

Before starting Downtown Streets Team, Eileen Richardson achieved success in her career in international high-tech. From 1989 to 1999 she worked in venture capital where she invested in and sat on the boards of innovative technology startups who were on the forefront of the internet revolution. Because of her love of music, her experience with a technology that could bring preference to the masses for music, art and books, and her belief that the internet could change the world, she became the first CEO of Napster in 1999. She also served as CEO of another high-tech startup until 2003. In 2004, Eileen left the startup world to take a sabbatical and began volunteering at the food pantry in Palo Alto. There, she developed a great sense of empathy, care, and concern for the men and women she met each week. She witnessed the loss of dignity and the toll homelessness took on the people who were living on the streets. Guided by the principle that everyone deserved the opportunity to become a proud, productive member of their community once again, and driven to reduce the impacts of homelessness on her community, Eileen launched the very first Downtown Streets Team (DST) in Palo Alto in 2005. Since then, Eileen has relentlessly pursued the vision to end homelessness by building positive communities which include and empower unhoused people and those at risk of homelessness to rejoin their communities, in turn, making them even stronger than before. She has grown the organization from serving four Team Members in Palo Alto to serving Team Members in 15 cities across Northern California and with two franchisees in Florida. To date, Downtown Streets Team has helped over 2000 people eliminate barriers that kept them from jobs and permanent housing.