

# SUNY Broome students triumph in the face of homelessness

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By John Miller

Students participated in the annual Sleep Out for the Homeless – dedicated to the memory of late Professor Wes Warren – to raise money and awareness for local homelessness. According to Professor Doug Garnar, [one of the event's founders](#), homelessness can happen to anyone at any time.

Princess Hinds, the chairperson of Homeless Awareness on the Student Assembly, was homeless for about 70 days in 2013. She lost everything when her boiler exploded and blew off the side of her house. For the next two months, she jumped between friend's couches. Princess said that she was always surprised by all those who stepped up to offer her a roof, but was more shocked by those who did not help her. Amazingly, she still came to school during those two months and graduated from SUNY Broome, on time, in 2014. When asked what she would tell other students who are going through a similar situation, she explained, "You need to learn how to be grateful for what you have and there are always solutions. As long as you've got a breathing body and determination, you can get everything back you lost."



Colton Lorts, another SUNY Broome student, was homeless for six months. He said he "burnt all [his] bridges" and wound up stranded and unable to get home. While walking the streets Colton became very good at performing arts, mainly staff twirling, which eventually put some money in his pocket and a roof over his head. He is now an entrepreneur; Lorts has started a business fire spinning and regularly performs at parties. He feels that we need to do more the combat the causes of homelessness and he warned other people who may be in a rut not to throw their lives away on petty things. Colton believes that "you need to love yourself before [you can love] anyone else."

Derrick spent three months on the vacant porches of Binghamton with no help from family or friends. He was kicked out of his home at 18 with nowhere to go. He said his saving grace was his first daughter, who gave him a new opportunity and a reason to get his life back together. When faced with a tough situation, he learned to “keep his head up and keep trying.”



An anonymous SUNY Broome student told a similar story. While she was very young, the student’s mother slept in her car for two years. During this period, the student was passed between relatives before finally finding a stable home.

The Sleep-Out was held May 8 in the Quad. The event was organized by Princess Hinds, Rae Palmer-Jones, Tyrone King and Professor Doug Garnar. Together, they raised more than \$1,000 that will be donated to the Homeless Collation of the Southern Tier.

The evening started with an emotional speech from the organizers about the life and accomplishments of Wes Warren, followed by a massive balloon release. King called Warren a “perfect soul.”

About forty people participated, with others coming and going all night. There was music, food and games. One student even rode a unicycle around.

Several local businesses donated to the event: Sam’s Club donated water, Dick’s Sporting Goods donated camping equipment, Walmart and Outback Steakhouse gave gift cards, American Food and Vending provided the

food, and Vancott Jewelers donated earrings to the person who raised the most money— Princess Hinds (\$400).

*Writer John Miller is a SUNY Broome student.*

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