Florida Commission on Homelessness

is a mix of top government, business, faith and philanthropy leaders who have come together to address the causes and consequences of homelessness across the three-county region. The Commission’s mere existence is rare across the country and is often cited as a best practice. At the end of 2019, the Homeless Services Network took over all administrative duties for the Commission and continues to serve as its administrative staff.

### Managing Board Members:

Ann Reinert, chair; Shannon Gravitte, vice chair; Martha Are, HSN; Karl Allen; Michael Bryant; Eric Camarillo; Will Cooper; Amy Elwood; Kristi Gray; Carla Bell Johnson; Carrie Longsworth; Desiree Matthews; Tim McKinney; Desmond Meade; Nikaury Muñoz; Nikki Osburn; Lisa Portelli; Danicka Ransom; Jina Thalmann; Shannon Young





## Leadership Council Members:



The Honorable  
Sheena Britton



The Honorable  
Jerry L. Demings



The Honorable  
Buddy Dyer



The Honorable  
Olga Gonzalez



The Honorable  
Cheryl Grieb



The Honorable  
Amy Lockhart



The Honorable  
Don Myers



Ann Reinert,  
Chair



Shannon Gravitte,  
VC



Chirag Bhavsar



Will Cooper



Deirdre Fortune



Andy Gardiner



Mike Griffin



Jeff Hayward



Eric Jackson



Linda Landman  
Gonzalez



Rena Langley



Hector Lizauain



Tim McKinney



Rev Derrick  
McRae



Desmond Meade



Diane O'Dell



Kay Rawlins



Jason Siegel



Sam Wilson

“It is a testament to the strength and dedication of the HSN staff that thousands of formerly homeless citizens in Central Florida are now stably housed, fulfilling the vision of a true Housing First mission.

This organization has managed to succeed despite the region’s well-documented affordable housing crisis. HSN has not only doubled the resources available to do this work; it has also earned a national reputation for excellence, including drawing the largest Bezos’ Day 1 Families Fund grant among 32 nonprofits across the country selected for the invitation-only award.”

– Thomas C. Chatmon Jr.  
Chair, Homeless Services Network of Central Florida and  
Executive Director, Downtown Development Board/  
Community Redevelopment Agency





# Our board of directors

<b>Thomas Chatmon, Jr., chair</b>	<b>Executive Director</b> Downtown Development Board/ Community Redevelopment Agency
<b>Eric Jackson, vice chair</b>	<b>Chief Strategy Officer</b> Verity Construction
<b>Doug Taylor, treasurer</b>	<b>Managing Partner</b> Church Street Entertainment
<b>Matthew Kennedy, secretary</b>	<b>Community Relations Manager</b> Walt Disney World
<b>David Barnett</b>	<b>Human Services Manager</b> Osceola County
<b>Dick Batchelor</b>	<b>Founder &amp; President</b> DBMG
<b>Amy Donley</b>	<b>Associate Professor</b> University of Central Florida
<b>Carrie Longworth</b>	<b>Division Manager, Community Assistance</b> Seminole County
<b>Desiree Matthews</b>	<b>Deputy City Manager</b> City of Kissimmee
<b>Ann Reinert</b>	<b>Head of Market Leadership Teams</b> JPMorgan Chase Orlando
<b>Latoya Sheffield</b>	<b>Case Manager</b> Wayne Densch Center
<b>Andrew Thomas</b>	<b>Community Relations &amp; Neighborhood Engagement Director</b> City of Sanford
<b>Greg Trujillo</b>	<b>Partner</b> CTS Agency

# The reason we exist

His name is Antonio. When he first came to us, he was pushing 40 and spiraling downward. He had been working two jobs – full-time as a mover for North American Van Lines and part-time as a clerk at 7-Eleven.

He was fiercely independent.

Then he had a car wreck that left him with a bulging disk, constant pain and deteriorating cartilage. Antonio could no longer work, and, like many in Central Florida – where 47% of households are one paycheck away from financial crisis – he had few reserves.

The rent money dried up fast. Over the next three years, he lived on the streets – unable to sleep soundly or shower regularly or feel fully human.



But because of the work of the Homeless Services Network and its partners, Antonio was finally able to get into supported housing in January. It changed everything.

He was safe. He no longer worried about thunderstorms or public bathroom closures or being perceived as a criminal just because he was unsheltered. He didn't have to take a bus to get a meal or nap in bushes to avoid being fined for "sleeping in a public park." His two children could finally visit again.

**"You cannot count anybody out just because they're homeless," he says.**





# Where your dollars go

We take our commitment to financial integrity seriously. We are one of the leanest nonprofits in Central Florida, while doing some of the hardest work imaginable. That's why we have a **four-star rating**, the highest possible, from [Charity Navigator](#).



## In fact, we spend **99%**

of our funds on direct services – helping people obtain or maintain housing.



rent for housing program participants, rental and utility deposits, transportation, household expenses



case managers for housing program participants



maintaining a coordinated data system that allows a single entry point for everyone experiencing homelessness in the three counties, which allows us to prioritize those with the most urgent needs



running HMIS, the Homeless Management Information System, as required by the U.S. Congress under the 2009 HEARTH Act, which is a confidential system that collects and analyzes client information from Central Florida projects serving homeless families and individuals, in large part to establish funding priorities



planning and coordination of special programs, including those addressing the unique needs of domestic violence and human trafficking survivors and homeless youth



business expenses (what we use to pay our administrative team and keep the lights on)

# Looking ahead

The federal resources that buoyed us during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic are dwindling – or have already run out. The moratorium on evictions has expired. And rapidly rising rents are exacerbating the existing housing crisis in Central Florida.

During this past legislative session, Florida lawmakers reduced the funds to support the affordable rental housing that our most vulnerable populations rely upon — the very support needed to help prevent and move individuals out of homelessness.

As we look ahead, we need more than ever to work together to prioritize our unsheltered neighbors, particularly people with disabilities and unaccompanied youth. We need to combat the inequities that leave people of color and the LGBTQ+ population so disproportionately impacted by this crisis. We need to decide that basic housing is a matter of human dignity.

This year, we have initiated or joined efforts to address homeless encampments, homeless victims of human trafficking and homeless youth. And we are working with community leaders to increase awareness around the connection between the affordable housing crisis and homelessness.

We know the work ahead won't be easy. But we're confident that we – and the community that supports us – are up to the job.





# Thank you

to our generous donors, corporate sponsors and government funders.  
We couldn't do this work without your support.



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