



WINTER 2017 NEWSLETTER

## CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY'S 35 YEARS

As we reflect on our years of service, we acknowledge our work is only made possible by community support from volunteers, donors, and partnerships. With support from over 3,000 volunteers each year and contributions from partners across Minnesota, we are able to fulfill our mission: to house, support, and advocate for those experiencing homelessness. Simpson invites you to join us throughout 2017 as we recognize our milestone anniversary.

"Simpson is an expression of the community's will to end homelessness. We are grateful for the public's support over the last 35 years; we would not be an organization without you," says Steve Horsfield, Simpson's Executive Director.

The community working to end homelessness includes a network of other nonprofits, government agencies, and collaborations of private and public sector organizations. One such collaborator is Cathy ten Broeke, State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness who guides the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness.

"In their 35 year history, Simpson has had a tremendous impact on our community. Every day, Simpson is helping our neighbors overcome barriers to safe, stable housing. I'm grateful to have an organization like Simpson fighting to end homelessness in our community," says Cathy.

Your support, volunteer hours, and generous gifts have sustained Simpson Housing Services over the years. Thank you.



We invite you to take part in our year of celebration of the community that has made the vital work of ending homelessness possible by sharing your Simpson story.

Visit us [www.simpsonhousingservices.org](http://www.simpsonhousingservices.org) and click on **#WeAreSimpson** to share your story.



At any given time, Simpson's Family Housing Program is working alongside 200 families with 400 children who are transitioning out of homelessness. The dedicated staff helping families every day are called Family Advocates. They help families find and maintain stable housing, find employment, access benefits, support their children's growth and academic achievement, and set and work toward individual life goals. Family Advocates' philosophy is to use a strengths-based approach, identifying the inherent strengths of each program participant and using those strengths to empower the whole family.

Here are the stories of two of our remarkable Family Advocates.

## MEET TWO FAMILY ADVOCATES: JEAN AND JOYLENNA

**"To provoke thought and to get you to actively participate and engage in your own life."** That's Jean Loyd's personal mission statement. It guides her life, both personal and professional. Jean's been working at Simpson for nine years and her mission statement drives her work.

"I like asking people questions. I'm not trying to be nosy, I'm just curious. And for whatever reason, people open up to me," Jean says.

Jean considers it an honor to be a Senior Family Advocate at Simpson. "To have our participants let me into their lives means a lot to me," she says.

Maybe Jean's participants open up to her because years ago, she was in their shoes. With three children, Jean stayed at a domestic violence shelter and later, a supportive housing program. At one point, her family stayed on the floor of her aunt's living room for eight months. Jean was using drugs and 24 years ago, knew she had to make a change. "I realized I didn't want to die and have this be my story," she recounts.

She worked hard to stabilize her life for her family and now she puts her experiences to good use for her participants.

Jean's had a variety of roles within Simpson over her tenure and takes each new challenge in stride. This past year has brought a lot of change. Jean bought a house and transitioned into a new position and new office at Simpson. "All the moves seem like a good fit for me now."

Family Housing Director Janelle Leppa says, "Jean embraces new opportunities and challenges. I am deeply grateful that her heart still remains focused on how she can best support families after nearly a decade at Simpson."

Jean takes her role with families seriously knowing that sharing her experiences can create a stronger connection. "Some of our families are so overwhelmed it's easier to hide. I've been there," Jean says.

This year, Jean was able to celebrate the holidays in her new home, surrounded by her family. "The new house just felt like home," she recalls. Her five grandchildren visit more now and with a sixth one on the way, she's thankful for a space to call her own.

"I have a great life."



Joylenna and her family at their first Simpson holiday event.

Joylenna Sims likes to have a goal. She's always working toward something – learning, growing, and striving to be better. As a Family Advocate at Simpson, she puts that attitude toward her program participants; too.

“I’m always driven by what’s next, how I can be better, and I want to see everyone do well,” Joylenna says. “I want my participants to achieve their definition of success and I’ll help them in any way I can.”

But it wasn’t that long ago that Joylenna was a program participant at Simpson. About ten years ago, Joylenna’s family lost their Section 8 Housing Voucher and found themselves homeless.

Her family entered Mary’s Place, a family shelter in Minneapolis. Joylenna was pregnant with her sixth child and each week she hoped her family would be selected for Simpson’s Family Housing program. When she finally got into Simpson’s program after two months of trying, she was shocked. “I freaked out as I told my husband we won the housing lottery! He thought I was crazy.”

After a month, the family found housing that met their needs. They became a part of the Simpson program and worked with a Family Advocate for three years.

“You make this connection with your Family Advocate; it’s not just about the resources. Simpson was different from other programs in that we felt cared about. In other programs you might just be a number, but at Simpson there’s a personal connection.” Her family got back on their feet. Three years ago, they bought a house; a fixer-upper that Joylenna and her husband worked on together.

“But I just felt there was something missing at my previous job,” Joylenna says.

Last year Joylenna reached out to Simpson, looking to volunteer but after a long conversation the possibility of working at Simpson was on the table. She took a bold step in leaving a large company to pursue her passion. “I absolutely love my job. There’s never a morning I dread getting up for work. I love what I do, it’s very rewarding.”

Now, it’s Joylenna’s turn to make that personal connection with her participants. “It’s a huge ice breaker to be able to say to my participants: I’ve been in your shoes,” she says. “I’m honored to sit in the same office where my Advocate sat. It’s been ten years... a lot happens in ten years.”

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## OUR MISSION

To house, support and advocate for people experiencing homelessness.



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2100 Pillsbury Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

612.874.8683 • [simpsonhousing.org](http://simpsonhousing.org)



7<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**ART**  
  
**SHELTER**

Proceeds benefit Simpson Housing Services



**MAY 10, 2017**

Le Méridien Chambers Hotel  
Marin Restaurant & Bar

901 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis

**First Look Luncheon: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm**

Tickets on sale March 1 | \$75 each

**Free Benefit Sale - One Night Only**

Preview: 6 pm | Sale: 7–9 pm

Art 4 Shelter is an exhibit and sale of over 1,000 original artworks on paper by emerging and established artists. Each 5"x7" piece will sell for \$35 and a selection of 8"x10" works will be available for \$90.

[art4shelter.org](http://art4shelter.org) | [facebook.com/art4shelter](https://facebook.com/art4shelter)

Interested in becoming an Art 4 Shelter sponsor?  
Please contact [eloeffler@simpsonhousing.org](mailto:eloeffler@simpsonhousing.org) or 612.455.0865.