

COMING HOME



Welcome to our first issue!

It is our pleasure to present you with the first issue of *Coming Home*. We hope this newsletter will help you to:

- learn more about the complex social issue of homelessness
- understand the cost benefits of addressing it
- find out about promising efforts to address homelessness here in your community
- see how you can get involved to be part of the solution.

Coming Home is produced by the Santa Barbara County Homeless Coordinator and staff from the Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services. We welcome your feedback. Please feel free to email us at cominghome@sbcsocialserv.org.

—Roger Heroux, Editor

Plan Aims to End Chronic Homelessness in 10 Years

Recognizing a need to change the way we respond to the problem of chronic homelessness, local government, businesses, clergy, service providers, philanthropists, civic leaders, and homeless and formerly homeless individuals and their advocates (over 100 people in all) joined together over several months to create *Bringing Our Community Home* — a well-researched 172-page plan to end chronic homelessness in Santa Barbara County within a decade.

Drawing on best practices and models, the plan calls for broad integration of systems and services among non-traditional partners (including County departments), and aims to reconfigure the homeless system into a housing system.

The plan has been approved by the County Board of Supervisors and the county’s major Cities. A governing board has been structured, an executive director is being recruited, and eleven projects are “in the pipeline.”

Who are the chronically homeless?

Each year, over 6300 people experience homelessness in Santa Barbara County (some 4000 on any given night). Most are homeless for a short period, utilizing various services to secure housing. However, others are *chronically homeless* — single adults and families with children who:

- have been continually homeless for a year, or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years,
- have a disabling condition, and
- have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. the street) or in an emergency shelter during that time.

Chronically homeless people make up only 10 to 15 percent of the homeless population — yet they consume 50 to 65 percent of the

Type of “housing”	Cost per day
Santa Barbara County Jail	\$86
Private Health Care Facility	\$800
Hospital Bed	\$1600
Permanent Supportive Housing	\$28

resources directed towards aiding homeless people, due to their continual movement through the service system. Chronically homeless people are also frequent users of other costly public services, such as hospital emergency rooms, psychiatric emergency wards and the criminal justice system. Many of these individuals have serious mental illness.

In Santa Barbara County, there are an estimated 945 chronically homeless individuals consuming over \$18 million in services and other assistance annually. These costs can be reduced, and chronic homelessness ended, by taking a new approach centered on supportive housing — the heart of the plan.

What does the plan propose?

The plan specifies four key strategies:

1. *Prevention & Intervention*: Catch people at risk and stop chronic homelessness before it starts.
2. *Supportive Services*: Provide diverse and appropriate care that meets the chronically homeless “where they are” and nurtures lasting, stable relationships.
3. *Permanent Affordable Housing*: Increase, build and preserve affordable permanent housing through recruitment, rehabilitation, new development and rental subsidies.
4. *Economic Self-Sufficiency*: Provide for long-term housing stability by increasing incomes through vocational opportunity and financial benefit access.

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One-Stop Shop Opens for North County's Needy

On December 3, Good Samaritan Services Inc. (GSSI) opened "Charlene's Closet" in Santa Maria — a one-stop shop for homeless families staying at the Good Samaritan shelter, as well as other needy families in the community.

What services are offered?

Charlene's Closet offers the following free support services:

- A grocery store
- A seasonal boutique
- A toy store

The grocery store provides free groceries to families in need. Shopping appointments are available every morning, Monday through Saturday, and shopping assistants are available for clients. By spending less on basic necessities like food, families have more money available to secure shelter.

The boutique is open year-round to serve seasonal needs: for example, stocking stuffers in December, coats and clothes in January, prom and Mother's Day in May.

The toy store allow parents to choose gifts for their children during the holiday season and birthdays. Appointments are available year-round. During the holiday season, a volunteer-staffed gift-wrapping center is available, so that every gift is wrapped and ready for parents to present to their children.

Who qualifies for services?

Clients are identified and referred through community agencies (county services, social service agencies, schools, churches, etc.). Clients must meet federal low-income guidelines to be eligible for services.

Why a "store" model?

"Charlene's Closet provides a place where families can get the help they need with dignity and respect through the power of choice," said GSSI Executive Director Sylvia Barnard. When families choose what they need for themselves, they feel empowered. Waste is reduced as well, compared for example to traditional food pass-out programs, which do not meet families' individual food allergies and dietary restrictions.



From left: GSSI Board President Larry Vernon, GSSI Executive Director Sylvia Barnard, Fundraising Chairs Jack Boysen and Kathy Boysen in the toy store.

The Charlene's Closet concept is similar to that of the Unity Shoppe in Santa Barbara, which has served that community for more than 90 years (originally under the name Santa Barbara Council of Christmas Cheer.).

Why the name?

Charlene's Closet is named in honor of Charlene Chase, the former director of the Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, who passed away on February 3, 2007.

"Charlene was my personal mentor and an amazing woman," said Barnard. "Her commitment to those in need, especially children, inspired everyone around her. When I think of Charlene, I always imagined her hall closet full of toys for children that otherwise would never have an opportunity . . . this is why the project was dedicated in her name."

How was this ambitious plan realized?

Generous donations from the community made Charlene's Closet a reality. The 2,000-square-foot building was donated by the Santa Maria Moose Lodge rent-free for up to five years. Tom Martinez & Associates donated the architectural work. Halsell Builders and many subcontractors and suppliers donated over \$75,000 in labor and materials to renovate the site.

Start-up money for the project came from the Hutton Foundation, with a cash match from the Cal Poly AmeriCorps Fellows Program to provide staffing.

Further funds came from a "Friends of Charlene" fundraiser held November 17, featuring a dinner, fashion show and auction. The event was a huge success, with some 200 people in attendance and \$17,000 raised to help pay for construction and remodeling costs.

For more information

Charlene's Closet is located at 122 West El Camino in Santa Maria. For more information, contact the Good Samaritan administration office at (805) 346-8185.

Transitional Living Facility Opens for Young Adults Exiting Foster Care

Four years in the making, the La Morada transitional housing facility for youth “aging out” of foster care officially opened November 26, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony featuring dignitaries from around the county.

The County used grant funding to transform the 6400 s.f. building on San Antonio Road in Santa Barbara from an aging Sheriff’s facility into a cheery house with eight cozy bedrooms, a well-stocked kitchen, and a roomy living area.

The facility provides housing, food and services to help youth who have “emancipated” — that is, lost eligibility for foster care because they turned 18 — to successfully transition to independent adulthood.

“We’ve found that emancipated foster youth often end up homeless,” explained Social Services director Kathy Gallagher at the opening. “It is a recipe for failure when foster kids move out into the community without that support and family that we all have.”

Why transitional housing?

Children enter foster care for various reasons: their birth parents may have died, or been imprisoned, or been deemed unable to care for them. Foster care provides parenting for these children when nobody else can. But when the children turn 18, they lose eligibility for foster care. Overnight, these youth are on their own with few resources.

Many have nowhere to go and no one to turn to. Many have neither a job nor a diploma. Some have mental health issues. Emancipated foster youth are far more likely than their peers to end up homeless or incarcerated — and less likely to complete school or avoid hunger and poverty.

Of the 4000 foster youth who emancipate each year in California, up to half are homeless within 18 months. Of the 36 who emancipated in Santa



From left: CWS Independent Living Program Coordinator Yolanda Perez, State Assemblymember Pedro Nava, County Supervisor Janet Wolf, Santa Barbara County Dept. of Social Services (DSS) Director Kathy Gallagher, and DSS Facilities Manager Molly Marino.

Barbara County in July 2006, six were known to be homeless by January 2007. La Morada is intended to help former foster youth beat those odds.

What does La Morada offer?

La Morada’s residents — up to eight former foster youth — work with case managers from the nonprofit Family Care Network to set and fulfill individual educational and employment goals. A resident advisor is available, as are physical and mental health services. Residents can stay up to 24 months, providing they are making progress toward their goals and following the program’s rules.

Each resident is expected to divert 10% of their income to an interest-bearing savings account, and the state matches that contribution to \$200 per month. The money, turned over to residents when they leave, can help them cover a security deposit on a new place, a used car to get to work, school expenses, or other needs.

Who lives there?

La Morada currently has seven residents, three female and four male, ages 19-20. Several were present at the opening. Despite difficult pasts and daunting new challenges, each was excited to have stable housing and support in reaching their goals.

“Coming from nothing, this is a blessing,” said resident Manny Peralta, who is now an apprentice in an upscale salon. Resident Autumn Pommier, who is completing her GED, agreed. “It’s hard to make it on your own,” she said. Both Manny and Autumn had experienced homelessness before entering the program.

A buoyant sense of community was apparent among the residents, and that mental well-being and sense of connection is one of the goals of the program. Friendships formed while in the program can help residents long after they leave.

How is it operated?

La Morada, operated by the Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, has a budget of approximately \$300,000 through the end of the fiscal year. The money comes from the state’s Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP+) Program, established by SB 1576 in June 2006 specifically to help this population.

THP+ funded programs have been found to help former foster youth ages 18-24 to achieve stable housing, living wage employment and higher education. La Morada is the 17th such program in the state, and the first in Santa Barbara County.

For more information

For more on La Morada and the County’s THP+ program, contact Yolanda Perez at (805) 696-8971. For more on Family Care Network, visit www.fcni.org. For more on THP+, visit www.childsworld.ca.gov/transition_342.htm.

Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities Opening Soon in Lompoc

An estimated 80% of chronically homeless people struggle with issues of substance abuse. For many people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, establishing a life of health and stability requires treatment for drug or alcohol problems.

Good Samaritan Services Inc., one of the largest social service providers in the North County, is working on two facilities to meet that need in Lompoc.

Detox center

The first is a six-bed detox center at 608 W. Ocean Ave. The center — the first in Lompoc — is due to open its doors in early 2008, offering residential detoxification services based on a social model. Clients will stay in the modular home for three to 21 days, during which time they can begin the process of recovery from addiction.

John Treur, Program Manager of the Good Samaritan's Santa Maria detox center Recovery Point, emphasized that the success of such an endeavor will not come from one agency's efforts alone. The center, he said, will be a tool for bringing the Lompoc community together in a network of assistance (including Public Health, Mental Health, Social Services, Legal Aid, Family Services, law enforcement, nonprofit agencies and the private sector) to address the substance abuse crisis.

Perinatal residential center

The second soon-to-open facility is located next to the detox center (in what was formerly Avenue Flower Shop). It is a 20-bed perinatal residential center for pregnant or new mothers who are substance abusers, many of whom may also be homeless or at risk of homelessness. This program is for up to six months, and includes parenting classes, financial education, child care, random on-site drug testing, therapy and life skills classes. On-site drug and alcohol



Under construction: detox center (above) and perinatal residential center (below).



treatment will be available for up to 18 months.

This program, the first of its kind in Lompoc, will provide women in need with the chance to turn their lives around, find a supportive community, live in a clean and sober environment, begin to establish financial stability, and give their children proper care, health, and the opportunity to thrive.

What happens after the program?

When individuals complete the detox process or a brief residential program, they will work with staff to complete exit plans, which can prepare them for re-entry into the community by making connections with rehabilitation centers, shelters, counseling and other assistance programs.

Housing is key to re-entry

Lack of housing, says Mr. Treur, is often the greatest obstacle to continued recovery. For many individuals, substance abuse not only contributes to the cause of homelessness, but also continues as they attempt to self-medicate the depression and anxiety brought on by not having a stable home. Housing options are limited for those in recovery.

Transitional family shelters provide a way for families to build a secure foundation for future success and, ultimately, independence. One such shelter is Good Samaritan's two-year, 56-bed family housing program, which charges 30% of a family's income and requires savings.

Clean and sober living programs provide structured transitional housing with accountability and the opportunity to work and continue recovery in outside programs while living in a monitored home. Good Samaritan opened a men's clean and sober living home in Lompoc this year.

These options are helpful, but more are needed. It is Mr. Treur's hope that others will take interest in developing housing opportunities for those seeking stabilization and an environment conducive to continued recovery.

For more information

For more information on Good Samaritan's alcohol and drug treatment programs, please contact John Treur at (805)347-3338.

10-Year Plan

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Ending chronic homelessness doesn't mean there will never be a chronically homeless person in the county. It means identifying people currently or soon to be without housing, and quickly providing them safe and appropriate short- and long-term housing options. It has been found that when intensive services are combined with housing, even the most difficult-to-house individuals respond and can stabilize their lives.

For more information

For more information about the plan or how to get involved, visit www.bringsbcohome.org.