




DOWNTOWN **WOMEN'S** CENTER  
**2019 Programs Report**



The Downtown Women's Center (DWC) is the only organization in Los Angeles focused exclusively on serving and empowering women experiencing homelessness and formerly homeless women.

We envision a Los Angeles with every woman housed and on a path to personal stability.

Our mission is to end homelessness for women in greater Los Angeles through housing, employment, wellness, and advocacy.

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# Permanent Supportive Housing Program

**P**ermanent supportive housing is comfortable, safe, and affordable housing without time limits. At DWC, it includes access to on-site services like healthcare, education, job readiness training, and a variety of community-building activities like yoga workshops, jewelry pop-ups, and even water aerobics classes.

Using the Housing First model, DWC provides 119 units of permanent supportive housing for single unaccompanied women across our two residences in downtown Los Angeles. Our housing model has successfully ended homelessness for hundreds since we pioneered permanent supportive housing for women in 1986.



## OUR 2019 IMPACT



**2** residence  
buildings



**119** units  
of housing



**99%** housing  
retention rate

## SUCCESS STORY

# "I was homeless, living behind the old library in Santa Monica.

I am schizophrenic and hadn't been taking my medication for over four and half years. At the time I didn't know how to get out of this situation of being homeless. Now I live at the Downtown Women's Center on Los Angeles Street. There I receive medical help, therapeutic help, social normality ... There's really no way that I know how to explain how it feels to not live life but to exist in it, and to suddenly have the opportunity to live in it. DWC gave that to

me, with an apartment key—a home, support, and a family and the friends whom I live with.

We need more buildings just like the building I live in. We need apartment keys just like mine to change lives forever and to stop homelessness completely."

— VIKKI, A PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING RESIDENT

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Our flagship San Pedro Street residences, opened in 2010, were designed to include an outdoor patio on the second floor in response to participants' desire for a safe, outdoor space where they could socialize, read, take a phone call, or just soak up the LA sun. The 2,064-square foot patio has become a special place for staff and residents alike, many of whom have not felt safe outdoors since first entering homelessness. Lined with flowering citrus trees, the patio also features several vertical hydroponic gardens donated by Urban Gardens, where women can grow lettuces, kale, and seasonal vegetables; they are especially beloved by our older residents who use walkers and/or experience body pains. Our patio hosts various activities and events for staff and residents all year long, including July 4th celebrations, gardening clubs, special lunches, and exercise classes.



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A woman with blonde hair tied back is smiling. Behind her is a white wall with a wooden sign that says 'home sweet home' in cursive. To the left, a portion of a pink and white checkered curtain is visible.

# Community-Based Housing Program

**O**ur Community-Based Housing Program connects single unaccompanied women and women with children to permanent housing and supportive services throughout Los Angeles County. Case managers provide each woman with the individualized support she needs to regain personal stability.

## WE OFFER:

- Rapid re-housing assistance to any woman in need of housing and particularly women escaping domestic violence, to connect them with safe, permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- Support for female-identifying veterans through housing vouchers, move-in assistance, trauma recovery resources, and help navigating the complex process of applying for veteran benefits.
- Case management for women living with severe mental or physical health conditions to develop long-term healthcare strategies.

The program operates through partnerships with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and various private foundations.

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

**79** women housed

**124** children housed

**99%** housing retention rate

**4,307** sessions conducted

## SUCCESS STORY

# "I became homeless when I couldn't afford my rent.

For me the experience of being homeless was scary, lonely, and confusing. I was harassed by men on the streets. I stayed awake at night because I was afraid of being assaulted or robbed, and I slept on the Metro trains during the day. I kept roaming the streets to see if I could find help or assistance.

My life changed when I was bussed to the Downtown Women's Center from a women's shelter. At DWC, there was food and clothing services, and showers. There was internet access so I could look up resources. I felt safe at DWC, I was with other women who were in the same situation.

In 2017, I moved into my own apartment in Highland Park. It felt like it was a dream. When I got the keys in my hand, it almost didn't feel real. I have my own bed, bathroom, and kitchen—I can now buy and store healthy food. I have access to all my belongings, and I get assistance with my health appointments. I got re-certified as a pharmacy lab technician. I want to help people reach their health and fitness goals, including low-income people in my community and senior citizens. I feel that now I have a second chance to finish what I started."

— ERICKA, A COMMUNITY-BASED  
HOUSING RESIDENT

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

In early 2020, our CBH team began developing a new Housing Navigation database to enhance coordination between DWC case managers, DWC participants, and local landlords. Featuring more than 70 landlords and property management companies across Los Angeles, the database allows us to better track housing units as they become available and work with property managers to fill them, while also collecting iterative feedback to ensure compatible matches between landlords and CBH participants. The new database has empowered our Housing Navigation team to be even more flexible and attentive to individual participants' needs, especially those who are fleeing domestic violence, have experienced extreme trauma, or live with long-term physical or mental health conditions.



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# Rapid Re-Housing Program

**O**ur Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) Program helps newly homeless women quickly obtain permanent housing and retain it long-term. By providing a variety of supportive services in addition to housing navigation support, RRH promotes independence and individual empowerment while remaining flexible and responsive to every woman's unique needs. Case managers assist with housing identification, rental subsidies, and move-in, and connect women with the resources they need to achieve personal stability and remain housed, whether that be mental health support, legal aid, workforce development, or access to vocational training.

We also have RRH staff who work specifically with veterans and women and families with histories of domestic violence. Case managers help veterans access U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs benefits, and assist survivors of domestic violence with safety planning, advocacy resources, and more.

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

**79** women housed

**481** total women served

**99%** housing retention rate

**4,307** sessions conducted

## SUCCESS STORY

### **“A 58-year-old African American veteran was referred to us by Women Vets on Point after she received an eviction notice.**

She had served in the Army for 10 years and now had only 24 hours to leave her unit before she would've been evicted onto the street. Thanks to the quick work of her case manager at DWC, the woman never entered homelessness—a new unit was quickly found and she was approved immediately. We also helped her collect the documents she needed to obtain financial assistance with her moving expenses and a security deposit, and we're continuing to provide her with case management services today. She's been successfully connected with a community work center in order to increase her income and retain her new housing. She says, 'Thank you so much for all the support you have provided. If not for DWC, I would be in the streets!'

— A DWC RAPID RE-HOUSING CASE MANAGER

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

**O**ur Rapid Re-Housing Program is contracted by the May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust and Northrop Grunman to serve at least 20 female-identifying veterans every year through case management services, therapy referrals, and assistance with housing navigation and benefits. This program fills critical gaps for many women who, despite serving our country, are considered ineligible for services through the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, such as those dishonorably discharged due to sexual orientation, mental health issues, or traumatization during service. Our team is committed to meeting and exceeding all program goals: in 2019, 42 veterans were served and our funding was doubled to continue meeting the need!



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# Bridge Housing Program

**L**aunched in August 2019, our Bridge Housing Program provides critical overnight housing to single, unaccompanied women who are in the process of securing permanent housing. Rather than just providing night-to-night shelter, the program works to quickly get women off the streets and keep them housed, in order to end homelessness for good.

Every night, staff and volunteers convert our Day Center into an area where 25 women can comfortably eat dinner, relax, and sleep indoors. The women are able to participate in a variety of enrichment activities, including meditation and exercise groups. One extra cot is always made available for emergency cases, while the other cots are reserved for the same 25 women each night.

Every woman in the Bridge Housing Program is paired with a Housing Case Manager with whom she meets regularly. Once someone secures permanent housing and moves out, another woman is able to take her spot.

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

**62** women served

**24** crisis beds provided

**1,623** showers provided

**169** activities coordinated

## SUCCESS STORY

# “Here I was, someone invited me for a job, to come to LA, they’ll pick me up.

They never did. I spent three days at the bus stop. Then [someone] told me about a shelter, they put me on the ground with an air mattress with about 100 people on the ground. When I went upstairs it was 200 women in a dorm. So I was glad when the Downtown Women’s Center came along. It’s changed my life great. I was very impressed with the night staff in the Bridge program. They are the most patient people I’ve ever met. And they go out of their way to get you things ... it doesn’t make you feel in any way humiliated. They treat you with respect. And you have a Workforce Development Program where you’re taught how to write a resume, how

to take an interview, and they have recruiters come in on the spot hiring. So the Downtown Women’s Center is a great benefit to me. It’s taught me how to job search, and [write a] resume. And believe me, it’s changed my life so greatly.

I’m off the street, I’m not in a shelter, not in a tent. And I get housing. I’m trying to do ticketing at the airport, and the information technology will come in handy. It’s the most important part of the job. So that’s my future.”

— MARJORIE, A BRIDGE HOUSING PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

**T**he Bridge Housing Program allowed DWC to start providing additional shelter to many unsheltered Day Center participants, several of whom had been sleeping on the sidewalk in front of DWC. Through its Bridge Housing Program, DWC is able to expand the services offered to Day Center participants, by providing the safety and stability of a place to sleep at night. Beyond immediate shelter and assistance with procuring permanent housing, Bridge Housing participants are also connected with mental health and medical services, and are provided access to basic supplies like clothing and hygiene. In April 2020, Los Angeles City Council approved additional funding for DWC’s Bridge Housing Program through June 2021.



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# Health & Wellness Program

**O**ur Our Health & Wellness Program includes a Day Center, a Women's Health Clinic, and our Bridge Housing Program services.

Our Day Center is the entry point for our women-centered services and the hub of our healthy community. It provides a safe space for women in the heart of the Skid Row neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles. Women who come through our doors have access to:

- 3 nutritious meals daily.
- Clean bathrooms and showers.
- Changes of clothes, including clean socks and underwear.
- A mailing address to receive mail.
- A safe place to rest and socialize with other women.
- One-on-one case management, provided through our Clinical Services Program.

Our Women's Health Clinic, operated in partnership with the John Wesley Community Health Institute, is the only women's clinic in all of Skid Row. We provide primary care, STD and HIV testing, tuberculosis and cancer screenings, vaccinations, mammograms, and physical as well as mental health assessments. Our exceptionally-trained staff also focus on preventative care to reduce diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and other chronic diseases.

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

**109,920**  
meals served

**747**  
women accessed  
health services

**3,399**  
women served  
through the Day  
Center

**1,193**  
women  
provided with  
showers



## SUCCESS STORY

# “When I came to the Downtown Women’s Center, I didn’t really know anything about a safe haven.

But once I walked through the door, I knew this was a safe haven. There were no men around and it was only women. I felt safe and comfortable, and knew I could close my eyes. That was the most important thing for me, to be able to close my eyes and not worry about anyone trying to hurt me.

DWC fed me, gave me clean clothes, and I was able to clean my body and just feel good. They embraced me with tender loving care and they gave me my dignity back. DWC understood the quietness of women’s hearts, and they gave me so much love and understanding.

Today, I am housed, I am healthy, and I am thankful. I’ve been in my own place for 13 years; it’s actually very close to a doorway I used to sleep in. I sing with Urban Voices, and we come to the center to sing to the women here. After 10 years on the streets, I know how they feel. And that’s why I give back. I get to give back now because of the Downtown Women’s Center.”

— LORRAINE, A HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

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# Clinical Services Program

**O**ur Clinical Services Program complements our Health & Wellness Program by providing individualized case management to the community. Case managers assist women with housing navigation via the Coordinated Entry System (CES), which connects chronically homeless individuals with permanent housing throughout Los Angeles County. Our exceptionally trained staff also link women to healthcare, legal aid, transportation, job training, employment opportunities, and educational resources.

The program includes a Trauma Recovery Center and a multi-disciplinary team of social workers, case managers, a psychologist, and a psychiatrist who coordinate health workshops and trainings for DWC staff and community members alike in areas such as Trauma-Informed Care, Crisis Prevention, Critical Time Intervention, and Mental Health First Aid. This work is supplemented by our annual Clinical Internship Program, through which eight MSW, MFT, and Clinical Psychology students are able to acquire formal clinical training and experience towards their graduate degree.

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

**893** women received case management services

**3,498** case management sessions provided

**400** women received mental health services

**1,325** mental health sessions provided

## SUCCESS STORY

# “Today is my last day of therapy. At the very beginning when we were first meeting, I was nervous.

But therapy and DWC, after everything I've been through, have been a blessing. A blessing to be able not just to confide in a therapist, but to be able to gain strength from being surrounded by other people and women. You don't know the other women's stories, but they are all trying to fight their way through it.

I've gained strength from the tools my therapist has given me, and am able to use them to make

myself even better. I can't thank DWC enough. And my own therapist for giving me tools and being someone I can talk to -- I don't think they realize how much of a weight has been lifted. I now know what my next steps are, and am able to give strength to others because DWC has reassured me of everything.

— VANESSA, A DWC PARTICIPANT ON HER  
LAST DAY OF THERAPY

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

**L**aunched in mid-2019, our Problem-Solving unit is part of an initiative by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) that seeks to prevent and quickly resolve new instances of homelessness through creative problem-solving. Its strengths-based approach empowers participants to use existing skills and resources to avoid and/or reduce the amount of time spent in homelessness, with the goal of restabilizing their housing situation within 60 days. Providers undergo an intensive, 16-hour LASHA skills training that covers everything from landlord mediation and budgeting to active listening and family reunification, before they are granted access to LAHSA financial resources on behalf of participants. Funds used constitute a once-in-a-lifetime grant to the participant, and can be combined with other housing and homelessness programs.

In the first five months of 2020 alone, DWC staff held 290 conversations with LAHSA Problem-Solving participants and resolved homelessness for more than 30 women.



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# Trauma-Informed Care

**T**rauma-Informed Care (TIC) is a necessary standard in ensuring women's unique service needs are met in both women-specific and mixed-gender settings. Research shows that housing-insecure women frequently experience gender-based violence. Domestic violence remains one of the main causes of homelessness among women, and 60% of women surveyed in our 2019 Los Angeles City Women's Needs Assessment report experiencing personal violence in the last year.

In addition to practicing a TIC approach across all our programs and services, we provide TIC trainings to other service providers and public departments that interface with individuals experiencing homelessness, such as the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Library, and the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

In 2015, we created a Trauma Recovery Center in partnership with Peace Over Violence and with funding from the California Victims Compensation Board. It offers individual and group therapy, psychiatric and medication services and assessments, and referrals to trauma services.

## THE 4 "R'S" OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

1. **REALIZE** the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for healing.
2. **RECOGNIZE** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
3. **RESPOND** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
4. **RESIST** re-traumatization actively.



## TIC AT DWC

# At DWC, trauma-informed care informs everything we do:

- We provide **low-barrier services** without requiring participants to complete a formal intake process.
- We offer **individualized treatment plans** and services that employ strengths-based vs. punitive approaches.
- We organize **enrichment activities** that facilitate a positive sense of ownership over communal spaces.
- We provide **trauma-informed care trainings** to all new hires.
- We prioritize **staff development and self-care**, by encouraging each other to take regular breaks and celebrating staff successes, birthdays, and work anniversaries.
- We created a **DWC Advocates Program**, where women with lived experience of homelessness learn techniques for sharing personal stories that can be painful to relive.
- We offer **Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Prevention workshops**, where direct service staff learn how to cope with the hardships inherent to our work.
- We established a **Culture & Community Taskforce**, which plans events and celebrations for DWC staff and participants in order to nurture peer support networks, build meaningful relationships, and strengthen engagement between participants and staff.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

In the fall of 2016, with support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, DWC and Rainbow Services co-launched a cross-sector Domestic Violence and Homeless Services Coalition (DVHSC) to focus on the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness. The coalition's goal is to create a client-centered system that increases access to safe housing and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence and their families, with an emphasis on integrated, trauma-informed care. Leading partners in the coalition include the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the City Attorney's office, and County Supervisor Kuehl's office.



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# Workforce Development Program

**O**ur Workforce Development Program aims to address the underlying causes of un- and under-employment among women, in order to end homelessness for good. Program services include a Learning Center, career readiness workshop series, and a social enterprise, MADE by DWC.

Our Learning Center provides classes in computer skills, literacy, and math as well as academic and vocational counseling sessions, job readiness preparation, and employment placement services. We offer courses in resume building, financial literacy, computer use, and more. During open lab hours, DWC participants can use computers to search and apply for jobs, write cover letters and resumes, or work on school assignments.

Women also receive help with the small stuff that most jobseekers take for granted, like a physical address, an email account, a quiet space to take a work-related phone call, interview-ready clothing, access to laundry, and assistance with transportation.

Through support from the City and County of Los Angeles' Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA:RISE), we also provide paid transitional employment at MADE by DWC, as well as final job placement and one year of support to ensure retention.

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

**113** women employed

**614** job counseling sessions

**64** vocational placements

**70** Career Series graduates

**35** women enrolled in LA:RISE

**17** LA:RISE job placements

## SUCCESS STORY

# "I was struggling within myself because I was an older unemployed woman.

Although I didn't have a college degree, I had a high school diploma, some vocational training, and over 30 years of work experience. I was tired of the temporary agencies and hearing that they moved forward with another candidate. One evening I was invited to the Downtown Women's Center for an orientation and I felt that I was given a break at that moment.

Here, I was given the opportunity to work with people who were non-judgmental. I worked alongside a woman who believed in

me and helped me everyday with words of encouragement, motivation as well as a joke or two. I was able to provide services to other women there, and I then quickly began to motivate and inspire them to try harder and let nothing stand in their way.

Twelve days before the end of my LA:RISE program, I was told about a position that I should apply for. I am very happy to say that I am now a Career Coach thanks to everyone!"

— JEANNINE, AN LA:RISE PARTICIPANT

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

In early 2020, our Workforce Development Program launched the "A Bridge Home" (ABH) Career Series, to provide mobile and in-house navigation employment services to women in Bridge Housing programs across Los Angeles County. Participants receive and are connected with employment coaching, transitional employment, resume- and cover letter-writing assistance, interview preparation, employment application assistance, and job readiness career series. In its first three months of operation, 31 women had already enrolled in the ABH Career Series!

## EMPLOYER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Our Employer Recognition Program is a unique opportunity for employers to align themselves with DWC by hiring women experiencing homelessness. Participating employers receive direct recognition on our website, on social media, at high-profile events, and even in our annual reports. All employers are also eligible for the DWC Seal of Distinction, which acknowledges employers who implement internal policies and practices that reflect their commitment to ending homelessness and hiring marginalized women.



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# MADE by DWC



**F**ounded in 2010, MADE by DWC is a purpose-driven social enterprise created by the Downtown Women's Center to empower women in Los Angeles to break the cycle of chronic homelessness through employment.

Our job-training program creates opportunities for women to earn an income while gaining skills through hands-on training and workshops as they move toward economic stability. This innovative approach provides a supportive environment for women to transition into sustainable careers. Women employed in the program help run and curate:

- Our **Home & Gift Collection**, which includes handmade, all-natural soaps, soy candles, bath salts, cards, and journals.
- Our **Café & Gift Boutique**, which offers organic coffee and teas, fresh fare, and baked goods as well as our Home & Gift Collection in a community gathering space in Skid Row.
- Our **Resale Boutique**, which focuses on promoting sustainable fashion and offers a wide range of designer and brand apparel and accessories.

All purchases at MADE by DWC help change lives and fund our job-training program!

## OUR 2019 IMPACT

# 33

transitional jobs provided  
through LA:RISE

# 70%

job placement rate

# 83%

job retention rate

# 40,000+

total training hours  
provided to-date

## SUCCESS STORY

# “At the time I joined MADE by DWC’s Transitional Jobs program, I was unemployed and seeking housing.

It was becoming tedious and discouraging not being able to obtain steady employment. I learned about the transitional jobs program through some of the women who were participants of the Downtown Women’s Center. I was excited about having the resources needed to gain employment and training.

I like being able to add my ideas and thoughts and creative liberty to the vision of MADE by DWC. I enjoy having the responsibility as part of the team to ensure that we give our customers the best that we have to offer as a business entity as well as a community resource. I am enjoying the security of being able to grow and

accomplish the techniques that I need in order to network and build business connections. I’ve learned to be confident enough in myself that I am able to handle the responsibilities that I have been given. I now have transferable skills needed to obtain a position in management, in leadership, and or as a trainer in retail operations. My goal is to become an entrepreneur within the next two years and to provide employment and training opportunities for those who have barriers that prevent them from obtaining employment.”

— **STEPHANIE, A RETAIL ASSOCIATE  
AT MADE BY DWC**

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

In October 2019, MADE by DWC launched a successful rebrand of its signature Home & Gift Collection. The re-brand added a pop of color and a new, streamlined aesthetic to its line of soaps, soy candles, and bath salts, as well as a variety of special California-inspired scents like Lady Bird Groove, Santa Cruise, Joshua Tea, Big Sir, Mojave Dessert, and Nap Valley. The re-brand was ushered in at DWC’s Annual “Dinner With a Cause” Gala with nearly 550 attendees, including emcee Natasha Rothwell of HBO’s hit series Insecure.



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*Pictured above: DWC Advocate Amiyoko Shabazz at City Hall for the 2016-17 Los Angeles Mayor's budget signing.*

# Advocates Program

**W**e believe the most effective way to advocate for systems change is to ensure the voices and lived experiences of DWC residents and participants are at the forefront of our work.

With this in mind, we launched the DWC Advocates Program in 2016. The five-month training program provides formerly homeless women with the tools and training to become successful, confident advocates for themselves, for other women experiencing homelessness, and for DWC. DWC Advocates participate in a six-hour foundational course that covers the basics of advocacy and storytelling, before choosing one of three specialization tracks in (1) public speaking and media interviews, (2) lobby meetings, or (3) written advocacy. Each group then meets individually to continue training, which includes active participation in press interviews, public policy meetings, lobby visits with legislators, fundraising events, and press conferences.

Throughout the years, DWC Advocates have had the special opportunity to meet and speak with public officials like California Senator Holly Mitchell, Former U.S. Secretary of Housing & Urban Development Julián Castro, Former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke, and Los Angeles Congresswoman Karen Bass.

## DWC ADVOCATES HAVE SPOKEN, INTERVIEWED, AND WORKED WITH:

- Media outlets like *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *CBS Local*, *Spectrum News*, and *Los Angeles Daily News*.
- Organizations such as Visionary Women, Black Women Lawyers of Los Angeles, and Hope LA, as well as Live Nation and TOMS.
- Premier institutions like Loyola Marymount University, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the National Center for Medical Development and Research.
- DWC Board Meetings and the DWC Annual Gala.

## SUCCESS STORY

# "I first became homeless when I decided to flee a very bad relationship."

Eventually, I arrived in Southern California, a place that was unfamiliar to me and where I knew no one. I was looking for safety, but I didn't really know where to start. I was living in a hotel in North Hollywood, where I would pay for a couple days at a time. The day I could no longer afford to stay in the hotel, I moved onto the streets. I rode the bus all day and night because to me, it seemed like the safest place to be.

One day, someone gave me the phone number to the Downtown Women's Center. There, I was able to rest, have a hot meal, get clean clothes, and see a physician in their on-site clinic. For years, I spent my days in the Day Center while spending nights in different shelters. I began working with a DWC case manager who eventually helped connect me with a permanent home. I still live there today.

After moving into my new home, I still wanted to find a career I loved, so I met with a Workforce Development staff member at the Downtown Women's Center. I was accepted into LA:RISE, a transitional employment program. From there, I accepted a position as a permanent part-time associate in production and inventory at MADE by DWC.

Today, I am thrilled to graduate from the DWC Advocates Program. Now, I would like to use the skills I developed during this training to advocate on behalf of women like me who have experienced domestic violence and mental illness. I want to make sure women like me are never ashamed to ask for help and know where to get the resources they need."

— PENNEY, A DWC ADVOCATE ON THE DAY OF HER GRADUATION

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

On January 30, 2020, DWC held a press conference on its garden balcony to mark the release of the 2019 Los Angeles City Women's Needs Assessment. Featuring testimonials from a number of DWC Advocates, the report was the first of its kind to study the needs and conditions of homeless women across the City of Los Angeles. The press conference was attended by eight DWC Advocates as well as several elected officials and long-time DWC allies like Mayor Eric Garcetti, LAHSA Commissioner Wendy Greuel, and County Supervisor Hilda Solis. One DWC Advocate, Vikki Vickers, got to speak to the crowd about her experience with homelessness and the need for more gender-specific supportive services, saying of her time prior to coming to DWC, "I became paranoid, and I ran away from everyone I'd ever known ... For me, homelessness was hopelessness." Vikki was among the first women to move into DWC's San Pedro Street residences in late 2012; today, she works as a Coordinator for DWC's Bridge Housing Program.



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