

# FEATURED PARTNER:

## COMEa House

United Way  
of Laramie County



*By: Sara Janes*

I thought I knew what "homeless" looked like; then I spent some time volunteering at the Comea House. I learned rather quickly that my preconceived ideas were far from reality. I saw men and women, young and old, addicts and non-addicts, religious and secular persons. Basically I saw a slice of the general population...all co-residents in a homeless shelter.

I visited Comea House to attend a "Journey" class offered to any resident with a case plan in place for re-entry into society. Although the course was originally chartered to teach resume writing and employment skills, it has since transformed into a lifestyle recovery process class. Rehabilitated homeless were losing jobs within weeks, and it became apparent that changing thought processes and personal behaviors was equally as important as teaching application skills. As I attended the class, I listened to homeless share their hopes and successes for the week. The students were engaged throughout the entire class. They laughed and listened and were genuinely interested. The Journey instructor later shared that the Comea motto is that their residents are homeless, not helpless. Before they started the Journey class, the full-time employment rate for those departing Comea was only 31%. The full-time employment rate is now 84%!

One resident, Rick, told me his story of poor choices, and about the passing of his wife. Throughout his story, he minimized his plight of homelessness, and focused on how Comea was not just another place to stay; it was a place for people get back on their feet again. A client at Comea receives more than a bed and a meal. A resident can access life skill training, clothing, showers, and contacts to other agencies within our community who can assist in additional ways.

I was still curious as to why these people seemed so drawn to the Journey class instructor. Just four years ago the instructor, Troy, was a resident of Comea for 20 days. He later realized that he wanted to give back to an agency that helped him rehabilitate and become part of a world he once failed to be part of. Troy is now a full-time employee of the Comea House who knows first-hand what his agency can do to help.

For more information about Comea House visit [comeashelter.org](http://comeashelter.org)