

Outreach Success: Sharon's Story

Sharon is a senior citizen who spent many a day on a bus bench in Costa Mesa. But thanks to the help of Costa Mesa's outreach team, a local tattoo parlor owner and a local faith-based nonprofit, Trellis, she's now off the streets and living on her own.

But getting there was a long journey with many pitfalls along the way. Originally from the Los Angeles area, Sharon found her way to Costa Mesa where she said the motels were more affordable. The outreach team often found her sleeping on the sidewalk on Harbor Boulevard

When outreach asked about her situation, she said she had money coming in from out of the area. It wasn't true. When outreach and police officers talked to her about entering the Bridge Shelter, she declined the offer.

Outreach continued to engage with her weekly, normally after she had used all of her money for a motel.

After a few months of conversation and missed appointments, Sharon asked about housing, and outreach workers began a housing assessment. Coincidentally, the owner of the Life After Death Tattoo parlor on Harbor Boulevard had contacted city outreach workers regarding Sharon.

Outreach staff worked in tandem with the tattoo parlor owner to support her. They encouraged her to show up at her appointments, finish the housing assessment share how she became homeless, and they started discussing possible solutions.

She finally admitted, after months of these one-on-one encounters, that one of the reasons she had been evicted from

housing was due to a chronic health condition.

Her last landlord asked her to leave because she couldn't control her condition, and she gave up looking for a room since the situation seemed hopeless.

During this time, a local church member who had also encountered Sharon while she was on the street reached Trellis to see if they could help.

Sharon began looking for rooms to rent and she felt encouraged that there were three entities helping her end her homelessness.

Today, Sharon has a place to live and settling in to her new home. She is using her monthly income to pay her rent and a local church assisted with her first month rent and moving costs. She is still in need of rental help and needs furnishings.

The tattoo parlor owner is working to find a long-term, permanent solution and is hosting a fundraiser called "Faces for Costa Mesa" on Sunday Nov. 24 at 7 p.m. at the Life After Death Tattoo shop located at 3011 B Harbor Blvd. Funds received from the fundraiser will go into a special account and be used solely for to help sustain Sharon's stability.

It has been a real team effort to help Sharon get off the concrete bus bench and into a warm bed under a roof. The amazing unsolicited collaboration has changed her life for the long term. It is a true example of how government, an outreach team, businesses, and the faith community can work together to help someone move off of the streets.

In this season of Thanksgiving, please join the community at the Life After Death Tattoo parlor to help raise funds for Sharon. Click the website here <http://www.lifeafterdeathtattoo.com>.

For information about the City of Costa Mesa's ongoing outreach efforts and Bridge Shelter, please visit www.costamesaca.gov/homelessness.