

**MERCED CONTINUUM OF CARE
GENERAL COLLABORATIVE MEETING
MERCED COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
369 West 18th Street, Merced
Wednesday, November 19, 2008
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Oral Communications**
 - At this time any person may comment on any item that is not on the Agenda.
 - 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 October 15, 2008 General Collaborative Meeting**
For information only.
- 4. Street Count Subcommittee – Purpose/Goal**
Sign up and offer suggestions
- 5. Merced City Police Department: Lieutenant Matthews**
What types of homeless crimes occur? What can the Collaborative do to help?
- 6. Announcements / Information**
 - *News Articles*
 - *Grant Opportunities*
 - *One Stop Shop*
- 7. Adjourn**

**MERCED CONTINUUM OF CARE
GENERAL COLLABORATIVE MEETING
HOMELESS SHELTER
1567 D Street, Merced, CA
Wednesday, October 16, 2008
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Deborah Bernal, Lifeline Phone Service
Su Briggs, Community Action Agency
Jim Bunnel, Human Services Agency Adult Services
Marcia Dailey, Family Resource Council
Monika Grasely, Lifeline CDC
Christina Kraushar, Department of Mental Health
Bea Lewis, Merced Bethel
Linda Lopez, Office of Congressman Cardoza
Renee Mounce, Community Action Agency
Terry Raley, Love INC
Audrey Slocum, Mental Health
Terry Soares, Merced City School District
Georgene Tarbox, Employment Development Department
Terry Tatum, Executive Council Member

STAFF PRESENT

Lori Flanders, Assistant Planner

1. Welcome

Meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. Lori initiated roundtable of self-introductions.

2. Oral Communications

None.

3. Updates: Lori provided the following updates -

- News Articles provided.
- Street Count Subcommittee: sign up sheet provided.
- Grant Workshop for Homeless Veteran Providers: Lori provided the group information regarding technical assistance workshops being offered for agencies interested in applying for Capital or Per Diem grants for homeless veterans. She announced that the closest one to Merced would be held on March 10th and 11th in Sacramento.

4. Minutes of the September 17, 2008 General Collaborative Meeting

For information only.

5. Merced City School District: Terri Soares, Nutrition Services Director

Terri Soares provided the Collaborative an overview of food waste created by schools. She informed the group if their agency were willing to pick up the left over food from school sites, they would be happy to donate it.

6. Lifeline Telephone Service: Deborah Bernal

Deborah Bernal is visiting CoC's throughout California to provide information regarding affordable, basic telephone service for low-income Californians. She explained it is important for CoC's to become educated regarding the phone service, due to potential participants having daily contact with end users of the service. Deborah offered to provide as many brochures as needed so that agencies can spread the word.

7. 2008 Memorial Day, December 21st

Lori asked if the Collaborative was interested in having an event on December 21st to remember those who have died without homes in Merced County to contact her following the meeting.

8. Tour of Homeless Shelter

So noted.

9. Adjourned at 3:17 p.m. until the next General Collaborative meeting to be held on November 19, 2008.



Merced City and County Continuum of Care

A collaborative effort to end homelessness

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2008

TO: CONTINUUM OF CARE GENERAL COLLABORATIVE

FROM: LORI FLANDERS, CONTINUUM OF CARE COORDINATOR

RE: STREET COUNT – PURPOSE/GOAL

BACKGROUND

The Continuum of Care Application for McKinney-Vento homeless assistance funding requires CoCs to produce statistically reliable, unduplicated counts of homeless persons in sheltered and unsheltered locations on a single night. CoCs are also asked to report the number of homeless persons in seven subpopulation categories: chronically homeless, severely mentally ill, chronic substance abusers, veterans, persons with HIV/AIDS, victims of domestic violence, and unaccompanied youth (under 18 years of age).

DISCUSSION

A Street Count Subcommittee has been established to discuss the Continuums game plan for the 2009 Street Count. Topics of discussion will include incentives for the homeless, survey design, locations to conduct the street count, and recruitment of volunteers.

We need as much help as possible. If you are unable to join the subcommittee, please volunteer to conduct surveys with homeless individuals or participate in the actual count.

REQUESTED ACTION

Sign up for the Street Count Subcommittee and/or volunteer to collect incentives, conduct surveys, or count homeless individuals during one night in late January.



Tuesday, Oct. 28, 2008

Merced schools offer needy kids help

Almost 1,000 local students will get an extra hand with 'survival' items.

By DANIELLE GAINES

Dgaines@mercedsun-star.com

Daniel Leister effortlessly backed his truck up to the Merced City School District's warehouse Monday morning. The words "Feed the Children" were stamped in large letters on the side of the truck.

Inside were 960 bright-colored backpacks filled with school supplies, nonperishable food, personal care items and books for Merced's needy children.

"When I saw that truck this morning, I was just so incredibly grateful," said Elaine Smith, district coordinator of student and family services. "I thought, 'Oh my gosh, this is great!'"

There are a "good number" of homeless or displaced children in the city's schools, Smith said.

And the outlook isn't good.

"Now more than ever with the economy going the way it is, we are finding more and more students in homeless situations," Smith said.

The backpacks are available now until they run out.

Needy students will be identified at the school sites in a number of ways, Smith said. Sometimes the office might notice that mail is being returned or a bus driver realizes a child no longer rides the bus.

The district has been handing out "survival backpacks" for several years, but the source of the donations varies.

In the 2003-2004 school year, the district received its last donation, a competitive grant award that allowed it to buy 500 similar bags.

There are still a few bags left over from that batch to add to Monday's new delivery. "This (donation) will keep us stocked for a good long while," Smith said.

Feed The Children distributed 80,000 backpacks across the nation last school year and plans to distribute 100,000 in the current school year.

"We believe in the power of education to reduce and reverse the cycle of poverty," said Larry Jones, president and co-founder of Feed The Children. "Providing homeless school children with 'survival items' such as school supplies, hygiene items and food help meet immediate physical needs. It also helps secure our long-term hope for these children: that they will excel at school and eventually break free from a life of poverty."

Smith was equally optimistic:

"You know, a lot of people will say, 'What significance is a backpack?' and I would say it's a whole lot to a child who doesn't have anything else."

Reporter Danielle Gaines

can be reached at (209) 385-2407

or dgaines@mercedsun-star.com.



SUN-STAR PHOTO BY DANIELLE GAINES

Merced City School District warehouse supervisor John Myers unloads another pallet of donated backpacks from the semi-truck Monday morning in Merced.

Plan A: Visit Cars.com to research fuel economy.



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More middle-class professionals join homeless ranks

By **Troy Anderson, Staff Writer**

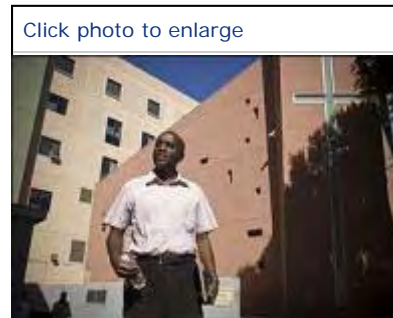
Article Launched: 10/26/2008 12:00:00 AM PDT

Colin never thought he'd wind up on Skid Row.

As a middle-class father and business owner, he had achieved the American dream. But that all came crashing down recently when his coffee-bean importing business went under and the home he was renting in El Segundo went into foreclosure.

With nowhere else to turn, the Westmont College graduate sought shelter for his family at the Union Rescue Mission in downtown Los Angeles.

"It definitely gives you a whole new take on life and how quickly things can unravel," said Colin, 39, who requested his last name not be published. "My experience is far more widespread than I think people would like to admit. And we may not have seen the worst of it yet."



"Colin" has been staying at the Union Rescue Mission and was... (David

As more and more people lose their jobs and homes in the worsening global economic crisis, experts say the face of homelessness is changing.

Crane/Staff Photographer)		
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Across the nation in recent months, shelters and government agencies have seen a sharp increase in the number of homeless middle-class professionals and families.

In Los Angeles County - the nation's homeless capital - advocates say they are seeing real-estate agents, lawyers, business owners, pre-med students and other highly educated people losing their jobs and becoming homeless.

The Burbank Temporary Aid Center has experienced a 66percent increase in requests for assistance in the last 18months, Executive Director Barbara Howell said. About half of those seeking help are middle-class people experiencing homelessness for the first time.

For example, one was a Hollywood writer who hadn't landed work since the 100-day writers strike ended last spring.

"He was in a very nice SUV and I was like, `Are you homeless?'" Howell said. "I started asking him about his situation because he didn't look like our regular homeless people. And he wasn't.

"He ended up losing his place to live and he's living in his nice SUV because it's paid for."

Andy Bales, president of the Union Rescue Mission, said he's also seeing professionals and other middle-class people coming into the mission who are experiencing homelessness for the first time, including former mission donors.

"We had another donor ... who was so depressed at the prospect of becoming homeless that she committed suicide before she kept her appointment with us," he said.

Carolyn Jones, 47, a mother of three who volunteers and donates to the Union Rescue Mission, ran into hard times herself recently after her husband was robbed while going to make their rent payment.

Jones, who spent 15 years working as a nurse until she became disabled after a slip-and-fall accident in 2001, became homeless after she and her family were evicted from their apartment in Los Angeles. Now, she and her children are living at the mission.

"This is my first time being homeless," Jones said. "I never thought I'd be homeless. But I'll never forget the Union Rescue Mission because they helped me when I needed help. My kids have a nice bed to sleep in, three hot meals a day, and I thank God for that."

In a county that has more than 250,000 millionaires, about 73,000 people are homeless on any given night, according to the United Way of Greater Los Angeles. About 40 percent are women and children.

The Los Angeles Unified School District has more than 13,500 homeless children, a 35 percent increase over last year.

Experts estimate in Los Angeles, only 12 percent of the homeless find shelter each night. The rest sleep on the streets and in vehicles, parks and abandoned buildings - a practice that has become increasingly dangerous as attacks on the homeless have nearly tripled in the last decade nationwide.

In one recent incident, a homeless man died Oct. 9 in Los Angeles after he was doused with gasoline and set on fire.

To protect themselves, many of the newly homeless are living in their cars, especially in beach communities like Venice and Santa Barbara or in tent cities, said Joel John Roberts, chief executive officer of PATH Partners, a network of homeless and housing agencies in Los Angeles.

"It's America's new shantytown," Roberts said. "It's happening everywhere - Seattle, San Diego and Denver. I think it's a reflection of the economic times. The social safety net in our society is failing."

In Los Angeles County, and across the nation, experts expect the number of homeless people to grow significantly in coming months as the unemployment rate rises and home foreclosures rocket.

About 760,000 people across the country have lost their jobs since Jan. 1.

"We are confronted with an unprecedented increase in family homelessness at precisely the same time that we confront a substantial reduction in resources," said Phil Ansell, director of programs and policies for the county Department of Public Social Services.

From June to August, the number of homeless families DPSS provided welfare benefits to increased 20 percent to almost 7,100. Similarly, the number of indigent adults, many of whom are homeless, receiving \$221 monthly general relief checks has risen from about 61,500 at the beginning of the year to just over 70,000 in August.

As the county's unemployment rate rose to 8.1 percent in August, the number of people receiving food stamps jumped from about 640,000 to more than 673,000.

But even as government agencies and nonprofits are facing unprecedented increases in need, they are watching their own tax revenues and donations drop precipitously. The state recently cut about \$50million in funding for DPSS, forcing the agency to reduce staff and eliminate contracts.

These cuts come as the number of people living in or near poverty keeps growing, putting even more people at risk

of homelessness, said Daniel Flaming, president of the Economic Roundtable, a nonprofit public policy research group in Los Angeles.

Last year, 37 percent of county residents were living in households with annual incomes of about \$32,000 - or up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level for a parent with two children. In the city of Los Angeles, the percentage was 43percent, one of the highest in the nation.

But the shelters and resources to help these people are overwhelmed, said Ken Craft, director of the San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission in North Hollywood, the Valley's only emergency shelter. It can accommodate about 60 homeless people a night.

The shelter is filled to capacity every night and has to turn away families, he said.

"The majority of families who come to us were previously employed, were paying their rent and mortgages and living normal lives, but because of the economic downturn ... they can no longer sustain their way of life," Craft said.

"I think we have a new class of homeless people who are stunned and shocked this could ever happen to them. They could never imagine themselves among the ranks of the homeless."

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Posted on Sun, Oct. 26, 2008

New approach helps reduce homeless

*By Frank Greve
Bee Washington Bureau*

last updated: October 26, 2008 02:01:02 AM

WASHINGTON -- On a cold January morning in 2001, Mel Martinez, who was then the new secretary of Housing and Urban Development, was headed to his office in his limo when he saw some homeless people huddled on the vents of the steam tunnels that heat federal buildings.

"Somebody ought to do something for them," Martinez said he told himself. "And it dawned on me at that moment that it was me."

So began the Bush administration's radical, liberal -- and successful -- national campaign against chronic homelessness.

"Housing first," it's called. That's to distinguish it from traditional programs that require longtime street people to undergo months of treatment and counseling before they're deemed "housing ready."

Instead, the Bush administration offers them rent-free apartments upfront.

New residents, if they choose, can start turning their lives around with the help of substance abuse counselors, social workers, nurse practitioners, part-time psychiatrists and employment counselors.

However, residents are referred to as "consumers," and the choice is theirs.

The help is so good and the deal's so sweet that roughly four out of five chronically homeless Americans who get immediate housing stay off the streets for two years or longer, according to the program's evaluators. In Britain, which has used the approach for a decade, the so-called "rough sleeper" population declined by about two-thirds.

The strategy gets much of the credit for a 30 percent decline in U.S. chronic homelessness from 2005 to 2007. The number fell from 176,000 to 124,000 people, according to the best available census of street people.

In May 2005, Stanislaus County's Housing and Support Services Collaborative drafted a countywide 10-year plan to end homelessness. Partners included Modesto, which ultimately built a winter shelter and day facility.

An offshoot was formed in Turlock -- the Turlock Community Collaborative, which led to that city's cold-weather shelter. The county collaborative was supposed to draft and bring the 10-year plan before the nine cities to foster more participation and community support, but that didn't happen.

No mandate holds the collaborative together; its members are volunteers.

The city contracted with California State University, Stanislaus for a homeless study; a part of that study advocated the "housing first" approach, but no further steps have been taken.

In March, Turlock's cold- weather shelter closed with no available alternative. Council members are looking into a motel voucher program as a stopgap measure.

Works with hardest cases

The chronically homeless, estimated at a fifth to a 10th of the total, are the hardest group of street people to help. A chronically homeless person is someone with a disabling condition who's been continuously homeless for a year or more or for four or more times in three years.

The new housing approach has worked for such people in more than 200 U.S. cities.

Denver, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, Ore., and San Francisco found that the added cost of homes and support services for the chronically homeless wasn't burdensome. In fact, it was largely or entirely offset by reduced demands on shelters, emergency rooms, mental hospitals, detox centers, jails and courts.

Instead of shuttling between them, chronically homeless people "are staying housed and starting to look for employment," said Nan Roman, president of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the leading advocates of the approach. "A lot are reconnecting with their families."

Just being off the street is healthy, said Sheila Crowley, president of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition.

"Even if they continue to drink, they're eating better, sleeping better and interacting with people better."

For the chronically homeless, the life change is sudden and profound.

"Today, God has seen fit to bless you," James Hamilton's counselor told him last month on a day that Hamilton began in

a fusty bunk bed in a Washington homeless shelter.

By nightfall, Hamilton's permanent home was a quiet one-bedroom apartment in an iffy neighborhood in southeast Washington, for which the city pays a HUD-subsidized \$900 a month plus utilities.

It's furnished with new furniture including a green plush sofa, bureau and end tables, oak kitchen table and chairs, bed, linens and a \$300 Target gift certificate for incidentals such as the microwave that's perched on a wastebasket.

Hamilton, a lean and chatty 51-year-old, hawks newspapers at a Washington subway station from 6 to 10 a.m. In the afternoons, he helps a clothing distributor make deliveries to fancy retailers.

In between, Hamilton spends a lot of time at Grace Episcopal Church in Georgetown, his spiritual home. With its help, he's enrolled in an educational lay ministry course at Wesley College Seminary in Washington. He types his papers at a nearby public library.

He's also a recovering crack addict who tests positive for hepatitis C.

"This is the best chance I've ever had to make things work," said Hamilton, who, to keep the apartment, needs only to:

Meet with his counselor once a week.

Abstain from substance abuse and smoking in his apartment.

Start paying 30 percent of his income as rent "in a few months."

Not let anyone else move in permanently.

For Hamilton, the apartment means that he can store his scattered possessions in a secure place. He can stock food securely, too. He's spared what he calls the "beefing" of other shelter dwellers and is free to watch his own choice of programs on the TV that his stepfather gave him.

Hamilton attends night events at Grace Episcopal now. When he lived at Washington's Adams Place Shelter, he had to check in by 6:30 p.m. to keep his bed. He's also attending a more energized evening Narcotics Anonymous meeting than the one that the shelter offered, he said.

God and the devil

In that regard, Hamilton's home, set amid older frame houses and small, rickety churches, has a threatening downside. Crack and PCP pushers are everywhere, he said.

"You got God and the devil in the same place."

Originally intended for mental patients, the new housing strategy may not work so well for substance abusers, who may need more structure and supervision, said Roman, the head of the homeless alliance.

Critics wonder if more shouldn't be done for homeless families, especially those that are newly homeless, and low-income families at risk of homelessness.

Since fiscal year 2002, authorizations for HUD homeless programs have risen from \$1.1 billion to a proposed \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2009.

For all federal authorizations that help the homeless, including veterans benefits, Social Security and Medicaid, the figure has risen from \$2.9 billion to a proposed \$5 billion.

Bee staff writer Merrill Balassone contributed to this report.

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Phone: (209) 578-2000.



Tuesday, Nov. 04, 2008

Rescue Mission still needs hundreds of turkeys for holidays

The Merced Rescue Mission is facing one of its direst holidays and says it needs help.

The mission needs almost 350 turkeys to feed more than 3,500 people in both Merced and Los Banos on Thanksgiving Day.

Donations of turkeys or money can be made at the mission, 1921 Canal St., Merced, or by calling (209) 722-9269.

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369 West 18th Street, Merced, CA
Wednesday, November 19, 2008
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lucy Becerra, Resource/Referral
Carolyn Burke, Harvest Time Calvary
George Burke, Harvest Time Calvary
Vong Chang, Turning Point
Jim Bunnell, Human Services Agency Adult Services
Denise Cannistracci, Impact House
Sara Gonzalez, Social Security
Monika Grasely, Lifeline CDC
Carl Joachim, Merced Parole
Christina Kraushar, Department of Mental Health
Linda Lopez, Office of Congressman Cardoza
Roberta Medina, City of Merced Code Enforcement
Renee Mounce, Community Action Agency
Ericka Peterson, Head Start
Terry Raley, Love INC
Luis Rendon, Merced College
Darrell Rogers, Impact House
Audrey Slocum, Mental Health
Mike Stephenson, City of Merced
Terry Tatum, Executive Council Member

STAFF PRESENT

Lori Flanders, Assistant Planner

1. Welcome

Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. Lori initiated roundtable of self-introductions.

2. Oral Communications

Lori provided an overview of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). California will have an application process for \$36 million for agencies that can provide housing for households with 50% of the annual median income (AMI).

3. Minutes of the October 15, 2008 General Collaborative Meeting

So noted.

4. Street Count Subcommittee

Lori informed the group that the street count and homeless survey will take place on January 22nd. She explained the count should produce reliable unduplicated counts of the homeless persons in sheltered and unsheltered locations. Lori asked

for volunteers to assist with the collection of incentives, volunteers to conduct the surveys, and participants to conduct the actual count.

5. Merced City Police Department: Lieutenant Matthews

Lt. Matthews informed the collaborative that the city would begin enforcing the “No Camping” ordinance. Code Enforcement has been collaborating with the homeless impacted by the ordinance (approximately 47 of them). The homeless that are currently living in the encampments refuse to seek assistance due to one of the following:

- Have a pet
- Time restrictions at the shelter
- Want to sleep with their significant other
- They are a sex offender (AKA: 290) and cannot find compliant housing

Michael Stephenson explained the following timeline:

- December 12th – first walk through with Code Enforcement (City has been communicating with homeless for the past two years regarding the ordinance).
- January 2nd – Code enforcement walk through with uniformed officer
- January 23rd – Citation and/or arrest for individuals camping on public/private property. The City will lawfully store possessions.

After discussions, Linda Lopez instructed the group to keep local legislators informed of any needs they may require to assist with this population. She also asked that this item be carried over to next month’s agenda.

6. Announcements / Information

- New Articles
- Grant Opportunities
So noted.
- One Stop Shop

Lori explained that the One Stop Shop is tentatively scheduled to begin 12/12/08. Each Friday, from 1-4pm, agencies throughout the County will provide services for all homeless individuals at the homeless shelter. She further explained that Mental Health & Community Action Agency spoke with the homeless on 11/5/08 to discuss what services they would like to see participate in the One Stop Shop. Comments included Legal Aide, Social Security, life coaches, WorkNet or temp agencies, and section 8, Merced Adult School, Employment Development Dept, optometry, dentist, haircuts and pet adoption agencies.

Lori asked if an agency would like to volunteer to contact her directly. Social Security Manager, Lori Waidely, offered to send her staff.

9. Adjourned at 3:12 p.m. until the next General Collaborative meeting to be held on December 17, 2008.