



## Six-Part Blog Series: Combatting Homelessness

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One of our mottos here at Aunt Bertha is a quote by Margaret Mead:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

In that spirit and in honor of the New Year, we’re highlighting six of our direct service providers’ powerful missions and showcasing how they were there for their communities in 2017. These are the people whose work fuels ours, and we hope their stories inspire you as we begin 2018 with this special series.

“Most Americans are one to two paychecks from living on the street. It can happen to anyone.” —Roz Palmer, The Kitchen (Springfield, MO)

On any given night in 2017, 554,000 people were homeless in the United States. That’s just shy of the entire population of Springfield, MO, where [The Kitchen’s](#) mission is to prevent and end homelessness in the communities they serve by providing housing and stabilizing services with dignity and compassion.

“We’re trying to let people know that they are worthy of the help. Youth, or those living on the street sometimes don’t feel they’re worth the services, so our biggest challenge is just getting them in the door. We want people to know we work with everyone — from infants to the elderly. If you’re homeless, we work with you. We have youth programs, programs for at-risk and homeless veterans, programs for the chronically homeless, families, and the working poor,” said Palmer.

In 2017, The Kitchen housed more than 600 individuals. A third of those individuals were children under the age of 18.

One of those people was Belinda. Belinda was a registered Medical Assistant, but due to a brain injury, she was placed on leave from her job. Her Family & Medical Leave (FMLA) ran



out, but Belinda still wasn't cleared to work. After going through her savings, Belinda had to decide between her medication and a stable home. The Kitchen was able to provide Belinda a place to stay while helping her navigate through and apply for, disability benefits. She has since exited the program and is living on her own in one of The Kitchen's affordable housing communities.

"We have a Housing First philosophy. We want to place someone in a home, then figure out the factors that may be leading to their homelessness. For some it may mean education, for some, sobriety. Our goal is that by the time they exit, they can do whatever "it" is on their own."

### How You Can Help

- Support efforts with a [financial donation](#).
- Donate furniture and household items. [Click here](#) for a full list of needs.
- Volunteer! [Sign up here](#).

*By Emily Storozuk, Community Engagement Manager*