

INSIDE

Senior center to get upgrade
Local housing listing and parking at 1.7 million dollars in total cost will be used to bring up a two-story senior living center in Santa Barbara, in addition to similar projects that are moving quickly through the pipeline.

Runaway car injures 2
A technician at a local auto shop says he was accidentally hit by a vehicle equipped with a special safety system designed for disabled drivers, he claims.

College leaders talk 'green'
When representatives from dozens of local universities, colleges and community colleges gathered in Santa Barbara last week for an annual sustainability conference, the big question was the prospect of engaging in green activities.



HOLLYWOOD MURDER TRIAL
New witness surfaces in Hollywood murder trial
 BY GARY PETERSON
 A new witness has surfaced in the trial of a man accused of murdering a woman in Hollywood last year. The witness, who is a former friend of the accused, claims to have seen the accused at the scene of the crime. The trial is set to continue for several more days.

City shapes plan to help chronically homeless
 BY ERIC LINDBERG
 The city of Santa Barbara is shaping a plan to help chronically homeless people. The plan includes providing temporary housing, job training, and other services. The city is working with various organizations to implement the plan.

City shapes plan to help chronically homeless

BY ERIC LINDBERG
DAILY SOUND STAFF WRITER

Two years deep into a decade-long effort to tackle the difficult issue of chronic homelessness in Santa Barbara County, organizers said they have built a strong foundation that will prove critical in providing services to those who find themselves perpetually forced to live on the streets.

Those involved in the coordinated effort known as Bringing Our Community Home outlined a series of successes during the initial stages, in addition to noting the long and complicated path forward.

"We're not to the point yet where I feel like we really have a handle on things," acknowledged John Buttny, interim executive director of the program.

However, he is encouraged by progress made in the last two years, including the

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formation of a homeless services guide and a safety program for homeless women, as well as headway being made on discharge planning for homeless inmates at the county jail.

After a lengthy series of meetings to formulate the local 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, organizers brought together information on the 75-plus agencies and service providers that offer homelessness resources throughout the county.

A "homeless services locator" is now available at www.bringsbcohome.org, featuring basic information about each agency including key contact information and a brief description of the services they provide.

"That, we hope, will be used by caseworkers," Buttny said.

A resource guide has also been compiled for organizations on the South Coast that offer eviction prevention services — approximately 30 separate groups.

The safety program for women, which is essentially a coalition of homeless shelters and law enforcement agencies, is designed to provide shelter to any women who find themselves on the streets at night, in addition to providing contacts for outreach teams and case workers to help transition those women into housing.

Several hundred people have already been provided with permanent supportive housing, and 217 housing units for the chronically homeless have been built or are in the planning pipeline.

"It is certainly a big step in a long journey," said Santa Barbara City Councilmember Helene Schneider.

The numbers connected with that "journey" are staggering. Of the 6,000 to 6,200 homeless people in the county each year, an estimated 1,000 are considered chronically homeless — those who cycle in and out of the homeless services system and often struggle with poverty, substance abuse, poor health and mental illness.

The stated goal of the organization is to house 1,200 chronically homeless



DAILY SOUND / Victor Maccharoli

County Supervisor Doreen Farr gives an update of the Ten-year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness yesterday at the Transition House.

people by the end of the decade-long program, in addition to providing outreach to 3,600, offering employment assistance to 600 and giving benefits to 1,200 people.

It's a lofty goal, to be sure, and Buttny said he has accepted the fact that the homeless problem won't be solved in 10 years. But if the group can reduce the chronically homeless population to 100 or fewer, he will consider the effort a success.

For now, his next pursuit is to improve discharge planning services at the jail, particularly to address late-night releases that have prompted some homeless people to attempt to complete a dangerous walk back to Santa Barbara along Calle Real in the middle of the night.

"We're trying to work out a transportation system for that," Buttny said.

County Deputy Chief Geoff Banks, with the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department, said 10 percent of the jail population is homeless and discharge issues clearly have been a problem for years.

"I served four years at the jail and it was constantly a serious problem we had," he said.

Under a new contract for mental health services at the jail just approved this week, the jail will have a fulltime discharge planner for the entire inmate population, he said.

Bringing Our Community Home has also secured funding for a half-time discharge planner specifically for homeless inmates, designed to help them connect with caseworkers and find a place to go other than the streets after being released.

"This is the most optimistic I've been in 31 years [with the sheriff's department] about truly seeing a change," Banks said.

Another major effort that will be undertaken in the coming years involves creating a system to track data on those placed into supportive housing.

There is currently no uniform data system in the county that will allow organizers to confirm that money is being saved by placing homeless people into housing.

"If you can prove with numbers that it works, then you can get the business community and the general population to say, OK, I can get on board with this," Schneider said.