

Shelter & Stability

News from Willis Dady Homeless Services

Spring 2022

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Michael's Journey to Stability

This article is adapted from Michael's full story, written by Martha Carter.

I first met Michael in the Winter of 2021. He had recently transitioned from the Community Overflow Shelter to Willis Dady's main shelter. As a new client, I went to introduce myself and schedule our first meeting. "Good morning, Michael," were the first words I spoke to him. He was lying in bed, fully dressed with only one wool blanket. I introduced myself, Michael looked at me but did not utter a sound. I must admit, it was a bit overwhelming. Michael was frail-looking. His grey hair stood straight up around his head, and it appeared as if he had not been able to care for himself for some time. He did not sit up, he just laid there. Not much was said that first day.

Days passed by and I continued to greet and build rapport with Michael each morning. He laid in bed all day, every day. Eventually, Michael began to warm up to me and told me how he first began experiencing homelessness. He had been a traveling salesman for many years. The company he worked for would deposit money into his account, while Michael moved from hotel to hotel. One day, the money stopped, and Michael could no longer support himself. When Michael arrived at Willis Dady he had no ID, social security card, or a birth certificate. We were starting his life over from scratch.

Michael began improving each day. He started attending our focus groups, he built relationships with other clients and received his birth certificate in the mail. I continued building rapport with Michael. We went to the grocery store, the DMV, and in the spring of 2021, we began taking walks around the block.

Michael continued to open up to me about his life. After having been shut down, not communicating with anyone, he finally began to trust me. We talked about his family, his life, and his music. After working with Michael for months, it was determined that he was not able to work, and I supported him in applying for Social Security. Waiting for the decision was almost too much for both of us.

As time went on, Michael continued opening up to me about his life and the struggles he had experienced. It was my responsibility to listen carefully, letting him tell his story to me in his own way. At his own time. Michael began to talk more with staff and clients. He started doing chores. He paid close attention to other people's struggles. He started to live again.

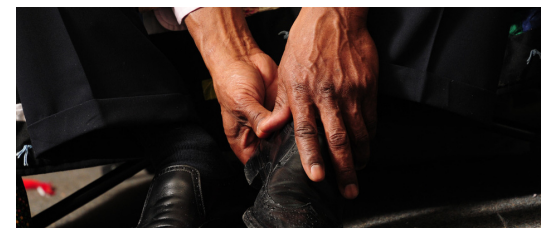
On November 18, 2021, we received word that Michael had been approved for Social Security. A sigh of relief and excitement brushed over me. Michael was told the good news. He smiled. It was like a great weight had been lifted off both of our shoulders.

Michael began learning more independence. We found a service that would take him grocery shopping, he learned how to use his bank card to make purchases, and how to use a cell phone. He qualified with the city of Cedar Rapids for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. We worked together to find an apartment.

The day Michael received the keys to his apartment, he smiled. "Very nice," was his response. I supported Michael in shopping for items he needed for his home. He pushed the cart through the store talking about the things he needed, and that he was now able to buy.

Michael continues to learn and experience new things. We are in the process of putting other services in place for him so that he can live a comfortable life. We have shared some of our stories and life experiences with each other. "I almost died," he admitted. It was hard to hear him talk about the condition he was in before he came to the shelter.

Michael's entire life changed due to the incredible case management offered by our Shelter Case Manager, Martha Carter. Thank you for all you do, Martha!



Generous gifts from our donors make it possible for these successes to continue. Thank you!

Director's Notes from Kelsey Culver!

Hello! My name is Kelsey Culver and I serve as the Employment Services Director here at Willis Dady. I have been in this role for almost a year now, and it is so exciting to see what the future holds for our Employment Programs. In case you missed it, we have opened the Willis Dady Works Employment Hub! In this building we will have training opportunities, employment programs, mentoring, and room to grow. Willis Dady Works also houses staff from other programs as well as our Development Team!

Construction is coming to a close on this building with only a small punch list remaining. We have already started WDW Skills Trainings. Currently we provide trainings in basic employment skills, conflict resolution, basic computer skills, access to space to communicate with mental health providers, and 1:1 employment mentoring. We have partnered with the Cedar Rapids Public Library to provide access to their online resources and have library staff on site once a week. Dupaco Community Credit Union will also be joining us to share resources on budgeting, opening a checking account, and other financial options. Clients accessing Willis Dady Works will also be able to utilize a clothing closet, showers, and laundry!

Willis Dady Works will also be housing a social enterprise. There is a need in our community to recycle mattresses, and there are no accessible mattress recycling facilities within a 3 hour radius. We are excited to be able to offer immediate employment to any person experiencing or at risk of homelessness through this social enterprise. This employment opportunity will open the door to regular income, 1:1 case management, and stability.

If you want to learn more about upcoming volunteer opportunities(leading trainings or job mentorship!), take a tour of the Willis Dady Works complex, or have questions, don't hesitate to reach out! Feel free to send me an email at kelsey@willisdady.org or call 319-651-8530 to chat.



Kelsey Culver,
Employment Services
Director

Volunteer Spotlight: Stephanie!



This past month Stephanie reached an incredible milestone as a volunteer at Willis Dady. For the past 1.5 years, Stephanie has been a front desk volunteer and has given over 300 hours of her time to helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness! Not only does Stephanie have a profound impact on our front desk, but she also is an ambassador for Willis Dady outside of her weekly shifts. When she saw how few nonperishable food items our donation room had, she reached out to her neighborhood to help. After notifying her neighbors via a message board, we received several donations mentioning her post. Her neighbors responded to her call to action! This shows how something as simple as making a post to your neighbors or sharing one of ours on social media, can have a large impact. We are so grateful for you, Stephanie!

WILLIS DADY
HOMELESS SERVICES
SUPPORT • STABILITY • OPPORTUNITY

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Our Mission

To provide shelter and prevention services to the homeless and near-homeless.

Our Vision

To empower clients to break their cycle of homelessness and become self-sufficient.



We are proud to display the names of those memorialized and honored by our donors from December 5, 2021 - April 5, 2022

In Honor:

Nick Lenane
Sam & Diana Jones
Jennifer Maxwell
Connie Maluwelmeng
Leslie Gilliam
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In Memory:

Norman Sasek
Charles Scheer
Ruth E. Karpenske
Howard Zimmon
JP Ranck
Billie Willits
Dick Brown
Deborah Levin

Staffing Transitions



Here at Willis Dady we truly value our staff. There are so many different gifts, skills, and personalities that come together to do the work that we are doing. Each individual brings something unique to the table, as well as a passion to help

those who are experiencing homelessness. Because of this, we are able to celebrate when it's time to add new talents, and when it's time for our beloved staff to move on.

With this in mind, we are announcing the departure of both Emily Zimmon and Marcy Oates.

We want to give a huge thanks to Marcy and Emily for their years of dedication to our organization. Willis Dady truly wouldn't be where we are today without them, and we are so grateful for all that they have done to push us forward. We celebrate with you as you move on to the next great portion of your life.

We also want to celebrate the addition of two new members of our team. Aaron Amundson will be taking over Emily's position as Development Director, and Cindy Petersen will be stepping in as our Office Manager.

To read more about their time at Willis Dady, and to learn about our new team members check out our Blog at www.WillisDady.org/blog or scan the QR code below:



How You Can Help...

Volunteer



Volunteers with Willis Dady provide essential duties and much-needed program support every day. Interested in learning more? Go to www.WillisDady.org/volunteer or email our Volunteer & Operations Coordinator at Volunteer@WillisDady.org

Donate Items



We welcome goods donations! Whether they are purchased or gently used, these donations are needed daily. For a complete list of items visit www.WillisDady.org/donate, search our Amazon Wishlist, or follow us on Facebook to learn more.

Leave a Legacy



When you join our Welborn Society, you provide housing stability for years to come. Please contact Aaron at Aaron@WillisDady.org or by calling 319-362-7555 to learn more about how you can leave a lasting legacy.

Amazon Smile



Have you heard of Amazon Smile? When you shop Amazon through Amazon.Smile.com a percentage of your purchase goes back to the charity of your choice. Visit Amazon.Smile.com and select Willis Dady as your charity to start giving back as you shop.

Follow Us



Follow our Social Media pages to stay up to date on our current needs and all things Willis Dady! We love to receive comments, likes, and shares. Please join us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



Financial Gifts



We couldn't keep our doors open without your support. **Thank you!** More than a quarter of our annual operating budget is funded by YOU, our incredible Willis Dady family.

Give Securely at www.WillisDady.org/Donate or mail a check to Willis Dady at 1247 4th Ave SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403



In conjunction with Willis Dady Emergency Shelter

1247 4th Ave SE
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1 DAY
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1 GREAT CAUSE

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- LIVE MUSIC
- PINT GLASSES & PRETZEL NECKLACES
- SILENT AUCTION BASKETS
- & MORE!

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\$35 TODAY, \$40
AT THE DOOR



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