



Unsheltered Utah 2022

a year in review

Dear donors, volunteers and incredible supporters,

Looking back over 2022's year in service for Unsheltered Utah there are so many highlights we would love to share, but we would also be remiss if we didn't share some of the harsh realities we are seeing in our boots on the ground efforts serving Utah's homeless population.

We will start with the good, because we lead with optimism and do our best to focus on each and every victory. We have expanded our volunteer base and now have a consistent outreach team for Ogden and for Salt Lake City. We have been working to elevate key volunteers into roles where they excel and lead. We have been actively engaging through networking with other homeless service providers, leaders in policy making and with philanthropists to make proactive plans to help improve available services.

As an executive board we have strategized solutions for immediate concerns and have begun to make long-term plans for sustainability of our organization as the needs increase due to the critical levels of affordable housing availability.

Our executive director, Wendy Garvin, has spoken at a wide variety of city councils, town councils, community meetings and with other organizations who have a vested interest in aiding those in serious need. She has worked to educate decision-makers on the real experiences of the individuals we have been case managing, as well as to share the experiences of volunteers during our larger outreach efforts.

We were honored to be the recipients of a charity golf tournament hosted by the Utah Association of Mortgage Professionals, and we successfully hosted our first in-person fundraiser evening in October. Throughout the year we were buoyed up financially through private donors and those supporting these events. With the approval of our 501(c)3 we were also able to launch giving platforms through Amazon and on social media, and have been so grateful for the many people who have selected Unsheltered Utah as their charity of choice for birthday fundraisers!

We work diligently to ensure that the funds raised are being spent on the most high priority needs facing our clients. Our first major wholesale purchase went toward tents and we are gearing up for another bulk order of sleeping bags after much research on product quality and affordability. We treat each dollar that comes in as we do our personal finances, choosing the most thrifty but effective solutions. At this point in time we do not have any overhead for employees, but as the needs grow so do the demands and we are hoping to be able to employ case managers with a living wage in the near future.

Now for the hard to read stuff: Families have nowhere to go. It is a challenging reality to know that adults have been without shelter beds, but when children get involved it hurts more. We have seen a stark increase in the number of families with young children living in motels, trailers, vehicles and tents. When they seek assistance through social media they are often dismissed and told to go to the family shelter, by well-meaning but unknowing people who aren't aware of the discrepancy between available beds and the exponential increase in families experiencing housing instability.

Before the onset of winter we worked to put into place effective plans for a winter overflow. Ultimately our partnership came to an end prior to the opening of that shelter space, but that did not deter us from continuing to seek viable solutions, particularly for families with minor children left in the cold. All family shelter beds in the state are occupied and as of the beginning of November more than 75 families had been turned away for services. We created a hotel program to help bridge the gap, but have only been able to host a limited number of families due to funding. This program is meant to be a stopgap to ensure that children are warm while efforts are taken to get them into a long-term housing solution.

We are seeing an alarming amount of domestic violence victims on the street. Just like the homeless services shelters, domestic violence shelters are also operating at maximum occupancy, this leads to a lot of vulnerable and traumatized individuals living out in the open with little to no safety.

We have seen an increase of individuals experiencing various levels of homelessness connecting with us through social media platforms, programs that provide phones and public wifi have been helpful in keeping us connected to the issues that folks are facing daily, but many are out of our regular reach. We have been building up volunteers in Box Elder, Cache, Carbon and Utah Counties in addition to those in Weber, Davis, and Salt Lake Counties. We have seen an expansion of homeless individuals moving toward more rural counties that have less access to essential services simply to avoid the harassment that they feel in more metropolitan areas.

The weather has played a major role in the general health of individuals on the street, with extreme highs in the summer and lows in the winter we have lost clients that were directly impacted by not having access to heating and cooling in a shelter or home. We have lost dear friends to illness, addiction and acts of violence; we mourn them all. But, we act in their honor trying to prevent unnecessary deaths by acts of kindness and providing essential survival items. They matter, just as each individual who dedicates time, goods or money toward helping others matter.

As we prepare to enter 2023, we are pleased to announce that we have partnered with The Garn Foundation. They have given a substantial donation which will be used to help relieve some of the burdens of parents who are doing their best to better their situations for their children, as well as to continue to cover the hard costs associated with our ongoing outreach efforts which include: transportation, food, and storage costs.

As our organization grows to meet more needs we will be needing assistance with grant writing and fundraising; we began as a grassroots effort with little to no experience in running a nonprofit organization and through many learning curves we have been able to learn and grow. But, we have the wisdom to know that we certainly don't know it all. We are always looking for those with more experience who are willing to provide mentorship as we evolve into what we refer to as a "grown up" organization. We have finally graduated from calling ourselves a "baby nonprofit" as we've gained experience through our operation.

We are so appreciative of all of our volunteers, donors, community partners and friends who have shared our efforts and who continue to support Unsheltered Utah in so many unspoken ways. We truly could not do this without you.

We thank you for your help, your hope and your willingness to be part of this journey to improve the lives of some of our society's most vulnerable. We wish you all the best this holiday season and cannot wait to get the ball rolling for a successful 2023 with you!

Sincerely,
Unsheltered Utah Inc Executive Board
Wendy Garvin, Christine Stenquist, Nathan Kizerian and Loni Newby





Volunteers sort donations on site at our SLC storage unit before going on Street Outreach.



A large volunteer response replenishes much needed survival gear after an abatement in SLC.



Serving a hot meal and providing Turtle Shelter vests on a Sunday Street Outreach in Ogden.



Volunteers enjoy spending time together almost as much as they love assisting those in need.



Backpacks donated by Young Living served as care packages sorted by size for our clients.



A smiling executive board and some family members after a successful fundraising event.



Photos serve as memories and often of documentation of law enforcement interactions, too.



Volunteers load the box truck with supplies before a SLC street Outreach effort.



Coats are always a popular item as temperatures begin to drop.

Movie Marathon to the rescue!

One of the benefits of being a young nonprofit is that we do understand how the systems work, but we also still have a great deal of motivation and enthusiasm for finding loopholes and workarounds to make progress when we hit a wall of the system.

One such novel idea was inspired by Genesis Project of Provo who found a way to open their doors on one of the chilliest nights of the year for a late night movie screening. Upon learning about this program we immediately began researching the legalities and logistics of hosting an overnight movie night at a church.

In a matter of hours, due to the existing networking relationships, multiple organizations were able to come together to create a program for Salt Lake City. The trial run was a four-night back-to-back movie marathon which would be hosted by First United Methodist Church of Salt Lake City. The nights of Dec. 15-18, were spent in a communal area watching TV shows, movies and nature documentaries with our unsheltered neighbors.

There were hiccups, there were struggles, but there were also lives saved. We can say that without hesitation because we know for a fact that five individuals who remained on the street succumbed to the cold while we hosted up to 80 individuals inside the warm church building.

The program was such a game changer that the leadership at FUMC have agreed to continue the program on nights where the temperatures are expected to dip to deadly temperatures. We will continue this program on nights that temperatures are lower than 20 degrees.

Taking on this amount of responsibility



not only for volunteers for overnight shifts, but also security, and providing snacks, blankets and mats was a big ordeal. We are still working to get our own supply of floor mats since the partnership will continue for future events with other service provider O.U.R.S. (Our Unsheltered Relatives) and SLC Air Protectors.

We have faith that we can make this a success and prevent more freezing deaths on our streets. It simply took creative thinking to find a workaround solution until more permanent options are created.

This is just one of the ways that we would like to see innovation and creativity to problem solve. We would love to see more churches open their doors in a similar fashion. We have established that this can be done on a tight budget as long as dedicated volunteers are willing to put in the time to ensure that safety standards are met. We now have this experience under our belt that we can use to demonstrate

that out of the box thinking can save lives and it doesn't have to cost a fortune. We truly hope that other organizations and religious entities can follow the lead of the groups that came together to bring folks in from the cold on nights when every bed and every mat in the traditional homeless services programs were taken.

An article on KSL described the effort by saying, "In response to the need over the weekend, several advocacy groups worked to open the doors of the First United Methodist Church to help fill the gaps. Around 80 individuals were able to seek shelter through these efforts."

"I want to say how grateful we are for the marathon efforts of volunteers in the city and a local church downtown who over the past weekend worked quickly and worked together to provide an indoor option for so many people who didn't have any other option. Our community's commitment to this issue is unwavering and I'm grateful for it," said Mayor Erin Mendenhall.