

Issue I -- Fall 2026 -- Nothing About Us Without Us

NOBODY WITH SOMETHING TO SAY

**SUBMIT!
SUBMIT!
SUBMIT!**

liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com

Rants, raves, photos, drawings, sketches, graffiti, tags, rumors, letters to the editor, missed connections, jokes, journalism, poetry, manifestos, obituaries, autobiographies, short stories, interviews, essays, comics, letters of concern, anonymous love letters, anything you want to share! Funny, serious, sad, devastating, cool, important, scandalous, interesting, investigative, we're into all of it! Email your piece to liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com and you just might see it in our next issue! Free!

THE CATCH:

Vegas Street Talk: Lifting Every Voice exists to **uplift the voices of people experiencing homelessness in Las Vegas and surrounding areas.** If you're on the street, living out of your car, in the tunnels, in the washes, in the shelters, in the desert, *we really want to hear from you! We love you!*

Vegas Street Talk is also open to hearing from people with lived experience of homelessness, frontline workers at shelters, outreach programs, or other places that work with people on or from the street.

USE YOUR REAL NAME OR YOUR STREET NAME! YOU CAN BE ANONYMOUS!

WHAT IS VEGAS STREET TALK: LIFTING EVERY VOICE?

Spearheaded by the Southern Nevada Lived X Team and the Nevada Homeless Alliance, *Vegas Street Talk: Lifting Every Voice* is a street newspaper centered on homelessness for Las Vegas and the surrounding communities. We deeply encourage contributions from people experiencing homelessness, people who *have* lived that life but no longer do, service providers, and those who are working toward social justice, peace, and equity, all with the same goal: to fight against poisonous stigma and alleviate the pain and suffering of homelessness.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I am originally from Vegas and spent four years in and out of homelessness here and in roughly 34 other US states. I know we struggle hard here in Vegas, but I also know we have lots of community here, too.

I know that by describing, processing, and writing through our lives, we can begin to heal, bear witness, and build positive relationships with each other. We might even be able to do something about it, too.

Drop by our writing workshops and see for yourself. Email us at liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com for the most accurate date, time, and place.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of Nevada Homeless Alliance or the Southern Nevada Lived X Team.



Sketch by Barbie

Nobody with Something to Say: A Letter From Las Vegas

Feature Story by Daniel G

I am a 60-year-old African American man living on about \$1,000 a month in SSDI. I have survived a heart attack, multiple minis-strokes, a leaking heart valve, nerve damage, a blood clot, and a long list of other serious health conditions.

Until recently, I was chronically homeless on the streets of Las Vegas. I share that not for sympathy, but so readers understand who is writing these words, and why they matter.

I Kept It to Myself

For years, I wrote in silence, thoughts, feelings, observations, and ideas about what is broken in this world, and how it might be fixed. Even while I was homeless, sick, and uncertain about tomorrow, I was still thinking, still writing, still imagining how things could work better.

I have written about my childhood, about being thrown into a dumpster as a baby, rescued by my oldest sister, and raised in Compton by my grandmother, whom I called Momma because she earned that name. I have written about the stepmother who beat me and my sister, and threatened us with more punishment if we told our father. I have written about the biological mother who told me at age 7 never to speak to her in public, and never to call her Momma.

I have written about what it feels like to be invisible, not just on the street, but throughout your whole life. And I kept it to myself, not because I did not believe in the words, but because I did not believe anyone cared enough to listen.

That is what this newspaper means to me. It is proof that somebody does care, and that somewhere, somebody is listening.

What the World Gets Wrong

People should understand this, homeless people are not all the same. We are not all broken. We are not all there by choice. We are not all addicts. We are not all criminals. Some of us are doctors, teachers, electricians, nurses, construction workers, hard-working, tax paying, bill paying people who woke up one day and found the floor had fallen out from under us. A job loss. A medical crisis. A divorce. A natural disaster. Any one of these can change everything.

Hurricane Katrina did not ask people if they had good credit before it destroyed their homes. It did not check their work history. It did not care that they had been doing everything right. One storm, and thousands of working class people who had never missed a rent payment in their lives found themselves on the streets with nowhere to go.

That is the truth that gets lost when people look at someone on the street and invent a story about how they got there, and what kind of person they are. And let me say this plainly, some of the most talented, intelligent, creative, and gifted people I have ever encountered, I met on the street.

People with ideas that could change things. People with stories that could move you to tears. People with skills, wisdom, humor, and a depth of understanding about life that you cannot get from a classroom or a boardroom, because they learned it the hard way, in the hardest places.

Their talent did not disappear when they lost their housing. Their voices did not stop mattering. Their truth did not become less true. The only thing that changed is that nobody was listening anymore.

Fifteen Million Dollars, and No Real Answer

Last year, Clark County's approach to homeless encampments came into sharp focus through a fifteen million dollar project, the flood control reconstruction of the Flamingo Wash. Beyond repairing critical infrastructure, the project required clearing the network of tunnels beneath the wash that had become home to dozens of unhoused people. The operation officially began on May 20th, 2025, as crews moved residents out of the tunnels and sealed the entrances behind them. It became one of the county's most visible and consequential efforts to address homelessness.

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BUS EXPERIENCE: EMPLOYEE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND MY STREET TALK RANT

Rant by Xtra Frustrated

I have been a bus passenger for approximately 20 years in Las Vegas, NV. I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly on Las Vegas buses. I personally have experienced rude customer service from bus drivers and good customer service from a few bus drivers.

I have also seen terrible conduct from the security guards who have been on the buses. Many of the security guards that have been on the buses that I was a passenger on have used excessive and abusive treatment of passengers, abusing their authority, sometimes physically and verbally.

They have talked to many of the passengers in a rude tone, and I have witnessed the bus security guards trying to take pictures of each passenger on the bus and then go and make fun of the pictures with another security guard on the bus and talk amongst each other, laughing and joking about the pictures they took of passengers like they were playing a sick game. It has felt very uncomfortable to be on some of the buses as a passenger while witnessing this behavior from the bus security guards.

There needs to be better extensive personal customer service training for the bus drivers and security guards to show more human kindness. There also needs to be accountability set in place for bad behavior towards passengers by employees and contracted security guards. They are a representation of how the bus company treats passengers riding their buses on a daily basis. No passenger should have to feel uncomfortable on their bus ride trying to get to their destination because of unkind treatment from the bus driver or security guard, especially if they have not done anything wrong on the bus and paid the fare to ride.

The bus company should put a division in place that monitors the bus drivers' and security guards' customer service behavior and make them aware that they are being monitored. They need to know that they will be held accountable for bad customer service behavior toward passengers. There should be consequences for mistreating passengers, such as suspension without pay. I hope the bus company will strive to be held to a higher standard so the passengers they serve can feel comfortable riding with a bus service that will show they care about the service they render to the public.

Xtra Frustrated is now housed after spending 20 years on the streets of Vegas.

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To be fair, it was not a sweep with nothing behind it. Outreach workers were on site, offering services and assistance with finding lodging. But offering something is not the same as offering enough.

In the weeks that followed, residents in surrounding neighborhoods reported an increase in encampments. Outreach workers described the aftermath not as a solved problem, but as an ongoing effort to engage with people who had simply been displaced. Whatever assistance was available, it did not answer the fundamental question: where are people supposed to go once they are forced out, especially in numbers that a handful of outreach workers cannot realistically absorb in a single morning?

Clark County has passed laws prohibiting camping in public rights of way.

On paper, that looks like action. In practice, it is a policy supported by an answer too small to meet the need. How can a law be created that makes it illegal for people to exist somewhere, without first providing enough somewhere else for them to go? Removing people from the tunnels does not solve homelessness.

It moves it.

It moves it into neighborhoods, backyards, parking lots, doorways, and vacant lots. It moves it into the lives of residents who were never asked whether they wanted a crisis relocated to their block.

I know what that displacement looks like from the inside. Nobody hands you a plan when they clear the place where you have been surviving. They hand you a deadline.

“When fencing is the only tool available, fencing is what gets used, even by people who know it is not enough.”

Then you go find the next place, and the cycle begins again.

I do not say this to blame the officers, outreach workers, or construction crews who carried out the operation. Most of them were dedicated professionals doing exactly what they were asked to do, and doing it as respectfully as the circumstances allowed. My concern is with the decision itself. I believe it was made not because anyone wanted to make things worse, but because no one at the table had a better answer.

When fencing is the only tool available, fencing is what gets used, even by people who know it is not enough.

Pushing people out without sufficient housing and supportive services behind that decision does not resolve the problem.

Those experiencing homelessness end up farther from whatever stability they had and farther from the outreach workers who knew where to find them. The surrounding community inherits a crisis it did not create and has no practical means to address. Fencing off a wash does not house a single person. It simply changes the address of the problem.

Full System Collaboration

The Flamingo Wash project illustrates a much larger issue. Homelessness cannot be solved by any single program because it is not caused by any single factor. Housing matters.

Mental health care matters. Addiction treatment matters. Employment matters. Medical care matters. Outreach matters. None of these pieces can carry the weight alone.

Homelessness is not one problem. It is many problems arriving in the same place at the same time: Housing instability, behavioral health, youth services, education, workforce development, healthcare, and economic mobility all intersect. When these systems operate independently, people may achieve temporary progress, but they rarely achieve lasting stability.

“One of the most overlooked realities is this: housing and a minimum wage job do not mean a successful transition. They represent survival, not stability.”

Las Vegas has strong individual programs. Shelters, treatment centers, youth organizations, workforce initiatives, mental health providers, and community partners all perform meaningful work. What is missing is a unified operating model that coordinates those resources around the same individual in real time.

Without that coordination, people fall through the cracks. Someone may obtain housing while continuing to struggle with untreated trauma. Another may complete substance use treatment but remain unemployed. A family may secure temporary shelter only to lose it because transportation or childcare collapses.



Photo by Martin Castro

These are not failures of individual effort. They are failures of system design.

One of the most overlooked realities is this: housing and a minimum wage job do not equal a successful transition. They represent survival, not stability.

When someone moves from homelessness into an apartment and secures a low-wage job, the system often celebrates that outcome as success. It is meaningful progress, and it should be recognized. But it is not the finish line. That person is still one missed paycheck, one medical emergency, one unexpected expense, or one eviction notice away from returning to homelessness.

We must stop confusing short-term improvement with long-term transformation. A successful transition requires stable housing, accessible mental healthcare, substance use recovery, employment that provides opportunities for advancement, transportation, healthcare, family support, community connection, long-term case management, and real pathways toward economic mobility. Most importantly, these supports must operate

together rather than as disconnected services delivered one after another. Las Vegas needs a collaborative model in which housing agencies, mental health providers, substance use treatment programs, youth organizations, workforce partners, schools, non-profits, healthcare providers, faithbased organizations, and local governments are not simply referring people to one another, but sharing responsibility for coordinated outcomes.

That is the difference between a network of services and a unified system.

A unified system ensures that people are not left navigating disconnected programs on their own. It ensures that progress in one area is reinforced by progress in every other area. It recognizes that lasting stability is built through coordination rather than isolated interventions.

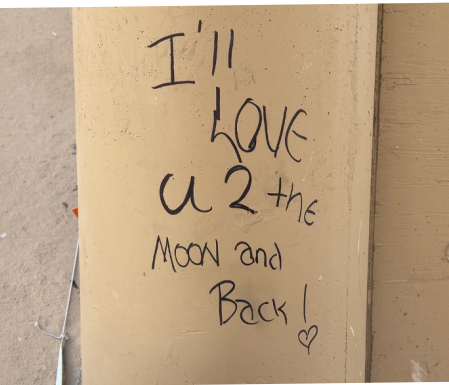


Photo by Martin Castro

The future of homelessness response in Las Vegas must be built on collaboration, integration, shared data, shared accountability, and shared outcomes. Until those systems begin working together as one coordinated effort, we will continue spending millions of dollars relocating homelessness instead of reducing it. Encampments will be cleared. People will be displaced. Neighborhoods will inherit problems they did not create. The location will change, the headlines will change, and the cost will change, but the outcome will remain the same.

Where I Am Now

I want to pause here and speak from where I actually stand today, because everything I have written above comes from lived experience, not theory.

Very recently, I was fortunate enough to receive placement through Rapid Rehousing. I can happily say that I have been clean and sober for six wonderful years, and I am currently in a stable, moderate-sized one-bedroom apartment. I did not write this essay from the tunnels or from the wash. I wrote it from a home of my own, still carrying everything I learned out there, and still asking the same question that has followed me for years.

How Do Societies Eradicate Homelessness?

This is a question I have spent a lot of time thinking about, and it is my sincere belief that if nothing changes, the homelessness situation and mental health crisis will likely worsen all over the United States over the next 10 to 15 years, driven by rising housing costs, inflation, aging populations, addiction, and economic instability.

Emergency rooms, shelters, jails, and police departments continue carrying much of the burden instead of coordinated community systems.

Governments will probably spend more money each year, yet many communities may see only see modest improvements, because many programs respond after people reach crisis rather than preventing it.

The biggest challenge, in my view, is that these problems are connected. Homelessness is not just a housing problem. Mental illness is not just a healthcare problem. I see them as tied to different things: employment, education, transportation,

social support, healthcare, public safety, and economic opportunity.

That is also where I think the greatest opportunity exists. If over the next 5 to 10 years communities moved toward more data-driven decisionmaking, greater use of AI to identify people at risk before they become homeless, better coordination among agencies instead of isolated programs, more emphasis on prevention rather than crisis response, and measuring success by long term stability rather than simply the number of services delivered, I believe the trajectory could change.

I believe this is one of the reasons the Housing First approach has not worked as intended. Rather than asking, “How do we reduce homelessness,” the question should be, “How do we build communities where homelessness becomes increasingly rare because the underlying systems are stronger?”

The truth of the matter is, I do not believe that one system or framework can solve homelessness or mental illness on its own. But I do believe the future belongs to integrated systems that help leaders see problems early, coordinate resources, measure outcomes, and adapt quickly. In many ways, some sort of system is needed that can address homelessness, mental health, economic resilience, public safety, and other civic challenges through one coordinated framework.

“If you are reading this and you have a story, write it. It does not have to be perfect. It does not have to be polished. It just has to be real.”

If I had to guess at the outcome, I would say that the communities that thrive over the next ten years will not necessarily be the ones that spend the most money. They will be the ones that connect their people, data, services, and decisions into one coordinated system instead of operating alone.

You Are Not Invisible

If you are reading this and you have a story, write it. It does not have to be perfect. It does not have to be polished. It just has to be real.

Because the voices of people who have been through the most, who have seen the bottom, who have navigated systems that were never designed for them, who have survived things that would have stopped others cold, those are exactly the voices the world needs to hear.

You are not invisible. You never were.

Daniel G. is a Las Vegas resident who recently transitioned out of homelessness through the Rapid Rehousing program, and who has been clean and sober for six years.



EVERYBODY DESERVES TO BE SEEN

A Parable by Ronnie Doak

The woman was not asking for much— just a little change for some food. He rolled up the window of his vehicle and turned up the radio. *It’s not my fault. I don’t owe anybody anything. I have enough on my own plate.* The light turned green as he sped off in haste.

He arrived home and joyfully jumped into the shower, where he lathered himself with the newest body wash and fancy shampoo. He dried off and redressed into more comfortable clothing. He made his way into the kitchen and heated up some food, then turned on the tube and began watching the latest crime thriller until his eyes shut. He woke up and realized it was time for bed. He set the air conditioner to the temperature he loves so much as he pulled back the covers of his king-size bed.

“What a day,” he exclaimed as he pulled a sleep mask over his eyes and blissfully fell asleep.

She picked up her sign that said, “Hungry. Anything Helps.”

Her dog trotted behind her, wagging his tail incessantly. She made her way to a convenience store to purchase some food for her pet, and with what’s left, possibly enough for a sweet bread and coffee. It was bone-chilling cold outside, with rain and strong winds howling through the city streets. It was a good mile’s walk back to the mattress she slept on behind a dumpster near the railway tracks. Her coat had long seen better days, but thankfully, the hood cut the chill on her wrinkled face. As her tired feet made it to her makeshift bed, she nearly cut her foot from broken glass that was sprawled amid piles of garbage and loose trash. Tonight, she prayed for a restful sleep, undisturbed by the darkness around her and the creatures that attacked her legs. Her blanket was damp and dirty, but she was thankful to be able to cover her frailty. She lied down with her little doggie, who kept her warm as she drifted off to sleep.

She dreamed of her home back before her husband passed six years ago, when life wasn’t a struggle to survive, before depression stripped away her happiness and meaning. She smiled as she called his name and told him, “I love you.” She thanked God that tonight she wouldn’t go to bed hungry. As she closed her eyes, she finally felt a surge of peace.

Photo by Martin Castro

Tonight, for some reason, the bitter cold had lost its sting.

He woke up to the sound of his alarm. “What a good night’s rest!” He exclaimed. He turned the shower on and let the hot, refreshing water invigorate his body. The smell of eggs, bacon, and hot oatmeal filled the kitchen. He poured a steaming cup of coffee and sipped it slowly as he checked the latest stocks on his phone.

He jumped into his Mercedes and pulled out onto the road. It appeared yesterday’s storm had passed. Traffic was typical. His new suit fit him well, and rightfully so; he deserved everything he had because he worked hard for it. He pulled up to the freeway overpass.

For once, that dirty old lady with her dog wasn’t there begging him for change, always shaking that cup, trying to get close to his car. She probably spent all that money on drugs. Why else would she be homeless?

The light turned green, and he hopped on the freeway. As he pulled into his office, he looked in the mirror to adjust his tie, then stepped out of his vehicle, where he was greeted by coworkers and friends.

He thought to himself, I’ve finally made it. Finally, I have arrived.

Her dog was whimpering and frantically moaning. It was not like her to sleep this

long. Typically, they would already be up and moving for his morning restroom and a little food. She never moved as he nudged her face. He sat there motionless, next to her, begging her to wake up, hoping possibly she was just a little more tired than usual. She never woke. She spent her last moments here on Earth laying on a mattress that smelled of mildew, in clothing tattered and torn. A few hours passed before red and blue lights pulled up behind the dumpster. It was in that moment that she no longer felt the shame of being homeless— the sneers and dirty looks.

It was in that moment that life no longer felt like survival, no more nights going to bed with hunger, no days of soiling her clothing because nobody would let her use a restroom. It was in that moment that she was no longer unseen.

While she had been alive while homeless, hardly anyone ever asked her name.

Yet in her passing, now and only now, was anyone concerned about the name her parents once gave her.

They never found a next of kin. Her days of suffering were over. name her parents once gave her. They never found a next of kin. The mattress was discarded in the dumpster. What little belongings she had were left behind in that little space she had made her home. She saw it all from a bright white light. She was given one last moment to send a message back to Earth.

She whispered in that little dog’s ear, “I love you so much, and don’t worry about me. Nothing hurts no more.” She told the animal, “You always kept me safe and warm, and one day we will see each other again. Until then, I thank you for the love you gave and how you always made me feel seen.”

The dog got up and wagged his tail. As he barked at the sky, he trotted off with joy in his heart in pursuit of a new temporary home.

30 Years Later:
The man was not asking for much, just a little change for some food. His hands were now wrinkled as he walked past cars near the freeway overpass.

His days of comfort had long gone, days of glory when he once drove this same route to work in his Mercedes.

A car pulled up and tossed a few coins in his cup. How grateful he was to receive the change. He managed to make enough money to buy some food. As he walked down the road to a gas station, he remembered when he used to roll his eyes at people like him.

What a fool I was, he thought.

One life event was all it took for him to lose it all. The car accident left him disabled; he could no longer work or pay his mortgage. The bank foreclosed his home, the repo took his car, and he was left with whatever he could carry on his back. Family never came to his aid. He was always better than them; he made time for nobody. As he poured a cup of coffee and went to the counter to pay the cashier, he was greeted with disdain as he pulled out a pocket full of coins from his dirt-stained pants. He knew the look all too well.

He once remembered, long ago, a little old woman with a dog who used to ask for change. Look at me now, he thought.

As he made his way to the tent he called home, he thought of her, and for once in his life he said to himself, “I’m sorry I never gave you no change. Please forgive me.”

He laid down to rest, hoping tonight wouldn’t be so cold. As days passed, no king-size bed, no climate-controlled room, no hot-cooked meal. He laid there and closed his eyes, knowing now the feeling of going unseen.

Moral of the story:
You never know what someone else is going through. Be kind to everyone you meet. Even those experiencing homelessness deserve the right to be seen.

Ronnie Doak is a member of the Southern Nevada Lived X Team, a Peer Recovery Support Specialist, and a Case Manager at Crossroads of Southern Nevada. He is formerly homeless.

STREET HOROSCOPE

By Jessica Moore

Aries (Mar 21 - Apr 19)
Your resilience shows up as momentum. If the path feels blocked, take one small, bold step, then another. *Lucky Item:* A warm cup of coffee.

Taurus (Apr 20 - May 20)
Comfort may come from unexpected places today. A kind conversation or a familiar face could lift your spirits more than material things. *Lucky Item:* A cozy blanket.

Gemini (May 21 - Jun 20)
Your superpower is adapt-ability. When things shift, you can ask better questions, find fresh information, and connect people who need each other. Hope grows when you share what you know. *Lucky Item:* A working Sharpie.

Cancer (Jun 21 - Jul 22)
Your resilience is soft but mighty. Protect your energy, accept help, and remember that care is a resource too. *Lucky Item:* A bracelet.

Leo (Jul 23 - Aug 22) Let others contribute, celebrate small wins loudly, and use your confidence to open doors for yourself and your community. *Lucky Item:* Pants.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
Your resourcefulness is leg-endary. Make the list, sort the details, and then give yourself permission to stop optimizing everything. The most hopeful plan is the one that leaves room for rest. *Lucky Item:* An accor-dion folder.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Resilience blooms through balance, but balance does not mean doing equal amounts of everything. Choose the sup-port that restores peace, then let hope look stylish while it works. *Lucky Item:* A 24-hour bus pass.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
You are built for transforma-tion. If something ends, trust your ability to rebuild with sharper wisdom. Your best resource is the truth you are no longer afraid to name. *Lucky Item:* A singular, abandoned shoe.

Sagittarius (Oct 23 - Nov 21) Hope finds you through perspective. Take the long view, ask what this chapter is teach-ing you, and look for resources beyond the usual map— books, mentors, travel, humor, or a very good snack. *Lucky Item:* A fresh Raiders hat.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19) Your resilience is practi-cal magic. Build the next step, not the whole mountain. The resources you need may already be nearby: time, structure, per-sistence, and one person who believes in your plan. *Lucky Item:* A sturdy backpack.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
Your hope is collective. Reach out, crowdsource, innovate, and remember that uncon-ventional solutions are still solutions. The future improves when you let people build it with you. *Lucky Item:* A brand new Nalgene.

Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar20)
Your resilience flows through imagination and compassion. Dream gently but keep a prac-tical cup nearby to catch the ideas. *Lucky Item:* That gra-nola bar.

Jessica Moore is a Resource Navigator at Nevada Homeless Alliance. She is formerly homeless.

(Left) N. Las Vegas HOME Team
Photo by Martin Castro



CONGREGATE SHELTER QUALITY SURVEY

An Analysis by Taisacan Hall

Between November 2025 and January 2026, the Southern Nevada Lived X Team surveyed 102 (n = 102) individuals staying in a congregate (shared space style) shelter to better understand experiences, needs, and barriers to accessing services and securing stable housing. While congregate shelters provide critical emergency resources and meet some immediate basic needs, survey respondents identified gaps in pathways to long-term stability. Respondents also raised important concerns related to safety, staffing, discrimination, privacy, and the overall shelter environment.

This sample of 102 individuals staying in a congregate shelter setting highlights the need for improvements within the shelter system and broader investments in affordable housing and supportive services.

The findings are as follows:

Prolonged homelessness.

More than half of respondents had been in shelter for over three months, while **57.8%** had been homeless for over a year. *Recommendation:* Review whether shelter policies or administrative processes unintentionally contribute to prolonged stays.

Housing navigation is the most significant service gap.

Housing navigation was identified by **43%** of respondents as missing or difficult to access. *Recommendation:* Employ and increase access to dedicated housing navigators.

Employment and income are major components of the homelessness cycle.

45% identified loss of employment/income as a contributing factor to their current homelessness. *Recommendations:* Expand partnerships with workforce development agencies and employers. Reduce barriers to employment. More living wage and second chance jobs are needed in our community.

Case management appears to be an important unmet need

Despite residing in shelter, the survey indicates that the majority did not have a case manager. Only **33.3%** identified case management as a service available when they needed it. *Recommendation:* Assess current case manager-to-client ratios and caseloads, ensuring that case managers are able to adequately support each client.

Service availability does not equal accessibility.

While emergency shelter, showers, and food were among the services respondents most commonly reported as available, respondents identified long wait times (**31.3%**), lack of information (**25.3%**), and transportation (**25.3%**) as frequent barriers to accessing services. *Recommendation:* Identify and remove fees for services and meals; expand transportation assistance, bus passes, shuttle services, and partnership capacities.

Safety must be a priority.

One of the most concerning findings is that **63.8%** of respondents reported experiencing or witnessing violence, theft, or harassment, with **27.5%** stating encounters with both. Additional research is needed to determine the frequency, severity, or circumstances of these incidents. *Recommendation:* Ensure residents know how to report violence, harassment, theft, and other concerns; follow up on concerns in a manner that is deescalatory, trauma-informed, and dignified for all involved.

Mixed reports on staff experiences.

Nearly half of respondents rated staff as respectful/very respectful while **27.7%** rated staff as disrespectful/very disrespectful. Similarly, while **60.8%** reported that staff usually or always responded positively to conflicts, issues, or concerns, a meaningful minority reported that staff rarely or never responded appropriately. These results suggest that staff conduct is inconsistent. *Recommendation:* Provide residents with a confidential mechanism for reporting staff conduct concerns and review complaints for recurring patterns involving specific policies, locations, shifts, or interactions; establish and improve staff accountability measures; and include resident feedback in staff performance.

Discrimination should be examined more closely.

33.7% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination in shelter. Demographic information is needed to understand whether certain populations experience discrimination at higher rates. *Recommendation:* Review shelter policies to identify practices that may unintentionally affect certain groups differently.

Shelter rules should be clearer and more transparent.

Only **44.1%** responded that shelter rules were fair, while **26.5%** said the rules were unfair or unclear. *Recommendation:* Review rules with direct resident input and provide residents with a clear process for challenging or appealing decisions; distinguish between rules required for safety/compliance and discretionary program policies.

Staff availability may be limiting access to support.

Although **54%** said staff was available when needed, **46%** responded that staff was not always available. *Recommendation:* Identify periods when residents report the greatest difficulty accessing staff and review staffing levels during those times.

Cleanliness is a significant quality of life concern.

The results are unusually divided into an even split between clean/very clean and unclean/very unclean. Residents have substantially different experiences depending on the shelter, time of day, or other circumstances. *Recommendation:* Conduct regular cleanliness inspections; increase sanitation staffing levels.

Overall, the survey indicates that the shelter is providing necessary emergency resources to individuals experiencing homelessness. Comprehensive and recurring review of shelter safety, staffing, privacy, cleanliness, and resident experience should inform ongoing program improvements. At the broader systems level, increasing the supply of affordable housing is essential to ensuring that shelter can function as a temporary intervention.

Taisacan Hall is a member of the Southern Nevada Lived X Team and a Lived Experience Specialist at Nevada Homeless Alliance. She is formerly homeless. For more information about the survey, please reach out at snvlivedx@gmail.com.

RECOVERY SPOTLIGHT: "YOU MATTER!"



Danielle Olivetti is currently a street outreach worker for the City of North Las Vegas HOME Team.

Favorite Color: Purple
Zodiac Sign: Sagittarius
Message to the people in the tunnels: **“You matter.”**

Originally from California, Danielle came to Vegas as a pre-teen. Anxiety, depression, trauma, a broken home, a parent with substance use issues, and mental health issues all built up. School came easily to Danielle, and she wasn't academically challenged. “Infatuated with marijuana and boys,” she struggled with her coursework and staying in class. This all came to a head when Danielle became pregnant at 17 years old. Danielle eventually worked at her sister's cleaning business until she had her second child at 19. She worked at Victoria's Secret and as a hostess at restaurants. She had four kids, all in all.

Ten years later, Danielle discovered the father of her children was struggling with a heroin addiction. She didn't want to tell anybody and tried to protect him. Danielle would minimize the harm his addiction caused and worked hard to keep her kids and their father together.

He finally admitted to his use, and Danielle's world crashed around her. She knew very well the stigma of teen motherhood. That stigma meant she couldn't accept help. The fact that the father of her children had a heroin problem fed into the stigma, even though they were well beyond their teenage years.

Danielle had a nervous breakdown.

Then one night, a friend of hers came over and offered her meth-amphetamine.

Meth became a relief and a way to self-medicate. It helped Danielle get out of bed, do the laundry, and go to work.

Danielle lost everything within a few months: her home, her job, her car, and ultimately, her family took custody of her children. That experience was humbling and devastating.

Danielle went through drug court for three and a half years. She got her life together. Danielle was working and had her own car and apartment. She took classes at CSN. At one point, she got custody of her children again. Danielle didn't have a strong support system. She relapsed and lost custody again. Danielle felt like she had betrayed and abandoned her kids.

Time became a blur, and she tried to escape the guilt and shame.

As she explained, “The only way I deserved to live was to be punished.”

Danielle then lived in the tunnels for seven years. She said it was a miserable experience. She hated her life and just wanted to

escape. She also graduated from meth to heroin, using intravenously, then eventually fentanyl. She wasn't chasing a high. Just escape. It was dehumanizing, and help was rare. Tunnel living came with constant threats of abatements by the Nevada Department of Transportation.

There were also brief moments of humanity, such as creating rooms underground complete with curtains and furniture.

Sometimes there were food pantries, or there were churches (shout out to the Hub!) Some organizations fed homeless people at the park. Those interactions reminded Danielle that life was still happening. The churches were so kind, but Danielle didn't know how to take the first step. She didn't know she could go to treatment with Medicaid. Danielle survived the heat and the rain. She was thin. She was in and out of the hospital multiple times and left against medical advice because that meant she couldn't escape. Her anxieties mounted. Danielle became suicidal. She witnessed someone getting shot and killed ten feet from her. There were so many people she interacted with on the street who passed away. Some from overdose and others from heat or dehydration.

At every rock bottom that Danielle hit, there was at least one person put in her path who felt irreplaceable. There were people she connected with who were in similar situations, and they helped each other get through really difficult times. One of her close friends in the tunnels had similar issues with his kids. He got arrested, then went to sober living. Meanwhile, people told Danielle he probably passed away. He returned to the tunnels while still in sober living to check on Danielle. He got a car, then his own place, and then he was at his nephew's wedding, and he was hanging out with his kids. He told Danielle, “You can do this too.”

Danielle finally got a phone and saw a picture of her granddaughter on Facebook. Something hit Danielle like lightning. The guilt and pain that she caused continued on by her not doing anything about her situation. That motivated her to seek help and reconnect with her family. Deciding to go to treatment, Danielle got high one last time. That time, she overdosed, and hospital staff brought her back to life. Danielle then went to detox and treatment.

Danielle just recently celebrated three years of sobriety. Her current work as a street outreach worker fuels a calling and a passion to give back and help people experiencing homelessness today. She deeply desires to stay in the field and expand her impact, exploring avenues for advocacy and harm reduction, including participating in the annual Narcan at Night event.

Danielle believes shedding the shame and stigma is so important. Recently, Danielle went to Washington, DC, to speak with Nevada legislators and advocate on behalf of people experiencing homelessness. Her message: *Dead people don't recover.*

Did you like this story? Please consider nominating a loved one for the next **Recovery Spotlight** column. Email liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com.



Photo by Public Domain Images

CANTALOUPE, I GUESS

A story by Tamika Edwards

This isn't a story about how I bought a cantaloupe and it reminded me of my mom. This is a story about how grief attaches itself to ordinary things and quietly stays there.

Sometimes we encounter grief every day. Sometimes it is seasonal, showing up around a holiday, a birthday or an anniversary. And sometimes grief lives inside something so mundane that we don't even recognize it as part of our grief until years later.

For me, one of those ordinary things was a cantaloupe.

When I got my first apartment in downtown San Francisco, my mom had a Saturday routine. She would go to the grocery store and buy me two cantaloupes. Then, on her way to my apartment, she would stop at Burlington Coat Factory. She would show up with T-shirts, slippers, socks and all these little things that, technically, I was a grown woman and should have been buying for myself.

But I didn't.

I had a mom who bought those things for me. At the time, I didn't think much about it. There was always another t-shirt, another pair of socks, another pair of slippers. It was just what Mom did. I didn't realize how important those little things were until she was gone. A few weeks ago, I stopped at the store on my way back to the office before my grief class. I wanted to grab a few snacks for myself and the group, nothing major. Then I walked through the produce section and saw the cantaloupes.

And they looked good. Like, really good.

Now, let me be clear. I have eaten cantaloupe since my mom died. I did not spend the last nine years dramatically avoiding cantaloupe like it had personally wronged me. I would buy the little containers with the cantaloupe already cut up. I would eat it in a fruit salad. That was fine.

A whole cantaloupe, though? Absolutely not.

But that day I stood there looking at them and thought, You know what? I could really go for some cantaloupe. Then I stood there a little longer.

Because apparently this was no longer a simple produce decision.

Finally, I picked one up, put it in my cart and bought myself a cantaloupe.

I took it home, put it on the counter and left it there for the night. The next morning, I rinsed it off, cut it open and had cantaloupe for breakfast. And it was good. I had some more the next day. Then the rest sat in my refrigerator.

And sat.

Until eventually I had to throw it away. So, after nine years, I have confirmed something my mom refused to accept when she was alive: I still cannot eat a whole big old cantaloupe by myself. And she used to buy me TWO. Next time, I'll take the other half to the office and share it with somebody. Problem solved. But I'm glad I bought that cantaloupe.

(pause)

Grief is funny like that.

You can go years without realizing you've made a rule for yourself. Nobody announces it. You don't write it down. You just quietly arrange your life around something until one day you realize, *Wait. I don't have to do that anymore.*

That's grief. Sometimes it shows up on birthdays, holidays and anniversaries. And sometimes you're just minding your business in the produce section.

Tamika Edwards is a member of the Southern Nevada Lived X Team and a Resource Specialist at Nevada Homeless Alliance. She is formerly homeless.



Photo by Martin Castro

“Untitled”
A Poem by Ben Stolen

The world opens like a flower if you yourself become a flower, change imminent and incandescent, and if you refuse like a rock in the riverbed, then you stay a rock.

Being a rock has perks, but it's just not for me. I'd rather float down the cascading river and follow it down to the sea.

After all, we're all being swept away into the sea anyway, no matter if we're rocks or flowers or anything in-between.

Photo by Barbie



POINT : COUNTERPOINT

The views expressed in this column do not formally represent the views of Nevada Homeless Alliance or the Southern Nevada Lived X Team.

Point by David, currently on the street:

“Wasted Resources: Nevada spends hundreds of millions on homelessness.”

Instead of using money to build permanent housing, it goes toward running inefficient shelters and supporting agencies that only exist to refer people elsewhere. Often to places that have already failed them.

The shelters are more concerned about enforcing rules than actually helping people. They are expensive to construct and maintain, failing to solve anything because they do not meet actual needs. The emphasis on restrictive rules creates a system of dependency rather than progress. It accommodates individuals who are not looking to change their situation, while actively holding back those who want out. People trying to move forward are forced to spend their entire day chasing resources. Waiting in a separate long line for each basic need even when multiple services are available at the same place. This keeps people trapped in a cycle of reliance, which ultimately allows these organizations to justify their ongoing demand for more public funding.

Most statistics I've read show that the majority of homeless people are either mentally ill or drug addicted, and many regularly commit crimes. The only real solutions require facing these facts directly. We need enough state hospitals for the mentally ill, enough treatment centers for addicts, and enough prisons for criminals, while shutting down the wasteful referral agencies and inefficient shelters. Treatment and institutional care must be mandated for those who cannot or will not take care of themselves. Placing these people into proper facilities removes the majority from the streets entirely. All that remains are the individuals actively trying to become self-sufficient. These people require less actual “help” and more of others simply getting out of their way. The goal should be to efficiently provide basic necessities until they succeed. It is not complicated, but it will never happen. Too many people benefit from exploiting the problem to ever want it solved. There is no real system of justice in the U.S.—only a Criminal Justice System.

Counterpoint by Oscar, formerly street homeless and former emergency shelter staff:

Hey David, There are some ideas you have that I 100% agree with, some ideas that I don't agree with, and some ideas that I want to address directly. In the spirit of open dialogue about homelessness, I'd like to start with things we can agree on. We need more permanent housing. We need affordable housing options, options that take 30% of whatever income a person has (vouchers and other options, especially for those on SSI and SSDI), and we need more Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).

I also worry about enforcement mechanisms and power at shelters. Acknowledging that shelters “are more concerned about enforcing rules than actually helping people,” I cannot sit here and tell you the rules are fair, or that you have to “get with the program” in order to receive help. The fact of the matter is that shelters are both necessary *and* a band-aid on an open wound,

and that wound is that there is not enough **actually** affordable housing and not enough ways to exit homelessness in a manner that affirms dignity and life for those who are suffering from it.

I also agree with you about dependency on the system. We do not talk to each other enough about learned helplessness as a psychological concept. Building self-efficacy should be at the forefront of project design. However, people experiencing homelessness are not infants, nor are they helpless, nor should they be punished for needing or wanting help, or even being hesitant or “noncompliant” in seeking help. Inspiring others to “help themselves” is a rare talent, and I can hope we can harness and nurture that talent when we see it.

Where we will disagree: I do not believe that there are individuals here or elsewhere who are “not looking to change their situation.” I do believe that the pressures of resource chasing, the social stigma of homelessness, and the literal lack of money or ways to legally attain money *and* hold onto that money are the root cause of what you are seeing. It is easy to give up. Yes, people will say they are not ready or willing, or they like it outside. There are deeper issues at play with these conversations.

I'm also happy to face facts directly. Mental illness, substance use, homelessness, and criminal justice involvement overlap; but they are not interchangeable. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) reports that roughly 35% of people experiencing sheltered homelessness have a substance use disorder. That number will be higher for those unsheltered.

Criminal justice involvement is disproportionately high, but that does not mean most homeless people are dangerous criminals. One HUD study found 38% of its homeless study population had at least one criminal justice encounter, but the leading reason for arrest was trespassing, followed by drug possession, petty theft, public intoxication, and driving with a suspended license—all nonviolent offenses (HUD).

Mental health and illness, too, are a serious issue. Federal data identified 139,964 people experiencing homelessness with severe mental illness in 2024—about 18% of the 771,480 people counted nationwide (HHS; HUD, 2024).

We agree Nevada needs more behavioral health and treatment capacity. Where I'm cautious is mandated treatment. Nevada already permits involuntary intervention during certain mental health crises, with legal standards and safeguards because taking away someone's liberty is serious (NRS 433A).

The question isn't simply whether we should mandate treatment. It's who decides, under what circumstances, and with what protections? Homelessness alone cannot justify confinement. Unfortunately, stereotypes, institutionalized stigma, and hatred do not differentiate between you and those whom you believe need mandated treatment.

Ultimately, I am convinced that solidarity is our best tool in the fight to end homelessness.

If you are or were homeless and want to add to this conversation, or spark another, please email us at liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com.



Not Homeless Voteless

GENERAL ELECTION DAY:
TUESDAY, 11/3/26

CAN UNHOUSED PEOPLE REGISTER & VOTE?

Yes, citizens experiencing homelessness can register & vote in all 50 states. People can list wherever they stay at night (sheltered or unsheltered), provide a description, and/or drawing for in-person & mail-in voter registration.

WHAT IF I HAVE A FELONY CONVICTION, WARRANT, OR MISDEMEANORS?

In Nevada, you are eligible to vote regardless of warrants or misdemeanors. If you have a felony conviction, you can vote after you've been released from incarceration, even if you are on probation or parole.

SAME DAY VOTER REGISTRATION & VOTING

Citizens can still register and vote on general election day, November 3rd! Same-day voter registration is also available at any in-person polling place during early voting. NOTE: Same-day voter registration and voting will require a state issued ID.

ADDRESS REQUIREMENTS

NOTE: Even if a shelter does not permit you to use its address for residential use, you can still use it to register to vote if you normally stay there. If a street address is unavailable, a detailed description of where you stay is acceptable. A mailing address is only needed to send ballot information. General Delivery address is an acceptable mailing address.

WHAT IF MY ADDRESS HAS CHANGED AND/OR I NO LONGER HAVE ACCESS TO MY MAIL?

You can update your address for voter registration at the Clark County Elections Department and they will provide you with a replacement ballot. To complete the address update, you will have to bring a copy of a bill or any form that shows your residence is in Clark County along with an ID.

GENERAL DELIVERY AS MAILING ADDRESS

NORTH LAS VEGAS: General Delivery, North Las Vegas, Nevada 89030

LAS VEGAS: General Delivery, Las Vegas, Nevada 89165

HENDERSON: General Delivery, Henderson, Nevada 89015

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

An ID is not required to vote if you're already registered and your signatures match. You will need the last 4 of your SS#. If you're a first time voter, registered by mail or online, you may need to present an ID.

ACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION

Driver's license, state ID, military ID, any ID issued by a government agency, student ID, passport, or tribal ID. State issued IDs that expired after March 2020 are acceptable for voter registration and same-day voter registration. An HMIS Clarity ID can not be used as voting ID.

RESEARCH CANDIDATES

Nevada Current Voter Guide:

<http://bit.ly/43tIMRJ>

Vote411: vote411.org/plan-your-vote

Ballotpedia:

https://ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup

VOTER REGISTRATION

Online: registertovotenv.gov

By Mail: nvsos.gov/sosvoterregform/

In Person: Clark County Election Dept, DMV, City Clerk, NV State Welfare or WIC Office

POLLING LOCATIONS

There are many polling locations to go to:
<https://bit.ly/4e2HFyx>

CLARK COUNTY ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Address: 965 Trade. Dr., Suite A, North Las Vegas, NV 89030

Hours: Mon-Thurs 7:30am - 5:30pm

DEADLINES

Mail or in-person registration: Tues, 10/6/26

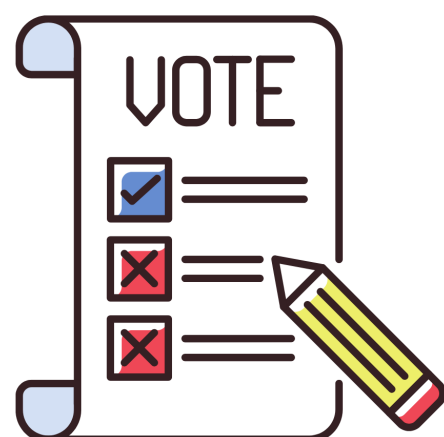
Online registration: Tues, 10/20/26

Same day registration & voting:

Wed, 10/21/26 - Tues, 11/3/26

Early Voting: Sat, 10/17/26 - Fri, 10/30/26

Primary Election Day: Tues, 11/3/26



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Autumn Word Search

O	C	I	N	N	A	M	O	N	O	S	Q
A	T	K	X	R	E	A	S	L	V	R	M
E	C	L	I	P	S	E	U	V	N	A	X
Z	N	I	K	P	M	U	P	T	P	R	E
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H	A	R	V	E	S	T	Y	P	Z	V	N
C	I	D	E	R	D	R	A	H	C	R	O
F	O	T	Z	R	E	T	A	E	W	S	Q
K	G	B	B	E	W	B	O	C	R	D	K
U	G	T	R	I	C	A	N	D	Y	B	P
S	C	A	R	E	C	R	O	W	E	Q	Y

1. Pumpkin

2. Autumn

3. Harvest
4. Orchard

5. Scarecrow

6. Sweater
7. Cobweb

8. Eclipse

9. Apple
10. Candy

11. Cider

12. Ghosts
13. Maple

14. Nutmeg

15. Cinnamon



Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family, including food, clothing, **housing**, medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood circumstances beyond his control.

United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, 1948

- If you are homeless,
- If you are an organization that would allow a two-hour writing workshop in your space,
- If you are interested in supporting,
- If you are interested in submitting,
- If you are interested in ad space,
- If you are interested in joining the editorial team,
- If you want *Vegas Street Talk: Lifting Every Voice* distributed at your location or want to join the mailing list,
- If you are a journalist / writer / photographer / artist / teacher interested in facilitating a workshop,
- If you're an organization that wants to partner with us in all kinds of ways,

Email liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com.

Thank you to our contributors and supporters! We're looking for more!

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Please contact
liftingeveryvoicevegas@gmail.com
if you are interested in dropping in
one of our workshops! No experience
necessary!

Next issue Preview:

A profile celebrating Donavan LeDean's Radio Show called "Next Man Up, Poetry in Motion" on KUNV, 91.5 FM, first and second Sundays from 9:30 - 10:00am, promoting positive mental health.
The show can also be found on YouTube!

Next Issue Theme: Grief, Love, and Remembrance



Art by Barbie



Art by Edie



PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT™

togetherforbetter



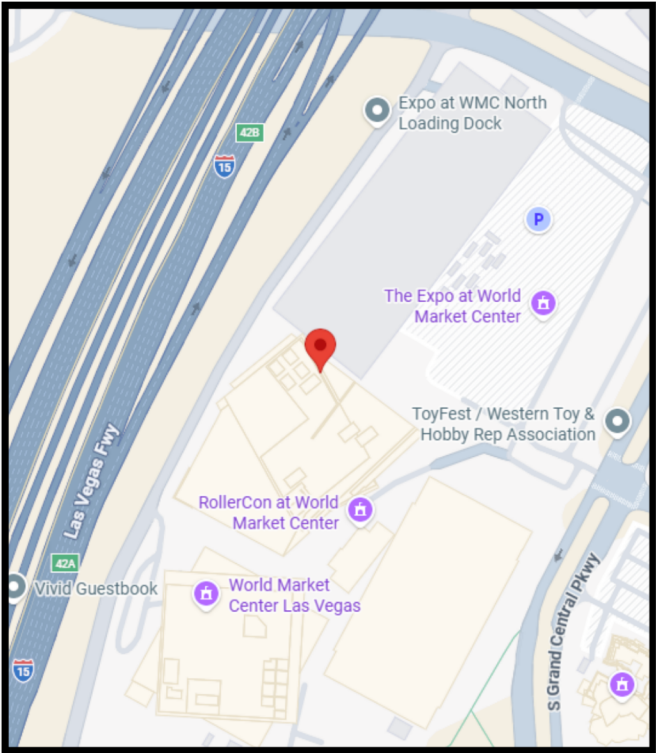
Help Hope Home

FALL 2026
PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

Wednesday, November 4th
9:00am - 4:00pm

World Market Center

475 S. Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89106



SERVICES ARE FREE

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Clothing / Shoes | Recovery Support |
| Dental | Seniors |
| Family Services | Social Services |
| Haircuts | Shower Truck |
| Housing / Shelter | SNAP/EBT & TANF |
| Job Readiness | Veterans Services |
| Legal Aid | Vision |
| Medical | Youth Support and Lunch! |
| Mental Health | |
| Pet Care | |

If you are currently experiencing homelessness or housing instability and are in need of help, check out the Resource Dashboard at helphopehome.org.