

**OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
WITHOUT A ROOF
EPISODE 65
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HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN**

(Music)

>> Welcome to another episode of “Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom” in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

Now here’s your host, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Welcome to Open Ninth. We’ve done over 50 podcasts. I have to say, I’ve never done a podcast that I’m more nervous about because this one is particularly personal to me, because we’re thrilled to have two people who are very important to me. One, who is extremely important to me, and that is my wife Shelley Lauten, who is the CEO of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. And Dr. David Swanson, who is the Chair of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. You can understand my apprehension in interviewing my own wife, mostly about the introduction.

So if you’ll just give me a moment, I want to tell our listeners that my beautiful wife Shelley is a native Floridian. That’s a rare breed. She went to UCF undergraduate, and Western Michigan for her master’s; worked in the community at Walt Disney World, worked for the Arnold Palmer Golf Management Company, was a consultant for the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce, president of myregion.org, was the founder and partner, along with Glenda Hood, of TriSect, and is currently serving as CEO of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. Most important in my life, my lovely wife, the mother of our two children. And I’m so proud of Shelley, and I don’t say it probably enough publicly. So welcome to Open Ninth, sweetheart.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: You did that perfect.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay. Good. Because I was really, really nervous.

DR. SWANSON: Very impressive, Judge.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: This one will be a little easier for me. We're also joined by Dr. David Swanson, who is the Senior Pastor and the head of the staff at First Presbyterian Church of Orlando. I'm not sure if our listeners know this, but Dr. Swanson is the author of four books. He is an active community member and the current Chair of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. He's been married to Lea -- Leigh --

DR. SWANSON: Leigh.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: -- Leigh for 30 years, has three grown children. Dr. Swanson got his undergraduate degree in Southern Methodist University, and his Master of Divinity at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and his Doctorate of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and is a well-known community leader and a true servant leader. And we're thrilled to have here today with us, joining us on this podcast, the Chair of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness, Dr. David Swanson.

Welcome.

DR. SWANSON: Thank you. Thank you. Great to be here.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So one of the two of you -- and maybe, Shelley, I'll start with you. What is the -- basically the vision and the mission of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: The Commission was actually started about 10 years ago. And its purpose was a real frustration in the community, honestly, from the business community and many of our elected officials, that we seem to keep dealing with homelessness the same way, over and over and over again, but not getting to the root cause of getting any better at this.

So the Commission was formed as a three sector -- four-sector community effort, that's business, government, the non-profit sector and the faith community, to come together, to bring

everyone together and figure out where -- what do we do, where do we go from here, and how do we get results that really move people out of homelessness once and for all.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So, Dr. Swanson, what's the greatest challenge facing our community as it goes to meet that vision and that mission?

DR. SWANSON: Wow. I think that's pretty easy. I'm sitting here thinking, am I going to give the answer that Shelley would give. Because I want to be sure we're on the same page.

But I think the biggest issue right now is the lack of housing. I think we've got a system that works. I think we've proven that it works over the last three-and-a-half years with -- between the VA and the Commission and HSN and all the players in this space, we've housed about 700 people. So we know how to do it when it comes to the chronically homeless. But right now, we simply don't have the kinds of apartments that are needed in order to meet the needs of the people who are already qualified to be housed.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So in ranking the, sort of, barriers or challenges, you'd put the lack of housing as the number one challenge. What other challenges or barriers exist?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Well, I would add, because it's exacerbated by the housing -- and I would agree it's -- housing is -- you can't solve homelessness without homes; you just can't. So that's an issue for our chronically homeless, and that's where the community is primarily focused.

But right behind those who are chronically homeless are different levels of people who are on the street who are homeless, but also a whole group of who the Department of Education define as homeless, the precariously housed; children in our schools who are couch-surfing from one place to another, families that don't have a stable home. But it all comes down -- the root issue, is housing.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So housing is an inventory issue. What other challenges -- is there a funding challenge, or is housing and funding -- is it a different way of saying the same thing, or what's funding?

DR. SWANSON: No.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay.

DR. SWANSON: I wish it were. But I think what we've -- that's a great question. There is a funding issue. And we started -- the whole system was created, thanks to a gift from Florida Hospital, three-and-a-half years ago, six million dollars, that was going to fund the wraparound services that are needed to keep people who have been housed, successfully housed, by providing case management services and the necessary healthcare.

The government, federal government, through HUD, provides the cost of the actual apartment. And then that grant covered the cost of the wraparound services. So we got all these people housed. But we never spent as much time as we probably should have along the way thinking about what happens when that funding runs out and how do we make this sustainable.

So we created a system, and now we have to sustain and scale the system. There's still five or six hundred people more that need to be housed, but that costs roughly 30 million dollars, and we're trying to raise money in a community where -- and Shelley may agree with this; I think she would. I think our community has kind of seen the publicity and said, oh, we did that. And we did. But this is not something that ever ends. We have to continue to sustain this funding, and that's been a challenge.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: I think when we started, the Commission was really focused on understanding the different populations. So you have individuals who are homeless. You have

families who are homeless. You have young people who are runaways and out there all by themselves.

So we focused a lot of attention on the populations. And what we've learned, I think, in the last three-and-a-half years is, really, when you step back, there are two issues as it relates to really driving systemic change; housing, and then providing the services someone needs to stay in those houses. And we have gaps in funding in both housing and services.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay. Let's talk about that a minute. So you both seem, to me, to identify as the first priority, we need houses. And if -- you know, and homelessness with homes, which is intuitive, that makes sense when you say it.

What kind of services do you need once you put somebody in a home, when you say services? And then, what about the challenges of this state in particular as it comes to services?

DR. SWANSON: Well, primarily you need -- for keeping someone successfully housed, you need a case manager. And what we've generally aimed at --

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And what do they manage? When you say case -- for our listeners, what would they manage?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: It depends. It depends on the population.

DR. SWANSON: Well, a chronically homeless person is going to be physically or mentally disabled by the federal definition.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Okay.

DR. SWANSON: So you've got physical needs, in the case of a physical disability. How is that person going to succeed in their home? Can they get to the drugstore to get their medicine?

In the case of somebody who's mentally incapacitated or mentally disabled, so much of that revolves around taking the right medicine and taking the right medicine at the right time. And so the case manager is often simply just helping them monitor what they need to be taking. Some of that sometimes needs to be refrigerated, which is, again, why mentally ill people do not succeed on the street because they can't take the medicine in a form that's going to be actually helpful to them.

So the case manager is generally stopping by. And we try to keep it to a one to twelve ratio; so one case manager for twelve clients. And they stop by on a regular basis and try to keep them -- and get them what they need to keep them successfully housed.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So for the universe I work in, the court system, I am acutely aware that we're 49th or 50th, I guess it depends on who you ask, in per capita mental health funding from the state, and we're a non-expansion state for Medicaid. So what about the services component of -- if you have a physical disability, that's one thing. But I imagine most people who are homeless [sic] have some degree of challenge with mental health issues.

Do we have enough service providers in this state, enough resources?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: We don't have enough resources by any stretch of the imagination. But let me step back and expand on what David was saying; that Housing First really is about those who are mentally or physically living -- incapacitated, living on the street. And that's the stereotype that most of us think about when we think about homelessness.

We decided, as a community, that that's where we would begin, because it is that population who are most at risk of dying on the street. So that's where they use about 80 percent of the services; the criminal justice system, the hospitals, other community services. We expend about 80 percent of our funding on that population, and they're only about 20 percent of the total

population of homelessness. They're critical, they're really at risk of dying on the street, and we don't have nearly enough the kind of housing we need.

So again, think, if you're mentally or physically disabled, you need a special kind of housing. Although, we've adapted our current inventory pretty well for as many -- for about 800 people that we've housed of that population. But we just need so much more.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: What, if any, barrier is the way people -- the way people think about homelessness, is that a barrier to solving the homelessness issue in this region?

DR. SWANSON: I think it is. And it's something that I've -- as long as I've been involved in this, I've kind of been trying to drive this train, and that is that as long as we talk about this as an issue, I think we miss the point. That what we're trying to do -- and at the very beginning, you know, you said, you know, what is the challenge with homelessness. I think it's understanding that everyone that you see that's homeless is somebody's child, is somebody's brother, sister. And at one time, their life was very much like yours or mine. And they have a name and they have an identity.

I'll never forget the homeless woman who came into my office at church, and she was crying and hysterical. And I'd kind of heard a ruckus outside my office, and she was demanding to see me. And I came out and I took her in a conference room, and we sat down, and she just was looking at me, yelling at me. And she said, you don't see me; everyone looks past me; no one looks at me; my name is Angel; I have a name; my name is Angel; you call me -- you know, and it's -- and I think that's the world that homeless people live in.

So there is a certain number of people who want to see solving homelessness as an economic issue. And it is. There are a lot of downtown businesses that feel like this is a disadvantage, if any of their clients see a homeless person. But I would tell you that it is the

morally right thing to do, because I think the way in which we care for people among us who are the least and the lost people who can't care for themselves, that says a lot about who we are as a community.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: So let's talk about that for a minute. So we live in the -- a capitalist society. It's kind of a deep history of rugged individualism, a puritan work ethic; if you just pull yourself up by your bootstraps, you'll succeed. That's sort of deeply embedded in our culture. And I'm wondering how those attitudes, which in some ways has made our country strong and great in some ways -- how do those make solving homelessness difficult?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Well, I think -- and, you know, jump in here. But I do believe that part of the rationale for that is for years, maybe centuries, we've dealt with homelessness exactly the same way, which -- we address the immediate issue. We feed people, we clothe them, we give them a little bit of money, we give them temporary emergency room care. But we've never gotten to the root cause, which is they don't have a home.

Now that we've started this Housing First model, what I find just so exciting is now we have a message to people who have always challenged the empathetic view to say, not only is this the right thing to do morally, it's the right thing to do economically. So what we did, for the first three years with our funding from Florida Hospital and the City of Orlando, is put a test together. And we identified the hundred people in our community who were costing us the most money, and we know by name who they were. We went to the jail system; we saw who was homeless and using the jails the most. We went to the emergency rooms; we got who was costing the emergency rooms the most money. And our goal was to house 100 of those folks in three years, using this Housing First test.

We -- can I tell the great news story?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Sure, because I want to end on the high points. But I'm -- talk about barriers, but we're working towards your success story, so it's not all going to be about your challenges. So go right ahead.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: So we not only, in three years, built a system that housed a hundred of the most difficult to house and stay housed, we actually brought the cost from 31,000 per person a year to just under 18,000 dollars per person to house them and service. So let me underscore that. It is cheaper to put them in a home and provide them this kind of intensive case management than it is to keep them on the street.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Fascinating. And I'm somewhat familiar of this because we have these conversations at home. But for our listeners, let me ask this question. Do you encounter in this community the thought from some people that, why should we give someone else a home; no one gave me a home? And that's what I was asking about, that barrier, that sort of thought process of, you know, it's a handout; I didn't get a handout. And that's kind of what I meant by our rugged culture.

DR. SWANSON: And I think that's -- that kind of idea is mostly related to this mistaken idea that the people who are homeless are just lazy and they want other people to take care of them. And really, a homeless person isn't capable -- a chronically homeless person, by definition, isn't capable of working. So, I mean, I would feel like that would -- there would be a problem with someone who is perfectly capable of working and earning a living and who is just choosing not to, and now I'm going to give them a house. That's not what we're doing.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. Let's talk about that for a moment. So someone pointed out to me once, when a homeless person was walking down the street and reached into a garbage can to get a half-eaten sandwich, do you really think that that's a choice that a human

being would make who's rational and healthy and mentally healthy, to eat someone else's half-eaten sandwich for dinner. And that was profound for me, because I realized, yes, that person has some -- is probably experiencing mental health issues and other challenges.

I know today the kind of controversy in our community is, are -- people who are panhandling, are they doing it because they're homeless and need funds, or are they doing it sort of as a sideline to supplement their income or make money because they don't want to enter the mainstream economy. How much is that a challenge for both of you right now?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: To me, those are two distinct issues. They may look and appear -- but one of them is about getting quick access to funding, the other one is a longer-term issue as it relates to their mental stability, et cetera. We're doing a lot of work right now in this -- in Downtown Orlando as a test, because that's where most of our chronically homeless individuals stay, and we don't know the complete answer to that yet. All we do know is that there is a source problem, which is giving people money, that has to be addressed. And then there's a people issue that has to be addressed. They're two different things.

DR. SWANSON: The Mayor's State of Downtown address on Thursday, he will speak to some of that and kind of the things that we've learned about panhandling. But I think just as you look at how people interact, how secure they feel, I think it's just one of those activities that tends to bother people, makes them feel unsafe if someone's constantly hassling them for money.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Right. Right.

DR. SWANSON: And it's just -- it is a challenge.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: But the other 80 percent, Fred, that I think is so important that your listeners need to understand, is the hidden part of homelessness. And that is economic. And that is something that is much more temporary. That's based on, we are now in a

community, the good news is, that is very prosperous, is growing exponentially, and we're having great opportunities coming to Central Florida.

But the other side of that part of Orlando is rents are higher than they've ever been, wages have been stagnant for years and years and years, healthcare, child care, all of that causes a gap where people right now -- we're forcing them out on the streets of Orlando, at least temporarily, because they flat just can't afford to live in Central Florida. And they're working.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: I want to talk about one more area that I think is a challenge for you and all of the kind of beneficent social issues that we face in our community -- or agencies who are beneficent. And then I want to talk specifically about homelessness and the courts and your successes.

But my question is this. How do you keep any community, and our community in particular, focused on an issue that requires years of focus, and how do you combat issue fatigue in our community?

So the Commission has existed for 10 years, and I have to think you're competing with things like mental health funding, school shootings, the opioid epidemic, cancer treatment particularly for children, hurricanes and wildfire relief. So how do you keep a community that has very significant issues, all important issues -- how do you keep them focused on an effort to -- in homelessness when you're competing with all of those other issues that are, of course, valid issues?

DR. SWANSON: Well, I think you're 100 percent correct. Since the year 2000, this community, Central Florida, has had a 600 percent increase in the number of nonprofits that exist. So in terms of just the sheer number of people who are trying to help -- and all of it's good stuff. But they all have to raise money, and many are doing capital campaigns, and I would tell

you it's one of the most challenging seasons for fundraising in Central Florida that probably has ever existed. So there is that dynamic.

I think the way -- at least, I believe, the way that you continue to succeed in that is you tell stories of success, you show pictures of changed lives, you interview the successful outcomes where a client really has had their life changed. And there are plenty of those stories. And sometimes I think that there's this false idea that we want to just get rid of the problem and we're going to give them a house so we can throw them behind a door and we don't have to see them anymore, and that is not what we're trying to do. We're trying to restore their dignity, their sense of humanity, and help them become part of the community again as much as is possible.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: David, can a community solve the homeless problem, or is that setting up a false narrative where --

DR. SWANSON: Correct. I think that's false. We can get to functional zero, which is where it's rare, brief, and one time, and where no one is going to -- if someone ever is homeless, it's not going to last for long. And that's really what we're aiming at.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: And, to me, those are the -- those are two connecting points right there. So what we're trying to do is create a regional three-county system of care that no matter where someone becomes homeless, they can enter into a system so that their homelessness becomes rare, brief, and one time. The issue is in the social service agencies as much as any other effort in the community.

We tend to silo the issues. So we talked mental health. And mental health has a direct impact on homelessness, but they're two different silos. It's crazy. And then we have transportation, which really has an impact on whether or not my population can grow and prosper. That's siloed, as if it's a business issue alone.

So one of the issues that we've really started talking about is how do we do a better job of bundling -- and this is something you and I have talked about -- those things that are particularly driven because of growth. We have grown so much in this community in terms of population. We're the third largest state now in the region, and we continue to address issues one at a time -- education, criminal justice, homelessness -- when in fact, they're all being driven because of this incredible prosperity we've had.

We've got to figure out a different way to talk it, fund it, and really address it in a way that becomes meaningful. But that's a really long-term goal.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. That's a challenge. So we're the third largest circuit, this circuit, in the third largest state in the nation. And our court system here, just in Orange and Osceola County, is larger than 11 state court systems in the United States. And so we -- this isn't about the court system today, but when I go to Tallahassee to lobby for resources for the court, one of the sympathetic aspects of dealing with the legislature is, I'm in line and you're in front of me for homelessness, and mental health is in front of you for mental health services, and transportation is in front of them, and education in front of them, prison reform is in front of them.

And so in some ways I think legislatures -- I could see where they'd get fatigued, and then the community at large might get fatigued of -- there are so many issues and we do tend to separate them. But you're right, transport -- you can have -- transportation, mental health, substance abuse treatment --

DR. SWANSON: Housing.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: -- housing, all of that impacts homelessness.

Do you -- do either of you feel like our community has criminalized homelessness? Is there a sense of that or not? In other words, have we turned activity that people without a home must engage in into crimes like loitering in public, sleeping in public parks, urinating in public, bathing in public?

And I have some thoughts about that, but I don't know if our community has moved away from that or if we're sort evolving away from that. What are your thoughts about, do we criminalize homeless behavior?

DR. SWANSON: I think there are certain things that you cannot allow, because if you do, the outcome is what we've seen in a lot of other communities, and that's called Tent Cities. And I think there have to be laws that are enforced that say you -- there are certain things you can't do in the city center. And by doing that, you prevent large groups of people from congregating together and these communities developing.

I think how you do that and the compassion by which you do that also factors into it. And that's one of the things that, by and large, I think Orlando and our community has done well is -- especially in the last four or five years, is that I think we've had a more compassionate approach. And as we talk about what happens during the day, if a homeless person gets housed, they still need community, they still need to be in a relationship with other people. Where do they go during the day? When they're out during the day, is there a place for them to go, is there a place where they'll know people, where somebody will know their name, where they'll be welcomed? And if we could work on that -- and again, we could give to them a better sense of their own humanity. I think that would help us a lot. But I think just the idea that -- there are some laws that need to be there, but overall I would hate to make it simply defined as a criminal activity.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. Well, if I -- go ahead, Shelley.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Well, and I would add to that, you know, the Criminal Justice Task Force that you chaired came out with one of their -- the biggest frustrations of the criminal justice system is the fact that they have no place -- if they are doing something wrong, they have no place to go but to take them to jail. So it behooves us as a community to think about options for our first responders so they're not put in that tough choice of criminalizing a behavior that someone is doing because they have no home.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Sure. So let's illustrate that for our listeners. If I were a downtown business owner and someone were [sic] urinating on my store stoop, right where my customers enter the building, it's going to have an impact on your business and you've got to end that activity.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Today, if that person's in real crisis, they might be taken to the Central Receiving Center. Twenty-five percent of the people who go to the Central Receiving Center are homeless and seventy-five percent are not. As you said, what the police told us in our study was, I may try to deescalate the situation, I may be able to deal with it, but frequently these individuals are in crisis and maybe there's resisting without violence or with violence and then there's no choice, and then I have to take them into custody, and the only place to take them right now is the Orange County Jail.

Then I see them after 24 hours, and I tend to release them because they tend to plead guilty to whatever it is they'd been arrested for, and I impose court costs, which is the most frustrating thing I've ever done, because all of a sudden I'm mandated to tell you you owe \$284 to the State of Florida, and they look at me and say, if I had \$284, I wouldn't have been here to

begin with, and realize we're [sic] never going to pay it. And then they also have a criminal record which makes housing difficult, services difficult.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: The cycle just keeps going.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And it's this, you know, very nutty cycle. And so if we had a deflection center or a diversion center where we could take people and say, your behavior is inappropriate; you can't urinate on the stoop of the business. But we realize the underlying problem is, you're experiencing mental health challenges or substance abuse and homelessness; we address that, you won't be on that stoop going forward.

And what I was amazed at, and I came in at -- you know, I'm a lawyer so I'm skeptical about all expert reports. And I came in it thinking, no, it can't be cheaper to handle the problem this way, to give someone a house. And I was amazed and surprised to find that that is true. So, yeah, so I agree with you that there's some different approaches that are required.

Let's look back, again, to your success story. So you say the Commission started 10 years ago. Do you ever see the Commission going away, or is it something -- is it sort of like addressing cancer in a health community; it's something that we will always have nonprofits raising money to treat this disease, which is cancer? And I don't -- not saying homelessness is a disease, but is it something we always need a Commission for? Do you see the Commission sun-setting? What are your thoughts on that?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: I don't know that I believe any organization, just by right, should always be in existence. I think -- from my systems background, I really do believe that once we have a system in place that is regional in nature where we have the operating group working together in a holistic fashion, I don't know that we do need a Commission.

That may be a while yet. But I do believe that there are a lot of great nonprofits. I think where the Commission has served a great role is to get the nonprofit organizations working together in a systemic way, in a way where everyone is handled in a similar fashion.

Before the Commission was around, we had over a hundred different nonprofit organizations that touched homelessness. They all dealt with homelessness their own individual way. So once we get to a point where we have a hundred organizations working together under the same framework of outcomes and expectations, I don't see a reason why the Commission wouldn't go away.

DR. SWANSON: And I sure hope that we will not always be in the position of having to raise funds.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Right.

DR. SWANSON: I think eventually, hopefully in the next three years even, the jurisdictions will pick up the means by which it gets funded. And there's no community that I know of that, long term, has had private money fund what needs to be happening and what -- the support that needs to be given to homeless people.

So Miami has done it their way. We've seen some things happening in San Francisco. We've seen some things happening in Houston, Salt Lake City. We're going to have to come up with what works best for our community, but I think that's in the not-too-distant future.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, I want to loop back to something you said a minute ago, Shelley. I can't get 10 judges to see any issue the same way. And when you have 100 nonprofits working on an issue, is there -- do you feel that there's consensus about how to address this problem in our community?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: I think there's a simple adage; follow the money. And if providers -- if the funders, be that the County or the private sector funding, is based on outcomes, that's when people will shift their model to get the outcomes that are expected by the funders. So, yes, I do believe -- and we've seen it happen in a great number up to this point to -- once you've set and established the core outcomes you want -- we want to house a hundred people and we want to see these kind of metrics; we want to see the cost come down, we want to see how long that they stay. We set metrics for each one of those.

And that's the good news. We've now proven it in a small aspect of it, about 300. We need to house over 1,000 of the chronically homeless. So we've got to now -- just like you do in private sector, you start with a test, you then take what you learn from the test and extrapolate out to build a system that really works for the long term. That's where we are.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Do you think our community has the patience for this long-term project, or do you think that -- it seems to me today, with social media -- particularly with social media, maybe other -- some other dynamics -- and this loops back to my fatigue question earlier.

Is it a bit challenging to keep people's attention before they say, I can't believe -- as you said earlier, you haven't solved this problem yet. So how do -- maybe I've asked this already. But how do you loop back to -- how do you address that, which is this sort of -- you want instant gratification everywhere today.

DR. SWANSON: I think when you see results -- yeah. When you start seeing results and we start seeing fewer people on the street, and the people that you do see on the street are not necessarily panhandling, but they're trying to make a contribution of some kind. I love that one of our homeless people that we'd served for a long time is now an ambassador on the streets of

downtown. Those are the stories that I think, if we can tell them and tell them well and show people that the contributions that you're making and the effort that we're making really is changing people's lives, I think we'll be able to keep that momentum up. I just think it's going to be -- it just needs to be steady and consistent. And as long as it stays in the public eye, we'll be all right.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Is there one story or one message that you want to get out to the public more strongly that you think, for some reason, you haven't been able to get out? Here's an opportunity. At least, here's a venue to do it.

DR. SWANSON: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: I mean, what message do you think is a great one that maybe is not being heard as much as you want it to be?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: I believe it's still the preconception that people who are on the street can pick themselves up by the bootstraps and go get a job; just go get a job. So, you know, my ongoing message for that population is, no, they can't; you would not ask your Uncle Joe who had a mental -- a severe mental or physical disability to leave your house and go get a job; you just would not do that.

The first time we've ever had a chronic homeless population in this country, think about this, was back in the 1960s when we eliminated institutions for people with mental illness. When we opened our doors and put people back on the street saying, they'll go back to their families, we didn't put anything in place to absorb that population. That is our current, chronic homeless population.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Yeah. I know that President Kennedy, whose family members had suffered from an experience with mental health issues, deinstitutionalized mental

health institutions. And he asked Congress to appropriate hundreds of millions of dollars, and he didn't get the appropriation.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: That's right.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: But he got the legislation through to close the institutions. So that was a -- you know, that was a real social problem for us.

I've looked at your board in preparation for this, and I, in full disclosure, served on the board at one point in time. But I've looked at the current membership on the board, and I'm so impressed with who's represented on this board, the cross section of real community leaders from both government leaders like Mayor Dyer, Mayor Demings, formerly Mayor Jacobs, the cities that are represented, and then the private industry, the hospitals that are there, private industries that's there, faith leaders, Dr. Swanson, Dr. Hunter.

It's so impressive. And I'm thinking, boy, if any group of community leaders and a cross section of community leaders can make headway in this process, it's this group. And so it's a phenomenal group of people. It's clearly a challenging problem, because there are so many, you know, resource challenges and then attitude challenges.

If you could change any one thing about the system right now, Shelley, what would you change? Would -- it should be more housing?

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Why don't you start first?

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Would it just be more housing? Is that the one thing?

DR. SWANSON: Gosh, if I could -- I would -- you know, the housing and the money are important. I think I'd just change attitudes. I think I wish that there was a -- we tend to be so into ourselves these days, and I wish people would switch their attitude and recognize that this is

a humanity issue, and that what I need to do is actually care for my fellow man, and what can I do to help.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: And I think if we shifted the attitude, the resources would come.

DR. SWANSON: Absolutely.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, I can't think of two better leaders to deliver that message.

First of all, Dr. Swanson, both what you do and where you do it at First Presbyterian, and talk about the compassion and humanity -- and after all, we're just entering that season where we're celebrating the Child that was born, not in an inn, not in house, but in a manger because there wasn't any room at the inn. And in a sense, that's really what our -- many of our fellow citizens are facing in a different sort of a way during this season. And this is the season about love and compassion and giving and rebirth, and in that sense, sort of a renewed faith in humanity.

And Shelley, your experience both in the private sector and in the public sector and forming your own business. And I can't think of two community leaders who are better suited to address this issue.

It strikes me, it's a marathon and not a sprint, this one.

DR. SWANSON: That is very true.

CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN: And that it's going to take a lot of effort on behalf of many people in our community.

On behalf of the citizens of our community, I want to thank both of you for taking time out of your busy schedule, and for devoting so much energy and passion to this issue which is a very important issue to our community and to the health of our community.

I think when you were saying earlier, it's really about what kind of healthy community do you want to live in, and we're measure -- are we a healthy community? Well, in part, the measurement is, how are we treating all of us in the community and some of those who are less fortunate than we are.

So thank you so much for joining me. This was fascinating. I hope our listeners listen in. And it's that time and season where I think this is a great message. Thank you so much.

SHELLEY LAUTEN: Thank you.

DR. SWANSON: Thank you, Judge.

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