

Artists Helping the Homeless

Artists Helping the Homeless began as a grassroots initiative and has grown into a comprehensive social service organization providing transportation, discharge planning, transitional housing, and long-term supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Operating in both Kansas and Missouri, Artists Helping the Homeless plays a vital role in bridging fragmented service systems, meeting people where they are by navigating and responding to urgent needs without barriers or delays. In 2024 alone, Artists Helping the Homeless served 1,498 unduplicated individuals, housing 245 through its programs.

Innovative Model of Care

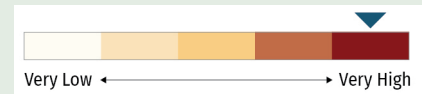
What makes Artists Helping the Homeless unique is its nimbleness. Originally created to provide transportation for individuals discharging from hospitals, Artists Helping the Homeless has become what many call the ‘safety net for the safety net’ and improves local social services by removing barriers to treatment and services and customizing support for the individual person. This flexibility allows them to address the whole person rather than a single issue.

Staff and leadership emphasize that their success is rooted in building individualized supports. As Kar Woo, program director shared:

“Getting ourselves out of the way and doing what is best for the people is what truly matters. Building a client-centered, case-by-case referral system has provided better longer standing success.”

County Context

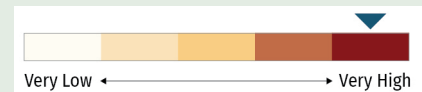
Douglas County



18% increase of deaths caused by drugs or alcohol from 2022 to 2023.

Naloxone distribution reaches only 20% of need.

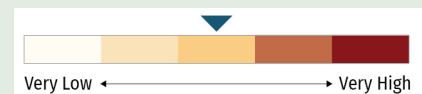
Wyandotte County



17% housing insecurity.

30% increase of deaths caused by drugs or alcohol from 2022 to 2023.

Johnson County



92% of those with a substance use disorder diagnosis not receiving services.

Deaths caused by drugs or alcohol
27 per 100,000 people.

Artists Helping the Homeless directly addresses these challenges by ensuring that vulnerable individuals are not lost in transitions between hospitals, shelters, treatment locations, and other social resources. Their peer-driven, case-by-case approach creates a model that is replicable and deeply responsive to community needs.

Community Impact

Artists Helping the Homeless works to reduce hospital readmissions, prevent justice system involvement, and provide immediate stability for people exiting crisis. Their ability to rapidly deploy transportation ensures individuals can attend medical and behavioral health appointments, access shelter, or reach safe housing. Their transitional housing is paired with peer mentorship and flexible case management, building long-term stability.

“Empathy is the ultimate weapon in combating SUD. SUD is a disease. These people are sick, not morally deficient. They need treatment, not punishment. They need help, not judgment. Every human being has a story, and many of these people are judged without ever knowing what happened to them. Sometimes one act of kindness and encouraging words can give a person just the right amount of hope to inspire change.”

Kar Woo, Program Director

SENT Topeka

SENT Topeka is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering holistic community development in the Hi-Crest neighborhood and Shawnee County. Recognized as one of the city's most vulnerable areas, Hi-Crest has long faced challenges related to poverty, substance use, and housing instability. SENT approaches these challenges with a philosophy that true transformation must come from within the community. Many SENT staff live in the neighborhood, building trust through lived presence and sustained commitment—the residency is not a requirement.

Unique Approach to Revitalization

SENT's stair-step case management model is designed to guide families from crisis toward stability and self-sufficiency. Instead of providing one-time fixes, SENT walks alongside families for the long haul, connecting them to resources, supporting their education, and helping them build pathways to independence.

One milestone achievement came when SENT completed the first new house built in Hi-Crest in over 60 years. This accomplishment sparked momentum that has since led to more than 25 additional projects, signaling a visible shift in neighborhood revitalization.

As Johnathan Sublet, founder and executive director explained,

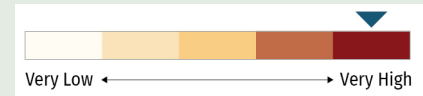
“Our guiding principle is that everyone has infinite dignity, value, and worth—regardless of their beliefs, lifestyle, or opinion of us.”

Community Impact

Successful community collaboration begins with minimal barriers but also clear values. SENT staff listen carefully to potential partners—how they speak about Hi-Crest neighbors often indicates whether they're a good fit. SENT only partners with organizations that view the neighborhood and

County Context

Shawnee County



Deaths caused by drugs or alcohol
52 per 100,000 people.

Suspected Overdose-related EMS Responses
788 per 100,000, nearly double the state average.

These statistics highlight the urgent need for prevention and intervention. SENT's local, grassroots model responds to these challenges by creating protective factors through housing stability, education, and community trust.

its residents as assets, not liabilities. Effective collaboration requires patience and long-term thinking. Start small and build trust. It's not about quick, flashy solutions but addressing root causes. We believe true collaboration thrives when partners prioritize collective impact over individual credit, are willing to take time to build trust, and focus on people rather than just numbers.

“We didn’t realize the prevalence or importance of SUD services until we made it safe for people to share their stories. A few weeks ago, someone who visited our pantry took free naloxone. Later, while driving for Uber, they used it to save a passenger’s life during an overdose. Stories like this have deepened our understanding of SUD’s role in holistic care.”

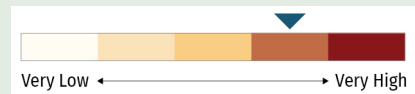
Johnathan Sublet, Founder and Executive Director

Radical Life

Radical Life exists to strengthen families and prevent foster care placements, bringing people together to create safe homes and strong families through community-based programming and meaningful relationships. Radical Life provides a proactive, collaborative approach that aims to prevent a crisis rather than derail a family. The team shares one mission: to walk alongside families as they build stability, hope, and lasting change.

County Context

Lyon County



Deaths caused by drugs or alcohol 37 per 100,000 people. 36 liquor stores per 100,000 residents.

Unique Approach

As a former special education teacher at Emporia USD 253, and a foster parent for more than nine years, Executive Director Lindsay Smith has seen firsthand the trauma that occurs when children are unnecessarily removed from their homes. Motivated to change that story, Lindsay launched Radical Life in 2021 after years of research and collaboration. Her team is dedicated to empowering families through community connections and evidence-based tools, ensuring every child has a safe and thriving home.

Radical Life offers a supportive 20-week program that helps adults take control of their future, build strong connections, and create stable, thriving households. Families move through three phases of transformation: Connect—meeting with staff to explore if the program is the right fit; Join the Community—beginning the intake process and working toward personal goals with a proven curriculum; and Grow and Thrive—progressing through phases designed to support lasting change at their own pace. Smith said,

“Getting over yourself first is the hardest, most difficult barrier. Being open to my understanding of what [SUD] looks like and what dealing with [SUD] looks like is probably the hardest, most continual barrier I face ... One of the biggest things we teach in our program at Radical Life is ‘Different isn’t wrong.’ A different way of doing something isn’t wrong. It’s just different and let’s try [being] more fluid and being open to other perspectives and other ideas and bringing people in.”

Community Impact

Since March 2021, Radical Life has empowered families to build stability and break cycles of poverty—helping graduates increase income, reduce debt, pursue education, and rely less on government assistance. Additionally, Radical Life saw a 73% success rate among participants on parole or probation who completed their programs. These outcomes reflect a larger truth: when families have the right tools and support, they rise.

Since July 2023, Radical Life has partnered with CarePortal specializing in connecting struggling children and families in need with agencies, churches, and community service representatives. This collaboration has resulted in over \$75,000 of goods, services, and financial assistance for its families. Together, Radical Life and CarePortal have collaborated to serve 260 children and adults across the county.