



# Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week

Nov. 16 to Nov. 22, 2025

## A Case Manager's Story: We can't keep just putting out fires



**Malik Baiyewu**  
Housing Case Manager

The phone in my office rings constantly. Every call brings a new story of a family facing financial hardship. Today, it was a young couple. I could hear the weariness in her voice as he explained that her entire department was being dissolved. They're good people who work hard, but they can't afford rent, let alone childcare for their three kids. A month ago, it was a single mom whose state-funded grant was unexpectedly cut. Before that, a family whose small business was wiped out by a medical bill. Each call is different, but the core issue of financial instability is the same.

Every day, circumstances change, but the work remains constant. My team and I at the Shalom Center, along with countless other agencies, serve as the first line of support for so many different demographics. We're skilled at navigating paperwork and connecting people with local churches,

resource centers, food banks, and housing programs to create a safety net. We work efficiently, addressing one urgent need after another to keep families from losing everything.

But the volume of need is overwhelming. I randomly find myself looking at the bigger picture, and I feel the immense scope of the problem. It feels like we're always reacting, trying to help one family at a time, while the number of people who need help keeps growing. The root problems, like wages not keeping up with living costs, and policies that don't offer enough support, are too big for our small team to fix. We can provide temporary relief, but the underlying issues are deep-seated.

That's when I knew our work, while vital, wasn't enough. We were just reacting, not preventing. It wasn't about simply helping the next family in line; it was about stopping the line from growing. It's a call that must be answered by all of us, not just with a donation or volunteering, but with a collective demand for a system that doesn't treat hope as a temporary hand-out. We can't keep just putting out fires; we have to go to the source and build a world where the fire doesn't start in the first place.

**For more information and/or to donate scan the QR code.**

You may also contact one of the participating agencies.

- Shalom Center—[www.shalomcenter.org](http://www.shalomcenter.org)
- Kenosha Human Development Services—[www.khds.org](http://www.khds.org)
- The Sharing Center—[www.thesharingcenter.net](http://www.thesharingcenter.net)





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**A True Story of a Client: We felt heard...We have hope.**

It all started with that notice about reduced hours. I saw it and my stomach just dropped. My husband and I had always been in a constant juggling act, living paycheck to paycheck to make it work for our two children. We sat at the kitchen table that night, the silence heavy between us, trying to figure out how to stretch a dollar that was already stretched thin. The numbers just didn't add up anymore, and the first thing we had to give up was daycare. It felt like the first domino to fall in a long line of them.



We tried to keep a brave face for the kids, making the back of our car feel like a fort, but the shame was a heavy, silent weight. We'd drive around late at night looking for a safe place to park and sleep. Every morning was a new struggle to find a bathroom, a place to get a snack, and to just make it through the day. We were so tired, and the fear was a constant reminder of how far we'd fallen. We were just totally lost, a family adrift in our own city.

Just when we thought we had hit rock bottom, a ray of hope appeared. We got a referral from a friend to a local agency right here

in Kenosha. I remember being so nervous making that call, terrified they would judge me, but the voice on the other end was just kind. They didn't just see a homeless family; they saw us. They listened to our story and, for the first time in a long time, we felt heard. They connected us with other places that didn't judge us, but just offered a hand. We were given a warm place to sleep, a hot meal, and a caseworker who sat down with us and helped us make a real plan. They showed us a path forward when we thought we had nowhere left to go. We're not out of the woods yet, but for the first time in a long time, we have hope.

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