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Plano homeless population up 16.5%; some say more compassion needed Of the 261 people identified as homeless in Plano for the 2023 Point-In-Time census, at least 51% were from Plano.

NEWS

By Myah Taylor

5:48 AM on Aug 9, 2023

Clark said. "And then, I lost the child."

homelessness in Plano.

need.

the DART train.

children under 18, the census says.

with inflation.

director of communications for Plano ISD.

Collin College student Aaliyah Clark sits for a portrait on the Frisco campus of Collin College, Monday, Aug. 7, 2023 in Frisco, Texas. Aaliyah Clark became homeless in Plano, but found shelter at McKinney's Samaritan Inn and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree. (Elías Valverde II / Staff Photographer)

With her own apartment in Plano and a job at Frito Lay, Aaliyah Clark seemingly had it all together until life dealt her a series of complicated circumstances. Clark, 28, was going to have a baby, but she wasn't in a healthy relationship with the father. Her job also began to overwhelm her. **ADVERTISEMENT**

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She sank into a debilitating depression. **Breaking News** Get the latest breaking news from North Texas and beyond. **EMAIL ADDRESS** Enter your email address **SUBMIT** By signing up you agree to our **Terms of Service** and **Privacy Policy**

"I couldn't focus. I was pregnant. I didn't know what to do. I didn't have help. I didn't have support,"

Clark, who grew up in Garland and spent most of her adult years in Plano, had been independent since her late teenage years. But when this crisis hit, she wasn't able to pay her bills. She started living in her car, but eventually she lost that, too. Anxious about ending up on the streets, Clark called family. She scoured churches. No one could help. **ADVERTISEMENT**

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One day, Clark's sister dropped her off at The Samaritan Inn in McKinney, where she has lived for about

a year. The inn, a comprehensive homeless program that helps willing individuals gain dignity and

independence, doesn't just serve McKinney residents, but also people like Clark who are experiencing

BY UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS · SPONSORED

The Samaritan Inn of McKinney in McKinney, TX, on Jun 1, 2023. (Jason Janik/Special Contributor) (Jason Janik / Special Contributor)

Recent counts show homelessness is on the rise, but Plano is working to stem the tide with initiatives

like the Rapid Re-Housing Program and the Homeless Housing and Services Program. Still, some say

residents in Plano, and Collin County at large, could show more compassion and do more for people in

The number of homeless people in Plano has increased by 16.5% since 2022, and contrary to what some

might believe, members of the unhoused population didn't all arrive from elsewhere in the metroplex via

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DISCOVER AMAZING TRAVEL SIDESTAGE.COM Of the 261 people identified as homeless in Plano for the 2023 Point-In-Time census conducted on the night of Jan. 26, 2023, at least 51% were from Plano, according to Shanette Eaden, housing and community services manager. Plano's PIT counts for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 were 248, 253, 216 and 224, respectively, according to city documents. Nearly 53% of the identified unhoused people counted for Plano's 2023 PIT census were Black, in a city where Black people comprise 9% of the population, and around 16% of the homeless population are

"These students were residing in local shelters, doubled up with friends or family, living in motels,

People become homeless for a variety of reasons, but Eaden said homelessness has been rising along

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sleeping in parks, in cars, in substandard housing void of water/power," said Zoheb Hassanali, assistant

Plano ISD identified 1,001 students as homeless during the 2022-2023 school year.

count is an annual survey measuring homelessness that local agencies conduct each year on behalf of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. **ADVERTISEMENT**

emergency shelter. About 31% lived in a transitional shelter, and around 18% were unsheltered. The PIT

Those who spend more than 30% of income on rent, mortgage and other housing needs, also don't count as homeless for the PIT survey. That's about 25% of Plano's population, Eaden said. It's as if one out of every four houses on a neighborhood street is on the verge of homelessness. "They truly are living paycheck to paycheck," Eaden said. "We just don't know it because they look like you and me." **ADVERTISEMENT**

A Homelessness Prevention Program, run by the Assistance Center of Collin County, pays rent so that

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Funds for the Homeless Housing and Services Program may be used for construction, development or

people or those at risk of homelessness. The Ending Homelessness Funds may be used for case

"They're given to the City of Plano for the use of anything that can help or prevent someone from

helped 110 people obtain housing since 2018, according to Plano Neighborhood Services. The

The Rapid Re-Housing Program, which provides financial assistance and case management support to

assist Plano's homeless population with obtaining affordable rental housing within the city limits, has

department claims that 52 people, at least three months after leaving the program, have maintained

Plano ISD also provides various services for students in need such as providing backpacks, school

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management and financial assistance, among other services.

becoming homeless," Eaden said.

supplies and hygiene kits throughout the year.

their housing.

shelter.

procurement of housing for homeless people, and rehabilitation of structures aimed at serving homeless

people do not become homeless, Eaden said. A separate homelessness prevention program pays six

"For families or students who are currently living in transition due to economic hardship, a natural disaster, fire, loss of housing, job loss, or any other life-altering situation, they should complete our Student Residency Questionnaire and/or Family Find form," Hassanali said. "This will allow our

While these programs are in place, in addition to help from other charitable organizations such as the

like the Samaritan Inn in McKinney or The Bridge in Dallas. Collin County doesn't have an emergency

Heather Molsbee, chief program officer at the Samaritan Inn, which serves single women, single men

and families, said they often have to turn people away because the need is so great and rooms fill up fast.

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Salvation Army, Plano doesn't have a comprehensive homeless shelter or homeless recovery center quite

McKinney-Vento team to quickly locate resources to best assist our families."

"It would be great if there were more providers in the area," Molsbee said.

Rick Grady, a former Plano City Council member who serves on the board of the Samaritan Inn, said he

thinks the lack of resources for unhoused people in Plano and Collin County is due to a deficit in what he

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Collin College student Aaliyah Clark stands for a portrait on the Frisco campus of Collin College, Monday, Aug. 7, 2023 in Frisco, Texas. Aaliyah Clark became homeless in Plano, but found shelter at McKinney's Samaritan Inn and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree. (Elías Valverde II / Staff Photographer) Clark was accepted into the housing at Frisco's Collin College campus, where she is pursuing her bachelor's degree. She also has a new full-time job.

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"There is a huge stigma which surrounds homelessness that they are lazy, they have no motivation. They choose it. And that's all false," Molsbee said. "The people that we serve sometimes have bigger hearts and bigger motivation than other people around."

Clark will make her transition back into the world soon and she hopes her story helps someone else.

"If you truly in your heart have a desire and a purpose, it makes a big difference," Clark said.

Related: How a North Texas nonprofit addresses homelessness holistically Myah Taylor, Staff, Reporter. Myah Taylor covers high school sports. She formerly worked as a Collin County reporter for The Dallas Morning News. Taylor has contributed to the Austin American-Statesman, Yahoo Sports, the Los Angeles Times and Texas Monthly. She is a 2022 graduate of the University of Texas at

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the city's demographic data. The average single-family home appraisal is \$493,960, and Plano has a poverty rate of 9%. **ADVERTISEMENT**

The median monthly mortgage in Plano is \$2,265 and the median monthly rent is \$1,592, according to

To be in accordance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Plano, for its PIT survey, did not count those living in hotels or motels as homeless. The Department of Education, however, does include those living in hotels or motels in its count for unhoused people. "The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has just started easing up on the guidelines regarding whether we can count couch surfers," Eaden said. "People a lot of times aren't aware of the specifics."

Plano's 2023 PIT survey shows that around 50% of the people counted as homeless lived in an

"It is becoming harder and harder to maintain your housing," Eaden said.

"When you see that number [for the emergency shelter population], the majority of that number ... were actually at an overnight warming station housed by the Salvation Army," Eaden said. "We have to call

that an emergency shelter, so before that overnight warming station having been open, they would have

Combating homelessness in Plano Plano officials say they are working hard to help people experiencing homelessness.

been in unsheltered homeless population."

The Ending Homelessness Funds and the Homeless Housing and Services Program are financed by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

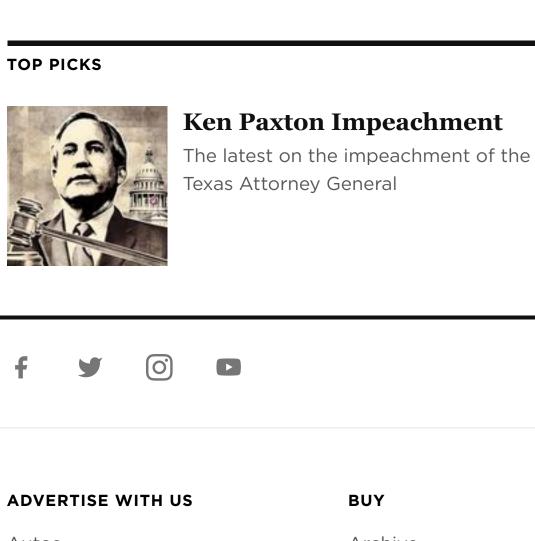
months worth of rent.

"We treat stray animals better than we treat stray humans," Grady said. "We see a dog or a cat that's loose outside, we pick them up, we take care of them, we take them to an animal shelter, we house them, we feed them, we bathe them, we find a new home for them. We do all that stuff. We don't do that for humans." A lack of compassion is not so at the Samaritan Inn, where at least one more room will open up soon.

The fruits of compassion

describes as community compassion.

"I've had so much support that I didn't have before," Clark said. "I really went through a transformation as far as having more confidence and having time to slow down and really re-learn things about life." Stories like Clark's don't typically come to mind when people think about homelessness.



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