

To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Karina Wallace, and I am writing this letter to share a little about myself and explain why I believe in the You Know Me Now vision.

For the last 4 years I have been working in Seattle for a non-profit organization, Facing Homelessness, as the Community Programs Manager. I manage a program called “The Window of Kindness” which is where I work closely with our community members who are experiencing homelessness. At The Window we share survival, medical, and hygiene supplies, meals, clothing, and most importantly, we hold space for conversation, building relationships, and allowing people to feel seen, heard, understood, and loved by all of our volunteers and staff.

I have lived homeless for many years of my life. I was born in Russia and lived in an orphanage for a majority of my childhood. I was lucky enough to be adopted by an American family at age 8, but after moving to the US in 2002, it was a big adjustment for me, and I had a lot of undealt trauma I couldn't face yet. This trauma led me to experience homelessness, drug use, and other dangerous situations at a very young age. In my early 20's I met Rex Hohlbein, and he asked me and my partner Alex one day “If you could do anything you wanted, what would it be”? Rex believed in us and loved us for who we were regardless of our circumstance, and for once in a long time, I felt like I was worth something more than just a homeless person on the streets. Rex's genuine care, empathy, and support, helped us to navigate out of homelessness. With the financial support of the Facing Homelessness community, not even a year later, we got into housing. My partner Alex went to college and became an EMT, I found a job I loved and started working full time. Several years later, Alex became a Seattle Firefighter, and I am working at the very same organization that helped me see something in myself and walked alongside me as I found my way. We have true stories that exemplifies the You Know Me Now vision, which is to work closely with Kaitlyn and other clients so they can also find the life they've always wanted, but didn't know how to achieve. There are so many obstacles when living homeless, and it takes community and unfortunately, funding, to be able to build a new life.

I have always wanted to be a part of an organization where volunteers work closely with clients in a more intimate way. You Know Me Now is trying to achieve exactly what I want when thinking about what could be that next step, closing the gap in the divided society we live in. I truly believe that when we have a community in our lives that believes and cares about us, that we are more likely to succeed. I am living proof of that.

With So Much Gratitude,

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