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Chattanooga Unhoused Storytelling Initiative

A Volunteer-Led Project to Amplify the Heart Behind the Work

Purpose

Across Chattanooga and beyond, many small organizations are doing essential work to support our unhoused neighbors. Each brings its own approach, its own relationships, and its own message — but the emotional core of this issue often gets lost in the day-to-day urgency of the work.

This initiative uses **documentary, dignity-first video storytelling** to highlight the humanity, compassion, and effort happening across the city. The goal is to create content that **supports and complements** what organizations are already sharing, adding emotional depth and narrative clarity without repeating or replacing their own messaging.

What This Initiative Provides

Stories That Strengthen the Ecosystem

A series of short films and social-ready clips that capture:

- The lived experiences of unhoused neighbors (with trauma-informed consent)
- Outreach workers, case managers, and volunteers
- Faith communities, grassroots groups, and harm-reduction teams
- The emotional reality behind the work: the hope, the struggle, and the connection

These stories are created independently and shared freely with organizations to use in whatever way best supports their mission.

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Content That Adds Heart, Not Redundancy

This project is not about retelling what organizations already say. It's about offering:

- Emotional context that deepens their existing messages
- Human-centered storytelling that helps audiences feel the impact
- Visual narratives that reinforce the dignity and complexity of the people they serve

The content becomes a **complementary layer** — something that enriches their communication rather than duplicating it.

Ethical, Dignity-First Storytelling

Every story is approached with care:

- Clear, voluntary, trauma-informed consent
- Respect for personal boundaries and lived experience
- Contextualized narratives that honor the whole person
- A commitment to portraying people with humanity, not as symbols or statistics

Why It Matters

Many Chattanooga nonprofits want to share deeper stories but lack the time, capacity, or resources to produce them. By offering this as a volunteer initiative, the project:

- Amplifies the emotional truth behind their work
- Helps the public understand the issue through real human stories
- Strengthens fundraising, outreach, and community engagement
- Creates a shared sense of connection across organizations working toward the same goal

This is storytelling as support and a way to lift up the entire ecosystem.

How to Get Involved

Organizations can participate by:

- Sharing insight into their work and the needs they see
- Connecting the project with staff, volunteers, or individuals who want to share their story
- Using the final content in whatever way best aligns with their mission

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Story Topic Examples

The Role of Pets in Survival, Stability, and Emotional Connection

How pets provide companionship, protection, routine, and unconditional love — and how this bond shapes decisions around shelter, safety, and daily life.

This can be one of the most powerful emotional entry points for audiences.

“A Day in the Life” of Outreach Workers

Not a procedural video — a human one.

The emotional weight, the small victories, the relationships built over time.

The Long Road of Rebuilding Trust

Many people experiencing homelessness have been let down repeatedly.

This topic explores how trust is earned slowly, through consistency and care.

The Importance of Community Among Unhoused Neighbors

Friendships, mutual support, shared resources, and the micro-communities that form for survival and belonging.

The Emotional Impact of Losing Housing

Not the logistics — the grief, disorientation, and identity shift that often goes unseen.

Faith Communities and Their Quiet Contributions

Not promotional — human.

Why they show up, what they've learned, and how they build relationships.

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Chattanooga Community Input Survey

I'm inviting community members to take a short survey that will help shape a new storytelling initiative focused on Chattanooga's unhoused neighbors. Your perspective matters because this project is meant to reflect the city as it truly is — the people doing the work, the people experiencing the challenges, and the people who care about finding better paths forward. The survey is quick, but the insight it provides will help ensure the stories we create are accurate, respectful, and genuinely useful to the organizations serving our community. Your voice will help me understand what's needed and how these stories can support real impact.

<https://forms.gle/UwMfxmCfTL6SS1UTA>

