



**DOWNTOWN
CHATTANOOGA
ALLIANCE**



Message From Executive Director

Cigarettes, Lunch, and a Phone Call to Dad

Three Days in Early November

I don't typically use this platform to discuss social issues, however this month I want to talk about a 72-hour period that started on Monday evening and culminated around Wednesday at noon.

For about a year, the Downtown Chattanooga Alliance has been acquainted with a homeless man suffering from addiction and mental health issues. He arrived from Atlanta in 2020 and made an immediate impact in downtown and Hamilton Place. It was nearly impossible to have a conversation with him because of his delusions. However, the DCA provided him with clothes and food when needed, cleaned the laceration on his face when he was cut by a knife, and cleaned up after him when he turned trash containers upside down.

During October neither I nor the Ambassadors saw him. Typically, when a homeless individual is missing, one of several situations has occurred: the person has died, or is hospitalized, incarcerated, in treatment, or has moved to a different location. One busy night in September, this man, in the grip of a delusion caused by a previous traumatic event, believed police were chasing him. To escape the police in his mind, he ran into the road and on-coming traffic. The driver tried to stop but couldn't. The impact of the car shattered his leg. He was hospitalized for five weeks.

I saw him on Monday, November 1.

"Hi. Where have you been?" I asked.

"Hi, Steve. I was hit by a car. I've been in the hospital."

"That's terrible. How did that happen?"

As he spoke, I realized his story was consistent, and not broken by episodes of confusion.

"Did you receive a shot for mental health?" I asked.

"Yes. I finally feel balanced. The shot is supposed to last for three months."

I knew it was an opportunity to talk and connect with him. I also knew the clock was ticking until I couldn't connect again. He told me he was going to continue seeing the psychiatrist so he could receive his medication. I asked if the hospital staff had set that up for him. He told me they hadn't. We talked for two hours. He had a copy of his birth certificate and a letter from the health department to obtain his state ID. He set goals and was determined to get off the street. I was proud of him. We agreed to meet at 10 AM the following day to go to the courthouse to get his ID.



Both of us were excited when we met the next day. At the courthouse we went through security, headed to the second floor, and waited in line until finally it was our turn. We were told that the health department hadn't faxed over the paperwork.

"No worries," I said. "We have the paperwork with us. If this doesn't work, please call this lady and she will verify it."

The clerk told us to take a seat, and that she would call us when the papers were ready. The man I was with talked pleasantly and coherently to others. An hour passed. No one else was still waiting. I asked the clerk to tell me what was going on.

"I'm sorry, Sir, but the letter you have is a day late. It needs to be issued with today's date on it for us to process it."

We were being turned away for being a day late! I was furious but tried not to show it. When I broke the news, the man started talking about conspiracies.

"Women who work on computers are part of it. Wells Fargo is part of it."

The disappointment of getting turned away had momentarily triggered his delusions. Once outside, we talked about what happened. I told him that we knew what happened was a possibility, and that we would get a new letter and try again. He agreed. During lunch we had a great conversation. He called his dad.

"Dad, I just got out of the hospital. I was in a car accident. I'm OK now, better than OK. I'm taking mental health meds, and tomorrow I'm going to get my Tennessee ID. I'm going to stay clean and get off the street. Don't worry about me. I'm good."

He had already had breakfast at the Community Kitchen when we met Wednesday morning. I was feeling positive we would get his new ID. We went to the courthouse, passed through security, went up to the second floor, and filled out the paperwork. The man was asked to sit for his photo. One last question.

"Is this your first ID in Tennessee?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm sorry. We can't process this. You need to go to the RMV in Red Bank."

That started a spiral. Words flew out of his mouth, and his manic episodes began. Everything was a conspiracy, and he was done trying. He needed a cigarette. He needed to panhandle for a bottle. There were no other goals in his life at that moment. I told him I would buy him a pack of cigarettes and take him to Red Bank. As we walked to the store, I called the RMV to confirm the paperwork we have would work. I told the RMV what we had gone through and asked her what to expect. She assured me we have the necessary paperwork. The cigarette calmed the man down and he agreed to go to Red Bank. Everything at the RMV went smoothly. We were in and out in 15 minutes. He had an ID for the first time in years. However, I could tell

that the medication he received in the hospital was wearing off. His episodes were getting more frequent. Time was ticking and I needed to get him his Social Security Card and an appointment with a psychiatrist. However, he was done for the day. He wanted his bottle, a shower, and to return his birth certificate to the health center. I dropped him off downtown.

My phone rang. It was one of the Ambassadors.

"Hey, Steve. It's Tony. You know that guy who's been sitting on the bench at 629 Market for three days? He needs help."

"What does he need?"

"A shower. He's covered in feces and urine, food, coffee, clothes. And he can't walk."

"Do we need to call an ambulance?"

"He won't go. Doesn't like the sound of sirens."

"I'll be there in five minutes."

When I arrived at 629 Market, Tony and Tiara were picking up the items that could be thrown away. I spoke with the man and did an assessment. He wanted to go to Moccasin Bend, but I knew that wasn't possible. How could we get there with a person covered in feces and urine who can't move? I started calling for advice but couldn't reach anyone. I looked across the street and saw another homeless person drawing on the building windows with an empty coffee cup. Now we had two situations, and both needed attention. I called my contact at the CPD.

"Lieutenant, I'm sorry to put this on you, but this is the situation."

He said he understood and would get back to me in a few minutes. I grabbed Tony and we crossed the street to speak with the individual drawing on the windows. We knew him. He said he dropped his coffee and just wanted a breakfast sandwich.

"No problem. Let's go to Cadence Coffee and get you one."

The Lieutenant called me back to say that an officer was in route who was trained in how to speak to a homeless person. I met the officer on the sidewalk and explained the situation. He completed the assessment and EMS took the individual to the hospital. The Ambassador team picked up the soiled clothes, sleeping bag and blanket and threw them away. They got bleach and cleaned up the numerous biohazards on and around the bench. The power washer finally arrived. The team rinsed down the bench, sidewalk, and surrounding area. We all looked at each other and thought the same thing. Will this man be out and back downtown tomorrow? Or will he end up at Moccasin Bend? We all knew he needed to be stepped down from the hospital to another facility. But would that happen?

Thursday, I saw the man whose ID I helped to get. I wanted to work on obtaining his Social Security Card, but his manic episodes were back full time. He didn't want to see a psychiatrist, didn't want any

help, didn't want to see me. The window had closed. I worried that the next time I saw him would be when he was hit by a car, arrested, or, if he was lucky, received a mental health shot.

This is the work we do in downtown Chattanooga and the lengths to which we go to help those in need. Those 72 hours provide a small insight into what is broken in our country. If the homeless people in this story had cancer or a heart condition, they would receive continuous follow-up care. However, society averts its eyes from those with mental health issues compounded by addiction. Those people go in and out of hospitals and prisons with no plan or follow-up care. They are expected to navigate systems that are hard for me, and I have all the resources to do so.

Chattanooga is a clean, safe city with wonderful businesses, attractions, and events. The scenic city is a great place to live, work, and appreciate impressive geographic surroundings. A lot of progress has been made to improve this lovely city. Twenty years ago, people came downtown to work and then left to go home. Today people love living downtown, and visitors from all over the world enjoy our beautiful city. However, there is still a lot of work to do, and we need to start with the systems that are broken.

Executive Summary: Clean Team Highlights, October 2021

Field Observations

During the month of October, Downtown Chattanooga Alliance Ambassadors achieved the following special projects and cleaning accomplishments:

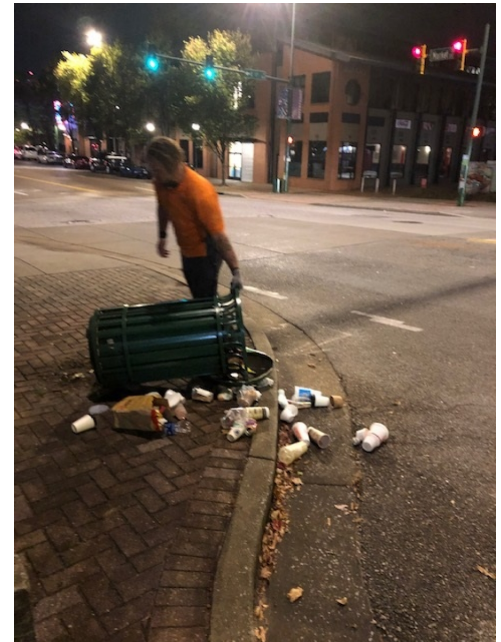
1. Power washed stains, smells, and deep cleaned sidewalks for 35 hours, an increase of 59% when compared to September 2021;
2. Removed 189 graffiti tags and stickers observed around the district, an increase 10.5% when compared to September 2021;
3. Cleaned 118 incidents of biohazards and disinfected the immediate surrounding area, an increase of 93.4% when compared to September 2021;
4. Performed 186 hours of special projects which mainly involved, painting, running the ATLV (All-Terrain Litter Vac), backpack blowing, planting and watering flowers; a decrease of 22.8% when compared to September 2021;
5. Collected 608 bags of trash, an increase of 50.8% when compared to September 2021;
6. Performed weed abatement on 98 block-faces, an increase of 127.9% when compared to September 2021.

The Ambassador team welcomed 6 new team members during the month of October. This led to the increase of stats reported and allowed the district to shine for our numerous events downtown held. The district welcomed the Three Sisters Festival, Chattanooga Motor Car Festival, Chattanooga Hip Hop Summit, Start Up Week, and the International Market.

In advance of the event, the clean team would focus on the "attention to details". The DCA management team would walk the district a week before the event and put together a plan to focus on all aspects of cleanliness. We would then share this plan with the Ambassadors and explain how it would be executed. Each day the team would paint fixtures, deep clean sidewalks, push broom mulch back into tree wells, remove stains, pull weeds, wipe down signs, landscape and any other duties that were required..

During the event we made sure our visitors felt welcomed, answered questions, made recommendations, and kept the area clean by removing debris off the ground and emptying trash cans that were full.

Overall, it was a great month downtown and businesses reported they were busy and excited by the numerous visitors that attended the events held in the district.



Ambassador Jake picks up a trash can knocked over on Market St.

Executive Summary: Hospitality Team Highlights, October 2021

Field Observations

During the month of October, Downtown Chattanooga Alliance Ambassador Hospitality Team did the following:

1. Provided 7,027 directions and recommendations, an 152% increase when compared to September 2021;
2. Conducted 17 business checks, a decrease of 66% when compared to September 2021;
3. And provided 9 motorist assists, a decrease of 10% when compared to September 2021.

The DCA Ambassador team helped 7,027 visitors during the month of October. This was the highest number of visitors the team has assisted for any month since the inception of the program. Most individuals were asking for places to eat or enjoy a beverage. Visitors were also interested in the local attractions and public restrooms.

The Ambassador team also introduced a new way to interact with visitors. Some of the hospitality ambassadors were trained on how to make balloon animals and give them away for free. This led to more interactions and a way to break the ice with visitors so they would ask questions. We look forward to more Ambassadors learning this skill as they become more comfortable creating different animals.

We look forward to the upcoming months and hope the month of October is a sign that more and more people will continue to visit Downtown Chattanooga.



Team Leader Ryan assists guests with directions.

Executive Summary: Outreach Highlights, October 2021

Accomplishments

During the month of October, Downtown Chattanooga Alliance Ambassadors achieved the following Outreach accomplishments:

1. Conducted 70 individual in-depth engagements (each last 3 minutes or more) with individuals experiencing homelessness in the DCA district;
2. Assisted 25 individuals with clothing;
3. Provided 2 pairs of shoes;
4. And provided 15 individuals with PPE's.



Ambassador Tony works with an individual in need of services.

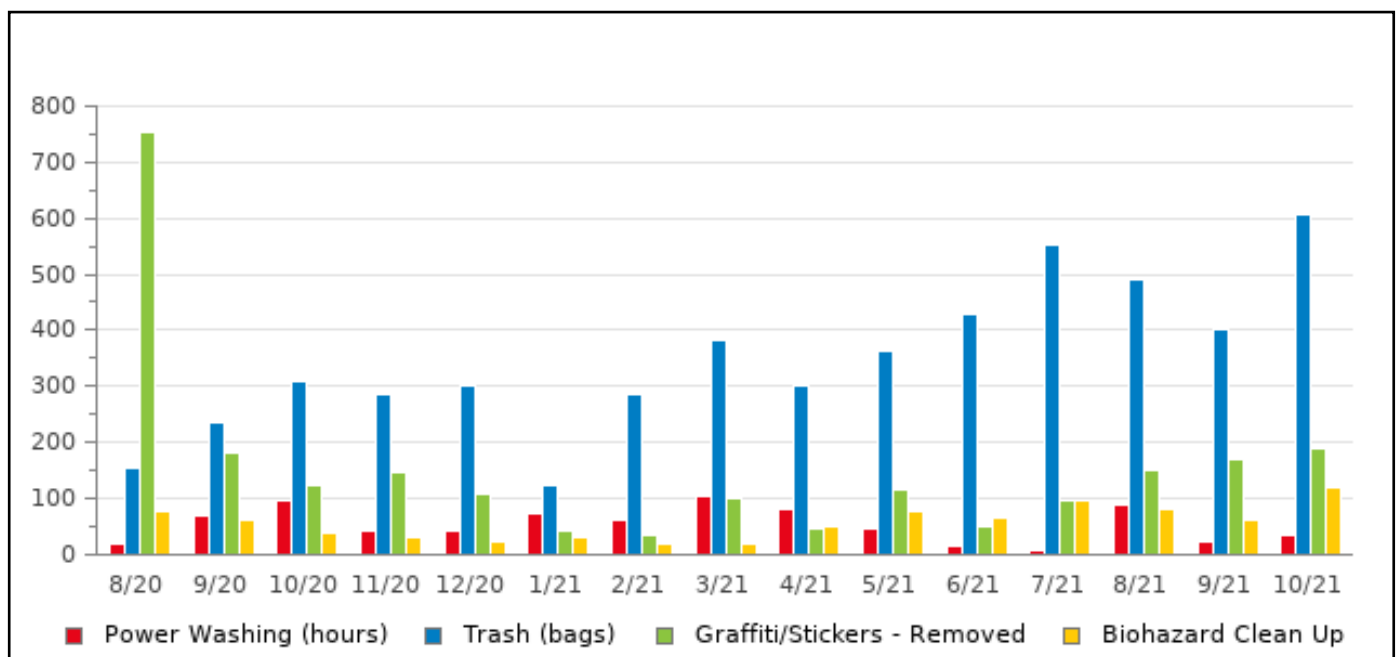
Cleaning Statistics

August 2020 through October 2021

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
Biohazard Clean Up	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	77	62	38	32	22	231
	'21	31	21	18	49	76	64	98	81	61	118	--	--	617
Graffiti/Stickers - Removed	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	753	183	122	148	109	1315
	'21	42	36	99	47	117	49	98	149	171	189	--	--	997
Power Washing (hours)	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	19	71	95	44	42	271
	'21	73	62	105	82	48	17	7	90	22	35	--	--	541
Special Project (hours)	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	366	300	280	233	171	1350
	'21	172	157	169	198	203	161	244	252	241	186	--	--	1983
Trash (bags)	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	154	236	310	284	301	1285
	'21	124	284	383	300	363	430	553	489	403	608	--	--	3937
Trash Cans Cleaned	'21	--	--	171	533	401	166	289	696	475	847	--	--	3578
Weed Abatement (block faces)	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	25	209	45	23	13	315
	'21	4	15	26	58	23	32	67	26	43	98	--	--	392

Stats are based on Block by Block's SMART tracking app.

August 2020 through October 2021



Stats are based on Block by Block's SMART tracking app.

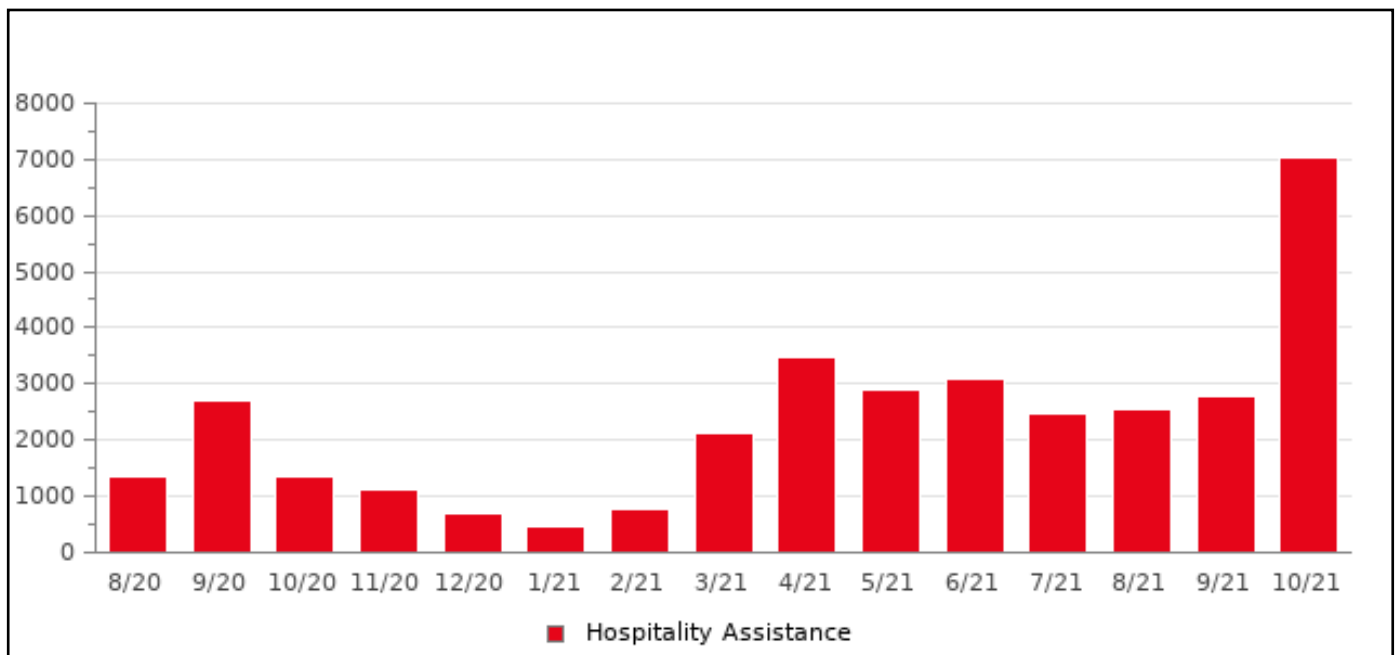
Hospitality Statistics

August 2020 through October 2021

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
Business Contact	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	57	42	62	93	91	345
	'21	45	112	66	120	187	26	35	46	50	17	--	--	704
Hospitality Assistance	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1370	2691	1364	1125	711	7261
	'21	466	762	2133	3468	2879	3076	2457	2561	2788	7027	--	--	27617
Motorist Assist	'20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	42	31	10	3	1	87
	'21	3	6	6	5	11	9	11	9	10	9	--	--	79

Stats are based on Block by Block's SMART tracking app.

Hospitality Assistance -- August 2020 through October 2021



Stats are based on Block by Block's SMART tracking app.

Photos



Biohazard on 10th Street.



Biohazard removed from 10th Street.



Five gallons of cheese spilled on Broad St.



Five gallons of cheese removed from Broad St.



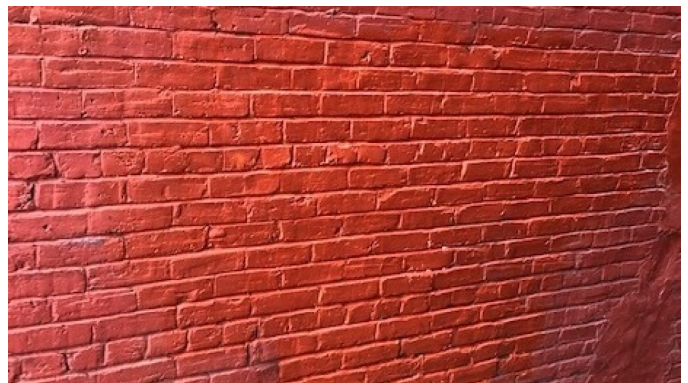
Before photo of graffiti on Broad St.



After photo of graffiti painted over on Broad St.



Before photo of graffiti on Cherry St.



After photo of graffiti painted over on Cherry St.

Photos



Ambassador Sin jump starts a car.



Ambassadors back pack blow Patten Parkway.



Ambassador Sin waters plants at Pine St and MLK.



Ambassador Caron scraps off a sticker on Chestnut St.



Ambassador Kathy removes graffiti on 4th St.



Ambassador Noah vacuums up leaves on Broad St.



Ambassador Ryan removes a sticker on Market St.



Ambassador Carson removes graffiti on 8th St.