

I met Kaitlyn in 2021 when I was volunteering with a mutual aid group in Woodland Park. She had just come safely through the first of several attempts to steal her beautiful loved and loving white husky Prince. That first attempted theft failed, but on another day not long after, Prince was stolen again. As I sat with Kaitlyn on that day, she was unable to stop wailing and sobbing but she nonetheless managed to look up and submit Prince's ID chip number and to initiate a search which brought his return by the late afternoon. This was my first hint of the resolve and resilience that have sustained Kaitlyn through the difficult circumstances of her life.

A third and more successful theft of Prince led to a months-long community campaign to get him back. Kaitlyn swore that if Prince came home safely, she would enter drug treatment immediately. When Prince was safely returned and with Kaitlyn's mom, I sat with Kaitlyn while she called every drug treatment number in the region, many of which she knew by heart. No spaces, no spaces, we don't take insurance, two month waiting period, no spaces, no answer, no response. Some time later, I was able to follow up and find a single open space, and Kaitlyn jumped at the chance; but at the end of a weeklong detox process, she was released back to the same tent in the same community of tents and tarps and despair, so relapse was almost impossible to avoid.

Kaitlyn has made good choices and bad choices, has lost her temper and kept her temper, has felt betrayal and has reached out to support and defend others. I am not the only person who has perceived in Kaitlyn a toughened intelligence that deserves a chance to thrive, in some kind of environment with reasonable safety and encouragement, rather than constant obstacles, traps and penalties.

With friends and communities around the world in terrible danger and suffering daily overwhelming catastrophes, I'm finding it easy to be daunted by global as well as local emergencies. At the same time, I was recently part of a tiny group of people helping to move another friend into a small apartment. After a years-long struggle with addiction and the cycles of detox, homelessness and relapse, our friend is now sober, healthy, motivated, and living indoors. The simple process of helping carry a mattress and a chest of drawers reminded me of the impact a small number of people can make. I was deeply moved, and I'm deeply glad to be on a team that can help make a tangible change for our friend Kaitlyn, who has never given up on the future, and maybe can help us not give up in our turn.