

FAITH WITH ITS SLEEVES ROLLED UP

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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Topeka Rescue Mission response to injury during city-led encampment abatement.

On March 4, an unsheltered neighbor was injured when equipment used during a city-mandated encampment abatement unknowingly picked up a tent with someone sleeping inside. The Topeka Rescue Mission is deeply grateful that our unsheltered neighbor was not seriously injured, but we are sickened that such an avoidable and dangerous situation occurred in the first place. This alarming incident is the direct result of policies enacted by elected city officials that prioritize forced displacement over real, lasting solutions to address homelessness. This is not just about one individual—it affects all those who tirelessly build trust and relationships with our unsheltered neighbors, working to help them find stability and self-worth in the face of hardship.

“Topeka Rescue Mission believes that all people are made in the image of God with inherent value. This belief is carried out by prioritizing the safety, dignity, and well-being of those experiencing homelessness in our community. We were deeply disturbed to learn of this incident and relieved that the injuries were minor. However, the fact remains—this could have been fatal. This could have all been avoided if local elected officials and policy makers had led the charge on ensuring proper continuum of care community housing options were available prior to enforcing the no-camping ordinance. These suggestions have been communicated continuously by various organizations since before the ordinances were passed in 2023.

We recognize the complexities involved in addressing homelessness, and it is critical that all efforts are carried out with compassion, clear communication, and a commitment to minimizing harm. The ordinance for no camping has the potential to be beneficial for our community but not in the manner that it is currently being carried out. We hope this incident will put a pause on scheduled and future abatements until sufficient housing is in place.” La Manda Cunningham, CEO, TRM Ministries

TRM remains committed to working with city and county officials, community partners, and those we serve to create real solutions that prioritize both public safety and the dignity of every individual. We call on city, county, and community leadership to engage in meaningful dialogue and action to prevent further harm and truly address homelessness with care and strategy, not force and ineffective measures.

Topeka Rescue Mission Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working in the Topeka Community and surrounding Shawnee County. TRM works with community partners to reach those in need by bringing help and hope through serving those experiencing homelessness and feeding the hungry. To learn more, please visit trmonline.org or follow Topeka Rescue Mission Ministries on Facebook.