



# Press Times

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## Disregarded: An update

With the emergency shelter season at St. John's over, the homeless population in Green Bay will become more visible as unsheltered individuals do what they can to find places to rest, like this doorway on North Broadway. Josh Staloch Photo

## A balancing act for everyone involved

BY HEATHER GRAVES EDITOR

BROWN COUNTY - Homelessness in Brown County, and more specifically Green Bay, is nothing new.

It's an ongoing issue that many across government departments and community organizations have dealt with for decades.

Drugs and alcohol, the economy, mental health,

unsafe living conditions, a global pandemic or plain-old bad luck - regardless of the reasons contributing to why individuals find themselves homeless, which may vary from month to month, year

to year or decade to decade, the problem continues.

Until COVID-19, it was a problem that was often dealt with in the shadows of the community - under overpasses, in parking ramps,

tucked into a wooded area or hidden in an alley.

Paul Van Handel, chair of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), a subsidy of the Brown County Homeless and Housing Coalition, Newcap outreach coordinator, former Green Bay Police officer and longtime advocate of the homeless, said though homelessness was prevalent in the area long before 2020, the pandemic exacerbated the problem and made it more visible.

"The pandemic got it out on the street where it's visible," VanHandel said. "And when things are visible, people really start paying more attention to it because it's sort of there."

When emergency shelter season began at St. John's Homeless Shelter Nov. 1, 2021, he said the HOT team had a list of 84 individuals - 56 male and 28 female - on

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## New Bellevue administrator



Benjamin Krumenauer

BY HEATHER GRAVES EDITOR

BELLEVUE - After a rocky search process spanning several months and two sets of candidate searches, the Village of Bellevue finally has a new village administrator.

In a special meeting April 29, the Village Board unanimously approved

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## One-year remembrance

The community took pause Sunday, May 1, as it marked the one-year anniversary of a tragic shooting at the Duck Creek Kitchen + Bar, inside the Oneida Casino/Radisson Conference Center in Ashwaubenon, that claimed the lives of employees Jacob Bartel and Ian Simpson. Bartel's grandparents, center, participated in a healing ceremony to commemorate their and the community's loss. Josh Staloch Photo

## Kimps Hardware: Serving the Howard community for more than 80 years

BY KAT HALFMAN INTERN

HOWARD - Kimps Hardware, located on Glendale Avenue, has served the hardware needs of the Howard community since 1940 - a family-owned business that started in the backyard of current owner Craig Kimps' grandparents, Bernard and Luella.

The three-generation-owned business recently expanded its reach to Ashwaubenon after acquiring the Ace Hardware and Paulson Hardware stores.

### Simple beginnings

Craig said his grandfather, Bernard, ran a dairy business in the mornings, and sold hardware and propane during the day with Kimps Hardware and Propane Service.

Bernard would pick up his merchandise from the train depot and bring it back to his store that was located on Riverview Drive,



Three generations of Kimps from left, Gary, Bernard and Craig. Submitted Photo

right behind his home.

Even back then, working in the store was a family affair with Bernard, Luella and all five of their children helping with the store in some way.

Back then, Craig said Kimps Hardware sold a wide variety of products from furniture to plumbing fixtures, serving the many needs of the growing community.

The original store went from 2,000 square feet to 3,300 square feet by 1950.

Craig said his father,

Gary Kimps, began working in the store and delivering propane in high school, and helped run the business after he graduated in 1962.

Craig's parents Gary and Sally Kimps purchased the business and took over day-to-day operations in 1974.

Craig said he joined the Kimps Hardware team in 1982.

Needing more space, the growing business moved to an 8,000-square-foot store on

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**HOMELESS**  
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that day, that were considered unsheltered.

Van Handel said of those, six found housing, 33 remained unsheltered, 22 accessed shelter, four left the area, 17 location unknown, one is in jail and one is deceased.

In the few days since St. John's shelter season ended, Van Handel said the team has identified 42 individuals that are considered unsheltered and they have been working hard to try and get them into some type of shelter.

**Summer Safe Sleep**

Executive Director Lexie Wood said the mission of St. John's Homeless Shelter is to ensure that nobody is on the streets in the harsh winter weather.

"That's been the mission and the commitment since St. John's started in 2005," Wood said. "We've always said we know homelessness does not end when St. John's closes its doors on April 30. There are needs year round for individuals who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness, and we want to be that service and that support."

She said as a seasonal emergency shelter, they want to see guests focused on forward movement during the shelter season and taking that next step when it ends.

However, Wood said sometimes it isn't always possible.



"Summer Safe Sleep provides access to safe shelter to people who otherwise don't have options, but we try to balance — and this is something we are constantly evaluating, constantly looking at — we still want individuals to understand we are a seasonal emergency shelter," she said. "Our job is to help you get attached to services, resources, support and secure employment and to save your income, to achieve and to move into your own place. The mentality is, we want to make sure guests throughout the winter months understand that this is not a year-round option. This isn't 12 months of free rent. We have this entire case management team. We have daytime resource centers. We have services and support to help you move forward."

Wood said St. John's has a summer capacity of 35, yet "we will never turn somebody away due to capacity."

"If guest numbers are 38 or



The City of Green Bay's Park Department will offer ENGAGE services with the help of community partners in St. John's Park throughout the summer. The park will be locked during the evenings to prevent people from sleeping in the park.  
**Josh Staloch Photo**

46, or whatever the case may be, in the summer months that need access to Summer Safe Sleep, but are engaged in forward movement, we will never turn somebody away due to capacity."

St. John's also supports two daytime resources centers — The Micah House, geared toward men currently experiencing homelessness, or at-risk for homelessness, and Wellspring, specifically targeting homeless or at-risk women.

Wood said programming and resources are available at both locations year-round.

**ENGAGE program**

In the spring of 2021, the Green Bay City Council approved a homeless support program at St. John's from May 1 through Oct. 31.

The one-year pilot program, spearheaded by St. John's Homeless Shelter, was designed to help connect or reconnect individuals with services and programs to help them become self-sufficient; and in turn help squash an uptick of incidents the park saw in 2020.

Parks Director Dan Ditscheit said for the majority of the summer, the program provided inclusive programming that helped build relationships, connected guests with services and addressed dynamic community challenges.

However, due to staff turnover and coordination hurdles, Ditscheit said the program became increasingly hard to fully implement.

He said it was decided over the last five months that the city's parks department would take the reins of the ENGAGE program and partner with community groups, including St. John's, to provide a hybrid program — noting that a sole organization or entity would not be able to provide the level of coordination and operational capacity to facilitate the program alone.

"It was determined that the city could run a modified version of the ENGAGE program, and utilize the wide network of community partners, agencies, churches and

advocates to continue to build relationships, host programs and events and provide resources to all guests at the park," Ditscheit said.

He said the program is still a work in progress.

City Council received an update on the program's shift at its meeting Tuesday, May 2, and while many were supportive of the city helping the homeless population, not all agreed it should be the sole responsibility of the City of Green Bay.

"I think the city needs to reach out to Brown County," District 4 Alderperson Bill Galvin said. "We need to get more out of Brown County. We need more help. How much more can the city do? How much more can the city put into this? It shouldn't solely fall on the shoulders of the City of Green Bay. We need more help and I think the plan needs to go to Brown County and we need to get them more on board providing more help with services, more mental health services."

District 7 Alderperson Randy Scannell said he thinks some alderpersons were confusing a program with homelessness issues.

"The issues that that park is going to face are only going to be worse without a program," Scannell said. "People sleeping there, that's not part of the program, and they're going to do that anyway. People bringing food there, while well-intentioned, is a bad practice that does not help at all. Again, it's got nothing to do with the program and that would go on. That stuff's going to go on. That's a homeless issue that's going to be there no matter what."

Those leary of the program route questioned if it was the best option.

"Essentially this went from a park that was for families in the neighborhood that can no longer be used for that purpose," District 9 Alderperson Brian Johnson said. "What we can do and elevate the standards with how we maintain what's happening there. And really, is this our best option in terms of addressing the community

needs that we have?"

**Locking St. John's Park overnight**

Ditscheit also said it was decided that the city would implement the same policies at St. John's Park as it does with all other parks within the city — which means closing at 10 p.m. and no sleeping in the park at night like many individuals did last year.

He said the park will be open during standard park hours — 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and be closed at night.

**“Unless something criminal happens it's not a police matter, and it isn't something that we can police away.”**

— Green Bay Police Lieutenant Nate Allen

Green Bay Police Lieutenant Nate Allen, the department's westside community officer working with the homeless population, said the decision to install additional fencing and lock the park at night was to deter similar situations that occurred last year.

Allen said recent actions — locking St. John's Park at night — is aimed at avoiding a repeat of last year.

He said he and his team spent hours in early November cleaning up St. John's Park from bags of clothes and blankets to outdated and spoiled food — after more than a dozen homeless individuals used the park as their "home" for several months in 2021.

"I think the big driving thing was, well, one, we have a city ordinance that you have to be out of the park at a certain time at night," Allen said. "The other thing is that you know from the business leaders and city officials, they didn't want to have a repeat of the mess, the garbage and everything we had last year. The city is all for using the park during normal business hours, and using it for the ENGAGE program, but at night, they don't want people sleeping overnight in there. They want people to come

back to the park and start using the park like families."

He said it's not saying that now that it isn't happening at St. John's Park it won't happen someplace else in the city.

"I guess that's something we'll have to revisit," Allen said. "I don't foresee them opening up the park and saying, 'Here.' I don't foresee that happening."

Van Handel said what will happen is the problem will just be spread throughout the city.

"The situation is, unlike last year, without having a safe area for them to go, now it's going to be spread out," he said. "Things that are going to happen, and they already are — we have parking ramps with homeless issues, different parks this year, the trails, businesses, buildings that are up for sale that aren't in use."

Van Handel said it will make his work and the work of others a bit more challenging — "but that is outreach work."

"It's just going to be more of a challenge this year, but we're still going to get out there and find the people we find," he said.

Van Handel said there's

the most this fall was really looking at a non-traditional shelter model, a peer-support shelter that would allow people to stay there that have specific, more high-barrier needs, such as mental health, possibly concurring with alcohol and other drug addiction type issues," he said. "We're really looking at trying to develop that, because that, I think, is a gateway for people that are chronic to be able to enter this system and de-stress their situation and allow them time to self actualize."

Van Handel said discussions continue to take place amongst stakeholders on how to get from point A to point B in terms of making non-traditional housing a reality.

Allen said it isn't a situation that "you can police (your way) out of."

"Unless something criminal happens it's not a police matter, and it isn't something that we can police away," he said. "It's services."

Allen said the community is very good at supplying clothing and food items, but what they really need is intensive AODA and intensive mental health services, "and I don't know where that comes from."

"I would say 70% mental health and 30% AODA," he said. "If you can get over that hump, you take a huge chunk out of the unsheltered population."

As far as what the summer will look like, Van Handel said it will look a lot different "because we're not allowing anyone to congregate in open spaces where they are visible."

"It will look to a lot of citizens like the problem is being solved, and I guess it's really being hidden and not solved," he said. "We're not going to be able to solve anything any faster without the placement opportunities that we need. It's just simple dynamics, mathematics, whatever you want to call it."

Both Van Handel and Allen said the support of the homeless by the community remains strong, but can sometimes be misguided.

"I know they want to do something and feel like it's an immediate help," Van Handel said. "I'm not saying that person on the street can't use a cup of coffee or something like that. But it would make sense to us, and really help, to ask first, so you know what the need is. That does mean a little more communication is needed on their part. If they don't want to do that, then I would say donate to those existing organizations that help them."

**What now?**

Van Handel said outreach and support organizations find themselves in the same position they are always in — looking for a solution for the area's homeless population.

"The thing we engaged in



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