

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

JENNIELYNN HOLMES

Jennielynn Holmes is the Director of Shelter and Housing at Catholic Charities Santa Rosa (CCSR), overseeing all of the homeless service programs, including street outreach efforts, a safe parking program, emergency shelters, supportive services, to housing. CCSR is the largest homeless service provider between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Oregon border, serving around 6,000 individuals every year. Jennielynn began at CCSR in 2009.



How did you become interested in serving the homeless?

I began at Catholic Charities 6 years ago as a part-time counselor while I was applying for law school, but once I got to know the stories of those who were experiencing homelessness it completely changed my life and this became my personal mission and career.

How many individuals are served at Nightingale? There can be up to 13 people per night at Nightingale, and on average we serve around 120 individuals per year. In collaboration with LEO, we are expanding the program to serve 26 people per night. The expansion will be completed in October 2015.

What do you believe could improve homelessness prevention programs across the US? I think there are several areas for improvement. The first and most significant being the amount of resources available to increase these services. The second would be the collection and analysis of data to back up those programs that most efficiently and effectively prevent homelessness. The last would be to understand how policy decisions create and affect homelessness. For example, in California, both prison realignment and Prop 47 have significantly impacted homelessness prevention efforts.

How has your partnership with LEO evolved over the past year? The partnership with LEO has been a tremendous gift. We met at a CCUSA annual gathering when we were doing a presentation on Nightingale and the social return on investment it created for the hospitals. After that initial meeting, we began coordinating with the local hospitals as well as the County of Sonoma and have developed a strong program design. The support and guidance from LEO has been tremendous and has allowed us to learn from a very unique research lab.

How do you anticipate LEO's research study will improve Nightingale? I think that LEO has already dramatically improved Nightingale by allowing us to design tighter systems and internal controls. The research results will allow us to see the impact we are making or not making. It is important that we are maximizing our impact on the lives of those we serve, and LEO will allow us to truly understand that. We can make adjustments to make the program stronger, but without true research we wouldn't be able to make the most effective decisions.

In your opinion, what role does research have in reducing homelessness? Research plays a very important role in reducing homelessness. It will not only help us to provide continuous evaluation of our programs to be the best they can be, but it will also allow us to replicate programs that have been proven successful, so that we don't have to start from ground zero. We can take programs that work and make a bigger impact in our nation.