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During the coldest months of the year, you and many other caring people worry about those who are living outside. If you notice someone you think is living outside, you may wonder how you can help.



SOS board member, Anna Schmitt-Reichert, shared her concern about a family she saw living in their car. “Last week at the library I saw the same Mom I saw a month ago, on the computer applying for jobs, with a child in hand, while their ‘home’ sits in the parking lot stuffed with clothing, bedding and little supplies.” Anna said.

“As a newer board member at SOS Community Services, I have learned of the signs of families that are experiencing homelessness, but honestly, I wanted to do more to help this family,” relayed Schmitt-Reichert.

With help, this mom can find shelter, food, and caring support. She can start with a phone call to Housing Access of Washtenaw County (HAWC) at 734-961-1999 or visit housingaccess.net. If you want to help someone who is homeless and living outside, you can share this phone number with them. Let them know that SOS’s Resource Center can provide them with bus tokens to help them get to shelter. SOS’s Resource Center is located at 114 N. River Street in Ypsilanti near Depot Town.

For help with other needs, you can advise people to call United Way’s 211 line. The 211 phone line can help with information about where to access free food, clothing, mental health care, and other human services needs. You can let people know about this important phone number too.

You also can offer people who are living outside a warm pair of socks, gloves, bottled water, or food.

You can let them know that warming centers are available Monday through Thursday until March 31st at the Ypsilanti Freighthouse during the day and St. Luke’s Episcopal Church on North Huron Street at night.

Of course, if you see someone experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 for an ambulance.

But it is especially important to remember to treat people with empathy. Homelessness is dangerous, scary, and extremely isolating. One of the most common things we hear from people struggling with homelessness is that they feel invisible. A simple smile or “good morning” as you pass by someone living outside can mean a lot and maybe be the most positive interaction that person has all day, or night.

SOS Community Services promotes housing stability and family self-sufficiency through collaboration, care and respect. Our services include shelter and rapid re-housing, job development, eviction prevention, and Parents as Teachers. In addition, SOS offers a Resource Center that provides a weekly food pantry, and walk-in services including utility and transportation assistance. For more information about SOS Community Services, including opportunities to volunteer and donate, please visit www.soscs.org.