



# **dream center peoria**

turning dreams into reality

April 5, 2024

Good morning,

My name is Kristy Schofield and I am Director of Homeless & Housing for the Dream Center Peoria.

27 years ago I was a Homeless mother sleeping in my car with my 4 year old son and 3 year old daughter. I had run from a marriage filled with Domestic Violence and was suffering from depression that was so deep and so dark, that I was not functional as a person or a parent. I know the pain of having your children hungry but having nothing to give them, having them cry because they are scared, and not being able to make them feel safe. **But God had a bigger purpose**, and I found the very Shelter and housing programs that I now direct, and I was given a second chance at life. The shelter and then the Housing gave me the support I needed to become self-sustaining. I am so grateful for what I was given, so grateful in fact, that I have spent the last 25 years working with those programs as Director. The work that I do, the accomplishments, have given me back the self-esteem that I lost through the DV and homelessness.

At Dream Center Peoria, Women, Children & Families are receiving life changing services and I am so blessed to work for an organization that gives our guests a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance at life and works so hard to help them become self-sustaining. I am ALSO so honored to be able to give others the gift that I was given.

At DCP I see so many broken and homeless. Even though, they become homeless for a myriad of reasons, un-employment, under-employment, substance abuse or mental health, the common thread in so many cases is the lack of self-esteem and belief in what they can achieve.

That self-esteem and belief can be rebuilt through accomplishment and achievements. We partner with programs such as Workforce Development, Illinois Central College, Adult Education and more. We offer a trades program onsite for those interested in Culinary, Auto and Small Engine Repair, Screen printing, Coding and a complete coffee program that allows students to learn the coffee world from roasting the beans to packaging, marketing and sales. These programs give our guests an opportunity to work and with that, accomplish and achieve, thereby gaining self-esteem and belief in themselves.

We are also partner with the Department of Children & Family Services, Our programs being an opportunity to keep families together and bring safety & stability to the household.

One family in our programs, a single mother household, lost her children to DCFS a little over a year and ½ ago, she had been unsuccessful at managing employment due to substance abuse issues and her children were placed in foster care. She began counseling, treatment and a workforce initiative we partner with. She has secured full time employment and has even worked her way into shift management. These achievements have given her a greater sense of belief in herself and she is on the path to the return of her children within the next three months.

It is our believe that works builds self-esteem, provides families, that have struggled to sustain, a better chance at long term success.

So many years of working in these programs have given me a sense of accomplishment, pride and self-worth. I know first-hand the difference work and becoming self-sustaining, makes in someone lives. You see 27 years ago when I was in that car with my children, I called my ex-husband to beg for help. He told me, “see I told you, when you left me, you would have nothing.” Well 27 years of hard work later and by the Grace of God, my children... me.... we have everything. Myself, my children with their children are now self-sustaining working families.

Chairman Smith, LaHood and Ranking Member Davis, Members of the committee, Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my life and testimony as well as all that Dream Center Peoria does for the most vulnerable in our area.

Kristy Schofield  
Director of Homeless & Housing  
Dream Center Peoria