



Community

# Annual Walk on Mall Aims to End D.C. Homelessness



Brigette Squire • November 7, 2018 0 173

2 minutes read



Hundreds participate in the 1.5-mile Friendship Walks event for homelessness, held around the National Mall on Nov. 3. (Brigette Squire/The Washington Informer)

A wave of orange washed over the Lincoln Memorial last weekend, as the Friendship Place organization held its annual Friendship Walks event to build awareness for homelessness in the D.C. region.

This year's 1.5-mile walk focused on LGBTQ youth. According to a True Colors Fund study, LGBTQ youth comprise 40 percent of all youth experiencing homelessness.

Within the LGBTQ community, conflicts present at elevated rates compared to heterosexual people. Low self-esteem, maltreatment at home or in school, temptation to try drugs, and rejection can often lead to homelessness.

“There are still people who are not enlightened and tolerant,” said Ward 3 Council member Mary Cheh. “They send their kids out of whatever home they are in so they are left on the street.”

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*Hundreds gather on the Lincoln Memorial steps to participate in the 1.5-mile Friendship Walks event for homelessness around the National Mall on Nov. 3. (Brigette Squire/The Washington Informer)*

Friendship Place, which casts itself as the “premier housing service provider” for the homeless in D.C., provides support through workers and volunteers who are trained to the sensitive needs of the community. Encouragement to rebuild, job placement, and they provide funding for housing. They have case management solutions, medical

and psychiatric consultations, work on addictions and on building families of choice.

“It’s is a very serious thing that we have any youth homeless on the street,” said Jean-Michel Giraud, Friendship Place president and CEO. “We have a LGBTQ work group and our approach is very compassionate and personable. We connect the youth with one another and if possible with their families again.”

Sexual assault, abuse and trafficking are also factors that contribute to homelessness.

“One of our programs is a street outreach program that works with youth from ages 17-24 and is District-wide,” said Alan Banks, who works in community engagement. “Our participants are rebuilding their lives and that empowers them.”

Jasmine Zanders Young sought out programs but, due to her sexual orientation, does not

qualify for benefits geared towards families.

“About three months ago I was homeless,” she said. “I have been with the program for little over a year now. I was in a shelter called Freddy House because I was a foster kid and I didn’t really have a family to go to. I met Miss Stephanie at Friendship Place and she gave me a chance to get on my feet and I took it. I feel better about life. I’m more positive.”

According to the Joyful Heart Foundation, In intimate partner violence cases, a perpetrator may capitalize on these fears to gain further power over the survivor.

“I was in an abusive relationship with another female,” Young said. “I stayed because I felt as though I finally had a home. I finally had somewhere to lay my head. I kept it even though it wasn’t healthy. One day I got up the strength to leave but it left me in debt and back on the streets.”

In 2018, Friendship Place served 300 youth and housed 60 youth. They passed out 250 hygiene kits and continue their outreach programs Monday through Saturday 1 p.m.- 9 p.m.

“We got a little bit more funding and we are ready to take on the work,” said Antwan Gillis, who works in the street outreach program.

Based on affinity, Friendship Place links youth with partners such as Casa Ruby, SMYAL, HIPS, and Sasha Bruce Youthwork.

The Virginia Williams Family Resource Center serves the District’s homeless. Help is available 24 hours a day, Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Friday, 8:30 a.m. – noon at 920-A Rhode Island NE.

A broad national effort is needed to fund the research, and raise awareness of the problems among LGBTQ and homelessness. Leaders need to develop policy changes through

which homelessness in youth populations can be eliminated.

- Tags
- Jean-Michel Giraud
- Friendship Place
- Brigette Squire
- D.C. homelessness
- Friendship Walks

