One is homeless, one is not and one is helping others to avoid it.

For Andrew Primm, the nightmare is over. For Lauren Phillips, it’s still going on. And for Demetrius Cooper, there’s a light ahead. In the course of six weeks, NECAC learned of their destitution, despair, hope and courage. Because there are more like them, NECAC is taking additional steps and working with partners on programs to help. See their stories on Page 2.

New initiative offers vouchers to young people leaving foster care

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has awarded NECAC $35,702 to assist young people aging out of foster care who are at risk of homelessness.

The award through HUD’s Foster Youth to Independence Initiative was announced Feb. 13 in Troy by HUD Great Plains Regional Administrator Jason Mohr. It covers eligible NECAC clients in Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Randolph, Shelby and Warren counties. NECAC was earlier awarded five Foster Youth to Independence Initiative housing vouchers for St. Charles County.

Mohr was joined by HUD Region 9 Administrator Chris Patterson, a former foster youth and the lead advocate for the initiative, and NECAC President and Chief Executive Officer Don Patrick.

The initiative offers housing rent-assistance vouchers to local public housing agencies to prevent or end homelessness among people ages 18 to 24 who are, or have recently left, the foster care system without a home.

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Home again

A fire destroyed the Lewis County home of Bobby Marshall and his daughters, 10-year-old Marain and six-year-old Lilly. Thanks to NECAC, they are homeless no more. Please see story, Page 3.
Andrew Primm

The first night Andrew Primm was homeless, he was robbed.
A 52-year-old Air Force veteran who had worked all of his life suddenly lost his job and found himself without a roof over his head.
“That was a little overwhelming,” he recalls. “I’d never been there before.”
After six months, hardship turned to desperation. Primm reached out to Missouri State Sen. Cindy O’Laughlin, who knew of NECAC’s efforts and referred him to the agency.
“One of the hardest things for a lot of people to do, but especially for a soldier, is to ask for help,” he said.

Primm swallowed his pride and NECAC got him an apartment in Kirksville. Through the generosity of others, he’s also gotten a car, furniture and a job interview.
“It’s unbelievable,” he said. “It’s completely a night-and-day difference.”

Lauren Phillips

For once, Lauren Phillips knew where she would spend the night.
The 33-year-old Hannibal woman planned to stay with a friend after getting an evening meal at the Loaves and Fishes program at Hannibal’s First United Methodist Church.

NECAC visited as part of the Jan. 29 Missouri Point In Time homeless count, an effort to develop programs that can help.
Phillips, who likes to be known by her street name, Lolo, often has no place to stay, and is brutally honest about her life.
“It sucks being homeless, but it is what it is,” she said. “Sometimes, it just is...it’s just the circumstances of how life hands to you and you just deal with it.”
The Point In Time count found five homeless people in Marion County. The numbers for other participating counties were 37 in Warren, 11 in Randolph, five in Lincoln, four in Lewis, two in Montgomery and one in Pike. Macon and Monroe counties recorded none.

Demetrious Cooper

Demetrious Cooper spent 13 of his first 18 years in foster care, only to become homeless when he aged out.
Now that he’s 20, Cooper is getting his life back on track. The O’Fallon man was the first client to receive a Foster Youth to Independence Initiative housing rent assistance voucher in St. Charles County, where NECAC is administering the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development program.

Cooper is pursuing his high school equivalency degree and working as a youth development professional with the Boys and Girls Club of St. Charles County.
“I’m really grateful for all that NECAC has done for me,” he said. “NECAC has done a good job of not only giving me a place to live, but building me up a foundation of trust.”

Initiative aims to help foster kids avoid homelessness

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home to go to.
“Youth leaving the foster care system should not have to experience the overwhelming obstacles of homelessness,” Mohr said. “These vouchers will not only provide stable housing but will lead to many more opportunities in their lives.”

“As a former foster care youth myself, having a safe and stable home made all the difference in my life,” Patterson said. “Our young people are our future, and this investment assures that those in your community who age out of foster care into this program, will have a brighter future to look forward to.”

“NECAC is proud to be among the first public housing agencies to receive funding for the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative,” Patrick added. “NECAC has been a partner with HUD for more than 40 years in providing rent assistance to qualifying residents of 12 counties in Missouri. This new funding will help NECAC broaden its commitment to making sure more of our neighbors in need have decent, safe and affordable housing.”

The initiative requires that communities provide supportive services for the length of assistance to help youth achieve self-sufficiency.
Activities center around basic life skills, landlord outreach and job preparation. Additionally, participants will receive educational and career counseling, as well as counseling on program and lease compliance.
The supportive services are considered critical given that the assistance is time-limited. The public housing authorities must meet eligibility requirements.

NECAC administers more than 2,400 rent assistance vouchers in its 12 Missouri counties.
HUD estimates that more than 20,000 young people age out of foster care each year. The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare estimates about 25 percent of these young people experience homelessness within four years of leaving foster care and an even higher share have inadequate housing.
Board Members are recognized

During the January board meeting, NECAC President and CEO Don Patrick and Chairman of the Board Fred Vahle recognized the following with certificates for their years of service.

Travis Fleer, Lewis County
Rich Daniels, Montgomery County
Will Barger, Randolph County
Justin Sheppard, Pike County

Fund-raiser offers biscuits for a buck

Customers at participating Hardee’s restaurants got a great deal and helped their neighbors in need on Valentine’s Day.

NECAC teamed up with Heat Up St. Louis for the 20th annual Rise & Shine fund-raiser.

Proceeds from the sale of $1 egg or sausage biscuits and other contributions will help elderly, disabled and low-income NECAC clients in Lincoln, Pike, St. Charles and Warren counties with utility bills. Staff, volunteers and Lincoln County Board Member Curtissa Kerr-Hunter collected donations at Hardee’s locations.

Heat Up St. Louis covers 34 Missouri and Illinois counties, and reported a record $705,000 in 2020 donations. NECAC is awaiting word on how much it will be awarded for its four participating counties. Last year, the four split $21,500.

NECAC helps Lewis County family rebound from fire

Bobby Marshall knew something was wrong when he awoke at about one o’clock on a frigid January morning.

“I heard a popping from the fire,” he recalls. “I smelled the smoke and got everyone out.”

The 39-year-old Marshall and his daughters, 10-year-old Marain and six-year-old Lilly, moved to Canton from Kahoka in early December. They lost everything in the fire, which authorities determined was electrical in nature.

NECAC Lewis County Service Coordinator Judy Eaton met with the family the day after the fire and agreed to help. Eaton and other community members collected clothes and other items. Eaton, Lewis County Affordable Housing Property Manager Teddy Ammons and NECAC Property Management Director Teresa Ellsworth arranged for a two-bedroom unit at the NECAC Westport Apartments at the west edge of Canton.

Marshall has his sights on a job at a local factory, but right now does not have a car to get there. Eaton said she will continue to work with the three to meet as many needs as possible.

“I won’t leave this family,” she said.

As for Marshall, he’s keeping things in perspective.

“Everything can be replaced, but everyone I love is still here, so I’m blessed,” he said.
Cuivre River donation to benefit four counties

As part of its Operation Round Up, the Cuivre River Electric Cooperative Community Trust donated $5,000 to NECAC on Jan. 30. The money will be used to assist homeless and disadvantaged clients in Lincoln, Pike, St. Charles and Warren counties. Pictured, from left, are Cuivre River Electric Cooperative Communications and Media Specialist Tim Schmidt, NECAC Lincoln County Service Coordinator Janice Allan, Warren County Service Coordinator Desiree Antoniou, Intake Assistant Carey Westerman, Administrative Assistant Heather Burnett and County Services Programs Director Linda Fritz. Not pictured are Pike County Service Coordinator Chandra Roberts and St. Charles County Service Coordinator Cheryl Clerkley.

Gubernatorial visit

NECAC Deputy Director for Housing Development Programs Carla Potts learned long ago that you never know who you’ll run into at lunch. By chance, Potts walked into Pagliai’s restaurant in Kirksville on Jan. 2 and encountered Missouri Gov. Mike Parson at a nearby table. The two discussed the NECAC Aspire Partnership Prison Homes Program, which hopes to get under way this spring.

FSS graduate honored

LaWonda Hart of Paris, second from right, graduated recently from the NECAC Family Self-Sufficiency program with a savings she had put aside of almost $4,800. Hart, who has a bachelor’s degree in human resources and will earn a master’s this July, plans to use the money to pay bills and to look into buying a home. Also pictured, from left, are Monroe County Commissioner and NECAC Monroe County Board Member Mike Whelan, Monroe County Service Coordinator Maggie Middleton, FSS Coordinator Sandy Gamble and the Rev. Harold Long of Faithwalk Ministry in Paris.