

Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

TX BoS CoC Board Member Elections
Nominee Information and Paper Ballot

Seat 1-- Person with lived experience, 2017-19:

- **APRIL CARL**

Experience: As a youth I spent an entire summer couch surfing and sleeping anywhere I could.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: I have been working to develop our local homelessness coalition for the past 5 years and feel this is the next step in the process. Moreover, in my new role at Ark-Tex Council of Governments I have an opportunity to work on homelessness throughout our 10-county region. There are many challenges facing our rural communities, and having the resources available to access state and federal funds is one of them. I see an opportunity to develop resources across the entire region to improve our ability to serve those in need of a home. I am one of the most knowledgeable professionals in the region when it comes to housing - the issues, the gaps, and the people already doing the work.

Other information: I am a 20-year professional, and an expert in governance and fundraising management for nonprofits. In our community, I have lead and developed the homeless coalition for the past 5 years. During that time I have developed a tremendous understanding of the issues facing our community and our region. Using my connections and knowledge, I see an opportunity to create the systems needed to address homelessness in all of Northeast Texas. Many of our agencies work in silos and rarely collaborate - I want to see our communities working in partnership to improve services and alleviate homelessness.

- *BoS Counties served: Bowie, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins, Lamar, Morris, Red River and Titus*

- **EDWARD LAWSON**

Experience: As one who was once homeless, I know first-hand the devastation of not knowing where your next meal is coming from, or where you will sleep or even where and when you will have the opportunity to bathe. Upon coming out of that situation, I vowed to become an advocate for the homeless, and those about to become homeless.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: To serve on the CoC Board will allow me and my organization, The Chosen Ones Outreach Ministries of Galveston, to broaden its services and possibly reach more people experiencing homelessness or about to become homeless. I can also bring to the table services and knowledge I have from working in this field for over 20 years. Furthermore, I will be working/serving with a group of focused individuals, dedicated to ending homelessness in our area of Texas.



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Other information: I am Executive Director of The Chosen Ones Outreach Ministries of Galveston, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to creating, promoting and enhancing the supportive services available to individuals who are MH/MR, HIV/Aids, Substance Abusers, Veterans, Homeless and Seniors. In addition, I am President of the Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition. We are a community organization of advocates, addressing the issues of homelessness and chronic homelessness in our communities. Our goal is to meet the needs of those who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless, as well as to assist individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness. Lastly, I am the Liaison for homeless individuals to the Gulf Coast Center, Board of Trustees.

- *BoS Counties served: Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston and Liberty*

Seat 2 – Homeless Veterans, 2017-18 (one year):

- **MELISSA ESCAMILLA**

Experience: I have over 15 years of experience working with people with disabilities including 2 and a half years specifically with homeless veterans. I am currently the Program Director of the SSVF Program for the South Texas Region at Family Endeavors in McAllen, TX. We service over 40 counties in our region which encompasses the area south of San Antonio to the Rio Grande Valley. The large coverage area has enabled me to see a variety of barriers homeless veterans face within our service region. We are currently working with local veteran organizations to help end veteran homelessness in our service area.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: I feel my expertise, work experience and day to day interactions with homeless veterans and other veteran service organizations will enable me to be a strong advocate and representative for homeless veterans in our state.

Other information: I have 15 years of experience working with special populations including homeless veterans and people with disabilities. I have been a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor for over 10 years and strive to ensure individuals of special populations including homeless veterans are well informed of all options towards housing stability including employment, benefits and fair housing. I also serve as board secretary for Texas Alliance of Information and Referral Services. Previous to my tenure at Family Endeavors I served in various capacities in social services working with people with disabilities of all ages. I served for over 3 years with the Coalition for Valley Families advisory board where we addressed homelessness issues and served as the disability advocate on the Texas Department of Transportation Advisory Panel in our region for 10 years. I also come from a family of veterans who have served in various branches of the military. I am well informed of the barriers veterans face when exiting the military including homelessness.



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- *BoS Counties served: Bee, Brooks, Cameron, Duval, Goliad, Hidalgo, Starr, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Victoria, Willacy, Zapata, Bexar, Webb, La Salle, Zavala, Dimmit, Maverick, Frio, Kinney, Uvalde, and Val Verde*

- **PAM MAERCKLEIN**

Experience: I have worked with homeless veterans since starting at Texas Veterans Commission nine years ago. I help them find resources for whatever challenges they are facing; housing, food, transportation, employment, financial support, and medical either through VA or local resources.

I am also a voting member of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH) and I helped write the response to SB 1580 - Veteran Homelessness.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: To help educate other counties, members, agencies about services and benefits available to homeless veterans that they may not know.

Other information: I serviced in the Air Force for 8 years. Homeless women Veterans and women veterans with children are on a rise and I would like to help resolve this problem.

- *Counties served: All*

Seat 3 – Chronically homeless persons, 2017-19: [Unopposed]

- **CHAD WHEELER**

Experience: Chad is an experienced and skilled executive director and homeless community developer with ten years of experience leading Open Door, a nonprofit organization working with people experiencing chronic homelessness in Lubbock. Under Chad's leadership, Open Door has operated a drop-in center which also serves as a Coordinated Entry Point and has developed the first and only Permanent Supportive Housing project 100% dedicated to chronically homeless individuals and households. Chad is passionate about the Housing First approach to ending homelessness. He specializes in organizational management and holistic strategies for ending homelessness.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: I would like to continue serving on the TX BoS CoC Board in order to support policies and direction that will further and increase efforts across the 215 counties in the BoS to prevent and end homelessness. Additionally, serving on the TX BoS CoC Board is an opportunity for me to learn more about our CoC and the many great projects serving our communities.

Other information: Chad has also served as the President of the South Plains Homeless Consortium from January 2016 to present. He also chairs the SPHC Coordinated Entry Committee which is the Coordinated Entry Planning Entity for the South Plains region.

- *BoS Counties served: Lubbock*



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Seat 5 – Homeless youth, 2017-19

- **ELAINE BRANDON**

Experience: I am the Program Services Administrator for a Community Services Nonprofit Agency that provides services to at-risk youth and families; youth in foster care; and disenfranchised, runaway, and homeless youth in 18 counties in South Central Texas. I also am a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor with over 20 years of clinical experience working with youth and families. Our agency has two emergency youth shelters and a transitional living program for older youth. Since I started with the agency, going into my 9th year, I have been a part of our Local Homeless Coalition and am a member of the Continuum of Care committee. I continue to work closely with counseling staff as well as youth in our emergency shelters and our transitional living program.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: Our agency mission is "Strengthen communities one youth and one family at a time." This is not limited to those youth who are in safe, secure, stable homes. It also includes those youth and young adults who may be having difficulties at home or may have left their home due to a chaotic family life or other difficulties. Or family who find themselves in situations because of hard economic times or mental health issues they never would have imagined that they would have ever been in before. I want to continue to be part of the solution.

Other information: As stated before, I am a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor and love working with our community partners. Working in a close knit community has provided me the opportunity to get to know the other providers within the community more and have stronger ties with them than when I worked in Austin or San Antonio. This allows me to be able to better help our staff and, in turn, the clients that we serve.

- *BoS Counties served: Comal*

- **NORMA MERCADO**

Experience: Currently serve as the Homeless and Foster Care Liaison for Bastrop Independent School District. Over 14 years of experience working with at-risk students and youth as Head Start caseworker and Parent Advocate with Del Valle ISD. Familiar with community resources and needed resources. Experience planning and coordinating services for children and youth to overcome homeless barriers.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: We currently partner with the Colorado River local homeless coalition to provide services to children and families who are facing homelessness.

I am 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.



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Other information: I am bilingual, speak English and Spanish fluently. One of my goals is to ensure we are reaching out to our Spanish-speaking population, as they are usually harder to identify due to the cultural stigmatization associated with homelessness and mental health issues.

- *BoS Counties served: Bastrop*

Seat 7 – Mental/behavioral health, 2017-19 [Unopposed]

- **MYRL HUMPHREY**

Experience: Have been part of the Dallas CoC for 11 years. Now am working to create Local Homeless Coalitions for Ellis and Hunt Counties this year, and further LHCs in the other counties in future years. I want to help these communities create even a few more affordable housing options for no- to low-income individuals and families. When that does not happen, the families may end up sleeping in their cars at Walmart in Waxahachie (with Walmart's permission) or the single clients come to Dallas and occupy housing there.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: We want to fully be part of the CoC process as we form Local Homeless Coalitions. The first one is for Ellis County. The next one will be in Hunt County. There are four other counties that I will be working with over the next couple of years. This would give us further access and assure we are an even more significant part of the BoS as it continues to grow. I believe my experience on the Dallas CoC and my contacts in these smaller communities gives me a unique perspective for this.

Other information: I ran three homeless grants obtained through HUD in Dallas until our Board voted to disband. There were several agencies that would have allowed us to merge in with them, but the board wanted to close it down and be able to sell the property which they legally could do.

- *BoS Counties served: Ellis, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, and Rockwall*

Seat 9 – Local government, 2017-19

- **DANIELLE SHAW**

Experience: Danielle Shaw is the Human Services Coordinator for the City of Denton. She 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 talents and experience help organizations solve issues, create value, maximize growth, and improve performance to achieve greater impact. She is responsible for developing a strategy for supporting human services activities in the City through collaboration, coalition building, and capacity building by coordinated distribution of local, state and federal funds distributed to nonprofit agencies that deliver assorted human service programs.



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Reasons nominee wants to serve: 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

Other information: N/A

- *BoS Counties served: Denton*

- **SUSANA VENEGAS**

Experience: On January 1, 2014, my husband was arrested on charges of aggravated assault due to a motor vehicle accident. As a result, our five children and I lost our primary source of household income. We lost our home and were taken in by family members. At times all six of us needed to live in one room. Other times, my family was split up staying in two or more family member's home, because we were so many and space was limited for the six of us. Part of the constant movement was due to safety and privacy concerns for my family. All our belongings were sold to cover legal fees and expenses. This included our family home and our vehicles. Transportation was a struggle to get my children to and from school. Looking for work was almost impossible. We moved over half a dozen times since my husband's arrest. Unfortunately, he was found guilty and his case is currently on appeal. My husband's ex-wife also filed for custody of their two children in order to avoid paying child support, and they were taken to live with their mother. Because of our various moves, the school district truancy officer reached out as to why the children kept changing schools. Eventually, after speaking with school administration officials my children were enrolled in the federal homeless program to provide stability and not having to change schools every time we moved into a new home. This eventually allowed me the opportunity to look for work while my children were stable at a school during the day. My children remain enrolled in the homeless program and I just started leasing an apartment under a short-term lease. I began work with the South Texas Development Council's Aging and Disability Resource Center covering a 13-county region which provides information and referral for long-term services and support. In addition, we also are involved in providing housing navigation for residents within those 13 counties to access affordable housing options, as well as transitioning individuals from nursing homes and assisted living facilities back into the community, while ensuring a network of services and support to help them age in place. We also support the efforts of our local homeless coalition and actively have participated in the point in time count. Through my experience and my current employment, I feel I can help advocate for families undergoing similar struggles. Through one unfortunate event, a family's life can change dramatically, and individuals should be able to reach out and receive support--not have to wait until a school truancy officer shows up to take a child to school. My children's rights were never explained, and even under the school district's federal homeless program, I was not informed of all the benefits I could access. Transportation was never offered to me, even though it was desperately needed.



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Reasons nominee wants to serve: I would like to bring the concerns of what I experienced and those of other individuals having lived experience or currently homeless to the TX BoS CoC. It wasn't until I became employed with STDC's ADRC program and attending training and events, that I realized I fell under the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homelessness. There are many families that potentially fall under similar circumstances that are unaware of their status, which could open the doors for support services to help stabilize their situation to afford better opportunities for their children. I would like to further our efforts in partnership through our housing navigation programs to link and educate these individuals about these services.

Other information: While my husband's case is still ongoing, and my family's struggles are far from over, as a single mom I have found the strength through faith and family to overcome my situation. I would like to work to let others know that they can do it too.

- *BoS Counties served: Dimmit, Edwards, Jim Hogg, Kinney, La Salle, Maverick, Real, Starr, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Zapata, and Zavala*

Seat 11 – Public Housing Agency, 2017-19 [Unopposed]

- **NIKKI BRENNAN**

Experience: Seasoned Executive Director of Georgetown Housing Authority, offering extensive supervisory and administrative experience. Manage all functions for agency and all internal departments. Staffing, payroll, and all related human resources functions. Accounting, budgeting, banking, and investing of all financial accounts. Procuring, contracting, and oversight of contractors, subs and vendors for new construction and modernization. Write policies and procedural manuals, interpret regulations. Report to federal, state and local entities. Develop and maintain partnerships with community organizations, businesses, City, county and state officials. Manage Housing Choice Voucher, Section 8 New Construction, Public Housing, Low Income Housing Tax Credit and Capital Fund programs. Apply for and administer various grants and funds such as Community Development Block Grant to rehabilitate properties. Identify, create and implement new programs. Identify and develop new opportunities to further GHA's mission, vision and goals.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: To assist in helping service providers and communities better serve the homeless population by supporting information sharing, collaboration, and new relationships to prevent homelessness.

- **Other information:** I currently serve as a board member of Georgetown Emergency & Transitional Housing Coalition. We convene key stakeholders to identify, plan and develop comprehensive aligned strategies that minimize overlapping efforts, while efficiently and respectfully connecting individuals and families struggling with housing insecurity with appropriate community resources.



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I currently serve as a board member of Helping Hands of Georgetown. We assist those who are considered low-income homeless, youth who are known as "couch surfers", and the homeless in our city. We provide food to those who lack the ability to provide for themselves. We provide needed living supplies (blankets, clothing, toiletries) to those determined to be in need. We match those in need to the services that can help them to move forward (Social Security/Medicare/Social Services).

- TX BoS CoC's Independent Review Team Member 2016.
- Serve as Board Secretary of the City of Georgetown Housing Advisory Board.
- Currently serving other Boards and Committees:
 - Board Member of Boys and Girls Club of Georgetown. I am the Bingo Chairman, and serve on the Program Quality Committee.
 - Board Member of Opportunities for Williamson & Burnet Counties (formerly WBCO) and serve on the Property Committee.
 - Board Member of Texas Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (TXNAHRO). Serve on the Scholarship Foundation Committee, Member Services Committee, and Small Agency Task Force Committee.
 - UTMB Parent's Council Member (UT Medical School in Galveston, Texas)
 - I have the capability to build solid relationships. I have the leadership style that supports others, giving them the opportunity to grow. I bring people, organizations, communities and gifts to the same table, to work together for a common purpose. Connect people, passion, tools and strengths to better us all as we strive to change lives for the better."
- *BoS Counties served: Williamson*

Seat 13 – Business, 2017-19 [Unopposed]

- **MICHELLE HUFF**

Experience: I run a public charity. We have partnered with HHSC to provide permanent supportive housing along with 16 provisions of supportive services to assist chronically or at-risk of homeless adults with mental illness.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: I have a passion for assisting the most vulnerable population there is to provide housing and supportive services in order for them to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

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Other information: I have linked with many organizations around Dallas County to collaborate and offer assistance to clients of case/social workers who are overloaded with caseloads. Working together and sharing resources will greatly improve Dallas high number of homeless individuals. We are also working to reduce Dallas County taxpayer dollars spent by supporting these individuals and assisting them to learn ways to cope and manage their illness rather than abusing jails, emergency departments and state hospitals.

- *BoS Counties served: Denton, Ellis*

Seat 15 – Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH) or State government agency, 2017-19

- **MOLLY VOYLES**

Experience: Prior to my current position, I spent over 10 years working in HUD-funded housing programs for survivors of domestic violence and understand 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), I have 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. I also work closely with state agencies in my current position and see the great benefit of alignment and coordination around issues, such as housing, homelessness, and survivors of domestic violence, can have at a community and state-level.

Reasons nominee wants to serve: There are a number of reasons that I am interested in serving on the CoC board. First and foremost, I believe housing is a human 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. I have also seen the power of the work the Balance of State CoC on communities in Texas around this issue and have enjoyed being a part of that work as a board member over the past year.

Other information: With experience in both housing services and public policy, I am excited to merge those skill sets to best support the work of the Balance of State CoC. I also have experience running a comparable database for victim service providers and could assist in collaborative work to support data elements within my role as a board member.

- *Counties served: All*

- **MICHAEL WILT**

Experience: I've been actively engaged in TICH activities for nearly three years, including doing the bulk of the work to support a TICH-created committee. I've also worked closely with USICH officials.



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Reasons nominee wants to serve: I'm passionate about removing barriers to housing and providing shelter for all without conditions. I'm passionate because I have lived experience. I spent my last year at college living first in my car and then on a friend's floor because of a financial burden. I didn't consider myself homeless at the time, because I had shelter, and I didn't think there were resources for people in my situation. I want to make sure others understand there are resources out there, and I want to do what I can to improve access to those resources and create more.

Other information: I've been a team lead for our local Point in Time Count three times and was a lead on a youth count in Austin. I've been to multiple THN conferences, and I've been to six national conferences on ending homelessness. I've also served on the Independent Review Team for THN the past two years. Whenever I've been asked to volunteer my time to support the work of ending homelessness, I've stepped up and delivered.

- *Counties served: All*

SEE BALLOT ON PAGES 11-12



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2016 TX BoS CoC BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS

BALLOT

To vote for a nominee, check the box beside the nominee's name. Select no more than one nominee per seat. If you do not wish to vote for any nominee(s) in a specific seat, leave the box(es) blank.

SEAT 1

- April Carl
- Edward Lawson

SEAT 2

- Melissa Escamilla
- Pam Maercklein

SEAT 3

- Chad Wheeler

SEAT 5

- Elaine Brandon
- Norma Mercado

SEAT 7

- Myrl Humphrey

SEAT 9

- Danielle Shaw
- Susana Venegas

SEAT 11

- Nikki Brennan

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SEAT 13

Michelle Huff

SEAT 15

Molly Voyles

Michael Wilt

Please fill in the information below to complete your ballot:

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Email address: _____

County/counties where you live and/or work: _____

Describe how you are affiliated with homeless services in the TX BoS CoC:

Scan and email completed ballot to: Mary Rychlik, CoC Manager, at mary@thn.org

Mail completed ballot to: Mary Rychlik, CoC Manager, c/o THN, 1713 Fortview Road, Austin, TX 78704