



A Future Without Homelessness



Meet those who dare to dream of the end of homelessness.

Learn how our community is joining the fight to make those dreams a reality.





Sacramento Steps Forward CEO Ryan Loofbourrow addresses a gathering of area stakeholders about the ongoing efforts to end homelessness in our region.
PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN

Taking Strides to End Homelessness

by Brittany Wesely

Sacramento Steps Forward leads the effort in the Sacramento region

More than 2,650 people were homeless in the Sacramento region on a single night in January 2015, according to the most recent Point-in-Time Homeless Count conducted by Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF). An estimated 4,000 people experience homelessness over the course of each year in our region.

For most of those individuals, homelessness was not a choice, says SSF CEO Ryan Loofbourrow.

“At the end of the day, homelessness is just a detachment from a support system,” Loofbourrow says. “There has been an event that has separated them from the support structure and finances they need to sustain.”

Homelessness has a devastating effect on not only the individual who struggles with it, but also on the entire community.

The 2009 report called “Where We Sleep” demonstrated that the typical costs for health services, public assistance and incarceration for individuals experiencing homelessness is \$2,897 per month, five times greater than the amount for people in supportive housing.

“Simply stated, it costs more to maintain homelessness than it does to solve the problem,” Loofbourrow says. “All of our first responders are tasked with responding to countless calls for individuals that would be healthier and less likely to need emergency services if they had been housed.”

While the problem of homelessness and its consequences is prevalent, Loofbourrow says the issue is solvable. Taking strides

toward a solution, SSF collaborates with public and private entities to devise comprehensive and sustainable practices that prevent and end homelessness.

The primary goal of SSF is to ensure that all people experiencing homelessness can gain housing, economic stability and an enhanced quality of life. To achieve this goal, SSF obtains and oversees the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant funding for service provider programs, evaluates the impact of the work and advocates for community support.

Aligned with HUD grant requirements, SSF and its partners follow the model of “housing first,” an approach Loofbourrow says is effective in ending chronic homelessness by focusing first on connecting individuals who are unsheltered with permanent housing right away, then offering other services as needed.

Since its formation in 2011, SSF and its partners have seen positive results. Between January and December 2015, SSF and its partners placed almost 600 homeless veterans and more than 450 chronically homeless individuals in housing. Through the efforts of SSF, Sacramento has made significant progress toward its goal of ending homelessness for these populations in the near future.

Read on to find out more about the programs of SSF and how you can get involved to help ensure that long-term homelessness is a thing of the past.

Simply stated, it costs more to maintain homelessness than it does to solve the problem.

Ryan Loofbourrow
CEO of Sacramento Steps Forward

By the numbers

A closer look at Sacramento-area homelessness

In order to solve the problem of homelessness, it is critical to understand the struggles of people who are experiencing homelessness. To gain insight, Sacramento Steps Forward and its partners conducted the Point-in Time Homeless Count throughout Sacramento County and incorporated cities on a single night in January 2015. Here are some of the results:

There were
2,659
individuals experiencing homelessness

36%
were unsheltered

15%
were under age 24

39%
were in families with children

21%
were adults with a substance abuse disorder

15%
of adults said domestic violence was a factor in homelessness

26%
of homeless adults had a serious mental illness

More than
4,000 people
are expected to be homeless over the course of a year.

It Can Happen to You

Homelessness affects all of us and can strike anyone

by Amanda Caraway

Michael Rogers was once happily married with a beautiful home and seven wonderful children. He was free of his drug and alcohol addiction for years until the death of his daughter and the collapse of his marriage drove him to relapse. Within a year he lost his job, his home, his family and all of his savings.

"My decline happened fast," says Rogers. "I lost everything, including all of the money I had put aside for my kids' education."

Rogers was homeless for seven years, 11 months and four days. During that time, Rogers moved around, but he mostly lived along the banks of the Sacramento River. Then, he began to fear for his life as he heard stories of violence along the river increasing.

"I didn't want to die on the river as a homeless person," says Rogers. "Luckily, I was saved through the grace of God."

Christian outreach volunteers found Rogers just in time and asked if he wanted help. He accepted and began working to recover from his addiction and get back on his feet.

Lutheran Social Services, one of the organizations involved with Sacramento Steps Forward, has been instrumental in Rogers' success.

"It's important that we work together to help more people and end homelessness for good," says Julie Kennedy, development manager for Lutheran Social Services of Northern California. "Anyone can become homeless. We are all just one personal tragedy away. All it takes is for circumstances to snowball and come together in a perfect storm."

Many people find themselves homeless due to circumstances out of their control.



With access to housing and support services, Michael Rogers successfully fought his addiction, and he's no longer homeless.
PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN

"Anyone can become homeless. We are all just one personal tragedy away."

Julie Kennedy
Development manager for Lutheran Social Services of Northern California

"If someone doesn't have family to reach out to, they can end up in a cycle that is hard to break," says Kennedy. "That's why public support programs are so important."

With access to the right programs, those who suffer from chronic homelessness can begin to regain self-sufficiency.

Rogers' story is proof that providing outreach and services to people experiencing homelessness can be successful and change lives. Today, Rogers is living in an apartment and working on strengthening his relationship with his children. He plans to go back to school and study the digital arts.

Although he says reintegrating back into society has been a challenge, Rogers has faith that he can avoid becoming homeless again. However, the experience changed him forever.

"I feel like I have a new pair of glasses and I can see the world more clearly," Rogers says. "I am more compassionate and understanding toward others. Displaced people are human beings and most of them are good, God-fearing people."

Neighborhood Connect makes things personal



In Sacramento, nearly 4,000 of our neighbors lack a home each night. These are people of all sorts, from veterans to survivors of domestic violence, and they all require something different.

Sacramento Steps Forward's Neighborhood Connect personalizes solutions through direct outreach to individuals in need in specific neighborhoods. Using information from law enforcement, EMS and other community leaders, the homeless services navigators target a section of Sacramento to address concerns on a one-on-one level during multiday canvassing campaigns.

This personalized outreach approach connects individuals with the services they need most, like Medi-Cal and supplemental income. The team then maintains a relationship until sustained housing is found for their clients. Finally, navigators partner with the knowledgeable members of these neighborhoods to understand larger issues and develop lasting strategies that will keep people off the streets and in secure homes.

A Place to Call Home

Veteran overcomes addiction and homelessness to give back to community

by Mike Blount

When Frank Topping sits with members of the Sacramento County Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Steering Committee, he feels proud to give back to the community. The Vietnam veteran struggled with addiction and homelessness for more than 10 years, but he is now able to give the committee valuable insight into the efficacy of mental health programs in the county. Topping, 68, says that without those programs, it would be almost impossible for others to escape chronic homelessness as he was able to.

would feel depressive lows and then manic highs, where he would resent all of society. The substance abuse exacerbated those feelings.

Topping returned to Sacramento in 1986 to take care of his parents' home after they moved to the Bay Area. For the next 12 years, he stayed clean and sober. But in 1998, he brought in roommates because he needed financial help. Those roommates introduced Topping to methamphetamine and he plummeted back into addiction.

In early 1999, Topping lost the house and became homeless again. He ended up in a shelter where a staff worker told him about Turning Point, which was a new treatment program at the time. Topping was one of the first clients in Sacramento.

He was finally able to beat addiction in 2004, after four years in the program. He says his main inspiration was learning about the Sacramento County MHSA Steering Committee and how he could help others beat addiction and homelessness.

"Learning that my experience could help sculpt programs to help others, it made me want to be sober," Topping says. "It was like a spiritual awakening in me, and it caused me to change."

Today, Topping is passionate about making sure individuals experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County have the resources they need to become stable.

"It's so rewarding to be a part of deciding policy and know that it is helping people," Topping says.

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Frank Topping
Formerly homeless veteran

Topping served two tours in Vietnam in the Navy. After the war, he worked for the Vallejo Police Department. But his divorce in 1975 was particularly hard on him. He quit law enforcement and became an electrician on industrial job sites.

"The divorce put me into alcohol and drugs," Topping says. "My life became extreme. I was using cocaine and partying hard after work with coworkers."

His addiction soon became out of control and he became homeless, staying with friends. He also started becoming more and more withdrawn, a symptom of bipolar disorder. Topping says he



Frank Topping addresses a group of Sacramento-area mental health stakeholders. A Vietnam veteran, Topping struggled with chronic homelessness for several years before he was able to overcome substance abuse addiction and find a stable home.
PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN

ZERO: 2016

Homelessness is a problem that can be solved. Zero: 2016 is a national campaign to end veteran and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016. The program launched with a total of 75 communities participating across the United States, including Sacramento City and County. According to a 2014 study from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, communities selected to join Zero: 2016 account for a combined 31,669 chronically homeless Americans and 16,218 homeless veterans.

During the national Homeless Point-in-Time Count (PIT) in January 2015, volunteers walked the streets block by block to survey people experiencing homelessness. The information collected helps connect those experiencing homelessness to appropriate housing options and other services in the community as quickly as possible.

To track Sacramento's progress toward meeting its Zero: 2016 goals, visit sacramentostepsforward.org/strategic-action-plan/zero-2016.

Breaking the Cycle

Mother overcomes addiction to find stability

by Mike Blount

As an outreach coordinator with Mustard Seed School at Loaves and Fishes in Sacramento, Liana Luna, 39, works to connect every homeless family she meets with resources that can help them get back on their feet. Luna says parents often come to her embarrassed or ashamed about their situation, but she's uniquely able to give them hope.

"In my job, outreach can be powerful because I can share my story with parents and I can say, 'I've been where you've been,'" Luna says. "It opens the door for many families to get the help they need."

Luna says being a homeless family can be especially tough on the children. She remembers moving around a lot when she turned 12 years old. After her stepfather left, she and her mom would often stay with relatives or friends for extended periods of time. But it wasn't until she got a little older that she realized her experiences weren't typical.

"We kind of woke up one day and my mom went one way and my stepdad went the other," Luna says. "What I figured out later was that my mom was a stay-at-home mom with no skills, no job experience and no resources. We were homeless."

Luna's life was plagued with instability. She bounced around with her mom for several years. At the age of 15, she became pregnant and gave birth to her first child. Two years later, Luna tried methamphetamine for the first time. She went to jail several times for drug charges and eventually lost custody of her daughter.

Without the drug treatment program Strategies for Change, Luna says she might not have been able to overcome her addiction and get her daughter back.

"I always wanted to get clean, but I didn't know how," Luna says. "It was the biggest thing standing in my way and it's a huge barrier for many others. You can't just go back to the places you used to go with the people you used to do drugs with. Having a clean and safe environment to go home to was the biggest relief."

Luna enrolled her daughter in Mustard Seed School, and eventually began working there. Today, she is happy she can help others find the stability and happiness she found by overcoming addiction and finding a stable job and home.

"All of these programs were so essential," Luna says. "Without one of them, it would have been so much harder. It's important that people continue to care and support them, because for a lot of people, these programs are their only resource."

It's important that people continue to care and support [addiction treatment programs], because for a lot of people, these programs are their only resource.

Liana Luna
Formerly homeless mother



When she was a young girl, Liana Luna, (right) and her mother, Ernestine Gonzalez (left), were homeless. Luna became homeless a second time in life after becoming addicted to drugs. Today, Luna, 39, and her family are stable after help from an intervention program. PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN

Help within reach



Sacramento Steps Forward and its partners provide myriad programs to help individuals who are experiencing homelessness obtain and remain in permanent housing, improve their skills, foster greater self-determination and break the cycle of homelessness. Here are just a few of the programs available:

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

Provides case management, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing through various programs available for youth, adults, families and people with disabilities.

MUTUAL HOUSING CALIFORNIA

Offers permanent supportive housing in a service-rich environment for individuals facing chronic homelessness.

NEXT MOVE

Provides chronically homeless men and women permanent supportive housing in fully furnished one-bedroom apartments. Assistance is also available for chronically homeless seniors through the Home at Last program, which offers housing, comprehensive supportive services and assistance with employment through AARP.

SACRAMENTO SELF-HELP HOUSING

Matches disabled and chronically homeless individuals to landlords willing to rent properties as shared rentals.

TLCS INC.

Offers housing, living skills training, mental health services and permanent housing support for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA

Provides support services to disabled adults who are residing in housing that is subsidized by Shelter Plus Care vouchers.

The Big Picture



The Partners

An innovative network of public-private collaborations makes up the big picture of the solution to homelessness.

SACRAMENTO STEPS FORWARD (SSF)

As the lead agency to end homelessness in the region, Sacramento Steps Forward manages Housing and Urban Development funding for homelessness. SSF works to identify needs and collaborates with service providers to coordinate and improve the services offered across the Continuum of Care — the entire network of services available to individuals experiencing homelessness.

SACRAMENTO HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency finances and develops permanent supportive housing for Sacramento County's disabled, extremely low-income residents. SHRA facilitates Housing Choice vouchers and rental subsidies.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Sacramento County and its incorporated cities provide funding for housing programs, outreach workers, emergency shelters and health and human services.

PRIVATE FUNDERS

Sacramento Steps Forward receives financial assistance from generous individuals, faith-based groups and other organizations in the community. This funding is critical to ensuring that the programs and initiatives of SSF are possible.

The Solutions

Different partners provide different pieces of the solution and make up the whole **Continuum of Care** to meet the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness.

LOCATIONS OF PEOPLE AT RISK FOR HOMELESSNESS

Hospital



Jail



Court



Street



DIVERSION

When people are discharged from corrections and medical facilities, or age out of foster care, they are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness. Specialists help these individuals resolve their crises prior to release in order to divert them from the streets.

COORDINATED ENTRY TO SERVICES

STEP 1

Outreach and Navigators

SSF's Integrated Outreach Team works with community groups, law enforcement, first responders, businesses and residents to identify individuals experiencing homelessness.

STEP 2

Assessment and Referrals

Under Common Cents, SSF's coordinated assessment and housing placement system, navigators then conduct a needs assessment using a common assessment tool for each individual to connect them to the housing and services they need.

Who's helping, what's being done and where we need to go to **end homelessness**



HOUSING FIRST

Emergency Housing

Some individuals experiencing homelessness will need immediate, short-term shelter and basic necessities — such as meals, clothing and supportive services. Overnight shelters offer a place to sleep for less than 12 hours. Transitional shelters provide accommodations for longer periods of time. Hotels and motels offer a voucher housing program when shelters are full or unavailable.

Permanent Supportive Housing

A combination of affordable housing and services for individuals and families who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or have multiple barriers to employment and housing stability, which might include mental illness, chemical dependency or other disabling or chronic health conditions.

Rapid Rehousing

Provides housing support for people experiencing homelessness due to short-term financial crises, domestic violence and substance abuse issues. Support includes housing identification, rent and move-in cost assistance, case management and additional services.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

SSF members and partners provide additional supportive services, helping individuals remain stable and avoid a return to homelessness, including:

- Food
- Health care
- Transportation
- Employment training
- Income assistance
- Mental health services
- Drug and alcohol recovery services



COORDINATED EXIT

To achieve full self-sufficiency, individuals receive help securing steady employment and rental housing.

The Future



In the coordinated effort to end homelessness, there's always more work to do. SSF is looking for ways to do it better by streamlining and expanding efforts. Goals include:

REACHING A FUNCTIONAL ZERO IN HOMELESSNESS

- End veteran homelessness in 2016
- End chronic homelessness by 2017
- End family and youth homelessness by 2020
- Overall reduction in homelessness by 10% every two years

MINIMIZING BARRIERS

- Increase "housing first" implementation in all permanent supportive housing programs
- Reduce barriers to housing for people with high needs — especially those with criminal backgrounds
- Improve access to housing for homeless with pets

IMPROVING DIVERSION

- Develop community-wide diversion system to connect people to resources before discharge from corrections and health care

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide rapid access to employment and education

STREAMLINING SYSTEM NAVIGATION

- Continue implementation of Common Cents, targeting veterans and chronically homeless

Sacramento Steps Forward members and partners are working together to create a coordinated and comprehensive solution to homelessness in our region. But there's still much to do, and they can't do it alone.

Visit sacramentostepsforward.org to find out more and join Sacramento's fight to end homelessness.





by Mike Blount

Finding a Safe Haven

Formerly homeless youth thrives at Wind Youth Services

For much of his life, Daniel Davis, now 24, says he had no place where he felt safe. He and his two siblings had a difficult and unstable childhood, he says. After their parents divorced, the three children bounced around between various homes. Davis was eventually sent to live with his father, while his siblings went to live with their grandparents. Davis says he was kicked out of the house at age 16.

Living on the streets was hard for Davis. By the time he was 21 years old, he had been homeless in Hawaii, Oregon and throughout California. He was constantly traveling, but had little or no money. He also had various substance abuse issues. In 2012, he was reunited with his brother after he hitchhiked to San Francisco. They both worked as male prostitutes to make money.

When Davis went to the Tenderloin district to look for drugs one day, he met a girl who briefly changed his life. They fell in love and the couple decided to move to Sacramento in 2012 to start over. The first thing he did when he arrived was visit the methadone clinic.

"In a few months, I got clean and got a job taking care of a quadriplegic man," Davis says. "We moved in with him for a year and a half."

But when he took a trip to visit his grandparents, he came back to a locked house and a note saying he had five days to leave.

"I was so depressed, I wanted to relapse right then and there," Davis says.

Things started to unravel. He broke up with his girlfriend and lost his job. Finally, Davis decided to visit Wind Youth Services and tell the staff his story.

Davis says he immediately bonded with Wind youth counselor Fred Charlie.

"We are very tight," Davis says. "He just came at me in such a sincere and caring way, but he also really rides me when I need to do something. That's exactly what I need. Wind is a safe environment where I can be myself."

Today, Davis is doing much better. He recently signed up for a housing program through Wind, which offers a stable environment for youth who are high-functioning and ready for independence. He is still working with youth counselors to stay on a path of sobriety. Davis says his life is completely changed because of the services at Wind.

"I feel safe when I'm here because I'm surrounded by a group of my peers who don't judge me," Davis says. "The staff here care about helping you."

Daniel Davis, left, enjoys a moment making music with youth counselor Fred Charlie at the Wind Homeless Youth Drop-In Center. Davis, who was formerly homeless, says Wind has given him a place to feel safe as he works toward stability.

PHOTO BY CHARLES GUNN



Wind is a safe environment where I can be myself.

Daniel Davis
Formerly homeless youth

Youth Programs

Few safety nets exist for homeless youth, who are vulnerable without the proper resources, support system and skills to live independently. More funding is needed to provide more resources like the local programs at right to address this crisis.

WIND YOUTH SERVICES

Wind Youth Services provides homeless and at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 24 with basic safety-net and survival services, a safe place to stay, street outreach, case management, and youth and family counseling.

windyouth.org

TUBMAN HOUSE

Tubman House provides a safe place to stay for eight young homeless parents with children in two four-bedroom houses. Young parents are enrolled in a holistic program centered on youth development, the strengthening of physical and mental health, educational attainment, career development, and financial management.

wakingthevillage.org

LGBT CENTER

The Sacramento LGBT Community Center's Youth Program supports homeless and vulnerable LGBT youth to improve their health, economic status, self-esteem and self-sufficiency at making positive life choices.

saccenter.org



After experiencing homelessness for three years, Billy Teel (right) is now in stable housing and working hard toward independence. Through support from the TLCS community, and Executive Director Erin Johansen (left), Teel receives help with his mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as stable housing.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



A Better Alternative

Supportive housing offers hope to those with mental health issues

by Mike Blount and Anne Stokes



Increasing access to care



The expansion of Medi-Cal under the Affordable Care Act has been an important safety net for the homeless, allowing single adults to be eligible for coverage, even without receiving disability or other waivers. Ashley Brand, community benefit manager for Dignity Health, says the expansion removed a huge barrier to accessing care because many homeless people in the greater Sacramento area are single adults.

Dignity Health, in particular, has invested several million dollars into local Federally Qualified Health Centers to increase access to care for the community. Dignity Health has also partnered with other local organizations that connect people to the health care system.

"Increasing capacity and providing education on how to utilize coverage and access care are vital components of making the Medi-Cal expansion successful," Brand says. "For many people, this is the first time they have had coverage."

For more information about Dignity Health's role in providing health care to Sacramento-area individuals experiencing homelessness, visit www.dignityhealth.org.

As a child, Billy Teel knew that he wasn't quite like everyone else. "I was always different," he says. "I just never fit in."

But it wasn't until his early 30s that he found out why. In 1996, he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and ADHD. Despite initially getting psychiatric help, Teel ended up spiraling out of control. He says his mental health problems, coupled with a habit of self-medicating with drugs and alcohol, led to multiple jail stints, unemployment and eventually homelessness.

"I hit the streets with no place to go," he says. "I was sleeping under bridges and in wooded areas. It was messed up."

Teel finally found the lifeline he needed when he connected with a supportive housing program run by TLCS Inc., a nonprofit that provides services and housing support to people with mental illness in the greater Sacramento area.

Supportive housing provides not only shelter, but also access to broader supportive services that many individuals need to avoid returning to the streets. Erin Johansen, executive director of TLCS, says supportive housing is key to ending chronic homelessness and less costly than letting someone remain on the streets.

"Homeless individuals are worried about their immediate needs: 'Where am I going to sleep? What am I going to eat?'" Johansen says. "Outreach workers can help them with those things, but we want to get them into supportive housing where they can be stable."

A study conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority in 2009 revealed that it costs taxpayers \$35,844 a

year for a person to remain homeless, including jail time and emergency room services. By contrast, it only costs \$20,484 a year to provide permanent supportive housing, less than half of what it costs to house a prison inmate in California. TLCS's Full Service Partnership program, funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) through the Sacramento County Division of Behavioral Health Services, is an example of the potential success of supportive housing.

"In our Full Service Partnership [program], 91 percent of our clients have remained stably housed in the last three years," Johansen says. "That is a huge savings to the system and often results in a dynamic change for the person who was homeless."

But Johansen adds there are challenges to connecting homeless individuals to supportive housing. Co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse are major obstacles because the use of alcohol and drugs can exacerbate a person's experience of mental illness.

"A lot of people who are homeless and struggling may not be aware they are struggling because of mental health issues,"

Johansen says. "It takes special strategies to really engage with them." But with the patience to build a rapport, outreach workers can be successful. For Teel, supportive housing has made a life-changing difference. He's off the streets, in recovery for his mental health and substance use issues and even gives back by mentoring others.

"I can't say enough good things about TLCS," Teel says. "It's not just one person or program, it's a community of people that are helping all of us. They've all helped me build [my self-confidence] back up to where I think I can do this again."

I hit the streets with no place to go. I was sleeping under bridges and in wooded areas.

Billy Teel
Permanent supportive housing resident

Michael Parr is a homeless outreach navigator for Sacramento Steps Forward's Integrated Outreach Team. He's proud to be part of the boots-on-the-ground solution to fighting homelessness and has seen many successes result from the program.

PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN



Common Cents makes a difference

Thanks to funding from Sutter Health and the City of Sacramento, Sacramento Steps Forward recently piloted Common Cents, a coordinated assessment and entry program. Common Cents provides a more effective solution to getting people off the streets by helping service providers across the Continuum of Care coordinate their efforts, so that individuals experiencing homelessness can be quickly identified and matched to appropriate housing and services.

It works like this: IOT homeless outreach navigators hit the streets to seek out individuals experiencing homelessness. Once an individual has been identified, navigators perform a coordinated assessment to identify the person's needs. They then facilitate a connection to

the appropriate programs and services. Navigators also provide follow-up with individuals to make sure their needs have been addressed.

Common Cents employs a "housing first" priority: quickly provide shelter, then aid for other issues like substance abuse or employment. The program emphasizes that one approach does not fit every individual, although data and proven practices shape how navigators start working with each person they encounter.

Common Cents proved successful in its first year. For example, between January and October 2015, navigators successfully housed 73 people in new supportive housing units using the coordinated entry system.

Changing Lives, One Person at a Time

One-on-one approach to outreach proves successful

by Evan Tuchinsky

For Michael Parr, homelessness in Sacramento is not an abstract concept or dry statistics on a spreadsheet. He knows it's a condition experienced by real people with heartbreaking stories — individuals he's come to know.

There's the pregnant woman and her dog he saw huddled by a waterway. There's the ill veteran who beckoned to him in the park. He could rattle off myriad others; so could his 12 colleagues who comb the city for people needing shelter.

As members of Sacramento Steps Forward's Integrated Outreach Team (IOT), Parr and his fellow homeless outreach navigators hit the streets to identify individuals experiencing homelessness. They then use an integrated assessment tool to determine what services the person needs. IOT navigators then facilitate access to short- and long-term housing and other services needed to end homelessness, like mental health services or public assistance benefits.

The IOT navigators are the "boots on the ground" who represent the critical first piece of Common Cents, Sacramento Steps Forward's newly implemented coordinated assessment and entry program.

Parr says the program has seen tremendous success so far. He recalls one woman in particular: Parr was out with Emily Halcon, homeless services coordinator in the City Manager's office, and city

police officer Michelle Lazark. They met a woman in her mid-20s who was five months pregnant, drug-afflicted and lost. She wanted help.

The three borrowed a large golf cart from the Haggin Oaks Golf Complex and headed across the course. They walked across a huge water pipe and found her with her dog along Arcade Creek.

Lazark provided the woman with a three-day motel voucher so she'd have shelter over the weekend, until she could get into a residential treatment program, and Halcon arranged for pet foster care. In the program, the woman made a

friend who would eventually become her roommate and babysit her child, who was born totally healthy due to the care the woman received.

"That's like a case study symbolic of how the IOT works," Parr says. "In the short time it's been around, it's already proven how successful it can be, and we're going to continue to see

tangible results. I'm glad to be part of it."

The IOT comprises representatives from various service providers, including Sacramento Steps Forward, the City Manager's office, Sacramento Police Department's Impact Team, TLCS, Loaves and Fishes' Genesis program and Guest House.

"Not only are these people who can share their knowledge and experience, these are people who can make decisions and help expedite solving any challenge or issue we have," Parr says. "It's a tremendous collaborative effort."

It's a tremendous collaborative effort.

Michael Parr
Integrated Outreach Team member



Sacramento Steps Forward's Andrew Geurkink works with the Winter Sanctuary program to provide seasonal relief for people experiencing homelessness. He says that while the program has been a successful and unique public-interfaith partnership, there's still much more to be done to meet the community's needs.
PHOTO BY TONY NGUYEN

They really took something that is a community issue, and they shouldered that because that's what faith-based communities do.

Andrew Geurkink
Program manager at Sacramento Steps Forward

Tending the Flock



Faith-based groups offer critical services to people who are homeless

by Jennifer Bonnett

A hot meal. A warm sleeping bag. A safe place to lay your head. And fellowship with others who treat you with respect.

Those four things can make the difference for a Sacramento homeless man or woman spending a cold winter night on the streets.

These elements are part of Sacramento Steps Forward's Winter Sanctuary program, which runs each year from November to March.

Launched in 2010 under the leadership of Volunteers of America and Sacramento Steps Forward, Winter Sanctuary has grown into a rotating network of nearly 30 interfaith congregations that open up their facilities to offer food and shelter to people who are homeless on Sacramento's coldest nights. Volunteers provide not only a warm, safe place to stay, but two meals and a break from the monotony of living on the streets, according to Andrew Geurkink, program manager at Sacramento Steps Forward.

Since its inception, he has seen volunteers sit down after preparing dinner to play board games, show movies, give haircuts or just talk with their guests.

"Overnight staff provided by one of the organizing agencies ensures a safe and restful night's sleep for all," Geurkink says.

The program works like this: During the winter season, as many as 100 prescreened single adult men and women are shuttled from the Loaves and Fishes downtown staging area

to the host site. Once there, they are loaned a sleeping bag for the night. They receive a hot and nutritious dinner funded by the congregation and a simple breakfast the next morning.

Host sanctuaries include Christian churches, Jewish synagogues and Islamic mosques.

"They really took something that is a community issue, and they shouldered that because that's what faith-based communities do," Geurkink says.

Winter Sanctuary has filled a need that originally arose from a funding reduction for Sacramento County's winter shelter, leaving many single adults experiencing homelessness to survive on their own on the streets when temperatures drop close to or below freezing.

"Cold and wet weather threaten [their] lives," Geurkink says. "With budget cuts forcing a decrease in winter shelter funding, the situation continues to worsen."

That's where Winter Sanctuary steps in, providing not only shelter and food, but fellowship and dignity.

Still, the program manager says it's a challenge to coordinate busy church calendars in order to provide respite at other times of the year when temperatures hit the century mark.

SSF is working with local congregation members to not only help feed and shelter people experiencing homelessness, but assist with their guests' future needs, whether that is financial support with rent or other services that help individuals permanently get off the streets.

Employment Connect

We're
HIRING

A steady job can mean the difference between a roof over your head or a life on the streets. But too often, people experiencing homelessness face additional barriers to gaining the employment they so keenly need.

The business community can lend a hand in the fight to end homelessness, something that benefits everyone in the community.

By participating in an event called Employment Connect, local businesses are doing their part to help individuals experiencing homelessness. The biannual event began in 2013 as a way to connect qualified veterans, people experiencing homelessness, Welfare to Work recipients and former foster youth to local employers.

Participants receive résumé writing and mock interview training in advance, and are generally interviewed at the event and hired on the spot.

Chris Mann, program supervisor for Volunteers of America, says around 35 local businesses and 200 job candidates attend each Employment Connect. He describes the opportunity as win-win.

"We're getting people who were getting aid to become employable, tax-paying citizens, and we're able to get talented clients to local businesses who need people," Mann says. "The goal is really to shed some light on homelessness and get people off the streets so they can be effective again."

Joining Forces for a Better Sacramento



Homelessness is a community problem that we all must join together to solve. All people who live and work in the Sacramento area can be part of the solution. As the lead agency working to end homelessness in the Sacramento region, Sacramento Steps Forward invites you to get involved.



1331 Garden Hwy., Ste. 100
Sacramento, CA 95833
916-577-9770

info@sacstepsforward.org
sacramentostepsforward.org
www.facebook.com/
SacramentoStepsForward
twitter.com/SacStepsForward



DONATE

End homelessness in Sacramento. Provide a tax-deductible donation to support Sacramento Steps Forward and its partners. Contribute by visiting sacramento-steps-forward.secured.atpay.com or text "GET TO ZERO" to 916-318-5438.



SPONSOR

Sacramento Steps Forward works with private donors, local governments and other groups to implement programs, including Winter Sanctuary, Common Cents and Neighborhood Connect. Your group can help support the programs that make a difference for people in need. To get started, email info@sacstepsforward.org.



VOLUNTEER

Give the gift of time by supporting Sacramento Steps Forward for special projects and events. Find out more: email volunteer@sacstepsforward.org.



PARTICIPATE

Learn more about the issue of homelessness and leverage your donations to your favorite nonprofit organizations like Sacramento Steps Forward on May 3, 2016 during the Sacramento region's Big Day of Giving. Contribute by visiting bigdayofgiving.org/npo/sacramento-steps-forward.

Resources in Sacramento for people experiencing homelessness

2-1-1 SACRAMENTO

2-1-1 Sacramento is a 24/7 referral hotline for community services relating to: employment, housing, financial assistance, children, seniors, food and health care. Dial 2-1-1 from a local line, 916-498-1000, or 800-500-4931 from outside the Sacramento area.

DAYTIME SHELTERS, SERVICES, FOOD

LOAVES & FISHES

916-446-0874 | 12th & N. C streets
Bathrooms, showers, meals, services. Mary House shelter for women and children. Mustard Seed School, preschool-eighth grade:
Sign up daily, 8:15- 8:45 a.m.

WELLSPRING WOMEN'S CENTER

916-454-9688 | 3414 Fourth Ave.
For women and children. Morning meal, childcare, services.

NIGHT SHELTERS

SAINT JOHN'S PROGRAM FOR REAL CHANGE

916-453-1482 | 4410 Power Inn Road
18-month program for women and children (teenage sons allowed).
14-day respite service for women in crisis.

FAMILY PROMISE

916-443-3107 | 1321 N. C St.
Shelter for families (including fathers and teenage sons).
Call to join waiting list.

FAMILY SHELTER PROGRAM (NEXT MOVE)

916-454-2120 | www.nextmovesacramento.org
30-day shelter for families (including fathers and teenage sons).
Call to join waiting list.

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA FAMILY SHELTER

916-443-4688 | www.voa-sac.org/SAC-Family-Shelter
120-day shelter for families (including fathers and teenage sons) receiving CalWORKs. Apply at Loaves & Fishes Mary House
Thurs., 8 a.m.- 11:30 a.m.

NORTH A STREET SHELTER

916-448-5507 | 1400 N. A St., Bldg. B
90-day shelter for single men. Apply for waiting list in person, Mon., 8 p.m. ID and TB test required.

OPEN ARMS

916-451-1765 | 1900 Point West Way, Ste. 270
90-day shelter for people who are homeless, doctor-referred, HIV+, or have AIDS. ID and TB test required.

SALVATION ARMY

916-442-0331 | 12th and N. B streets
Shelter for single adult men and women. Call to join waiting list.

SISTER NORA'S PLACE

916-669-7000 | 1351 N. C St.
Shelter/crisis facility for women with mental disabilities. Apply at Loaves & Fishes Genesis.

UNION GOSPEL MISSION

916-447-3268 | 400 Bannon St.
7-day shelter for single men. Apply in person from 5-5:30 p.m.
ID and TB test required.

WINTER SANCTUARY

Seasonal night shelter for single men and women, late Nov. to March 31.
Register daily at 1400 N. C St. at 3:30 p.m.

CRISIS SHELTERS

WEAVE — WOMEN ESCAPING A VIOLENT ENVIRONMENT

916-920-2952 | 866-920-2951 24-hr crisis line
60-day shelter and services for women experiencing intimate partner violence crisis.

SACRAMENTO CHILDREN'S HOME

4553 Pasadena Ave. | 916-679-3600
6699 South Land Park Dr. | 916-394-2000
Crisis childcare (day and overnight) for children 0-5 years.

MY SISTER'S HOUSE

916-428-3271 (24-hr. hotline) | www.my-sisters-house.org
90-day shelter for survivors of human trafficking or domestic violence (including men and children).

WOMEN'S REFUGE PROGRAM (NEXT MOVE)

916-455-2160 ext. 315 | www.nextmovesacramento.org
30-day shelter for single women.

YOUTH EMERGENCY SHELTERS

CHILDREN'S RECEIVING HOME OF SACRAMENTO
916-482-2370 (24-hr. hotline) | 3555 Auburn Blvd.

WIND YOUTH SERVICES

800-339-7177 (24-hr. hotline) | 1722 J St., 3rd floor
Shelter & emergency services for youth (12-17).
Drop-In Day Center | 916-561-4900 | 701 Dixie Ave.

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD

800-786-2929 | www.nrscrisisline.org

ADOLFO — LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

916-453-2900
Housing and services for homeless, disabled former foster youth.

LAVERNE ADOLFO HOUSING PROGRAM — VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA

916-879-1784
Support and paid housing for homeless former foster youth (18-24).