

**MERCED CONTINUUM OF CARE
GENERAL COLLABORATIVE MEETING
Public Health Auditorium
260 East 15th Street, Merced
Wednesday, October 21, 2009
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Oral Communications**
 - At this time any person may comment on any item that is not on the Agenda. Comments are limited to three minutes per person.
 - Please state your name and address for record.
 - Action will not be taken on an item that is not on the agenda. If it requires action, it will be referred to staff and/or placed on the next agenda.
- 3. Minutes of the September 16, 2009 General Collaborative Meeting**
For information only.
- 4. City of Merced Homeless Shelter/Campground Plan Update**
Mike Conway
- 5. Review Draft of Continuum of Care 2009 Plan/Applications for Submittal to HUD; Provide Comments.**
 - *Point- in-Time Comparisons*
 - *Short Term / Long Term Objectives and Action Steps*
 - *Discharge Planning*
 - *Project Applications*
- 6. Informational Items**
 - *Grant Opportunities*
 - *Grantees of Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Funding*
 - *News Articles*
 - *Coordinator announcements*
- 7. Announcements from group?**
- 8. Adjourn**

**MERCED CONTINUUM OF CARE
GENERAL COLLABORATIVE MEETING
City of Merced, Sam Pipes Room
678 West 18th Street, Merced, CA
Wednesday, September 16, 2009
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Genevieve Bardini, Valley Crisis Center
Su Briggs, Community Action Agency
Jim Bunnel, Human Services Agency Adult Services
Kathleen Cadden, Human Services Agency
Stacie Dabbs, Congressman Cardoza
Marcia Dailey, Challenged FRC
Liz Freitas, Mental Health
Stephen Hunt, JMJ Maternity Homes
Carl Joachim, Merced Parole
Roxanne Maldonado, Serenity Youth Ranch
Roberta Medina, City of Merced Code Enforcement
Dawn Mendonca, City of Merced Housing Division
Renee Mounce, Community Action Agency
Terry Raley, Love INC
Nellie Muniz Smith, Christian Life Center
Georgene Tarbox, Employment Development Dept.
Terry Tatum, Executive Council Chair

STAFF PRESENT

Lori Flanders, Assistant Planner

1. Welcome

Chair Tatum called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Self introductions.

2. Oral Communications

Liz Freitas announced that VIP Pets has offered to provide vouchers for the homeless to vaccinate their pets. Vouchers will be available at the One Stop Shop and can be used on Saturdays at the location of the mobile vaccinations van.

3. Minutes of the August 19, 2009 General Collaborative Meeting

So noted.

4. Presentation: Genevieve Bardini – Valley Crisis Center

Genevieve provided the group an overview of Valley Crisis Center. Highlights included:

- Services: crisis calls, intervention services, counseling, emergency housing, case management, legal assistance for restraining orders, and referral services. All services are offered in English, Spanish, and Mong.
- Currently counseling for the Westside of the County is offered over the phone due to budget cuts.
- Services are also available for men, but housing has to be utilized through another means (example: motel).
- Budget cuts have resulted in a much smaller staffing level than what the Women's Place previously operated with, however the needs of the clients have not changed.
- There is an ongoing "wish list" of items needed by the agency. Genevieve will provide this Lori for distribution to the CoC.

Roxanne asked what Valley Crisis' plans are for future funding.

Genevieve responded that they are applying for as many grants as possible.

Chair Tatum inquired to what steps are typically taken to bring the women back to self-sufficiency.

Genevieve commented that one or more of the following usually occurs:

- They are placed on the Section 8 wait list.
- They are directed to low-income housing (Valley Crisis keeps a running list of apartments and homes available).
- They are relocated out of the County for safety reasons.
- They are placed with family.

Steve Hunt asked if their emergency shelter is typically full and if they are able to utilize volunteers.

Genevieve responded that they are typically full, and they can house up to 24. She also stated that there is currently a class in session for volunteers and that they require 80 hours of intense training due to the confidentiality required.

Pamphlets and contact information were provided to the group.

5. Goals 2009/2010

Lori provided an overview of goals established at the May CoC meeting. Goals included:

1. Providing shelter/housing options for homeless sex offenders
2. Housing and services for foster youth aging out of the system
3. Creating a hospital discharge plan
4. Increase HMIS participation
5. Improve weekly One Stop Shop
6. Build public and leadership buy-in regarding homeless services.
7. Adopt policies and procedures for the CoC

She asked if there were additional goals or if the group had any comments about the existing goals.

Goal #1 - Carl Joachim commented that several members of the CoC have requested parole not place their parolees (specifically the sex offenders known as 290's) at the encampment near Black Rascal Creek due to overcrowding. He emphasized that parole does not place individuals at the encampment, that the parolees are responsible for telling the agents where they will be sleeping each night. He further explained that the parolee population has not grown in the area (typically 10-12 at a time) and that the non-290 homeless population is what is growing. Carl explained that the 290 population do not have the option to stay at the emergency shelter(s) due to the proximity to schools/parks.

After discussion, Lori asked the group if they'd like to revise the goal "Provide housing options for homeless sex offenders" to read "Provide housing opportunities for the homeless population at the encampments".

The group agreed to revise the goal to include the entire population at the encampment.

Goal #2 - Lori asked if Luis Madrid, who is new to the CoC, would give an overview of his program known as THP+ (Transitional Housing Plus), which provides transitional housing for 10 foster youth aging out of the system, ages 18-24.

Goal #3 - Lori commented that Father Fred Risard, currently a member of the Executive Council, has offered to take the lead to get the right parties at the table to discuss the creation and implementation of a hospital discharge plan for the homeless population.

Goal #4 - no discussion.

Goal #5 - Liz Freitas commented that many improvements are currently taking place or are in the works. Improvements include pet vaccinations, prescriptions program, a bicycle clinic, dental/eye glasses program, and possibly the DMV to assist with ID's.

Goal #6 and #7 - Lori advised the group that the Executive Council would be taking the lead on each of these goals.

Lori then asked if the group would like to see sub-committees developed to begin working on goals established, or if they'd like to tackle the goals as a large group.

Father Risard commented that he liked the thought of sub-committees.

Lori explained that the CoC attempted sub-committees a few months back, and they only met once or twice before completely disbanding.

Liz Freitas recommended that each goal have a lead person that can conduct the necessary action steps or involve others without having to technically meet.

The group agreed with one lead person for each task. The following leads were assigned:

Goal: Provide emergency shelter/housing options for the homeless population at the encampments.

Leads: Lori Flanders with City/County (discussion still needs to occur with the City and County regarding this goal).

Goal: Services and housing for foster youth aging out of the system.

Leads: Luis Madrid and Roxanne Maldonado

Goal: Create a Hospital Discharge Plan

Lead: Father Fred Risard

Goal: Increase HMIS participation:

Leads: Lori Flanders and Community Action Agency

Goal: Improve weekly One Stop Shop

Lead: Liz Freitas

Goal: Build public and leadership buy-in regarding homeless services.

Lead: Executive Council

Goal: Adopt Policies and Procedures

Lead: Executive Council

6. Informational Items

- Grant Opportunities
- New Articles

So noted.

- Coordinator announcements – Lori made the following announcements:
 - Merced Union High District is currently accepting applications for a part-time homeless liaison.
 - MCAG will only send out hard copies of CoC invites if requested or no email address is available. Invites will continue to be sent out via email.
 - The CoC NOFA has not yet been released.

8. Announcements from group?

Terry Raley announced that Love INC is hosting a Community Yard Sale on October 10 and that 10x10 spaces are available for community partners to rent for \$25.

Marcia Dailey announced that the Hunger Task Force would be hosting a Food Summit on November 5, 2009.

Su Briggs announced that Community Action Agency would soon post a safety net (food, clothing, etc) grant opportunity for Merced County agencies. She will provide the opportunity to Lori to send to the CoC once available.

9. Adjourned at 3:05 p.m.



GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

BANK OF THE WEST – HOMELESS SHELTER & SERVICES

<https://www.bankofthewest.com>

Keyword search: Charitable Contributions Program

The mission of the Bank's Charitable Contributions Program is to support nonprofit organizations that contribute to charitable educational, civic, cultural, health and welfare needs, and is committed to improving the quality of life for low- and moderate-income residents within communities. Nonprofit organizations qualify under the following charitable giving categories: education and job training; community/civic; health and welfare; community development. The Bank provides grants for homeless shelters and services, financial management training, education training, job and vocational programs, including literacy and basic skills education. Deadlines are ongoing. Contact: Kristin Walter, (323) 727-3381; email avillarreal@bankofthewest.com

Eligible applicants: States, County, City, Non-Profits

Funds Available: Program funding is \$15,000,000 with 35 awards available.

WELLS FARGO FOUNDATION

https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/charitable/ca_guidelines

Applications accepted year round.

Community Development: Wells Fargo provides grants to organizations that help people and communities of low and moderate income in the areas of:

- Affordable housing
- Training people to find and retain jobs
- Community revitalization and stabilization

Human Services: Wells Fargo considers support of social and human service organizations whose work primarily serves low- and moderate-income populations in the following areas:

- Childcare
- Health services and education
- Assistance with basic needs



Homeless Prevention & Rapid Re-housing Funding – City of Merced Sub Grantees

Housing Authority County of Merced

The Housing Authority of the County of Merced (HACM) provides housing rental assistance to low/very low-income families through two programs; Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (formerly called, Section 8). Due to the current economy, high unemployment and foreclosure rates, many already financially challenged families are experiencing additional challenges securing and maintaining housing.

The overall objective of the proposed program, is to serve those families who are currently housed but at risk of becoming homeless due to foreclosure, or the inability to pay utilities. Many of these families while they may qualify for housing assistance, fail to lease up do the inability to locate proper housing, secure the required deposit, or fail to have sufficient funds for moving or utilities. The basic eligibility for families to participate in the project activities and to receive housing search assistance and needed financial assistance, is that the family/individual must be a current participant in the Section 8 Program or Public Housing Program and at risk of losing housing due to foreclosure, unpaid utilities, etc; or has received a voucher and is experiencing difficulties searching and securing a unit because they are in need of utility assistance, deposit, etc. Families will be required to demonstrate that they lack the financial resources and support network needed to remain in current housing or obtain immediate housing.

Housing Relocation and Stabilization

- Provide case management to assist clients in obtaining and keeping housing
 - ✓ Approximately 10 clients per month or 240 clients for two years
 - ✓ Approximate cost of \$17,500.
- Provide financial assistance with security deposits, utility payments, and moving costs
 - ✓ Approximately 6 clients per month, or 144 clients over a two year period
 - ✓ Approximate cost of \$52,500.

Total projected number of clients served is 384

Total projected cost of grant is \$70,000. Or approximately \$182.00 per client

It is important to note that when this proposal was originally submitted to the City of Merced, the anticipated need was much higher based on the information and what we were experiencing. At that time, our agency was seeing on the average, 20 clients per month that were in need of housing search assistance to ensure that that they were able to locate housing, secure utilities, deposits, etc. Originally we were seeing as many as 10-12 clients that were leasing homes that were in foreclosure and were required to move immediately but, had no means of providing deposits, utility hook-ups and moving expenses. However, at the present time we have noticed a decline in the need. The revised numbers reflect what the agency is currently experiencing. There has been a definite decline in the number of individuals seeking assistance even though the numbers needing housing has increased.

Sierra “Saving Grace” Homeless Project

The Rapid Re-Housing Program proposed by Sierra Presbyterian Church addresses *a population of homeless who are not currently served by any other providers* of homeless services in the community. This population includes people who have acute medical needs and/or complex medical conditions due to accidents, illnesses or injuries.

With this grant, we intend to *help 8 individual or family households of “medically stable, but needy” individuals who would be discharged from a hospital into homelessness “but for” the intervention of our program.* While being initially housed either at the church or in a motel, they will receive counseling, identification of and access to community and government based services for which they qualify, and the development of individualized housing and service plans which will allow them to rapidly move from their temporary needs for convalescence to re-housing and independence.

A *case manager* will assess, arrange, coordinate, monitor, deliver, and track the services necessary to meet the re-housing needs of these persons. In addition, a *volunteer “need navigator”* will be assigned to each particular program participant to help accomplish the day-to-day tasks necessary to ensure the goals of the respective individualized housing and service plans are met.

Sierra will work with *two identified landlords*, each of whom pledges four housing units to this effort. These units are able to accommodate 1-2 households, depending on the particular individuals/families being served.

Program participants will be identified in consultation with *the Public Health Department, a group of volunteer healthcare professionals, the case manager, and the social workers and utilization specialist at our local hospital.* Participants should also have at least two or more of the risk factors identified in the HPRP guidelines.

After an assessment of eligibility has been completed (including a review of all discharge instructions), each participant will be required to consult with *all agencies represented at the weekly “One Stop Shop” program as well as those in the local Continuum of Care consortium.* The vast community resources (e.g. grants, church support groups, etc.) offered by the *twenty-three churches, many service/community groups and volunteers* participating in our program will also be considered.

Finally, our program will use *“flexibility” and “efficiency” in the expenditure of HPRP funds.* Any medically stable, but needy individuals living at *Black Rascal Creek* who could be successfully helped and re-housed under the grant guidelines may be considered as potential clients. (In fact, three such individuals were re-housed by our project this past season.) And *all determinations of services will be “needs based,”* meaning the amount of assistance based on the minimum amount needed to prevent the program participant from becoming homeless or returning to homelessness.

Love INC

Love INC proposes to increase capacity and implement a Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) for residents in the city of Merced, to provide financial assistance and services to help prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and to help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized.

During the period of October 15, 2009 – November 30, 2010

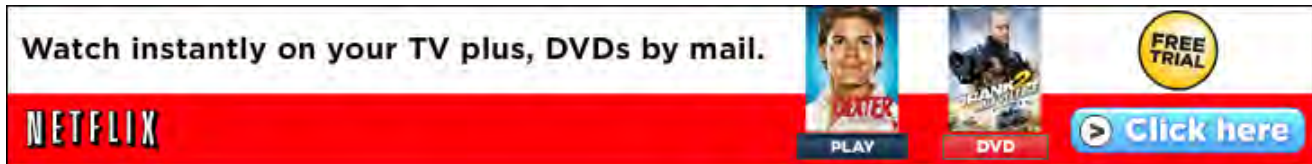
- (80% of financial assistance budget) Love INC will provide financial assistance to 50-75 individuals or families that are currently in housing but have been determined to be at risk of becoming homeless. This assistance will range from \$250.00 - \$1,500.00 per family. This assistance may include rental assistance, security and utility deposits, utility payments, moving costs, and motel and hotel vouchers.
- (20% of financial assistance budget) Love INC will also offer financial assistance to 10-20 individuals/families that are experiencing homelessness and need assistance to obtain housing. This assistance will range from \$250.00 - \$2,000.00 per family/individual.
- Love INC will hire a part-time, 20 hour per week, staff member, to serve as HPRP Case Manager, at \$10.00 per hour.
- Love INC will publicize the availability of HPRP funds and work with other HPRP funded agencies in Merced County to ensure that persons who are homeless or almost homeless are aware of HPRP and that the services that Love INC is providing are not being duplicated among the same clients.
- All referrals for the HPRP program will be received through the Love INC Clearinghouse, based in Merced, staffed M-F, 9-3:30 p.m. After completing the Love INC Clearinghouse process, potential applicants will be referred to the HPRP Case Manager to determine eligibility for assistance, length of service, and type of assistance that will be provided.
- HPRP clients will have access to the other tools, services and resources that Love INC provides, including, Budget Counseling, emergency food, clothing, used furniture, and other support services.
- Love INC will partner with Community Action Agency to receive training on HMIS and other federal reporting requirements for this grant.

Community Action Agency

The Merced County Community Action Agency proposes to be a sub-contractor with the City of Merced to administer HPRP funds to assist families living in the City of Merced. The Merced County Community Action Agency has been the recipient of Homeless Prevention funds for the City of Merced for the past 13 years and has the necessary structure in place to administer the funds according to HCD guidelines. The funds would be distributed in coordination with the HPRP funds for the County of Merced, which are also administered by this office and the offices will be housed at the D Street Homeless Shelter in Merced, CA.

MCCAA proposes to spend the money on program operations, eviction prevention, and re-housing of currently homeless citizens. Referrals will be generated from a variety of Agency run programs including W.I.C., Emergency Utility Assistance Programs, Preschool's, and Senior Service Programs. Through these programs this Agency comes in contact with over 13,000 citizens of the City of Merced monthly. Our utility assistance program assists over 200 families per month who cannot pay their utilities due to family crisis. These families are also in danger of losing their housing which will provide the perfect service delivery model for this program in identifying needy, eligible families. In addition this Agency serves over 100 homeless individuals with shelter 365 days per week. Homeless clients will be identified who are eligible for the program to place into appropriate permanent housing. Through the course of this 2-year grant we expect to be able to serve 130 households.

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Homeless find temporary haven in tent camps

- Story Highlights
- Tent camps for the homeless are springing up in cities across the nation
- Camp residents say tents offer safe haven as streets are too dangerous
- Life in the camps far from easy and never permanent
- Authorities and camp residents often at odds over camp locations

By Patrick Oppmann
CNN

SEATTLE, Washington (CNN) -- In cities across the country, people with nowhere to live have done what many would have thought unthinkable before the economic crisis: moved into tents.

Tent camps once associated mainly with the "Hoovervilles" of the Great Depression are springing up in places as varied as Sacramento, California; Nashville, Tennessee; Pinellas County, Florida; Providence, Rhode Island; and Seattle, Washington.

The camps have often led to standoffs between local governments that say the camps violate housing ordinances and homeless rights advocates who argue that people struggling to get back on their feet need a permanent place to stay.

There are no definitive numbers on how many people have taken to living in homeless camps. A recent annual report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development showed an increase in homelessness among families while overall rates of homelessness stayed roughly the same.

But those numbers are only the initial waves of what could be a larger crisis, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

"This data is the canary in the coal mine," Nan Roman, the alliance's president, wrote on the group's Web site. "Homelessness is a lagging indicator of economic tides, so there is concern that this new information could foreshadow sharp increases in homelessness in the future."

 [Watch as a CNN journalist spends days in a tent camp »](#)

A year ago Terry Bailey, his wife and two teenage sons lived in Montana, where he worked as a truck driver for construction companies. But when the construction work dried up, the Baileys were faced with an onslaught of bills and no income.

"We are hard-working human beings that just can't make enough money to survive," Bailey said.

In a last-ditch attempt to avoid going bust, the Baileys moved to [Seattle](#), where they heard there were jobs. Instead they found a high cost of living and few opportunities. City shelters, Bailey said, were often full and split up the family. The streets, he said, were too dangerous.

 [Watch how homeless camps are multiplying »](#)

With nowhere else to go, the Baileys found Nickelsville, a homeless tent camp named after Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, who camp residents claim has tried repeatedly to shut the camp down. The camp has roughly 80 residents and offers a safe haven for those without homes.

"This gives us a place where we can stay as a family," Bailey said. "We can stay together, we can prepare our food. We can live as a community with people who are in the same situation as us."

Before a homeless person can move into the camp, their names are checked against a county list of sex offenders to keep predators out. Drugs and alcohol are also prohibited, camp organizers said.

Camp resident Gregory Lewis said his drug addiction kept him living on the streets for years until he moved into Nickelsville. The camp, he said, helped him to get clean and "saved his life."

But life in the homeless camp is far from easy and never permanent. Residents live in cramped camping tents and in the last year have been forced to move nine times. The camp's latest location -- at a waterfront park overseen by the Port of Seattle -- may be closed down Wednesday as camp residents and city officials engage in their latest faceoff.

Port officials say the camp violates city codes. The officials add that they have tried to find the camp's residents another place to live. But Lewis said the camp is holding out for a permanent location.

"A lot of ... us want to be quote unquote 'normal,'" Lewis said. "I would like to be a contributing citizen to society with a good job and eventually help people like myself. When I am on the bus you wouldn't know I am homeless."

All About[Seattle](#)

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/09/29/washington.homeless.camp/index.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

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Thursday, Sep. 17, 2009

Masoud Niroumand: Open discussion on homeless funding

Thank you for the editorial Saturday on the Merced City Council's recent vote to award \$500,000 in grant funding to help the homeless in the community.

It has been an open process that began when the city was told by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that we received the homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing program funding. Your Washington correspondent, Michael Doyle, wrote about that Feb. 27.

The city invited all members of the Continuum of Care to an April 7 meeting to discuss the funding and invited them to submit proposals. The Continuum of Care is a group of local government, nonprofit and faith-based agencies that have been working to help the homeless in the community.

Up to 25 people, including a Sun-Star reporter, have attended the meetings, which are open to the public.

As part of the open process, a public notice was placed in the Merced County Times and on the city's Web site announcing a May 4 public hearing before the City Council on the receipt of funds and requesting citizen input on how to use those federal dollars.

Five agencies submitted proposals for the funding, and those proposals were included in the staff report in the agenda and posted on the city's Web site for the May 4 meeting. Two people spoke at the public hearing in support of one of the proposals.

At the Sept. 8 City Council meeting, staff presented the council with the proposals as part of their regularly posted agenda and the recommendations were unanimously approved.

At its next meeting Monday, the council will review the contracts with the four agencies that it approved.

The city of Merced is required to comply with all HUD rules and regulations regarding any grants including these funds. All activities must be reported to HUD and must comply with all rules and regulations established by HUD. The city has distributed millions of dollars of HUD over the years without problems, and has been used as an example of "best practices."

We take seriously our obligation to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money, whether it is generated on the local or the federal level.

We encourage anyone who has questions about the process, the applications or the monitoring to visit the city's Housing Division at the Merced Civic Center, 678 W. 18th St. or call (209) 385-6863.

Masoud Niroumand is housing program manager for the city of Merced.



Thursday, Sep. 17, 2009

Letter: Help homeless vets

Editor: I hope that the \$500,000 federal grant the city of Merced received will go to help homeless veterans, whose issues are sometimes quite complex.

Since there are 200 new recruits joining the military a year from Merced and more than 12,000 veterans who are registered, it is my hope that some of this money will help our veterans get back on their feet.

It is a shame that such a strong military community offers no help to our returning soldiers.

As a veteran, I can tell you that help here is hard to come by when you get home.

I urge the Merced City Council to consider how to especially help our homeless veteran men and women.

ELI PAINTEDCROW

Merced

CONFIDENCE BOOSTER

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

ANSWER ROBIN MEADE'S QUESTION & YOU COULD WIN HER NEW BOOK AND A TRIP TO MEET HER!

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION




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Blogging begins turnaround for homeless woman

- Story Highlights
- 24-year-old went from being executive assistant to homelessness after layoff
- Karp lived in Walmart parking lot, and her blog started grabbing attention
- Elle columnist: "I'm excited for her future"
- Karp hopes blog will educate people about homelessness

By Ted Rowlands
CNN

(CNN) -- It may have a fairy tale ending -- a story of perseverance and second chances that's playing out live on the public stage of online networking.

But 24-year-old Brianna Karp's story started as a nightmare.

In a rocky economy, Karp was laid off from her Irvine, California, job as an executive assistant in July 2008.

She got by for a while on temp jobs and [unemployment](#) benefits. But when her savings dried up, she was no longer able to afford her rent.

The only answer she saw then was a trailer she'd inherited from her father -- a man she barely knew who had recently committed suicide.

"I was left with a truck and this camper, which I was going to sell but coincidentally this happened to me," she said. "I thought, 'Well, I have this.' "


Karp, who writes that she is also estranged from her mother, ended up camped in a Los Angeles-area Walmart parking lot.

"The first night, I think, in the Walmart parking lot was the scariest," she told CNN. "I was panicking, and I was just afraid."

For comfort, she had her mastiff named Fezzik. And she had her laptop computer.

As she spent five months looking for jobs and blasting out resumes, often spending hour after hour at a coffee shop to take advantage of its free Wi-Fi connection, she also started [blogging](#). The result, [the Girl's Guide to Homelessness](#), chronicled the ups and downs of her new life.

She reminisced about adopting her dog, named for a character from the movie "The Princess Bride," and mulled the pros and cons of having a pet while homeless. She recounted details from failed job interviews and offered tips for other homeless women.

"I was trying to stay positive and cheerful," Karp said. "I started writing the blog in a tongue-in-cheek way to kind of laugh about my circumstances, keep them chronicled. I didn't think anyone would actually read it."  [Watch CNN's Ted Rowland's report on Brianna.](#) »

But people did, including Matt Barnes, formerly homeless himself and running a Web site about his own homelessness issues in Scotland.

He asked her to write for his site and would eventually become Brianna's boyfriend.

Another big break came through a shot at the weird world of reality television.

Karp applied for a show that would offer contestants the chance at a job with Elle magazine advice columnist [E. Jean Carroll](#).

She was granted an audition for the show and, by her own account, totally botched it.

"I went back and blogged about bombing the interview and made fun of myself," she said.

On a lark, she then wrote to Carroll via her column.

"Dear E. Jean: I'm currently [homeless](#) and living in a Wal-Mart parking lot," her e-mail began. "I'm educated, I have never done drugs and I'm not mentally ill. I have a strong employment history and am a career executive assistant. The instability sucks, but I'm rocking it as best as I can."

She told Carroll about her poor interview for the show and finished the note with the question, "How does one get another shot when one screws up a job interview? -- Homeless, but Not Hopeless."

Carroll said she was floored by the note.

"[The phrase] 'I'm living in a Walmart parking lot' hooked me," she said. "I thought, she's so ready to work, obviously she can write, she's got some skills."

Her response appeared in the August issue of [Elle](#) -- she offered Karp an internship and a chance to write a fashion blog for the magazine.

"I think she's a new voice," Carroll said. "She's a voice we haven't heard, and I'm excited for her future."

Not that all of her troubles were instantly over. Last month, she wrote, Walmart finally had her trailer towed, and she has now parked her mobile home at a friend's house outside Los Angeles.

She's also still seeking that elusive full-time job, while hoping her newfound high profile will help spread the word about homelessness, and how it can happen to the most unlikely people.

"If you saw me walking down the street, you wouldn't assume I live in a parking lot," she writes on the blog. "In short, I am just like you, except without the convenience of a permanent address."

CNN's Doug Gross contributed to this report.

All About[Job Losses](#) • [Blogs and Blogging](#) • [Homelessness](#) • [Elle Magazine](#)

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/09/11/homeless.blogger/index.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

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latimes.com/news/local/la-me-homeless14-2009oct14,0,6561655.story

latimes.com

Permanent housing for L.A.'s homeless saves tax dollars, study suggests

A United Way study followed four homeless people for four years. Finding permanent housing could save taxpayers \$20,000 a year on each formerly homeless person, the study found.

By Raja Abdulrahim

6:36 PM PDT, October 13, 2009

Finding permanent housing for Los Angeles County's homeless rather than allowing them to continue living on the streets could save taxpayer money, according to a study released Tuesday by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

The four-year study followed four homeless people while they lived on the streets and later as they found stable housing. Researchers concluded that taxpayers could save \$20,000 a year per person using public services. There were an estimated 73,000 homeless in the county last year.

Elise Buik, president and chief executive of the local United Way, said the study also looked at other cities that have reduced homelessness and found that permanent housing was the key.

"We always need to be very prudent with our public dollars, and for legislators to see this is a cost-effective model helps build the case that this is an effective model," Buik said.

The study followed four chronically homeless people: a 52-year-old white woman, a 58-year-old white man, a 32-year-old Latino man and a 61-year-old black man. It took into account drug abuse, physical health, mental health, criminal justice and housing.

Once placed in stable housing, each became less dependent on public services. Emergency room visits went from 19 among all of them to one, and rehab stints went from six to none, according to the study. Incarcerations were eliminated, the study found.

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"Once you find them housing, they do lead stable lives," Buik said. "One of the things we're trying to do is take away the stigma and show that people can go on to lead productive lives."

raja.abdulrahim@latimes.com

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Thursday, Oct. 15, 2009

Letter: What does it take?

Editor: How long does it take for the city or the county of Merced to assist the homeless people living in tents on Santa Fe Drive?

Dog parks can be built for the dogs, expensive shelters can be built for animals and local politicians can attend sensitivity classes at the taxpayers' expense, but nothing is being done for the homeless.

What does it take to make these agencies act on a problem that is not going away?

MONA ADKINS

Atwater