



*Panelists discuss homelessness in the metropolitan area*



*Touring the Hope Faith overnight winter shelter*

## DECEMBER: GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL

In December, Pillars explored the many components of homelessness in the Kansas City metropolitan area. We started the session with a panel discussion with Mark Miller, the Executive Vice President of Behavioral Health at Swope Health Services; Terry Claudell, the President of Eden Village; Rob Santel, the Director of Programs at Cross-Lines Community Outreach; and Josh Henges, the City of Kansas City, Missouri's Homeless Prevention Coordinator. We learned that homelessness is a solvable problem. It starts with providing more affordable housing, but it is not always an economic problem. People can become homeless and people can remain homeless, and the people who remain homeless often need more than just economic support. They need access to wrap-around services that support their health and behavioral health needs. This is one of the reasons Eden Village has been successful. They provide the chronically homeless a safe place to live in a sustainable and supportive community environment, so they can focus on building a life outside of homelessness.

Next, Pillars met Emily Reeves, the Overnight Shelter Director at Hope Faith. She gave us a tour of their facility in the historic northeast where they provide basic necessities to the homeless, including showers, meals, and other essential services. During the winter, Hope Faith is an overnight winter shelter to those in need during the cold winter months. It is open for 90 days, but they have a broader goal to be open 365 days because everyone deserves a safe place to sleep.

Finally, Pillars volunteered at Operation Breakthrough's Christmas warehouse. Operation Breakthrough is a non-for-profit that responded to the need for quality child care and provided a nurturing and safe environment for children in poverty. They offer a wide variety of educational programs, and during this time of year, the Christmas program. Many of their donors will provide extra gifts and toys, so the week before Christmas, Operation Breakthrough allows families in the area that are not a part of other Christmas programs to pick out gifts at their Christmas warehouse. Since this had already happened, we packed up leftover toys, so they could be sent to their permanent storage facility. Throughout the year, they will grab gifts and toys from their storage facility for their birthday closet.



*Volunteering at Operation Breakthrough's Christmas warehouse*