

Plymouth Taskforce for the Homeless
President's Report
2007

Overnights of Hospitality Program

We ended our third season of providing emergency sheltering in March, 2007. Over the 2006-2007 season, we provided a total of 1,220 beds for 39 different individuals, averaging 7.9 guests per night. A couple of nights, we had as many as fourteen guests. There were 168 volunteers from fifteen different congregations and from the community at large who served as hosts and meal providers.

We began our fourth season beginning the last week of October, 2007. By the end of December we were seeing an average of eight men per night, with sometimes as many as fourteen. On Christmas Eve, the Taskforce put up eight men at the Radisson. During the season, in emergency situations, we also put up several single homeless women, each for a night in a hotel.

We implemented a weekly shower program using the shower facility at Christ Church Food Pantry. Thanks to John Malloy for supervising this activity.

We lost the use of the First Church of Christ Scientist due to their need to sell the building. However, we gained the use of St. Mary's Parish Center, still leaving us with seven congregations offering their space for the program.

I met with groups of prospective volunteers from St. Mary's in Plymouth and St. Joseph's in Kingston.

In addition to offering space for the Overnights, St. Mary's also decided to offer a noon meal on Saturdays. Now, for every day of the week, there is a hot meal available for those in need.

Next Step House

Five men are currently living in the Step House., One of the residents continues to serve as house manager, thus providing a consistent presence in the house.

Government Housing Support

With state funding under the Home and Healthy for Good program which is administered by Fr. Bill's, we placed four individuals into their own apartments, Two men in the Next Step house are being supported by that program. Thus, a total of six men were provided permanent housing. With case management provided by Peggy Hall, Nicole Robbins, and George, these men are doing well. One of the six was featured in an article in the *Patriot Ledger*.

The funding for five units under McKinney-Vento was finally approved. The process of identifying and placing individuals was begun.

Homeless Count

During the annual homeless count in January, 2007, we were able to identify twenty-six single individuals, most of whom were frequent or occasional guests at the shelter during the season. We still don't have an idea of how many others there may be (men or women) who are living with friends or relatives in illegal or unsafe conditions.

Doris Johnson and I attended a training session for the computer based Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). We began the process of entering our clients into the system.

Grants/Fundraising

We had three very successful fundraisers in 2007. Even though we had fewer golfers, our second annual golf tournament raised over \$5,000. Thanks to Doris Johnson for her hard work in chairing this event. The third annual Crop Walk brought in over \$1,000. Thanks to Jack Ryan and Bill Finn for their leadership. Thanks to the generosity of Stan Tavares and thanks to John Malloy for organizing, we ran our first cruise aboard the Capt. John which raised over \$4,000.

The Taskforce applied for and received a grant of \$2,500 from the left-over Patrick/Murray Inauguration funds.

Project Development

To move forward with our goal to end homelessness, the Board voted to apply for a grant from Episcopal City Mission, which was approved, to hire a consultant to help us define our goals and to develop a Request for Proposal. This is a proposal to seek one or more partners to assist us in developing a housing project for which we then will seek funding. Al Scott, of Ford Scott Associates, was the selected consultant. The project site may or may not be the Next Step house, depending on the owner's willingness to sell at an acceptable price.

Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast

Our annual volunteer breakfast was held in May, a little later than we would have liked. At that time we honored all our volunteers with certificates of appreciation. Special mention was given to Dave Tassinari for being a host for the most nights during the season (fourteen).

Homeless Issues

This past summer, there were several incidents involving the homeless that occurred downtown causing the downtown merchants to complain. Carole Tagg, Doris Johnson, David Tassinari, John Malloy, and myself attended a meeting with town officials to follow up on these complaints. Some officials, including the Chief of Police, are under the mistaken impression that the problem is growing because we have a sheltering and feeding program in Plymouth. The issue is, that as more properties are being developed, there are fewer places for the homeless to go during the day so now they appear to be more visible. The need, then, is for a location for a drop-in center during the days and during the time of year when the Overnights for Hospitality is not in operation. A second informational meeting was held with Dennis Carmen from United Way in attendance. Future meetings are planned.

Goals for 2008

- Develop partnership through the RFP process to develop a housing project

- Attempt to identify the “invisible” homeless population
- Seek and apply for grants, including re-applying for a CPA grant,
- Seek new fundraising avenues
- Increase membership and/or to do a general fundraising campaign
- Recruit more congregations to offer their space
- Develop a website
- Publish more frequent newsletters,

In closing, I would like to personally thank all of our board members – Judy Erikson for managing our funds, Jan Palmer-Tarbox for taking the minutes, Amy Palmer for writing thank you notes, Doris Johnson for producing publicity and attending meetings of the PCHA and other groups, and David Tassinari, John Malloy, Jack Ryan, Pamela Daikh. for their valuable insight and willingness to help with fundraising. Thanks also to Helen Evans, co-coordinator of nightly screening process and thanks to Dave Tassinari, Judy Erikson, Rich Pecorella for providing backup driving when needed. Finally the success of the Overnight program was due to the many people who volunteered their time to host or to prepare a meal. Truly, God’s work is being done!

Respectfully submitted,

Constance Melahoures
President