

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Library thriving with help from Friends

To the editor:

Next week, October 19-25, marks the 20th annual National Friends of Libraries Week.

This is the perfect time to recognize the generous support Waukesha Public Library receives from its Board of Trustees, Public Art Committee, and the Friends of the Library. Whether they're fundraising, volunteering, or enhancing our public art collection, these groups make meaningful contributions that enrich the library experience for everyone who walks through our doors. Their dedication makes our library a better place for the entire community.

We're especially proud of the strong tradition of community support that shapes our library. This year, the Public Art Committee celebrated its 20th anniversary, and the Friends of Waukesha Public Library commemorated 61 years of service. Thanks to their unwavering commitment, the library remains a true gem in downtown Waukesha.

If you're interested in joining the Friends of Waukesha Public Library, please call 262-524-3694 or visit WaukeshaPublicLibrary.org/friends. New members are always welcome. On behalf of the library staff and our community, thank you to our Friends!

Bruce Gay
Director

Waukesha Public Library

Safe streets require stable homes, not myths about homelessness

To the editor:

State Rep. Scott Allen, R-Waukesha, in response to President Trump's recent executive order on homelessness, argued:

"Public safety should always be the priority. Over the last several decades, we've thrown billions at programs that treat symptoms while ignoring the root causes of homelessness, like untreated mental health issues and rampant drug abuse. ... Thriving businesses and economic growth can't occur without safe streets. It is time to stop repeating the same mistakes and expecting progress."

Allen's words echo a common narrative, but they misdi-

agnose the problem. The primary driver of homelessness is not addiction or untreated mental illness — it is the lack of affordable housing.

Here in Waukesha County, the median home price has risen above \$350,000. Rents continue to climb faster than wages, and a minimum-wage worker would need to work nearly 90 hours a week to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. When housing costs outpace incomes, even minor setbacks can leave families without a roof over their heads.

Mental health and substance use challenges do affect some unhoused neighbors, but those struggles are worsened by the trauma of homelessness. That's why "housing first" models — which prioritize stable housing before treatment requirements — consistently reduce homelessness and save taxpayers money. Family Promise of Waukesha County, for example, helped 88 families avoid homelessness last year at an average cost of just \$700 per household, with 98% remaining stably housed.

Public safety and thriving communities do not come from blaming individuals or pushing people out of sight. They come from investing in affordable housing, eviction prevention, and access to health care. If dignity is the goal, then stability — not stigma — must be the starting point.

SOPHIA Housing Justice Task Force

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