



Jobs and Education are Critical to Helping Homeless Families Get Ahead

Though Jessica, a single mom of two, works a full-time job and makes twelve dollars an hour - a dollar above the minimum wage - she cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment in Cowlitz County.

“I wasn’t there the first time my daughter crawled and I’ll probably end up missing her first steps because I have to work so much just to provide the bare minimum.”

Jessica says that the county hasn’t seen much change over the years. There are few job opportunities and the homeless population is growing. Nevertheless, it has the potential to be a good community as long as there are opportunities.

That’s why Jessica, currently a resident of the Community House, is supportive of the Northwest Innovation Works’ plan to bring a new clean-tech industry to Kalama.

With over one hundred families at the Community House looking to better their lives and go back into the workforce if given the right opportunity, the prospect of building and operating the NWIW methanol plant would breathe life into the community and provide for so many families.

“For people who are opposed to this,” says Jessica tearfully, “I would ask them, “Have you walked a day in my shoes? Do you live in this county? Do you raise children by yourself? Do you work a minimum wage job? Have you felt what it is like to be homeless and not provide for your children? Can you imagine how that affects a parent?”

Like many in Cowlitz County, Jessica feels like she will only be able to find a future here if the community can grow. She believes the opening of the NWIW methanol facility would bring more money, greater educational opportunities, and benefit the community in so many positive ways – including environmentally.

“Having a company dedicated to making sure our beautiful trees and water are still protected means we are not only getting good jobs, but my children will grow up knowing they can safely play in the river or go fishing.”