I am in awe of the resilience of the human spirit. Just a few days ago I received a text from Robert, who used to live behind Safeway in a tent. He always said that once his Social Security benefits arrived, he would move back to his home state of Missouri. He wrote to me, “I did what I told you! I got my check and moved to Missouri!” He’s doing great. He even sent a few photos of his RV perched amidst trees on his land. He couldn’t have been more grateful for the friendship and support from many of us who helped him while he was here.

His note continued that one of the guys who also lived here for a couple of years had made his way back home to Kansas. He had stayed in touch, and gone out by bus to visit Robert for a few days. There’s an interesting piece of information... Cell phones are allowing the homeless and formerly homeless to stay in touch. They have connections deep enough to make a weekend visit valuable and memorable enough to tell someone like me about it. I was pleased to hear their story of friendship.

Seeing a few people make it out of homelessness is inspiring. Robert is one of four people we’ve seen move into housing the past few years. All of them received major help through government programs and social services. But equally important is that the programs were the vehicle that drew a circle of support. They were the reason that social workers, the street medical team, Abundant Grace, Coastside Hope, Abode Services, LifeMoves and others were all talking to one another, comparing notes, sharing ideas and coordinating. We’ve spent several years meeting as a Homeless Outreach Team and it’s finally paying dividends. People who were homeless now have homes.

The downside for me is to consider the folks who have not budged. They are the most hard-core alcoholics behind Safeway. I often wonder what they are trying to numb out, what pain in their lives is at the center of their disease. In some strange, mysterious way, I think every drink is a yearning for wholeness and healing, and perhaps an attempt to connect with something beyond oneself, the Divine. After all, isn’t it God whom so many of us both seek

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and hide from in myriad ways; whose mysterious love terrifyingly calls us to discard our fears, especially the the fears that (ironically) help us “feel secure?” It should be no surprise that people who have the most difficult time with life also lack sleep, work, social connections, and a place to call and be at home. Those are elements of life that ground us in stability and hope.

I wish the answer were easier...but this is life, and it’s a messy journey. That’s why I think the relationships that accompany these programs are so important. They provide the unseen material that makes change possible - Love.

Peace and blessings,

Eric