

## ROSC Consortium Meeting

Topic: Homelessness Awareness Month

Mon, Nov 18, 2024

Michelle: Welcome and Introductions for in person and online.

Michelle: Requests all in person members to sign sheet in back by agenda and all online members to comment in the chat their name and organization.

Michelle: Spoke about the ROSC Facebook page and the importance of joining to stay up to date on local meetings and events.

Michelle: Anybody online have any updates for the ROSC board game? If you do, if you are interested in this ROSC Utopia board game and you want to be more actionable, we've got some action cards in the back.

Michelle: November is Homeless Awareness Month. Let compassion guide us on helping our unhoused community during the holiday season. Quote of the Month.

Michelle: Welcome our guest speaker, Danny Robinette. Danny is here from Alton's Coordinated Response Team. She's going to talk a little bit more on how the Coordinated Response Team was built, where it came from, and how it's doing so far.

Dani Robinette: I'm with the Coordinated Response Team in Alton, and I'm going to tell you a little bit about how it came about and what we've done, what we're doing, where we're going.

The CRT was created in the winter of 2018 when there was a large, unhoused population and some people had passed away due to the freezing temperatures. There was a call to the community and stakeholders of all kinds to help solve the homeless issues in the area. It's important that all of the communities join together to try to see what they can do.

If anybody is familiar with Rockford at all, and what they've done, they have something called "Functional Zero", and they claim to have solved homelessness. The group I was just referring to went up in March 2023. What does that look like, what can we bring back to our community to see what will work here?

How do we move forward from there? Alton Housing Coalition, and Alton Mission developed out of that too. Alton Mission is a smaller church that's right in the heart of Alton that said, "We're going to do our best to make sure our doors are always open and that we can work with people experiencing homelessness."

The Salvation Army's attempting to build a new shelter. They have 51 rooms in Madison County, and we have 60 to 100 calls a day for help. They wanted to rebuild their shelter, and they have caught back lash from the community. This is where the coordinated response team came into play.

They aggressively started getting to know their people experiencing homelessness, learning their names and keeping track on a spreadsheet. They would use that to work off of around the table.

When the camping ban came about in fall of 2023, we adopted that case conferencing technique. There were many different agencies coming around the table to ask how they can help with these names.

Attendee: Can you explain the camping ban?

Dani: The camping ban started with Tom Hain, the state's attorney. He wanted every community in every city in Madison County to pass a camping ban. It would prevent people from camping in public spaces and make it illegal, and possibly facing fines and jail time.

When I went to Rockford, I asked if they had a camping ban. What has worked for them is that their police department and their agencies are so close around the table that they know exactly how to handle the issue. At one point they had a 30-day turnaround to get people into housing. Rockford has been really committed to working with the person repeatedly to keep getting them into the house of what fits them.

In Madison County, we have groups, agencies, and people represented at the table that are now meeting around the table. We're able to take out the name list and read through so that we're working on what barriers each person has.

We're meeting every two weeks, for an hour and a half, utilizing the grouping app to communicate in between meetings. 35 different individuals around the table representing 17 different agencies and health care, housing, shelters, churches, food pantries, and other social service agencies. Something that we're working on identifying is an advocate, and then there's a secondary advocate. This means you're a person who's working directly with someone experiencing homelessness, you brought their intake to the table, you're representing them, you're advocating.

20 people on our list right now, 8 have moved into housing since we have gone live on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Identifying barriers and solutions to move our people forward into housing and services, organizing and collecting data, and asking for help is what we're focused on. We still have these barriers that need to be worked out. Case managers, advocates, outreach workers, shelter directors, people working with those experiencing homelessness, they all work with people one-on-one to provide the case management.

We've activated the Fort Baker response team in real time, where the goal is to get people into services, shelter, and housing where possible. Some local police departments are trying to help them. Our native response team is working on the outreach aspect of this, and there are people in every community that want to believe that the problem doesn't exist.

How can we start that in our community? Building relationships with your local political leaders to find out the current status, what's the temperature in the community? Are people for it, against it? Do they not know it exists? Where are people in your community with a homeless issue about just to know where to start? Educating your community. We partner with other organizations and I'm doing a two hour class forum on street homelessness 101, and components of interacting with

people experiencing homelessness. How do we make that digestible for someone who doesn't know what to do, how to do or where to start?

That's why we continue to work with it. That's why it's called a coordinated response. We are trying to coordinate a response for people experiencing homelessness before it gets to a place where we've just ignored it or made it worse. It looks different to every community as well. Something to consider when trying to help is that there is no one size that fits all. You must evaluate what you have and figure out where your voids are, what your strengths are, and then how you can work together to do it.

If you feel like maybe your community would benefit from doing something like I've described with coordinating outreach, starting an outreach team, getting agencies to the table, We're happy to share any of our information to help you do that. Are there any questions?

Is that where your time with them ends as soon as they get into housing?

No. We keep going. We also help people connect with services that they need because wraparound is a huge part of that. Keep walking with them and building a relationship.

Is your organization a non-for-profit?

Yes.

And you're funded by grant funding?

No, we're privately funded. Hand Up Housing is very new, it's in Godfrey, but I also work with Inner City Mission in Springfield.

Michelle: All right, before we wrap up the meeting, I did want to just talk a little bit on our "Built from the Heart" fundraiser that we had on Saturday. We had a good turnout, but it was moved indoors because the RISE food truck was unable to attend. We're hoping to be able to do another fundraiser for Hearts United come the springtime. Jeanette, if you want to just talk about Hearts United and what they offer you're more than welcome.

Jeanette Ackerman: We've been here in the community supporting people that are in need and helping the homeless population for the past 25 years. I have been here for a year and a half, but it's been a challenging and wonderful time. What we offer at Hearts United right now is emergency food, clothing, hygiene packs. We have a free shower facility that we provide all the toiletries for. Free blankets, backpacks, sleeping bags, cold weather gear, storage lockers outside that they can have access to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those are 2x2x2 storage lockers, so big enough for a backpack and a bed roll. We do have some laundry support from time to time. It's kind of flexible right now. We're trying to get that into a steadier part of our resources and services. But when we have a move-in, we also have laundry soaps and coinage for the laundromat across the

street from ours. We provide the homeless with status certification of homelessness so they can acquire state IDs. I've also been a part of getting a public people's birth certificate. It's for assisting them with getting a birth certificate. We do also allow our homeless population and unhoused population to use Hearts United as a temporary address so they can receive mail at our location. Gives them a place to be able to receive their mail or whatever that they need to have to be with Postal Services. If it's not picked up within 90 days, we are required by law to return it to the post office and let them deliver it. We do as much referring as we can and ask for resources from the rest of you guys to make sure that we're doing the right services. What we don't have a lot of right now is housing money. We do have some minor support in that way of emergency housing, trying to prevent homelessness through rental assistance and deposits, trying to help people get more permanent housing. But as far as temporary housing goes, it's very rare, and it usually is something that has to be an outstanding situation.

We do get some information from time to time from landlords that kind of give us a heads up of what they have coming available and we try and pass it on to those that are seeking housing that we could see would be a good fit for that situation.

Attendee: We appreciate everything that you do for the Litchfield community.

Michelle: Yes. So, I just wanted to take a moment to kind of highlight Hearts United and everything that Jeanette and Hearts is doing over there is fantastic.

The planning committee, if you don't know about it you can always email me or Brittney if you're interested in joining. For the months of December and January we'll be talking about transportation. If you're interested in being a little bit more actionable, come on and join our planning committee.