A few years ago, Carmen Guidi read a book that changed his life and, in turn, the lives of many others—from homeless men, women, and children to university students and professional men.

Carmen is a hometown boy. He lives just outside the village of Newfield, NY, where he runs Guidi’s Collision Service, a family business started by his father. “If I’m twenty miles from home,” he admits, “I get nervous.”

If he wanted to remain comfortable, Carmen never should have read David Platt’s Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream. “You and I can and should continue with business as usual in the Christian life and in the church as a whole,” Platt writes, “enjoying success based on the standards defined by the culture around us. Or we can take an honest look at the Jesus of the Bible and dare to ask what the consequences might be if we really believed him and really obeyed him.”


response, eventually contributing hundreds of hours at helping them; his approach was unconventional. Believing that some people struggling with substance abuse issues but many did not. It was hard to arrange housing for a mother and her baby—trying to arrange housing for a mother and her baby—was “almost impossible.” He once spent an entire week at the Department of Social Services for jungle residents was “almost impossible.” He once spent an entire week at the Department of Social Services

man, he was unaware of a homeless problem closer home. However, he heard about “the jungle”—a tent-city settlement where they have little autonomy, that is not the same as being housed. By giving a second chance to others, how does it make you feel? Have you ever been in a situation where you had to make your own food or build your own shelter? What is the difference between being homeless and living in shelter? How do you think that experience has changed your perspective on life? What do you think is required to make a successful transition to stable housing?

Carmen was away, Dan hanged himself. In the distance of home shook Carmen to his core. He began to develop a passion for helping others who were in similar situations. He and his wife Nan adopted from the jungle serves as a testament to the power of love and dedication. Carmen’s experience with the homeless has given him a unique perspective on life and has shaped his approach to helping others.

Carmen didn’t initially set out to end homelessness in Ithaca. He simply set out to befriend a few men.

It’s not just about putting a roof over their heads. It’s about dignity, and having a cottage of one’s own is actually an attractive alternative to these men.

Carmen began knocking on doors—social services, mental health services, and housing agencies. Despite various support systems, he found that arranging housing for jungle residents was “almost impossible.” He once spent an entire week at the Department of Social Services. Why do you think it was so difficult to arrange housing for these residents? What challenges do you think Carmen encountered while trying to help these people?

The problem is that the system is so complicated that homeless men and women can’t navigate it without committed advocacy and assistance. His story brings to mind the trenchant insight of Dr. Seuss: “Unless someone like you caring what the consequences would be of believing and obeying the Jesus of the Bible. For Carmen, this literally has meant housing the homeless. By giving a second chance to others, however, this Newfield native has discovered a second wind also for himself. When many forty-something men are wondering why they haven’t yet achieved the American Dream of wealth and comfort, Carmen Guidi is redefining the dream. Although he claims not to have many expected others to suffer and make do when it comes to living in a new cottage in Ithaca. For the first time in literally three generations, the jungle was empty.

One year ago—Christmas, 2012. If that was the end of the story, it would be impressive enough. But that is not the end. In fact, Carmen was just getting started.

In 2013, Carmen founded Second Wind Cottages. In collaboration with the local Faith Partners, a local non-profit organization, he is donating seven acres of land behind his shop and spearheading an army of volunteers to build a small village of winterized one-room cottages. Why build cottages when a dorm-style facility would be more economical? Because it’s just about putting a roof over their heads. It’s about dignity, and having a cottage of one’s own is actually an attractive alternative to these men.

Constructing the cottages is a daunting task. One has to deal with architects, engineers, building codes, permits, the health department, and of course funding. “I was scared stiff,” Carmen says. Nevertheless, when he determines to do something, he doesn’t give up.

On September, Saturday 21st, 2013, after all the permitting, inspections, and processes, Faith Partners held a Care Day on site. Volunteers descended by the pickup truck load—one hundred and twenty of them, from local contractors to university students. Since then, thirty local businesses have contributed material and services, including a local architect, civil engineer, lawyer, and construction manager. Fifteen churches and four local artists also support the effort. On December 1st, just twelve weeks after breaking ground, Second Wind held an open house to show off the cottages, which are very nearly complete.

Second Wind Cottages, named by one of the residents, will create a healthy and humanizing alternative to homelessness for men in transition. Residents will pay what they can to live there. Drugs and alcohol will not be allowed. Bible studies and life-skill classes will be offered but not required. Eventually, after two more construction phases, the plan is to have eighteen cottages, a community center, and a social worker on site.

Second Wind Cottages is not exactly a success story. It’s more nearly a faith story. It’s a work in progress and always will be. There will continue to be disappointments, failures, and setbacks of all sorts, and Carmen knows this.” There is nothing romantic about this work,” he says. He would know. The baby with fetal alcohol syndrome that he and his wife Nan adopted from the jungle serves as a daily reminder that the problems associated with homelessness have no quick fixes.

The work of Second Wind Cottages will never be complete because it’s not ultimately about the cottages. It’s about transforming lives and creating a full life for each man instead of just giving them a roof over their heads. Dan’s story is a reminder of what can happen when we provide hope and support to those who need it most. The cottages are more than just a roof; they are a place for community, a place for healing, and a place for hope. They are a testament to the power of love and dedication and the ability to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most.