



United Way of King County

United Way King County
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Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886

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United Way of King County, King County Bar Association and Seattle Mariners announce \$3 Million partnership to stem the tide of homelessness

New partnership to stop one of the leading causes of homelessness – evictions of tenants who owe one month's rent or less.

SEATTLE - December 14, 2018. The United Way of King County, King County Bar Association and Seattle Mariners today announced the launch of a community partnership to help tackle King County's homelessness crisis by reducing the number of people who lose their homes due to eviction, which is a leading cause of homelessness.

Home Base works to keep thousands of people facing eviction in their homes by:

- Providing legal representation through scaling King County Bar Association's volunteer attorney program, the Housing Justice Project, which helps low-income clients facing eviction.
- Making flexible funds (provided by the Mariners and administered by United Way) available to clients to pay the back rent causing the eviction.
- Offering the guidance of a caseworker to prevent the person or family from facing eviction again.

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty reports that evictions are the leading cause of homelessness. A September 2018 study by the King County Bar Association and Seattle Women's Commission found that 87% of eviction filings were because of nonpayment of rent with roughly three quarters of those cases involving an average of \$1,237 or less owed to the landlord.

"United Way knows that our community won't begin to see a difference in the crisis until we can stop more people from becoming homeless in the first place," said Jon Fine, President and CEO of United Way of King County. "Through Home Base, we are working upstream by providing

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eviction prevention. This is a game changer and we're so pleased the Seattle Mariners and King County Bar Association have stepped up in a big way."

So who is becoming homeless in our community? Data reveals people of color and women face eviction disproportionately. The study by King Co. Bar Assoc. and Seattle Women's Commission found:

- 51.7 % of eviction filings in the City of Seattle in 2017 were people of color
- African Americans in Seattle received 4.5 times the amount of eviction notices than what would be expected based on their demographics in Seattle.
- A separate study found that in 2013, women in King County were more likely to be evicted than men.

For many low-income renters in our community, the combination of scarce resources and high rent means no flexibility when facing an emergency like a serious illness, a death in the family or temporary job loss. There's often little time for renters to come up with rent as Washington law allows landlords to file evictions against tenants in as little as three days after rent is due.

"In a community as vibrant and successful as ours, it's heartbreaking that so many people don't have the most basic necessity of a warm, dry, safe place to live. Home Base can make an important and lasting difference in the lives of thousands of people and the Seattle Mariners are proud to be a part of this innovative, collaborative solution," said John Stanton, Seattle Mariners Chairman and Managing Partner.

The Seattle Mariners are providing almost \$3.0 million to create the eviction intervention fund that will be administered through United Way of King County and provide individualized resources and services to help people obtain or stay in housing. The fund, which is based on successful emergency rent support models in other communities, can be used to pay a landlord in the tenant's name, to cover outstanding debts and resolve a pending eviction.

"One of the biggest challenges facing volunteer attorneys in their negotiations with landlords is the lack of tenant funds to pay the full amount or a portion of the rent that is due. For a fairly small amount of money for each person, we estimate the program could help more than 4,000 people from becoming homeless each year," said Andy Prazuch, Executive Director of the King County Bar Association.

In addition, King County this week announced a total of \$1,071,000 for legal aid, alternative dispute resolution, and housing counseling service to help keep veterans, service members, seniors and their caregivers in their homes. The funding is provided by the Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy passed by voters in 2017.

“The best way to fight homelessness is to prevent it in the first place,” said King County Executive Dow Constantine. “That’s why King County supports efforts to help people stay in their homes, but we need partners - business, nonprofit, and philanthropy - to truly succeed. Home Base is a great example of what we can accomplish when we each bring our unique resources to reach common goals.”