



Downtown Emergency Service Center

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"1811 Eastlake represents a new, effective and compassionate direction for helping the chronically homeless. It's called putting housing first. Providing housing for these individuals will benefit the community. It's effective, it makes financial sense and most importantly, it's the humane thing to do." - **Greg Nickels, Seattle Mayor**

"Our best hope for helping chronic alcoholics is to move them off the streets and into safe and stable housing, with immediate access to treatment services. 1811 Eastlake will house 75 chronically homeless people, reducing a costly cycle through emergency and criminal justice services and improving both public health and public safety in the downtown area." - **Ron Sims, King County Executive**

"I commend DESC for their excellent outreach to and the ongoing collaboration with neighborhood stakeholders in connection with the development and operation of the 1811 Eastlake project."

"They are committed to making a substantive difference in the lives of individuals who are homeless and struggling with chronic addictions and mental illness as well as to all of us in the communities in which they serve." - **Lyn Krizanich, Clise Properties; Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association**

1811 Eastlake Avenue

DESC's supportive housing is predicated on the concept of 'housing first'. The housing first approach is based on a simple premise: People are more likely to be successful in treatment when they have a stable home. A safe, affordable place to live should be the first thing we provide. One of the most visible implementations of housing first in the country is DESC's newest supportive housing development, 1811 Eastlake.



1811 Eastlake is the first housing program of its kind in Washington to address the needs of chronic homeless alcoholics. Opened in December 2005, it offers pre-recovery housing to 75 homeless men and women with long histories of chronic alcohol addiction and multiple, failed attempts at conventional treatment. The project is unique in that it does not require participation in a treatment program or abstinence from drinking. Residents benefit from 24-hour, seven day a week supportive services including mental health and chemical dependency treatment, on-site primary health care, daily meals and medication monitoring.

Homeless chronic alcoholics die on the streets at incidence rates much higher than that of any other subset of the homeless population. They are the heaviest utilizers of expensive taxpayer-funded crisis services such as police, jails, courts, alcohol detoxification centers, 911 calls, ambulance transportation, hospital emergency room care and involuntary commitment services.

A recent Op-Ed piece in the Seattle P-I noted that "A study of the 40 most frequent users of Harborview Medical Center's Emergency Department and the Sobering Center revealed that most of these users were chronically homeless individuals whose services cost more than \$2 million a year, an average of \$50,000 a year per person." By contrast, the annual cost of housing and providing intensive services at 1811 Eastlake is less than a third of that figure.

DESC has teamed up with the University of Washington to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of 1811 Eastlake. This study will seek to determine if residents' quality of life improves after moving in and if their use of crisis services decreases and therefore saves the community money. In the meantime, the project is providing a safe home, ready access to services and on-going encouragement to achieve a better life to a people for whom assistance is long overdue.



Gabriel

Gabriel ventured out west by way of freight train. Back in Minnesota he enjoyed his job as an assistant in a nursing facility and diligently cared for those with whom he worked. But when times got tough, alcohol became Gabriel's escape and eventually he became homeless. That was more than twenty years ago.

Gabriel is a Chippewa Indian who grew up on the Case Lake Reservation. He identifies strongly with his culture and proudly displays his native heritage. He is also quick to proclaim that he's never been arrested or sent to jail during his many years on the streets—sleeping in doorways or camping in the woods. As he tells it, it's his 'street smarts' that have kept him alive and safe all those years.

Gabriel was one of the first people invited to move into 1811 Eastlake when it opened in December of 2005. He had attempted renting a place before, but always found himself back on the street. As he plainly puts it, “alcoholism always got in the way” and

made it impossible to follow the stringent program guidelines often required by housing providers.

“I feel better about myself physically and emotionally.”

At 1811 Eastlake, Gabriel has been given another chance at having a home—without rigid or unrealistic expectations. He is surrounded by the necessary supportive services to maintain his housing and address the other critical issues he faces in his life.

