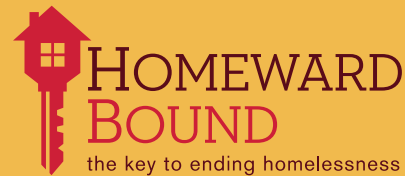


KEYnotes

NEWS FOR HOMEWARD BOUND SUPPORTERS



“You built me a castle”

James' story of finding a home and family

James was living in Florida when COVID-19 hit and he lost the ability to keep a roof over his head. His mother had passed away the year before, and without any nearby friends or family, James moved back to his home city and was left homeless.

“That was the start of searching for places to stay where I didn't have to walk or move through quickly enough to avoid being noticed,” James shared. “Nobody wants to see you standing around in front of their place. I learned how to move quick.” Like many experiencing homelessness, the fear of being kicked out or arrested constantly loomed while stopping to rest or sit down.

James began to feel uncertain of what he was trying to accomplish or how to move forward. He deeply valued perseverance, and he couldn't accept the idea of getting on disability and living in an unfamiliar area surrounded by strangers. At one point, James lived in an abandoned building in Tennessee for 6 months.

Seeking change, James decided to pursue sobriety and enroll in a rehab program in Brevard, NC. However, the program wasn't what he expected, and the challenges overwhelmed him. He left the program and used alcohol to cope with living on the streets. Four days later, James was arrested and jailed until the city of Brevard decided he'd be better off elsewhere. They drove him to Asheville, leaving him at the airport with two things: \$5 and a short piece of advice,

“Find 19 North Ann and you'll be okay.” The address of the AHOPE Day Center.

James spent the \$5 on coffee and food before making his way toward AHOPE. He stopped along the way to ask for food, shelter, and resources. It was the end of 2020, marking the start of another chapter in another new city. This time, James was on his way toward a real place he could call home.



Once he secured his North Carolina ID, James was approved for Permanent Supportive Housing. His perseverance finally paid off when he became one of the first residents of Compass Point Village in October 2023.

Over a year later, James has embraced the opportunity to grow, build a family, and learn how to communicate. He has a deep empathy and understanding of others. When another resident had a tough day, James gathered a few dollars to buy him a milkshake from Cookout. James says he's someone who'll give up to half of what he has to make anyone's situation better. Sometimes, he jokes, he gives too much—whether it's the last of his sugar or his patience.

James has learned to take the time to care for himself and not dwell on difficult situations. He enjoys staying busy, listening to music, and collecting interesting items with stories. When asked about the future, James says,

“I want to maintain my home, my family, and my friends who live here. I want this place to be okay. For us to be all alright. You built me a castle and it runs itself. We're still going to be as taken care of tomorrow as we are today.”

Open Your Heart to Women & Homelessness

Safe and stable housing provides women a Place to Grow



Chayse and her Case Manager, Amanda

The 7th Annual HomeTrust Bank Open Your Heart to Women & Homelessness Luncheon focused on how stable housing can provide women experiencing homelessness the opportunity to grow and find hope. The most recent reports reveal that 39% percent of people experiencing homelessness in 2024 are women, many of whom often live in fear for their safety and struggle with mental health challenges and addiction.

During the program, we heard Chayse's story. Chayse entered foster care at nine years old when her mother was murdered and her father was taken to prison. She was abused in multiple foster homes, began drinking after her grandparents died, and was introduced to heroin at 10 years old.

Throughout her teenage and adult life, Chayse struggled with addiction and was often arrested while trying to maintain it. She felt like her life came to a halt when she was released from prison and began living on the streets.

"When you're homeless and you're outside and it's a day-to-day routine, you're forgotten about. It gets to the point where you don't even have hope that something different will happen. The only thing that you can hope for is to make it through the day and survive."

Chayse knew her life wouldn't change while homeless with an active addiction. She entered drug court and lived in a halfway house until she got the call that a unit was ready for her at Homeward Bound's Key Commons apartment complex.

Less than two years later, Chayse is living the life she didn't believe was possible. She earned her GED, completed drug court, and is over 1 year and 9 months sober. She moved to a new home where she practices yoga, meditates, and works to process the trauma she experienced through her life. She feels safe enough

to sleep at night without being attacked, something she didn't have her entire life. Chayse is now in college for an associate's degree in human services to become a caseworker. She wants to use her experience to help others in homelessness and addiction move into housing and recovery. **You can watch Chayse's Story at homewardboundwnc.org.**

Chayse spoke at the luncheon and shared her poem below with attendees.

"A Chance to Save A Life"

by Chayse Sosa

I was a shadow on the corner, unseen,
Twenty-six years of being nowhere, in between—
Between homes, between hope, between dreams long
gone,
A life of despair that dragged me along.

Food thrown at me, bruises unseen,
Sleeping with fear under skies unclean.
I learned not to wish, to bury my pain,
Lost in addiction just to numb the refrain.

But then came a place, a light in the dark,
A door that opened, a flicker, a spark.
Homeward Bound, they called me inside,
No judgment, no pity—just kindness applied.

A warm cup of coffee, a hot shower's embrace,
They saw the human behind the worn face.
"Do you want to apply?" they gently asked.
For the first time, I saw a future unmasked.

A roof over my head, a space of my own,
A chance to rebuild, to call something home.
With stability came the strength to restart,
To heal the wounds deep inside my heart.

Today, I am someone I never thought I'd be,
I've found self-worth, I've found dignity.
A GED, a purpose, a vision so clear,
Because someone believed when I couldn't near.

This is not just charity, it's a lifeline in hand,
A belief that no one should sleep on this land.
Your donation isn't just dollars, it's breath, it's grace—
It's saving a life, it's changing a face.

Without Homeward Bound, I'd still be lost,
But they saw my humanity, no matter the cost.
So I ask you today, to open your heart,
And help someone like me have a fresh start.

Rapid Rehousing/HACA Program

Short-term assistance provides long-term stability

Our Rapid Rehousing/HACA Program provides short-term rental assistance and supportive case management services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Unlike Permanent Supportive Housing, which provides long-term assistance, the goal of Rapid Rehousing (RRH) is to help people secure housing quickly, stabilize, and increase their ability to maintain housing independently. Homeward Bound can provide rental assistance for up to two years, but many clients successfully graduate from the program within 6 to 12 months of entry.

“We’ve helped a lot of people through small and major circumstances that could evict them and force them back to homelessness,” shares RRH/HACA Program Manager Amanda Thomas. “They have income or the potential to earn income; they just need that extra support. Having our folks prioritized is pretty critical.”

Amanda’s team supports 45 clients living in homes managed by private landlords or the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville (HACA). Case management often involves addressing barriers that might seem small but have a huge impact on their stability and future goals. While meeting, the team shared stories of clients they recently assisted.

One client, who was already housed, received an eviction notice after missing the deadline to submit an important annual recertification form required by HACA. Facing homelessness again, she informed her Case Manager, Nicholas, who connected her with Pisgah Legal Services’ Homelessness Prevention team.

Pisgah Legal, which is experienced in tenant rights and discrimination cases, resolved the eviction in court, enabling Nicholas’ client to remain housed. When the next annual recertification form was due, Nicholas’ client submitted it on time and was stable enough to continue paying her rent.

Another client had been living in her car while working full-time as a Certified Nurse Assistant. She regularly checked into AHOPE until she became eligible for

the program. Our RRH Housing Specialist, Sara, found her a home, and six months later, she was stable, consistently paying her rent, and successfully graduated from the program.

A Saved Gift

Morgan and her partner lived in their car in Carrier Park until Hurricane Helene hit, causing them to lose most of their possessions. This January, our Welcome Home team, along with her Case Manager, delivered furniture, cookware, cleaning supplies, and other items donated by our community to their new home in South Asheville.

When we arrived, this butterfly case (right) was already hanging on her kitchen wall. A gift from Morgan’s partner, it had traveled with them for three years, carefully wrapped in blankets to protect the delicate frame and glass. Morgan—and this cherished gift—now have a place to call home.



Thanks to the dedication of our staff, partners, and supporters like you, Homeward Bound continues to prevent and end homelessness in Buncombe County.





Homeward Bound's 13th Annual Welcome Home Luncheon

*Your invitation to our premier event to inspire,
inform, and raise funds to end homelessness in
Asheville and Buncombe County*

Wednesday, May 21
12:00 PM - 1:15 PM
(Doors open at 11:30 AM)

**AB Tech's Mission
Conference Center,
16 Fernihurst Dr,
Asheville, NC 28801**



**Visit homewardboundwnc.org/welcomehome or
CALL (828) 747 - 9409 to RSVP by May 14**

Thank you to our Event Sponsors



Thank you to our 2025 Annual Sponsors



You can prevent
and end
homelessness.

Scan the QR code
or visit our website
to donate today!



P.O. Box 1166, Asheville, NC 28802 | (828) 747-9409 | HomewardBoundWNC.org