

Monday, October 17

Notes:

What does everyone do in region of Waterloo?

- They're not all within the region Pat is, Veronica is with the Kitchener Public Library and Regan is a community of social justice advocate.
- Pat:
 - o Work in community services, and we have a housing and homelessness prevention team. There's a number of them working on ways to help people who are experiencing homelessness to become and stay housed.
 - o They have a program that looks at emergency shelters which is another one that is supportive housing.
 - o Pat works with families program.
 - o Have a prevention and diversion to help support people to before and help to attempt them to not become homeless. As well as working with organization folks with lived experience.
 - o Connected with the street outreach teams and drop in programs which where the pocket card lands with him.
- Veronica:
 - o Works at the kitchen public library, part of the community connections team.
 - o The teamwork with former populations, particularly those who are in the streets or unstable housing or people who are not completely in house at all, they come to the library and they try/ help refer them to the resources in the community that might be helpful to them. As well as providing direct support in the library.
 - o used to work a lot in the shelter system and still work part time at some support housing location.
 - o Immersed in the culture and talk a lot with people who are experiencing homelessness.
 - o At the library, Veronica collect a lot of information about resources in the community so that they can provide referrals. Library has resource posters.
- Regan:
 - o Local social justice advocate.
 - o Has been homeless twice in her life; as a youth and as a pregnant woman.
 - o Volunteering on a few of the committees with the region, which is what's brought me here to say hello to you guys to all today.

- o Run a website called mymotherunshinedot.ca
- o Does the unsheltered campaign.

- What made you interested in working with unhoused people?

- o Veronica has fell into this work. She has a degree in modern and languages. Looking for any jobs, that's when she started to work in a shelter system and saw the challenges and victories. She realized she wanted to be apart and how she got into this work.
- o Spent most of those years in the area of social determinants and working on from a public health perspective, how can we improve the health outcomes of individuals and and through that there's some key determinants of health and housing being one of them.
- o So, the opportunity to move more directly into focusing on helping people end homelessness in our community was rewarding.
- o We talk about social determinants of health, there's a lot of them, but housing is really primary, nothing else can happen until people have housing
- o Pat has worked in public health. From a public health perspective, the opportunity to do this has multiple benefits. Housing is primary, nothing else can happen when education, income, and social connections. Just really excited to work on this.
- o Regan (mentioned above) is a local justice advocate. She's been homeless twice in her life; as a youth and as a pregnant woman. She is volunteering with the community with region. She runs a website called mothersunshine.ca. And she does shelter campaign.

- What aspect of your job do you enjoy and has there been a project that you've worked on that has stood out to you?

- o Regan: Everything is volunteered based. Everything I do is because it feels like the right thing and best to follow my path.
- o Pat: Rewarding part is to connect with people he is working with, being to see and hear stories is meaningful.
- o Veronica: is a connector and likes to bring resources together to help make the world a better place. Has a lot of opportunity.

- o supports the organizations, don't work directly with people experiencing homelessness, but more with the outreach organizations with the emergency shelters and listen and try to bring as many resources that they can to help them to focus on the work that they're doing on a day-to-day basis.

- How did you get involved in this project of supporting people who are going through a food and shelter crisis?

- o Volunteer based because Regan loves it. Someone she wants to follow the path and tries her best.
- o Veronica awarding part is the connections she works with people, hearing their stories, people who are working on the streets that have employed and having a house; helping that person and good experience is so meaningful.
- o Pat is a connector bringing resources together. This has a lot of opportunity. Veronica has directly people, pat works in organizer with the emergency shelter, listen and tries to bring resources and help them to focus.

- History & Effectiveness:

- What method was used before the Pocket Card was created, and how long has the Pocket Card been used?

- There's three main audiences:
 - o primary audiences, people experiencing homelessness, or those who are precariously housed, maybe couch surfing with friends, staying with family, but without a permanent place of their own and looking for needing to know where they can go to get help. It's a way to bring it all together because we have real connected community of services.

Jumping to 8 years ago:

- the primary audience that the secondary audience is really those who are working with people experiencing homelessness so they can help.
- So sometimes it's first responders, sometimes it's security, sometimes it's drop in programs and outreach or church groups, and it allows them to help connect people to the supports available, and sometimes to know what numbers to call to help people. So, that's a secondary audience.
- And then the third is really those who are offering services um and being able to promote and let people know about what's available, where they can go for help, how to make an access that.

- The last few years it has been changing rapidly. So then they go to the printing that is a bit specialized paper, tear resistance and waterproof and its more expensive to get it outside of the region. It takes time to get it printed, and takes time to update.
- They print about 5000 copies couple times a year.
- By the time they were getting it distributed the information has changed.

- How did you end up deciding on the pocket cards that were in use for the past eight years, was it that you wanted something specifically that was pretty portable kind of lightweight could be easily handed out?

- o Trying to get something in the hands of people that they could keep with them when they need to reference.
- o Needed to be small kind that sits in your pocket and recognizing that people are living in different conditions; rain, snow, etc.

- How effective have the pocket cards been? Feedbacks or seen it in action?

- o Veronica uses the pocket card as a reference for her community resource posters and then verify because the information changes quickly. It is convenience because there is a very limited period of time where they are considered to update and it's a biggest struggle because the next week after she updates it things can change again.
- o Regan said its handy because you can bring the pocket cards with you on hand even if information isn't up to date, it still gives you the best resource. And the portability is important because if you don't have digital format you can look always have it available with you having to rely on digital portal.

- Challenges or difficulties that you encountered when distributing the pocket cards?

- o There's has been a lot more grassroots, organizations wanting to help during pandemic.
- o Size of pocket is limited.

- What places do you distribute these pocket cards? Where do these people go to for accessing them?

- o There are a few different groups.
- o One is the area municipalities, so by law who connect with people through encampments, security transit system has security, and they have those cards with them. There they hand the out as well as fire and police.

- o First approach: Provide as much help for a few people as possible.
- o Street outreach and emergency shelters are the primary ones.

- Estimate to how many people housed individuals do have access to the internet? Are there any places around where they might go in order to access this information with the internet?

- o Don't know the exact number but there are a high percentage of people either don't have access or like a lot of people who don't have digital literacy.
- o This is something happening in the library as well, some people tend to not know how to use email or computer
- o If we do go by digital, it's important to go very simple so people can access it easier
- o Access factor is crucial

- Would local businesses be open to help spread the cards or display updated info at their establishment? (Why or why not? Have you been refused before?)

- o Regan: Local business not so sure. But as an employee, there's been times where you keep the pocket card on the desk.

-i.e.) You are dealing with people who are coming and talking about how they are stuck in their life and need a source. You end up hearing about the barriers they are facing and then you have to list available local information will be beneficial to have them walk away with it.

- o Employees may do that if they recognize the value of their customers
- o Pat: Some people who are working at the business will offer that help.
- o But as a business as a whole, their approach is often through business improvement associations, they have come together and provided some funding to help with street outreach who can help negotiate and intervene conflicts between customers or business or individual's.
- o They would probably want the distribution through the street outreach.
- o But at the same time, they are staff who are at a different business across the community who would distribute them in that way but primarily the businesses themselves are wanting outreach or city by law to be the ones to do that.
- o Regan: Sometimes the concept of marketing through local business isn't viable because you would have to cast such a broad net in order to effectively put out there.
- o If an individual is accessing those local services, it's more easily assumed that they would be in the demographic that may need awareness of other local services.

- o Whereas an individual going to a business, you don't necessarily know just you'd have to cast such a large net marketing expenditure wise, it won't necessarily work
- o It's helpful to have something printed, but they do spread word and share information and it's a very connected group of folks and that sense of community is important. (Like veronica said, word by mouth)

Scheduling:

- We wanted to check again with you about how often the schedules change?

- Pat: Some of the restrictions have changed and we are at a place where services have changed and shifted a bit. So, it used to be that we printed a couple times a year and it would be more stable in the last little while.
- Locations has changed, services have opened or closed or shifted their hours, they've gone from dropping take out. So, it's a regular shift right now and probably every couple of months they will reprint.
- Veronica: She usually update resources every two months often very month. Since the pocket card is small, putting posters in the library and updating the information is easier.
- Sometimes she puts poster next week because it is important resourced changed and need to keep it updated at all costs. And its challenging.
- One of the things that happened in the last few years with a lot of change was the services are very dynamic in terms of environment, so people are responding to situations that are happening on a regular basis and there's not that flexibility to update

- How do you usually receive the updated information?

- It's a pushed-out email to ask people to update, one of the things that happens, a lot of changes and services are dynamic. People are responding and not reflexivity and respond onto the update. It is hectic.
- Veronica doesn't make people update so she's consistently reaching out to the agents and following up new things and update new things.
- Challenges some service people offers: They don't promote too often. Because they don't want that many people to come.

Additional Information & Closing:

- How large is the pocket card and given its special water and tear-resistant material, can it be folded a few times?

- 8.5 by 11
- What are your budgetary constraints?
- \$10,000

How do you decide what can go on the pocket cards?

- Historical kind of updating or using places that have provided funding to.
- Any other information you'd like to share with us about the pocket cards?
- The information they would like to see on the pocket card is **public toilets (a big one)** especially in the winter so people that don't know can go. Or accessing WIFI (can be a changing game sometimes) or water.
- Accurate and dated information
- Look for a user perspective.

Adding information's that user needs could be like Veronica said public toilets which is a big change. Accessing WIFI near.