

## September 2021

Hello, my name is Darren, and I am the new shelter programs coordinator at the House of Charity (HOC). My journey with Catholic Charities began over three years ago. I was taking an intro to social work class at Eastern Washington University, and the instructor tasked each class member to interview an active member of the social work field. I was lucky enough to interview then director of HOC, Heather Schleigh. During the interview, she suggested that I apply for one of the peer positions at Donna Hanson Haven, one of our permanent supportive housing units in the downtown area. A peer is someone who has lived experience. My experience started when I was 12 years old. That is when I was incarcerated for the first time. From that point on, I was in and out of the juvenile system and graduated to the adult system. I was what they call "state-raised." I have been to three juvenile institutions and four adult prisons. I lived on the streets as a juvenile and experienced homelessness many times as an adult. Having experienced homelessness and incarceration, I can fully understand what our clients are dealing with in a real way, which helps me serve their needs from a unique perspective. I have truly been there, and I know what it takes to not only carve a pathway out but also a sustainable path.

In my current position, I will oversee the case management team. Case management provides a wide array of services to our patrons. The services provided include, but are not limited to, housing support to create long-term sustainability, connecting clients to community resources, advocating for clients, crisis management intervention, direct client support, goal setting, and developing crisis plans. Catholic Charities believes that housing is a human right. Using the housing first model, we focus on dealing with the immediate issue of experiencing homelessness. Once housed, our clients can focus on the other areas of life they

would like to improve. We believe in the worth and dignity of all human life, and we seek to remove all barriers our clients face.

I worked as a peer for over a year before applying for one of the open case manager positions with housing stabilization (another program within Catholic Charities). As a housing case manager, I worked with several different funding sources to provide housing to our clients. I have worked as a property manager at Schweitzer Haven for the past several months, expanding my understanding of housing clients and what it takes to keep them permanently housed. Ultimately, my path led me to the House of Charity, where I am today. All I have been through has made me who I am today. I love the clients I serve, and I speak for everyone at the House of Charity when I say how grateful I am for each of you and your continued, amazing support of our clients.

With deep gratitude,

Darren White  
Shelter Program Coordinator



*Darren, Shelter Program Coordinator*