

Arnie Carter

Arnie Carter is a mid-60ish white guy who lives with his wife Rolina in Lakewood, a western suburb of Denver. Arnie and Rolina have been members of FUSD since 2007. He is a life-long social justice advocate who has led and been a stalwart in congregational efforts for peace, immigration justice, sanctuary, and services to people experiencing homelessness. Arnie currently serves on FUSD's Giving in Action team. He is also a founding member of a guerrilla theater group The Romero Troupe. Arnie is experienced as a substance abuse counselor. Through 2020 and the first half of 2021, he worked as an advocate and counselor site supervisor for an organization that provides work and support for underserved and houseless folks in Denver.

For nearly three decades, I have been lucky enough to get paid for building relationships in Denver.

My training and experience are as a substance abuse counselor. At the beginning of the pandemic, I was an advocate and supervisor for a counselor site in an organization that provides work and support for underserved and houseless folks. In that role, I worked directly with people living houseless. Although both I and my wife have conditions that put us at higher risk of COVID complications I never gave serious thought to not going to work every day. To not be there would be turning my back on people I love.

On one of the early days of COVID I came across a houseless friend who was obviously very ill and in a mental health crisis. He and I needed a hug in the worst way and of course neither of us could allow this. My heart broke and I cried to myself and with him.

This was stressful. The thought of bringing home the virus to my wife who has a rare but nasty condition kept me up at night. As did worrying about my crew of workers who had no safe place to go home to isolate. My supervisors were less than supportive. On top of all that, I had to start chemo again for my chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

I would come home from work and spray sanitizer all over my body, slip into the house and shower and change clothes before settling in to rest. I got tested about every time I sneezed or coughed, but somehow, I made it through without ever testing positive. I got vaccinated in April 2021 and helped my houseless crew get vaccinated, too. That involved a lot of encouragement, education, and logistical support to find clinics, make appointments, and provide transportation. I ended up leaving work in late June over priority differences with management.

Now (in July 2021), with the delta variant pushing a new surge of COVID infection, I am left with a lot of not knowing. Not knowing about my health, my finances, my career, my wife's health, and of course, the big worry about the big picture world.

I am grateful, for my wife who understood that I had to work and to all the other many beautiful folks in my life. I am also grateful for the health I do have.

What gets me through these hard times is knowing that everything changes, nothing ever stays the same, and my belief that we will all be okay in the long run, even if we have no idea what that future looks like. I am very aware that the privilege of being housed, having access to health care, a loving spouse and community greatly improves my chance of getting through the current difficulties.