

September 2021

Homelessness in Gwinnett

Prosperous communities like Gwinnett County often present the illusion that homelessness could not possibly exist. Out of sight, out of mind? However, a closer look gives a sobering reality.

Gwinnett County has the third-highest homeless population in Georgia. Estimates in the tens of thousands of homeless are staying in shelters and transitional housing, to the truly unsheltered sleeping outdoors in parks, on the street, in vehicles, abandoned buildings, under bridges, and other places not meant for human habitation.

Gwinnett County Schools report over 1,900 known homeless students, and one in four children live in a family that exists at or below the poverty line. When we hear the word "homeless," we often have a preconceived notion of what that looks like, maybe of a man sleeping on a park bench, or a lady in tattered clothes pushing a shopping cart, or even a family that holds a sign "Will work for food." Although these types of homelessness exist, the majority of the homeless population in Gwinnett remains unseen. Recently, StreetWise has experienced a rise in homeless clients needing our services. Their stories are not one size fits all, yet all are heartbreaking. We know our Government is heavily dependent on Nonprofits to help, and StreetWise intends to rise to the challenge. We will not only provide food and clothing, but we are also participating and partnering with other resources and agencies who can provide shelter, medical and mental health services, and other connections necessary to a homeless person or family.

We are an active nonprofit member of the **Gwinnett County Homeless Entry Planning Commission** and the **Gwinnett Coalition**. StreetWise has partnered with **HomeFirst Gwinnett Shelter, Family Promise Shelter, Rainbow Village Shelter, and Home of Hope Women's and Children Shelter**. All of these organizations focus on the shelter and restoration of homeless individuals and families.

Homelessness is a complex problem. Please pray for StreetWise as we navigate the most effective and compassionate programs to help address this growing epidemic.

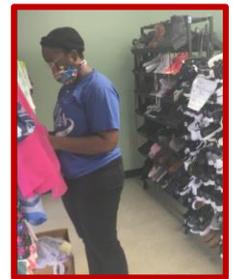
-Tracy Joseph, StreetWise Executive Director

Backpack Day



Back to School Backpack & School Clothing Shopping was a huge success! There were so many happy parents and smiling kids. This year we did this event a little differently. Parents registered their school-age kids by appointment for backpacks and to shop for clothing. Parents receiving backpacks stayed in their vehicles, and a smiling volunteer chose just the right backpack and loaded it into their car. Our clients that registered for clothing were paired with a Volunteer Personal Shopper to help them pick out school clothes, shoes, and personal hygiene items.

A heartfelt thank you to our Volunteers that gathered, packed, and distributed backpacks and clothing. And to our Partners and Donors that purchased the backpacks, school supplies, donated clothing, including brand new shoes! Check out our Back-To-School Event Photo Gallery on our website StreetWiseGeorgia.org.



Donations, Holiday Meals, & StreetWise

The holidays are fast approaching! Each year StreetWise provides families with a Take Home To Cook Holiday Meal box with all the delicious sides. We are preparing for more than 250 families to receive a holiday meal box. To provide a family of four a Thanksgiving Meal, would be a cost of about \$51.25 at the local grocery store. To put this in perspective and serve 250 families, we will need \$12,812.50 for Thanksgiving. And this same amount for Christmas meals. We encourage and appreciate Financial Donations for the success of our Thanksgiving and Christmas Events.

But it doesn't just stop at the holiday season. Families need more canned food and dry goods items than ever before. For our weekly Client Appointments and Mobile Food Pantry, we give families over 27 pounds of canned food and dry goods for a family of four. StreetWise serves over 600 families per month. We are running extremely low on the necessary items that we provide to our clients.

Be a part of our mission to fight food insecurity!

We would love for you, your family, friends, organization, or company to have a Canned Food Drive for StreetWise or Fundraiser to sponsor StreetWise families for the holiday season.

Email us at Volunteer@StreetWiseGeorgia.org and share your Canned Food Drive ideas and dates with us. You or your organization would collect the donated items from the shopping list at www.streetwisegeorgia.org/2020/08/17/canned-food-drive/, and then contact us to coordinate a drop-off date.

Should you want to contribute financially, it is easy! Just go to our website and click the **DONATE TODAY!** button. Your generous donation directly and immediately helps a family in need within our community.



Farmers Market & Client Intake

Have you heard StreetWise has a Farmers Market? We do! On August 31st, we opened our doors to a few clients for Intake and shopping in our Farmers Market. In just one month, we have been able to speak with over 250 clients and show them the love of Jesus! Our clients meet with a StreetWise Client Advisor to help them with the resources they need to get back on their feet. Then they shop in our market for bread, coffee, specialty cakes, baby formula and diapers, personal hygiene items, and much more. When they are done shopping in the market, they are greeted by a smiling StreetWise Volunteer with a shopping cart full of meat, produce, canned goods, and dairy items.

We want your help in naming our Farmers Market! Submit your suggestions to volunteer@streetwisegeorgia.org, and should we choose your idea, you will receive a gift from us!



Diane Ramunno Our New Financial Administrator

As our long-time friend, co-worker, a true blessing to StreetWise for over 11 years, Dorothy Ford retires and embarks upon the adventure of Grandmama and moving closer to her kids. Last year, Linda Moore, a StreetWise volunteer, invited Diane Ramunno to come and volunteer. Diane instantly fell in love with StreetWise and our mission. She says, "I love being able to help others. StreetWise is a blessing in so many ways, and I enjoy being around others (volunteers) that have the heartfelt desire to be the helping hands." Diane retired after 40 years working in the Finance Office at the Gwinnett County Public School System. With Diane's professional experience, compassion, and passion for StreetWise, we welcome her as our new Financial Administrator!

Volunteers

Volunteers are a critical component to everything we do at StreetWise. Volunteering is not just for Mobile Food Pantry and Special Events. We have positions open during the week, Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. serving our clients. You cannot do heavy lifting? We still have a volunteer position for you! We need helping hands from warehouse, food and produce room, clothing room, office administration to driving our truck or van. Contact us today at Volunteer@StreetWiseGeorgia.org and become a StreetWise Volunteer!

Winter Is Coming!

Winter Clothing Drive!! We need your coats, hoodies, sweaters, pants, boots, hats, scarfs, gloves (mittens), thermal shirts, and flannel shirts if you still have them! We are transitioning our summer clothing to our Fall/Winter and need your help. We all agree Georgia does not have normal seasons. One day it is 30 degrees, and the next, it is 70 degrees! We all tend to layer. Our senior citizens wear sweaters all year round; my Grandmother sure did. She had a button-up sweater for each season.

Dive into your closets! If you have new or gently used clothing that you would like to donate, email us at Volunteer@StreetWiseGeorgia.org to set up a drop-off time.

If you would like to have a Coat Drive, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Bonnie.Moore@streetwisegeorgia.org for details on having a Winter Clothing and Blanket Drive.

Hitting The Roads In Style



Our Truck & Van have a sleek new look! Thank you to **Atlanta Community Food Bank, Penske Truck Leasing, and Valentine Enterprises**. Our new to us vehicles and professional graphic wraps are made possible to StreetWise through Grant opportunities and project-specific donations.

If you see us on the roadway, safely take a picture and tag us on our Facebook page.

PRAYER REQUESTS

StreetWise [Online Prayer Requests](https://www.streetwisegeorgia.org/prayer-requests) connects you with one of our Prayer Team Members! Share your prayer of concern or joy with us, we are here to listen. Click on the Online Prayer Request QR or go to the StreetWise website, click on About, and then Prayer Requests! to submit your request. A StreetWise Prayer Team Member will contact you or add you to our Prayer Book. We welcome you to share the link with those in need of prayer.

