

# Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

## 2018-19 TX BoS CoC Board Members

### Seat 1 – Person with Lived Experience of Homelessness

#### **JERAMY CANNON**

Jeremy has fought against being homeless since 2012, all the while finishing his bachelor degree in sociology. He has experienced being homeless in both shelter less conditions and working homeless (couch surfing). He is now working on a master's degree. Jeremy is a part of the working homeless, those who have a job, but do not make enough money to rent a place of their own.

Jeremy has seen the gaps in several systems (including housing and health care) and the benefits that are present, and he has dedicated his degree and career to helping those who face homelessness/impoverished situations and helping them overcome. Jeremy said, "I believe that there are some gaps that can only be addressed by someone that has had experience being homeless...I would like to give input and proof that people can change their position in society, with some hard work and the right tools at their disposal." Jeremy would like to be part of developing these tools and helping educate homeless people on how to use them and educate those helping how to best help offer and best develop these tools in their communities.

CoC county served: Lubbock

### Seat 2 – Homeless Veterans



**MELISSA ESCAMILLA**, Program Director at Endeavors in McAllen

Melissa currently serves as the Program Director for the Veteran Supportive Services Program at Endeavors in McAllen, Texas, which provides services to at-risk and/or homeless veterans in over 20 counties in South Texas. She serves as the Vice Chair of the Cameron County Homeless Coalition and participates in homeless coalitions across South Texas, including Corpus Christi and Laredo. She has over 16 years of experience working with special populations, including people with disabilities and veterans. In May 2019 she will acquire a Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Counseling. She is also a board member of the Community Veteran Engagement Board in the Rio Grande Valley.

Melissa said, "I am passionate and dedicated to working for and with veterans with disabilities, homeless veterans and veterans in general...I come from a veteran family and am aware of the challenges a veteran may face once they have transitioned out of the military." She Melissa wanted to continue to serve on the CoC Board to help advocate for homeless veterans within the continuum and promote any services the continuum can offer homeless veterans.

CoC counties served: Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Cameron, Dimmit, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kleberg, La Salle, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Starr, Victoria, Webb, and Willacy

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## Seat 3 – Chronically Homeless Persons

**CHAD WHEELER**, Executive Director at Open Door in Lubbock



Chad has provided executive leadership at Open Door since 2007. He and his team are passionate and experienced in developing community-based solutions to poverty and homelessness. Under Chad’s leadership, Open Door has developed Lubbock’s first Permeant Supportive Housing project serving chronically homeless adults with disabilities. As of March 2019, they provide PSH to 41 people.

Additionally, he has overseen the development of a regional transitional housing project at Open Door, serving 20 adult survivors of sex trafficking and their

children. He has served on the board for the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care since 2016. He has served on the Community Development and Services Board for the City of Lubbock since 2018. Chad also served as the President of the South Plains Homeless Consortium from 2016-2018.

CoC county served: Lubbock

## Seat 4 – Homeless Families

**ARTURO GARCIA**, Director at the City of Laredo Community Development Department

Arturo has worked for the City of Laredo for nearly 17 years in housing and homeless related issues. He is a retired Army combat veteran from Operation Iraqi Freedom, having served combined 20 year active/reserve service. He has a finance degree and a master's in business administration from Texas A&M International University.

Arturo is the lead for the Mayor's Challenge to end veterans homeless in his local community. He stated, “This valuable and rewarding experience with our veterans has allowed us, through help from THN, to reach our goal locally.” Arturo wants to be a part of the solution to help end homeless issues in the state, saying “I would like to be a part of our State wide support for assisting those most in need and, if given the opportunity to serve as a board member, I will use my experiences to be part of the THN team that helps out our local communities throughout the state.”

CoC county served: Webb

## Seat 5 – Homeless Youth

**NORMA MERCADO**– Homeless and Foster Care Liaison for the Bastrop Independent School District

Norma has over 14 years of experience working with at-risk students and youth as a Head Start caseworker and Parent Advocate with Del Valle ISD. Norma has experience with planning and coordinating services for children and youth to overcome homeless barriers. Bastrop ISD currently partners with the Colorado Valley local homeless coalition to provide services to children and families who are facing homelessness. Norma is interested in serving on the CoC Board to provide input from the school district perspective and create programs and services that can help families and youth facing homelessness as well as share barriers currently affecting families and youth. Norma is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish fluently. One of her goals is to ensure that the CoC is reaching out to the



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Spanish-speaking population, as they are usually harder to identify due to the cultural stigmatization associated with homelessness and mental health issues.

CoC county served: Bastrop

## Seat 6 – Victim Services

**DAISY LOPEZ**, Program and Education Director at Friendship of Women, Inc.

Daisy has served as a strong advocate in the movement to end violence for 14 years. October 2018 will mark her 12-year anniversary at Friendship of Women, Inc. (FOW). Daisy currently oversees the coordination, management, and leadership of the outreach victim services, battering intervention and prevention program, community education and training, and primary prevention efforts at FOW. She has served in direct service capacities such as Legal Advocate, Shelter Coordinator, Battering Intervention & Prevention Program Coordinator, and in management positions. She has also served on committees and expert panels in the field of domestic violence at local and statewide levels.

Daisy is passionate about the needs and barriers facing victims, the biggest being housing crises and housing instability. She believes that communities are also leading the charge in responding to these needs in unique and innovative ways. Daisy stated, “I am interested in learning from and supporting programs to continue their amazing work and help be a part of designing future initiatives and programming. Social issues impacting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are intertwined with issues around education, health, housing, income, homelessness, and many more.”

CoC county served: Cameron

## Seat 7 – Mental/Behavioral Health

**ELAINE BRANDON**, Program Services Administrator for Connections Individual and Family Services



Elaine works for an agency that provides services to at-risk youth and families in 18 counties. She has been with agency for 9 years and has been working with the Comal County Homeless Coalition during tenure with the agency. Elaine is a Licensed Professional Counselor and has been working with youth and families for 23+ years in all different settings to include private practice, emergency shelters, residential treatment, and inpatient hospitalization. Through the Youth Shelters and Transitional Living Program, she works every day with youth who are homeless and disenfranchised. Along with that, they are dealing with mental and behavioral health issues that can affect their future if things do not change for them to make moving into adulthood easier and more accessible. During FY 2016/2017, she was a member of the CoC Board. Elaine said, “It was very fulfilling to know that I was working not only at my local level but also at the State level on issues that so many look past every day...I want to be able to help make a difference in change that will bring about a brighter future.”

CoC county served: Comal

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## Seat 8 – Health/Medical

**LUÍS T. CERDA**, Chief of Health Preventive Services at City of Laredo Health Department

Luís has 10 years of direct patient care experience and for the past five years, he has actively participated in improving Public Health in the South Texas region. He has developed programs to modify and improve Social Determinants for at risk populations as the homeless, drug addicts, veterans, social and racial minorities. Homeless situations or below-standard living conditions determine health and social outcomes; there is a direct relationship between housing deficiencies and the incidence rate for some diseases.

Luís can provide expertise in Public Health and disease prevention, information on important emerging public health threats and the latest disease trends and behavior, and access to health care prevention services for at risk populations. He believes providing affordable, dignifying housing should be a priority for thriving societies. Luís said, “I understand that housing is a basic principle and foundation for human development...Housing and health must be the stepping stone for social development. Our commitment to these principles shouldn’t be short term investments...I consider housing as the most important social determinant of health.”

CoC counties served: Duval, Jim Hog, Webb, and Zapata

## Seat 9 – Local Government

**DANI SHAW**, Community Development Manager for the City of Denton



Dani is a leader in non-profit and community development in Denton County. She is a professional passionate about building relationships, connecting people, growing resources, and empowering people. Her work is in community development, human development, and social services, where her skills and experience help organizations solve issues, create value, maximize growth, and improve performance to achieve greater impact. She is responsible for the strategic vision and goals including oversight and management of the City’s

Federal, State, and locally funded grants, programs and partnerships that support low and moderate-income citizens and neighborhoods with the provision of adequate housing, recreational, social, health, and other services. Dani said she wants to serve on the CoC Board because “As a community, Denton County would love to have access and influence in THN’s efforts in assisting persons experiencing and at risk of homelessness.”

CoC county served: Denton

## Seat 10 – Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program Recipient

**MARCELA CERVANTES**, Housing Manager, City of Laredo Community Development Department

Marcela (Marcy) has worked for the City of Laredo Department of Community Development for over 7 years. She is currently responsible for the administration and operational oversight of the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program, Housing Rehabilitation Program, and HOME Program. She monitors and



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ensures compliance with program goals, local/federal regulations requirements, and contract provisions. She developed the City of Laredo ESG Policy and Procedures Manual and the Laredo/Webb County Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures. Marcy also has experience in shelter management for storm victims. She has participated in the annual homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count and the Stand Down for Homeless Veterans event. She hosts weekly meetings for Laredo's Homeless Veterans Master List and a monthly evaluation meeting for the Coordinated Entry Process. She is a member of the Laredo Homeless Coalition, and she graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration – Finance.

Marcy stated, "I would like to serve on the board because I care about making a difference. My expertise working with federal funds, strong work ethics, and passion for helping others can assist in our mission to end homelessness."

CoC county served: Webb

## Seat 12 – Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice

**Kyle Moore**, Officer, Homeless Outreach Team, Killeen Police Department (KPD)



Kyle has been a Police Officer for eight years and is entering his second year running the Homeless Outreach Team. He is a TCOLE Licensed Mental Health Officer and a Certified CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) Instructor for KPD. He also teaches a first responder course for negotiations for KPD and is a Senior Negotiator with our TRU (Tactical Response Unit).

Prior to becoming a police officer, he was a high school Chemistry teacher and football, wrestling, and track coach in Beaumont, Texas.

Kyle would love the opportunity to better serve his community by learning from and working with other counties within the CoC that are working towards a positive solution to the homelessness issue in Texas. He sees serving on the Board as a great opportunity to share and work with other Police agencies in the State of Texas, providing them with another approach than simply charging homeless individuals criminally. He also wants to have a voice with regard creating CoC policy.

Kyle said, "I was humbled by being awarded the 2018 THN Community Service award and my department's 2018 Uniformed Officer of the Year award...which speak to my work ethic. If given the opportunity to serve on the CoC board, I would bring that same energy and work ethic to a position I have much respect for."

CoC counties served: Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, and Lampasas

## Seat 13 – Business

**MICHELLE HUFF-ALEXANDER**, founder of Journey Towards Wholeness

With more than 30 years of humanitarian work experience, Michelle continues to strive to make a difference to help those in need. She launched Journey Towards Wholeness in Rowlett, a northeastern suburb of Dallas in 2014. The agency is a public charity geared toward helping homeless persons and



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those at risk of homelessness, primarily with housing in the greater-Dallas area. She began working in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services two years later to provide the



necessary funding to those needing shelter, among other supportive and mental health services. That same year, she secured a four bedroom house in Dallas, dubbed the Malachi house, to provide just that. Michelle's goal is to purchase, rather than rent, affordable housing, with each property recognized for a name rather than a street address. Before moving to Texas in 2012, Michelle assisted with implementing policies and procedures for an organization in Tennessee that provided supportive housing to the mentally ill homeless population. She has partnered with area homeless shelters, along with a slew of organizations, such as Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance, The Stewpot and state hospital case workers, to identify clients that can benefit from the services offered by Journey Towards Wholeness.

CoC county served: Denton, Ellis

## Seat 14 – Faith Community or Faith-based Organization

**DAPHNE ADAMS**, Family Service Manager at Christian Community Action

Daphne has over fifteen years in the social services field, which includes over ten years dedicated to working with the homeless population. She feels passionate about working collaboratively to end homelessness with other agencies. Daphne sees the importance of agency relationships in order to end homelessness. She is responsible for the operational success of the agency where she works, ensuring seamless team management and development, program delivery, and quality control and evaluation.

Daphne's coursework at Oklahoma State University in Human Development and Family Science introduced her to the concepts of viewing the family in a world perspective, professional skills, and ethics within the field of human services while fueling her interests in family policies, laws, and advocacy. Daphne stated, "I align my education and personal experiences with my personal life mission, "With love and compassion, lead others to grow to their maximum potential and fulfill their purpose."

CoC county served: Denton

## Seat 15 – Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH) or State government agency

**MOLLY VOYLES**,

Prior to her current position, Molly spent over 10 years working in HUD-funded housing programs for survivors of domestic violence, and she understands the critical link between safe, affordable housing and long-term stability. As a member of the Policy team at the state domestic violence coalition, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV), she has served on the Texas Interagency Council on Homelessness (TICH) for a number of years as well as participating on national work groups to examine issues such as rural homelessness, coordinated entry, and data collection. Molly also works closely with state agencies in her current position and sees the great benefit that alignment and coordination around issues, such as housing, homelessness, and survivors of domestic violence, can have at the community and state levels. Molly wants to serve on the CoC Board because, she said, "I believe housing is a human



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right and enjoy being a part of a group with a similar vision. I have also worked in the field of domestic violence for well over 20 years and know that housing is the top unmet need for survivors and their families. As the landscape of housing and related services and funding changes, I am interested in how best to foster survivors' access to housing while supporting the overall movement to end homelessness in Texas."

CoC counties served: all (statewide organization)

