



H O M E W A R D

ANNUAL REPORT

- Fiscal Year 2023 -



**Strategic Partnerships Toward
Ending Homelessness**

A Word From the Executive Director

FY 23 was another challenging year for our neighbors experiencing homelessness in Polk County. But time and time again, our **community has risen to the occasion to provide housing, supportive services, and creative solutions to homelessness.**

Homeward has grown over the past year, expanding our work to meet the need. We have secured critical resources, collaborated with new partners, and created long-term systems change.

Here are just a few highlights of what Homeward has achieved over the past fiscal year:

- Homeward **expanded our staff**, adding new expertise with a Grants & Program Coordinator position. This role will help manage federal grants, apply for funding, and ensure a high quality of homelessness programs in the community.
- We secured **\$4.9 million in critical funding** for Polk County housing and services for residents experiencing homelessness. During the current federal funding competition, Homeward is collaborating to secure \$5.6 million to expand community services.
- We wrapped up two years of **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program grants** in the community, recognizing the impact of innovative housing and supportive services for young people ages 16-24.

- Homeward released the **Unsheltered Des Moines Study**, conducted in partnership with Drake University. This eye-opening research combines the experiences of people who have lived unsheltered in Polk County with evidence-based recommendations for improvement in our system and services. Workgroups are now focused on creating better systems based on the results of the study.
- The Homeward Board and staff worked together to create a **strategic plan for Homeward**. This plan will help the organization maintain our focus on partnerships to end homelessness in the years ahead.

The numbers of people living unhoused is growing. The barriers they are experiencing are also increasing. However, we know that **when we have an appropriate level of resources, we can truly make a positive impact.** We need the entire community working together to end homelessness and to increase affordable housing in Polk County. Homeward is up to the task of creating that community collaboration.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angie Arthur".

ANGIE ARTHUR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Why Homeward Exists

A safe place to call home is the foundation for thriving individuals, families, and communities. When lowans have a stable place to live, they can focus on their well-being, attend school or work, and engage productively with their community. However, this year alone, 7,427 individuals in Polk County experienced homelessness, depriving them of the safe and secure foundation they need to succeed. Without a place to call home and their basic needs met, our neighbors suffer the devastating consequences of poor mental and physical health, stress, and trauma.

At Homeward, we believe the Polk County community has a collective responsibility to support each other, including residents experiencing homelessness. Through work to expand housing options and services, together we can ensure our neighbors have access to the resources they need to not just survive, but thrive in stable, permanent homes.



State of Homelessness in Polk County

- The need for homelessness supports far outpaces available resources in the community:
 - There are currently over **700 households experiencing homelessness on the waitlist** for housing support.
 - There are **89 family households (with children)** on the waitlist for emergency shelter. This is the highest number since COVID began. At the end of the Fiscal year 2023, Polk County had a record high of 100 family households on the waitlist.
 - The needs of people experiencing homelessness in our community are also escalating due to barriers such as mental health, disability, correctional history, substance use, and domestic violence.





What's Behind the Need for Homelessness Services?

- Lack of safe, affordable, accessible housing
- A challenging rental market
- Difficulty housing larger families
- COVID-19's impact on finances and health
- Expiration of COVID relief programs and resources
- Economic struggles such as inflation, insufficient wages, and child care costs
- Mental health, healthcare, and developmental needs of individuals and families



What We're Doing to Address the Needs

Homeward serves as Polk County's homelessness planning organization, forging strategic partnerships between organizations, community partners and government officials focused on improving homelessness, and people experiencing homelessness themselves. Through these partnerships, we're working to create an **efficient, effective homeless response system that meets all residents' strengths and needs.**

Homeward takes a **system-wide approach to homelessness in Polk County** studying all the pieces of a complicated puzzle, identifying community gaps, and leading innovative solutions. We also disseminate homelessness data and resources, enabling the Polk County community to engage in partnerships toward ending homelessness. We **operate as a hub of strategic planning and expertise on homelessness** in the following ways:

- We work **collaboratively with over 100 organizations** to share best practices, build community strategies, and set a coordinated approach to ending homelessness.
- We **distribute \$4.9 million** in federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding for community homeless services.
- We **support hardworking homelessness organizations** across our county with information, training, and problem-solving.
- We partner to **collect and analyze data** on homelessness in Polk County to inform community strategy and monitor progress toward community goals.
- We **advocate and share information with local officials to build systemic, long-term solutions** to homelessness and affordable housing options.

FY 23 Updates and Accomplishments

The past year has presented tremendous challenges for our community and our neighbors experiencing homelessness. But through it all, Homeward has grown, adapted, and welcomed new projects and partnerships toward ending homelessness. **Some highlights from Homeward's Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023) include:**

SEPTEMBER 2022

Staff and Board celebrate one year of the **Homeward brand**. Formerly known as the Polk County Continuum of Care, Homeward rebranded to better forge strategic partnerships toward ending homelessness.



JANUARY 2023

Homeward and Drake University release the **Unsheltered Des Moines Study**, a unique collaborative research effort. The study examines why individuals face barriers to shelter and permanent housing in Greater Des Moines



APRIL 2023

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announces **funding for homeless services** through the Continuum of Care Program. Thanks to the hard work of community service providers and Homeward volunteers and staff, the Polk County community receives a record \$4.9 million for housing and supportive services for residents experiencing homelessness!



AUGUST 2022

Jim Cain joins the Homeward staff in the newly-created role of **Grants & Program Coordinator**. His addition ensures a point-person for annual funding processes and expands Homeward's capacity to engage with the community.



NOVEMBER 2022

Polk County's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) grants complete their demonstration phase. These **innovative federal grants for young people under 25** will now move forward as part of Homeward's annual funding process.



MARCH 2023

Homeward partners to educate lawmakers on the **need for eviction expungement legislation**. Under current Iowa law, if a renter has an eviction filed against them — even if it is later dismissed or filed in error — it permanently stays on their record. Though a bill unanimously passed the House to rectify this, the bill did not make it to law. Advocacy will continue in the years ahead!





Homeward FY 2023 Board of Directors

Dr. Ahmed Agyeman- Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families

Katie Albrecht-Snell- Nationwide

Brett Burk- EMBARC

Lisa Crabbs- City of Des Moines

Angela Dethlefs-Trettin | Secretary- Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines

Reverend Frederick Gaddy- St. Paul AME Church

Lorna Garcia- Des Moines Police Department

Jenny Goulden- Des Moines Public Library

Charles Hill- Iowa Civil Rights Commission

Kendyl Larson- Polk County Housing Trust Fund

Renée Miller- United Way of Greater Des Moines

Jennifer Miner- VA Central Iowa

Tony Montgomery- Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines

Tami Nielsen- Food Bank of Iowa

Jill Padgett | Chair- Iowa Department of Human Rights

Manisha Paudel- Des Moines Civil & Human Rights Commission

Rebecca Phong- Des Moines Municipal Housing Agency

Catherine Reaman-Gerdes- Polk County Crisis and Advocacy Services

Nathan Simpson | Treasurer- Primary Health Care

Ehren Stover Wright- Institute for Community Alliances

Mark Swisher- Fitness Nomad

Annie Uetz | Vice Chair- Polk County Behavioral Health and Disability Services

Amanda Wanke- Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority

Whitni Warnke- UnityPoint Health

Lyn Wilson- Des Moines Public Schools

Homeward Staff

- **Angie Arthur**- Executive Director
- **Abbey Barrow**- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Coordinator
- **Jim Cain**- Grants & Program Coordinator



FY 2023 Data and Insights

A look at the Polk County homeless response system from July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023

7,427

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY THE POLK COUNTY HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

CLIENTS IDENTIFIED THEIR PRIMARY REASON FOR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AS ISSUES WITH THE FOLLOWING:

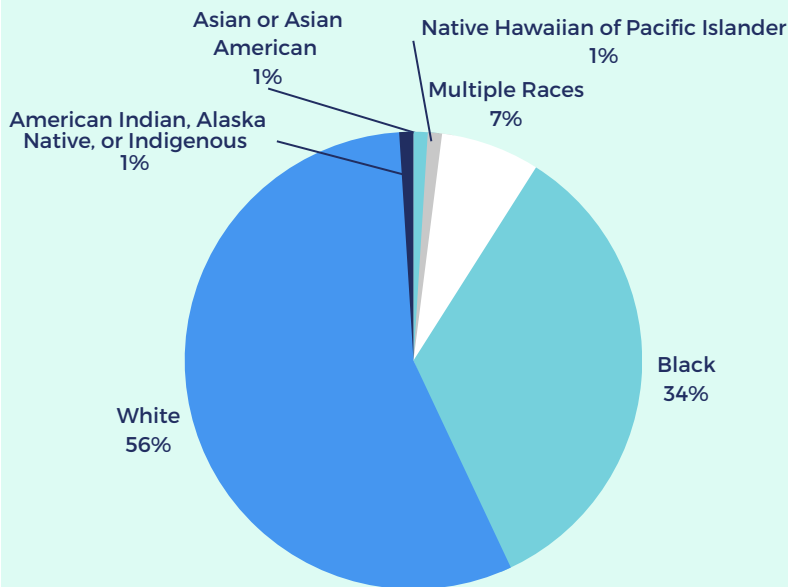
-  << HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
-  << FAMILY SUPPORT
-  << EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM
-  << RE-ENTRY FROM CORRECTIONS SYSTEM
-  << EVICTION
-  << SURVIVOR OF VIOLENCE



There are currently over **700 households** experiencing homelessness on the waitlist for housing support in Polk County.

RACIAL IDENTITY

OF CLIENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN POLK COUNTY



6.7%

of individuals experiencing homelessness in Polk County were veterans



POLK COUNTY YOUTH HOMELESSNESS DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM GRANTS SERVED

252

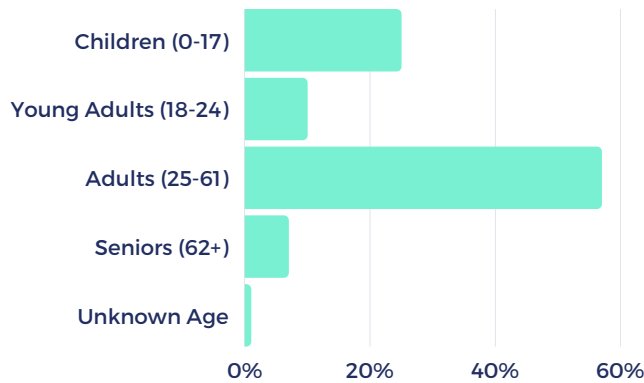
youth ages 16-24



FY 2023 Data and Insights

A look at the Polk County homeless response system from July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023

AGE OF POLK COUNTY INDIVIDUALS SEEKING HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT



\$4.9
MILLION DOLLARS
in federal homelessness funding distributed by Homeward



OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WERE HISPANIC/LATINO

HOMELESS SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN POLK COUNTY INCLUDE:

- Emergency Shelter
- Street Outreach
- Transitional Housing
- Supportive Services Only
- Rapid Rehousing
- Permanent Supportive Housing



2,531

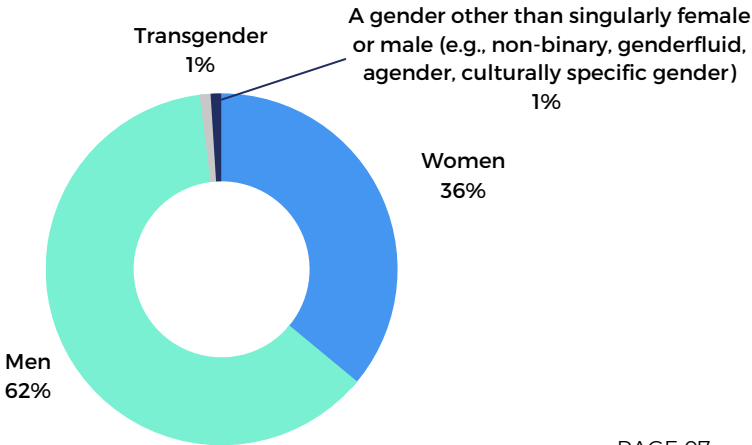
clients were enrolled in emergency shelter, safe haven, transitional housing, or street outreach

(the most crisis-oriented projects in the system)

HOMEWARD
PARTNERED
WITH OVER
100

Polk County community organizations

GENDER IDENTITY of people experiencing homelessness in Polk County



What's Ahead for Homeward?

We know that with challenging economic conditions and the shortage of affordable housing resources, individuals can feel powerless to help their neighbors experiencing homelessness. But there are still many ways we can improve our systems to strengthen our community and create more equitable housing and support services for all in need. It will take the entire greater Des Moines community to pursue Homeward's vision that one day, everyone in Polk County will have a safe place to call home.

How Can Community Members Take Action?



ADVOCATE

- Engage with local and statewide officials about the **need for additional resources** to support our neighbors experiencing homelessness
- Join community conversations about development to encourage the creation of **more affordable housing units**
- Help advocate for the passage of statewide **eviction expungement** legislation to ensure that folks aren't barred from accessing the housing they need due to an error or mistake from decades ago



VOLUNTEER

- Join a **Homeward committee** to volunteer in support of Polk County's homelessness service providers and clients
- Opportunities are available for **many skillsets and interests**, including finance, grants, communications, racial equity, youth leadership, and program evaluation
- **Volunteer your time** with shelters and housing programs across our community to serve meals and support residents



LEARN

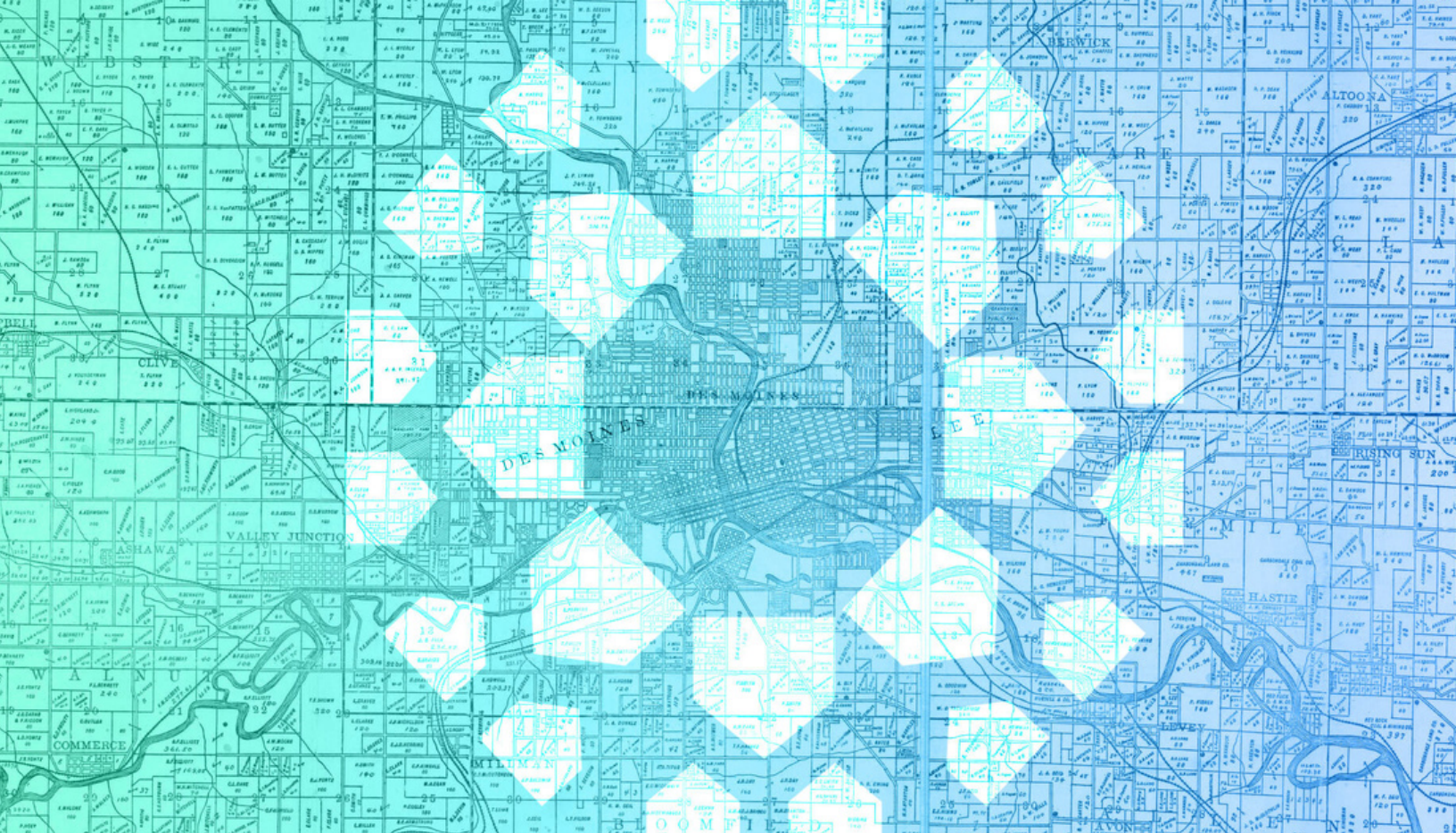
- **Learn about the causes of homelessness** and the changes needed in order to end it
- Read the **Unsheltered Des Moines Study** or executive summary to learn firsthand from people experiencing homelessness
- Subscribe to Homeward's **newsletter and social media platforms** for opportunities to learn more about homelessness in the Polk County community



DONATE

- **Give** to support people experiencing homelessness and the organizations that serve them across Polk County
- Host a **supply drive** to collect supplies including hygiene items, clothes, and non-perishable food
- **Contribute financially** to Homeward to support the systems-level work needed to prevent and end homelessness





Thank You!

Thank you for your continued care, support, and partnership to end homelessness in our Polk County community! Now, get involved in Homeward's work! Sign up for our newsletter and follow us on social media to receive updates, resources, and more on homelessness in Polk County. Stay tuned for opportunities to donate, join a committee, or engage in Homeward's advocacy efforts.

Stay in Touch with Homeward



We've Moved! Find us at:
505 5th Avenue, Suite 1010
Des Moines, IA 50309



facebook.com/HomewardIowa



515-302-6017



twitter.com/HomewardIowa



www.homewardiowa.org



linkedin.com/company/homewardiowa