



Welcome Home

HOPE ATLANTA  
**FIELD  
REPORT**

Spring 2024

An Inside Look at the State of  
Homelessness in Our Communities



Dear friends,

This year, Melody Bloodworth would be celebrating her 42nd year of life. But in the winter of 2022, she perished on the streets of Atlanta.

She was a familiar face Downtown, typically swaddled in dirty blankets near the Five Points MARTA station. Suffering from unaddressed mental health challenges, she cycled for years between healthcare facilities, jail, shelters, and bouts of homelessness. In a state ranked 49th in the U.S. in access to mental health care, she was among countless others failed by a system ill-equipped to provide the holistic support needed. But Melody's story didn't end with her tragic death.

In January, I attended the ribbon cutting for The Melody, a groundbreaking housing initiative named in her honor. It's the first of many projects planned under Atlanta's Rapid Housing Initiative. Hope Atlanta is proud to play a pivotal role at The Melody, providing wraparound services, including behavioral health care, to meet each client's individual needs.

As the first residents settle in and embark on a new chapter, The Melody stands as a testament to our collective resolve to rewrite the narrative of homelessness and strive for a future where no one suffers the same fate as Melody Bloodworth. With the support of compassionate community members like you, I truly believe such a future is within reach.

At Hope Atlanta, we are dedicated to advocating for the ongoing housing needs of Atlanta's most vulnerable populations, ensuring that the momentum generated by The Melody continues to drive positive change. We Hope you'll join us.



Julio Carrillo, CEO



SCAN THE QR CODE TO  
CONNECT, JOIN THE  
CONVERSATION, AND DISCOVER  
WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!

AN INNOVATIVE  
SOLUTION TO ATLANTA'S  
HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

# Meet The Melody

The research and evidence are overwhelmingly clear: housing stands as the cornerstone in resolving homelessness. Yet, it is not solely housing that facilitates this transformation. Instead, it is the strategic incorporation of comprehensive wraparound supportive services that empowers individuals in their journey out of homelessness.

Enter The Melody, the first of several collaborative projects in Atlanta's Rapid Housing Initiative, championed by Mayor Andre Dickens. The initiative aims to build 500 low-cost housing units on city-owned land by the end of 2025. Besides a safe place to call home, The Melody provides residents with the foundation for a fresh start. Each resident is connected to a dedicated supportive services team that empowers them to chart their own path from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

## THE MELODY: AT A GLANCE

### Number of Housing Micro-Units

40 (32 ADA compliant)

### Location

184 Forsyth Street

### Time to Completion

4 Months

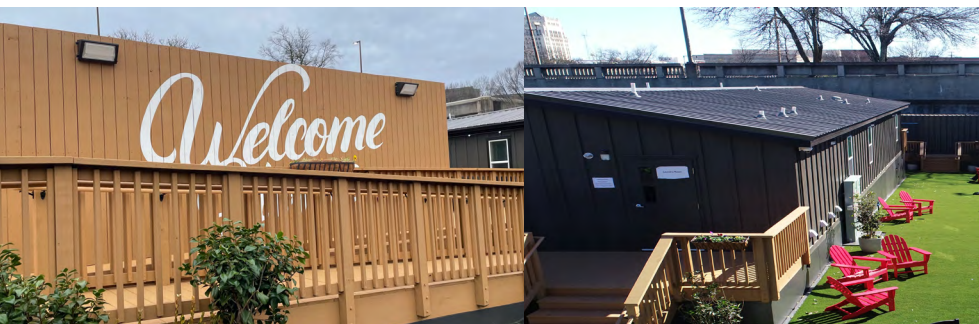
### Community Features

24/7 Security, Green Space,  
Dog Park, Coworking Areas,  
Laundry

### Hope Atlanta's Role

Onsite Behavioral Health  
Services, Care Coordination,  
Resident Advisor with Lived  
Experience of Homelessness,  
Food Assistance, Facilitating  
Onsite Medical & Economic  
Mobility Partnerships

### Partner Organizations





## MEET ONE OF THE MELODY'S FIRST RESIDENTS, TRENT B.

"I really appreciated that I was able to make it to The Melody because it's got a lot of caring people that work here, and they are really trying to help. If you feel like you need to talk to someone, they have that and are there. **They can supply you with food and assistance and basic things that you need in life, and it makes me feel a lot better about myself because I'm able to make a better appearance. I am able to keep myself clean and keep my hygiene up and also my health.**

I am able to really rest and keep track of all my medication properly. I feel more relaxed, and I am able to get my strength back and not worry about too much day-to-day pressure and stress. This is a fabulous place, and if you get here, you're very lucky to be here."

-Trent B., Melody Resident and Hope Atlanta Client

## MEET THE MELODY, CONT.

**Residents aren't just tenants—they're part of a community, forging connections and reclaiming their sense of belonging.** The Melody offers a range of amenities, including a communal green space, dog park, gathering spaces, and a community area equipped with a kitchenette, offices, and laundry facilities.

Hope Atlanta provides wraparound services to support each resident's basic needs and longer-term goals, from behavioral health support to food assistance, comprehensive case management, and resources promoting economic mobility. By providing two fully licensed clinicians, two certified

peer specialists, and an onsite resident advisor who has also experienced homelessness in the past, Hope Atlanta ensures clients receive the essential care and support they need to thrive.

The Melody demonstrates that remarkable transformations can unfold when we join forces and collectively tackle barriers. And change is happening quickly. It took just four months to transform a nondescript parking lot near the Garnett MARTA station into The Melody community. Thanks to the City of Atlanta's new permitting process, these rapid affordable housing options will become more common.

# Focus on Mental Health

## INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Because mental health disorders often coincide with homelessness, behavioral health care is integral to our approach. Our in-house, licensed clinicians provide compassionate, individualized care to residents at The Melody as they begin a new chapter.

We are even working to improve traditional methods of treating clients by pioneering a new tool: **The Psychosocial Resiliency Index-30 (PsRI-30)**. Developed by Dr. Valentin, our Senior Director of Programs and Clinical Services, the PsRI-30 assesses social determinants of health, psychosocial wellness, and resiliency, and uses that data to measure impact.

## MENTAL HEALTH IN GEORGIA



45% OF OUR  
CLIENTS HAVE A  
MENTAL HEALTH  
DISORDER



34% OF ADULTS  
IN GEORGIA HAVE  
SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY  
OR DEPRESSION



GEORGIA HAS THE 2ND  
HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF  
ADULTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS  
UNABLE TO RECEIVE TREATMENT

## MEET DR. EDWARD VALENTIN

### SR. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND CLINICAL SERVICES AT HOPE ATLANTA

We are thrilled to introduce Dr. Valentin, who joined our team in 2023 as a highly esteemed licensed clinical social worker. He brings over two decades of invaluable experience in clinical behavioral health. Dr. Valentin holds a Ph.D. in Social Science and leadership with a focus on Affective Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology, highlighting his profound dedication to advancing community mental health. His role as a consultant for nonprofit and health organizations, coupled with fellowships in Neuroscience and Neuropsychology, underscores his influential leadership in the field.



# Atlanta Homelessness Update

WITH ADAM HAWKINS, DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH AND EMERGENCY SERVICES



Adam oversees 19 outreach employees at Hope Atlanta who meet people experiencing homelessness where they are and offer services. With dedicated teams at MARTA, Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, encampments, the Women's Community Kitchen around the city of Atlanta thanks to a partnership with QuikTrip, making HOPE Atlanta the largest outreach team in the city of Atlanta.

*You and other Hope Atlanta staff members recently participated in the 2024 Point in Time (PIT) Count. What was that experience like?*

I got to go to the airport. There were six or seven of us. I'm at the airport every week during the daytime, and it's a very different experience from going and doing the PIT count. There is no doubt that there are a lot of unsheltered people at the airport at night. That was eye-opening to me. I've heard the reports, but to actually go out there and see everybody literally camped out...it's not just a few people.

*How many unsheltered people did you interact with? What was that like?*

We did 41 surveys and gave out 41 gift cards, but interacted with 60 people in addition to that. Some weren't interested in surveys. It's at night and people want to sleep. There were lots of mental health challenges.

## WHAT IS THE POINT IN TIME (PIT) COUNT?

On a given night every January, volunteers in cities across the country (including Atlanta) visit designated sites to count and survey people experiencing homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered. While not an exact measurement, the PIT Count helps us understand the characteristics of the unsheltered population, track changes over time, and plan resources.



Part of the HOPE Atlanta PIT Count team, 2023.

## ATLANTA HOMELESSNESS UPDATE, CONT.

**People have their whole life in a piece of luggage.** At night, people move into the upstairs area. Our office is on one side, and there are dozens camped out on the other side. There are people living there who are trying to make it. They have jobs. The part I enjoyed about it was getting to know people. I found myself sitting on the floor and having conversations with people.

### *Were there any stories that stood out?*

A guy we met at the airport had housing arrangements here in Atlanta. He flew in, arrived at the airport, and went to the house to meet the roommate or landlord, but when he got there, the person said, 'I'm sorry, this is not going to work.' He had been at the airport for eight days. I would never have guessed he was homeless. Fortunately, we were able to get him into rapid rehousing. Two of the clients at the airport were able to get connected through another agency and housed at the Melody. It gives me Hope to see people who have had terrible luck getting helped and watching my team do the work and go the extra mile.



File photo: Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, 2020.

### *What were your overall impressions about the state of homelessness in Atlanta?*

During the pandemic, a lot of money went toward getting people housed. A lot of that money went away, but people were dependent on it for housing. What I see now is a lot more focus on providing the services to support the housing.

It feels like we're starting to fill in some of the gaps. A lot of thought goes into how we actually help people in a way that works for them. We're really starting to focus on the client's needs.

### *What is the #1 thing you would want people to know about your work or the issues surrounding homelessness?*

There's this idea we have that homelessness is because people just can't get it together. People are homeless for so many different reasons. Not everyone is homeless because of mental health or addiction. There is a lot of circumstantial homelessness. People have medical issues and don't have any savings. Maybe they suddenly can't afford all the bills or their rent or have had to take time off of work. **The majority are regular folks who have had a very bad time.** Something happened that completely changed the course of their lives. They just need a second chance.

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*Adam Hawkins, Director of Outreach and Emergency Services*

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

# QuikTrip

In December, QuikTrip announced more than \$7 million in grants awarded to local nonprofits to help combat homelessness and make communities across the Atlanta metropolitan area safer, stronger and more stable. Hope Atlanta is honored to be among the grant recipients.

Since its founding in 1958, QuikTrip has donated 5% of net profits to the communities it serves. In 2023, QuikTrip began investing above and beyond its historic donations by investing more than \$7 million in several organizations throughout the greater Atlanta area.

In just the first six weeks, this partnership enabled our outreach teams to serve more than 240 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including 153 children. QuikTrip's support is instrumental in helping us provide housing and other necessities to neighbors in need – neighbors like the Lowery Family.



"Their gracious partnership has allowed us to acquire new staff and expand our reach to the most vulnerable in our community. **QuikTrip's support enables our service capabilities to meet the ever-changing needs of our neighbors.**"

*Hope Atlanta CEO Julio Carrillo*

## MEET THE LOWERY FAMILY

The Lowerys moved to Atlanta from Michigan, where job opportunities were scarce. But hardship soon followed, and at the worst possible time. Their seventh child had just been born.

Struggling to care for the children while maintaining a liveable income, they moved into an abandoned house. The Lowerys lived there for four months with no electricity or running water, and little money for food or clothing. Our QuikTrip team encountered the family during outreach and quickly transported them to Hope Atlanta's office.

Seeing the family's desperate situation, we sprung into action. Emergency lodging funding from QuikTrip allowed us to secure temporary hotel lodging; meanwhile, we enrolled them in the LIFT 2.0 outreach project to help them apply for and transition to permanent housing.

Today, the family is stably housed and the children are once again enrolled in school. Their parents can now focus on building self-sufficiency and are receiving additional training to enhance their employability.

"Hope gave us an opportunity to improve ourselves, and we went out there. We both got a job. We showed them that we were dedicated and trying to do better for ourselves."





## THANKS FOR STAYING INFORMED.

### NOW, JOIN US IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

Amid an ongoing affordability crisis and worsening inequality, we invite you to help struggling individuals and families in this community we all call home. You can be part of this historic movement to end homelessness in Atlanta through compassion, collaboration, and innovation!

Visit [HOPEAtlanta.org](https://HOPEAtlanta.org) to sign up for updates, learn about volunteer opportunities, make a donation, and more.

