Atlanta (CNN) — The Homeward Choir, a group of homeless men from Atlanta, will perform at the White House on Monday.

"I was faced every day on my commute to work with seeing guys on the street and their faces became familiar to me and I became friends with them, and I said I need to do something to help them out," Donal Noonan, the Director of Music Ministry at the Catholic Shrine of the Immaculate Conception church, told CNN.

Story highlights

Not all members of the choir could make it to Washington because they don't have ID

The shelter and the choir have helped men turn their lives around - and find places to live

It was then, about three years ago, that the Homeward Choir was born.

Noonan reached out to Katie Basher, who has been running The Central Night Shelter for homeless men in Atlanta for decades, to help him recruit men for the choir.

And in November an unexpected invitation to sing at the White House came.

"I have witnessed the amount of people in the community who came together to make this happen," Noonan said, referring to donations that poured in to pay for plane tickets, hotel rooms, food and clothes. "It's almost faith affirming. There's so much good in the world."

However, seven of the men won't be able to make it to Washington to perform at the White House's Holiday Open House Celebration.

"So many have fallen through the system -- have no birth certificates, no ID's, no drivers' licenses and to try and get it ... they get swallowed by red tape," Noonan said. "They have no ID's so they can't go through TSA."

CNN talked to members of the Homeward Choir and here are some of their stories:

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Carlos Glass

"This is one of the best things that have happened to me in my life to join this choir," Carlos Glass, a native of Decatur, Georgia, said. "When I think about it I’m just very speechless because I never had no one to really just open the door and accept me as I am."

Glass is "one of the fortunate ones," he says because he grew up with a mother and a father, but has been homeless off and on due to his mental condition. Mental healthcare is a luxury that is "being over looked more than everything" in the homeless community, he said.

"To be homeless, it’s like everyday you go to look for something to eat. you don’t have nowhere to sleep. It’s really rough because there’s nothing to look forward to," Glass said. "By the grace of God, I found this shelter here that has helped me out so much, directed me and gave me the proper things I need to try to get my life back on track."

It’s important to remember that homelessness is a complex issue and everyone has their own challenges and their own journey, Glass said, adding that "some people look at all black men or all homeless men as the same, which they're not."
Bryant Allen

Bryant Allen, 27, is from Detroit, Michigan, but had been living in Charlotte, North Carolina, for about 10 years.

"I had some family issues that I got into and one of the myriad bad choices that I made was running away from that," Allen said. "For the equal amount of money, I could have gone to Atlanta or New York City and it was January so I chose to come south."

After a couple of months of being homeless in Atlanta, Allen, who was dealing with depression, came across the Central Night Shelter.

"Making friends at the shelter made it easier to make friends elsewhere," Allen said. "It made obtaining that community that we need a lot easier."

And one of those friends helped him get a job at Einstein Bros. Bagels.

Seven months later, Allen saved up enough money to move into an apartment and, as of last month, he is no longer homeless.

It’s important to remember that stigmas further isolate and hurt homeless people, Allen said.

"Really, we’re just trying to find a place to sleep," Allen said. "It’s not that we’re trying to do anything bad. It’s just that really, we have nowhere to go."

Mackendy Pierrette
Mackendy Pierrette was born in Haiti. He came to the United States in 2003 and served in the U.S. Army for eight years.

"Some of us make mistakes, you know, and it’s a personal mistake. Everything started with me cheating on my wife. I got court marshaled for it and here I am," Pierrette said. "I went to war to fight for this country and I’m still fighting for my life here in America."

Pierrette said that the Central Night Shelter is doing "what the system should have done for me."

"Everywhere you go they give you the run around and its sad to say your own people, the VA, they’re rejecting you," Pierrette said. "Everybody’s dropping the ball ... Every time you go [to the VA] they take your information again but they’re not doing anything for you."

When he joined the Homeward Choir, Pierrette found a support system that he needed.

"After a couple of days [of practice] we became life a family. If I don’t see this guy in choir practice, Ill be asking for him," Pierrette said. "We see each other in the streets now, we’re hugging each other. We are a team ... we look out for each other."

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