



Asking for help is the most meaningful example of self-reliance. –Unknown

This morning Ann Arbor News reporter Lauren Slagter posted [this story](#) highlighting high housing costs in Washtenaw County and the effect on our clients at the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County. With higher rent costs, those experiencing homelessness in Washtenaw County need more time to save the recommended \$1,500.00 to pay first month's rent plus a security deposit. This is particularly difficult for our increasing number of clients on Social Security Disability. When our clients do save enough money, we are finding that they still struggle to find a place to rent. This means longer average shelter stays at the Delonis Center.

Homelessness is stressful and so we are proud to have been able to assist 249 individuals in finding permanent housing last year. We house a majority of our clients in Ypsilanti and provide ongoing case management and critical time intervention to make sure they stay housed. We work to ensure that they can access transportation to their work and nearby support systems of friends and family, as 93% of those in our residential program report their last residence as a Washtenaw County zip code.

The Shelter Association of Washtenaw County serves more than 1,100 individuals a year with case management, meals, "warming center" shelter, laundry, showers, storage, and more. So far this winter we have provided shelter to an average of 120 individuals a night through our residential and warming center programs, 278 unique overnight guests total. The services we supply are not only lifesaving, but humanity affirming. We are so thankful for the support we receive from individuals, foundations, community and faith groups, local and state government, and from our clients themselves who uplift our staff and one another.

Reading the comments on Ms. Slagter's story can be demoralizing and so we would like to say this: we think the world of our clients. We reject narratives of the deserving and undeserving poor, or of a Washtenaw County that is only for the wealthy. We cannot individually address each criticism of our clients, process, location or partnerships, we're too busy. We take all of the circumstances of our client's struggle into consideration as we support them: mental health, substance abuse, trauma, market forces, history, discrimination, etc. and do the best we can to walk with them towards solutions. We may not be able to solve the root causes of each person's homelessness, but we do our best to overcome their barriers and build a safe, sustainable lifestyle.

We invite you to join us in this work. Visit www.annarborshelter.org/how-to-help or contact Emmeline Weinert at weinerte@washtenaw.org for more information.