

FRCoC Spring Newsletter

2007

Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care



Volume 1, Issue 1

March 2007

Workshop Shows Who is Homeless

On January 31st, shelter and service providers held a workshop for the region's elected officials. The goal was to show, in clear terms, who is homeless in Planning District 16, what is being done to help them, and what needs to be done to address this growing problem. The Thurman Brisben Center hosted this event at their facility in Fredericksburg. While participants ate lunch (spaghetti with garlic bread and even desert and coffee), Reverend Larry Haun from Fredericksburg Baptist Church and MICAH Ecumenical Ministries,

opened the presentations with a discussion of who exactly ends up homeless in this region.

1. The homeless population includes relatively young people who have mental handicaps. They were/are special education students, often cared for by elderly caregivers. When asked when they became homeless, persons in this group often reply: "When Grandma died."
2. Another group is adults with mental health issues. Sometimes they come off their medication,

with bad results. Previously housed persons can lose everything under these circumstances and will then avoid the services that might help them.

3. Veterans are another group. They usually live outside and many work, but many appear to fear success. Success in war has bad consequences for the losers and some veterans studiously avoid responsibility, for anything. They try to self medicate, with alcohol.

Special points of interest:

- *What happens to those with severe mental retardation or mental illness when their caregiver passes away?*
- *Many of our Viet Nam Vets suffer from issues which result in them being homeless*
- *Alcoholics eventually spiral downward and become homeless*

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FRCoC Formalizes

The Fredericksburg Continuum of Care recently formalized its group with policies and a new mission statement.

Keep an eye out—FRCoC will soon be on-line. The address will be www.fredcoc.org.

FRCoC Mission Statement

The mission of the Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care is to develop, promote and support a continuum of human services and housing opportunities that reduce and prevent homelessness in our community.



FRCoC Service Area

Who are the Homeless? Cont'd from Page 1

4. Alcoholics in a downward spiral are often homeless. They have progressively lost their homes, their jobs, and their families. Many work as day laborers because full time work requires ID and other documentation that they simply do not have.

Persons who are homeless often cannot meet the criteria for obtaining medical care at the Moss Free Clinic. As a result, the homeless typically have chronic health issues.

Persons who are homeless have on one to bury them when they die.

Persons who are homeless are sometimes preyed upon—as sport! They become the victims of theft, rape, and the wanton destruction of their limited property. Even in the harshest weather, when the Cold Weather Shelter is open, groups will designate one person to stay in camp to try to protect their equip-

ment/belongings. The risk to these lone individuals is more than just harsh weather.

So what should be done? Encouraging panhandling is not a good option. Persons begging for money should be directed to the right place to receive help. Giving money may ease the sense of guilt, but should be avoided. Directions to the day shelter or some other suitable location are better. Those who we see as homeless are still people. They are someone's child. They have human needs and we need to take care of them. The challenge is to then have a viable system in place that can truly assist to prevent persons such persons in need. Such a system would

include emergency shelters, detox programs, mental health services, transitional housing, permanent housing and a way from repeating the cycle once they work through the process to overcome homelessness.

“The challenge is to then have a viable system in place that can truly assist such persons in need.”

Rev. Larry Hahn and Lisa Brewer discuss chronic homelessness and how we can help



Enumerating the Homeless Population: An Annual Endeavor

On January 25th, the regional Continuum of Care (CoC) coordinated what is called a point-in-time count of the homeless population. The concept is to capture a snapshot of the homeless, both sheltered and unsheltered. This method is the most accurate way to be comprehensive without double-counting. The CoC is a group of shelter organizations and service providers who meet on a monthly basis to coordinate their response to homeless needs.

For the third consecutive year, this regional count was organized by jurisdictions, with the Social Service Directors taking the lead. The directors, after all, know their communities best and can develop the most effective way to obtain a count of homeless persons in their respective localities. The numbers obtained on the night of January 25th show a large number of

homeless children, compared with the number of homeless adults. This disparity is the direct result of the Federal definition for homeless that we are required to use for such counts. Children living in motels, for instance, are considered homeless, by Federal definition, while their parents are not. Further, persons on waiting lists for housing or living with friends or family are also not considered homeless. As a consequence, the number of persons who could potentially become homeless is much larger than the following numbers show.

“The 2006 Point-in-Time count showed 447 homeless persons, 329 of which were children.”

Total homeless persons in Planning District 16, by jurisdiction:

Fredericksburg	199
Stafford	199
Spotsylvania	109
King George	26
Caroline	28

The Point-in-Time count done in 2005, revealed 407 homeless persons, 283 of which were children. The 2006 Point-in-Time count showed 447 homeless persons, 329 of which were children. Homelessness is clearly growing. In addition, the high number of homeless children reveals unstable housing for their families. Furthermore, Census data shows thousands of families in the Planning District as living below the poverty level. The homeless population is very likely going to continue to expand.

Alarming Statistics

- Children and families make up the fastest growing segment of the homeless population
- As many as 500,000 families are living in shelters nationwide
- There are 1.35 million homeless children each year
- The average homeless child in the US is 6 years old
- Homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school
- Homeless children suffer 3 times as many GI disorders, 5 times as many diarrhea disorders and twice as many hospitalizations as non-homeless children
- Nearly 40% of homeless families have had their food stamps reduced in the last year



Erik Nelson, Senior Planner of Fredericksburg, discusses CoC and Point in Time

Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care

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**Coming
soon—www.fredcoc.org**



Membership Criteria

Any agency who represents, works with or is concerned about homelessness, affordable housing or low income people and families can join the FRCoC.

Meetings are the second Wednesday at 9:00 am at the Salvation Army in the City of Fredericksburg. Feel free to join us.



Front: Matt Kelly, City Council; George Solley, City Council and Erik Nelson (rear) Fredericksburg Planning Dept. and Chair of CoC enjoy networking and lunch

