



Cynthia English

Mentoring Advocates

“Effervescent. Bubbly. Smart. Friendly. Loud. Resilient.”

That’s how Cynthia English describes herself, and it tracks. Spend a few minutes in her presence, and you understand quickly: **she is someone who fills a room, shares her truth, and refuses to be invisible.** But Cynthia’s story is not defined by where she started. It’s defined by what she has continued to build.

She was born in New York, but her life took her across the country where she endured hardship that demanded strength and the ability to adapt at a very young age. She survived childhood abuse and domestic violence. She also experienced street homelessness for nearly a decade, cycling through shelters, hospitals, and the criminal legal system, navigating severe mental health challenges while trying to hold onto pieces of herself.

At one point, while seeking treatment to stabilize her health, her daughter was taken from her through the court system. The loss sent her into a spiral so deep that, in her words, “she didn’t care whether she survived”. But for Cynthia, survival was never passive.

There wasn’t one moment that changed everything. There were many small moments where support systems aligned to finally meet Cynthia where she was. She credits a women’s shelter with on site mental health support for facilitating a pathway to stability, a community of peers that taught her how to survive when systems failed, and eventually something even more powerful: reconnection. Years after being separated, she was reunited with her daughter. There was a period when her mobility was impaired and her daughter gave her the strength to relearn how to walk, step by step.

Those moments didn’t erase what came before. Instead, they shifted what was possible for Cynthia.

Today, Cynthia speaks about her life with a clarity that is both disarming and deeply intentional. She does not run from her past; she reframes it. She calls it a gift.

Not because her life was easy or fair. But because it gave her something she now uses every day: the ability to reach people, to connect, to make others feel seen.

Cynthia has been permanently housed since 2010. **She has built a life rooted in service, advocacy, and continuous learning.** She is a national speaker, an advocate, the Chair of the Consumer Advisory Board, and member of the Board of Directors at Care For the Homeless.

Cynthia is someone who always shows up for others. Her advocacy knows no bounds, and in every space, she brings the same urgency to the understanding that people experiencing homelessness deserve to be at every table. **One of the most meaningful ways her work has evolved is not just in how she uses her own voice, but how she lifts others to use theirs.**

As the Chair of the Consumer Advisory Board, Cynthia has become a mentor to the next generation of advocates. She meets people where they are, helping them identify their strengths and build confidence in spaces that feel intimidating. **Where some see hesitation, she sees potential.**

She deeply believes that people experiencing homelessness are not defined by their circumstances. They are, in her words, an “under-invested resource.” And she is determined to make sure the world sees that.

At Care For the Homeless, Cynthia has found a space that aligns with her values, one where lived experience is not just acknowledged, but integrated into leadership and decision-making. But she is clear: the work is bigger than any one organization.

Her focus is on what comes next. Mentoring the next generation of advocates, so the work continues long after she steps back.

“I want people to know,” she says, “that we are just like everybody else. We just had a different journey.”

Helping people understand that there is life after homelessness, and that their story does not end where others expect it to.

And for Cynthia, that journey is still unfolding. Getting louder, brighter, and more powerful than ever.

