

Learn More & Start a Discussion



'Transforming the way people view the stereotypes of those who find themselves homeless' is one of Mobile Loaves & Fishes' organizational goals. Learning more about the experience of homelessness, having discussions about it, and advocating for our homeless friends can be extremely impactful. One way that those stereotypes can be transformed is by coming to Community First! Village and connecting with our neighbors, human to human and heart to heart. Whether you're about to visit the Village or just learning about it, we want to equip you with resources that will help you to connect with our mission.

Contact Details

Thank you for taking the time to dive deeper into the issue of homelessness and please don't hesitate to reach out to our team with any questions!

Address:

Contact Number/s

Home:

Cell:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- What are some of the stereotypes that you have about those experiencing homelessness?
- Why and how do you think someone becomes homeless?
- What are some words that come to mind when you think of home?
- What are some of the most important aspects of your own home?



These videos will help you get acquainted with MLF

[Building Hope](#)

[Finding Home at Community First! Village](#)

[The Untold Story of Homelessness](#)

What Is Home?

To understand homeless, you must first understand home. Mobile Loaves & Fishes understands home to have 8 key aspects, outlined by Brian Walsh and Steven Bouma-Prediger in their book, [Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement](#) (Eerdmans, 2008). We use their 8 Marks of Home to inform how we help rebuild the lives of our formerly homeless neighbors, provide support for them, and create community.

THE 8 MARKS OF HOME



1) A Place of Permanence

To be 'at home' somewhere is more than simply having a place to stay. Home signifies a certain degree of spatial permanence, an enduring presence, or residence.

2) A Dwelling Place

A home is a dwelling place but not the same as a house. A house is a domicile, while a home is an abode. Home is a relationship that is created and evolved over time. A house refers to its construction while a home has deep psychological and social significance.

3) A Storied Place

A home becomes a home when it is transformed by memory-shaped meaning into a place of identity, connectedness, order and care. Rituals like celebration of holidays make a house a home by linking our personal and communal stories with a particular location.

4) A Safe Resting Place

A home is where you can relax, be yourself, be vulnerable, and learn to trust.

5) A Place of Hospitality

As opposed to a fortress, few are strangers there and there is room to include others.

6) A Place of Embodied Inhabitation

A home is a place of embodied inhabitation where a person feels a sense of rootedness. To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. A resident is a temporary and rootless thing. The inhabitant by contrast 'dwells' in an intimate, organic, and mutually nurturing relationship with a place.

7) A Place of Orientation

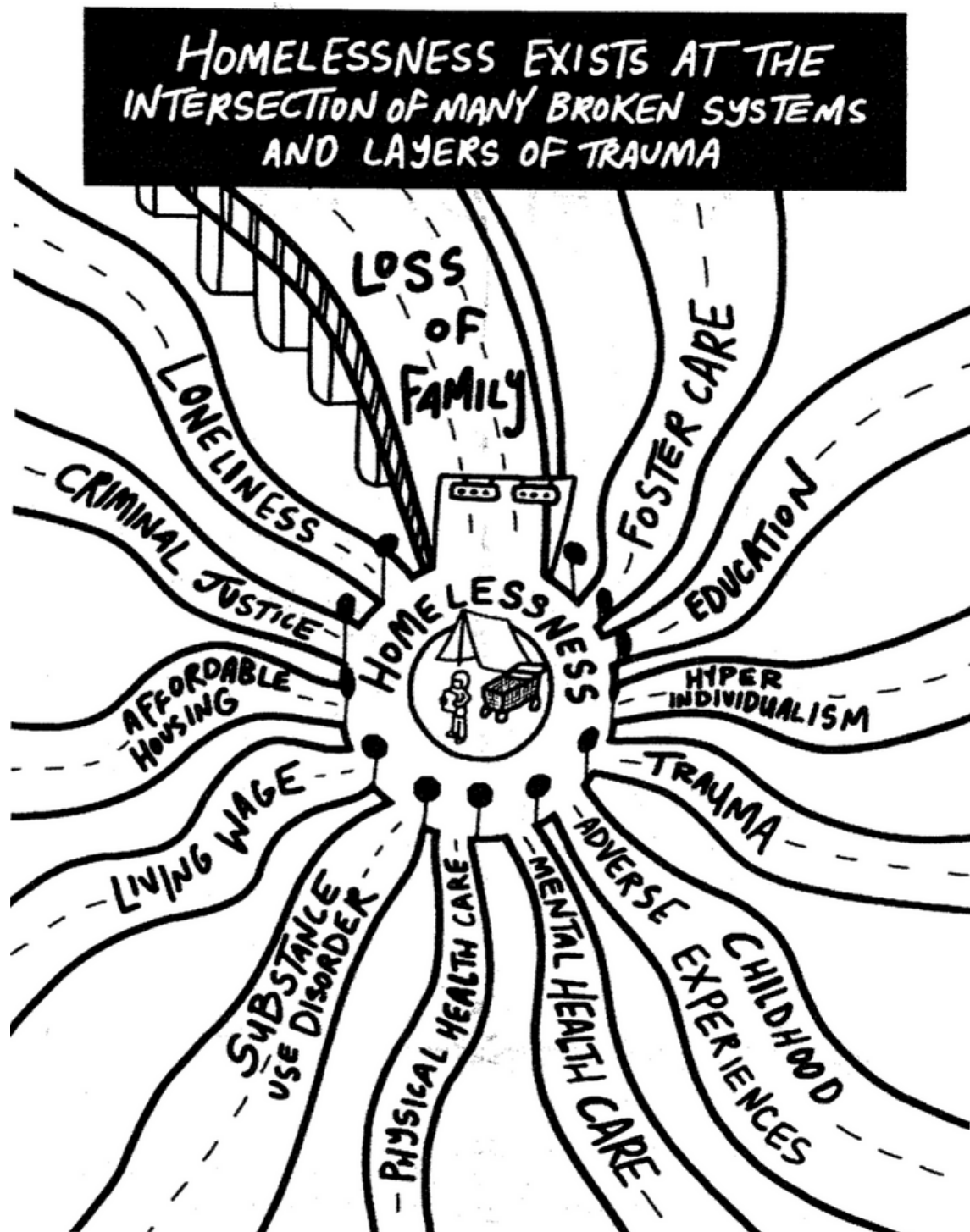
A home is a place in which we know where we are and what we are in this world. A home provides a sense of order and direction to our lives.

8) A Place of Affiliation and Belonging

A home is where we experience recognition, acceptance, and identity.

What Causes Homelessness?

While Mobile Loaves & Fishes believes that the single greatest cause of homelessness is a profound and catastrophic loss of family, we've learned that homelessness exists at the intersection of many broken systems and layers of trauma. What questions or observations come up as you look at the image below?



The MLF Story

Mobile Loaves & Fishes (MLF) is a social outreach ministry that has been empowering communities into a lifestyle of service with the homeless since 1998. Founded in Austin, TX, the organization serves our currently and formerly homeless brothers & sisters through three core programs: our Truck Ministry, Community First! Village, and Community Works.

TRUCK MINISTRY

Alan Graham and a few of his friends went out in his minivan to serve sandwiches to those experiencing homelessness on the streets of Austin. They found that what begins with a sandwich and a conversation soon opens the door to community and relationships where they are needed most. Relieving immediate hunger and other basic physical needs is a fundamental step, but many of those experiencing homelessness aren't just lacking physical resources.

Our caring truck volunteers deliver more than a meal - they give those they serve the dignity and respect many of them have been denied as a result of pervasive stereotypes and biases. A handshake, a hug, or a friendly smile can go a long way. As we faithfully serve our homeless neighbors and deliver meals with a side of hope, lives truly are transformed.

"Everything we do is about relationships. The biggest lesson we have learned over the years is that we are not a food ministry. We merely use food as a conduit to connect human to human and heart to heart."

— ALAN GRAHAM, FOUNDER & CEO

Through the support of thousands of volunteers, Mobile Loaves & Fishes food trucks hit the streets of Austin 365 days a year to provide food, clothing and other life-sustaining items to those who find themselves homeless and are struggling to survive. Now, with more than 6 million meals served, MLF has grown to become the largest prepared feeding program to the homeless in Central Texas and has spawned similar food truck programs in other cities across the country. Come along on a truck run with us [in this video](#).

COMMUNITY FIRST! VILLAGE

As a result of the multitude of connections we've made with those living on the streets through our Truck Ministry, we've learned that the root cause of homelessness isn't any of the things our society frequently associates with it. It's not mental health issues, laziness, disability, addiction, or chronic illness that makes someone homeless. Whether you know it or not, we all have people in our lives that face these challenges, but we have found that the single greatest cause of homelessness is a profound, catastrophic loss of family and community. It's from this understanding that MLF's vision emerged to build Community First! Village and now welcomes home our friends who had been pushed to the fringes of society.

"Housing alone will never solve homelessness, but community will."

— ALAN GRAHAM, FOUNDER & CEO

Often referred to as "the most talked about neighborhood in Austin", Community First! Village is a master planned development that provides affordable, permanent housing and a supportive community for individuals coming out of chronic homelessness. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines chronic homelessness as a single individual who has experienced homelessness for longer than a year, during which time they may have lived in a shelter, Safe Haven, or a place not meant for human habitation. We serve the chronically homeless because we believe they are the most vulnerable and underserved of the homeless population. [Take our video tour of the Village.](#)

COMMUNITY WORKS

Realizing that most, if not all, of our formerly homeless neighbors are entrepreneurial in nature, Mobile Loaves & Fishes developed the Community Works program at Community First! Village to empower individuals to rediscover their God-given talents and move those talents into the economy. Community Works provides micro-enterprise opportunities that enable our friends who have experienced homelessness to earn a dignified income, while also developing new skills and cultivating enduring relationships. These are some of the many areas our neighbors can work in while living at Community First! Village:

- Our [Community Inn](#) is a collection of tiny homes, RVs, and other unique units that make up a bed and breakfast open to anyone who wants to stay at the Village.
- [Genesis Gardens](#) is our ever-growing organic farming program that provides its weekly harvests of fresh produce to our neighbors.
- Our [Community Art House](#) is where neighbors create beautiful pieces of art that are then sold through our eCommerce shop and in our Community Market on their behalf.
- The [Community Cinema](#) hosts public movie nights in our outdoor amphitheater.

DISCUSSION

- Do you see the stereotypes our society has about the men and women experiencing homelessness differently after learning more about Mobile Loaves & Fishes?
- Have you ever met someone who was experiencing homelessness? What did you think about that experience then and how do you see it now after learning more about how and why that may have happened to them?
- What are some examples of ways that the 8 Marks of Home are lived out in your home?
- Part of our mission at Mobile Loaves & Fishes is to restore dignity and respect to the currently and formerly homeless. What are some ways you think you could do this for someone?
- Have you ever considered that the cause of homelessness might be a profound and catastrophic loss of family? What do you think about that idea?
- How might the reasons for becoming homeless that you listed before cause someone to experience a catastrophic loss of family?
- How could a catastrophic loss of family cause someone to experience the factors you listed?
- Can you think of a time that your family or community helped you when you were having a hard time? What would've happened if you didn't have anyone to help you?
- Looking at the [map of Community First! Village](#), what sticks out to you? Are there any things that surprise you?
- At Community First! Village, almost all of our volunteers work alongside or are led by neighbors that live here. Why do you think we do this?
- Our Founder, Alan Graham, started this ministry with a simple idea: let's feed the homeless. What's one small thing you can do to help someone experiencing homelessness?

