



City of Gainesville/Alachua County
Office on Homelessness



PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE STATUS OF FORMER TENT CITY RESIDENTS

Date: June 24, 2009

To: Honorable Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan and Members of the City Commission

From: Jayne Moraski, Executive Director of the Office on Homelessness

Subject: Preliminary Results of Tent City Evacuation Proceedings and Summary Report on Homeless Encampments in Other Cities

On June 18, 2009, the City Commission approved the request to increase the number of beds from 35 to 60 at St. Francis House to accommodate the evacuation of homeless residents at Tent City. The City Commission approved the increase for only 14 days due to a provision in the City Code which allows for only fourteen consecutive days, which expires on July 2, 2009. In accordance with the provision, at the end of the first fourteen day period, the City Manager or City Commission may authorize an additional fourteen days if the emergency remains in effect. As a result, the City Commission requested staff to provide a status report back at the July 2, 2009 City Commission Meeting to determine whether the emergency still exists for the residents of Tent City.

The following information is only a preliminary report on the status of the Tent City residents, including additional services that are being provided to assist the residents during this provisional period. The report also includes examples of Tent City homeless encampments from other comparable cities:

Additional Services Provided:

After the second round of evacuations was announced, the Office on Homelessness worked with area providers to identify a partial solution to the problem of closing Tent City. The Alachua County Office on Poverty Reduction, the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry, Alachua County Housing Authority and St. Francis House were instrumental in creating a plan to provide resources to former Tent City residents. As proposed by the Office on Homelessness, Alachua County Housing Authority (ACHA) and the St. Francis House in a memo dated June 15, 2009, if persons could not be housed at St. Francis House, they were referred to ACHA to provide hotel vouchers. The program would utilize policies similar to the Cold Night Shelter program which is operated by both St. Francis House and ACHA.

This report provides a summary of the preliminary numbers of people that utilized services at St. Francis House, and through the Alachua County Housing Authority and other service providers.



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Gainesville Police Department posted notices of trespass on private property on June 4, 2009 and then again on adjoining properties June 11, 2009. Both notices informed residents they had one week to vacate the premises. And in both cases, officers sent out a second flier on red paper the day prior to evacuation. All fliers contained a referral to the Office on Homelessness if assistance was required.

The Gainesville/Alachua County Office on Homelessness is housed at the Alachua County Housing Authority (ACHA). Since June 4, 2009 (the day of the first notice to vacate Tent City), **65 persons self-identified as homeless** received outreach from staff of either the Office on Homelessness, ACHA or the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry.

The Alachua County Housing Authority, through referral from St. Francis House and outreach from the Office on Homelessness, **housed 42 people with hotel/motel vouchers from June 18th through June 24, 2009**. The hotel vouchers utilize the same hotel agreements identified through the Cold Night Shelter program.

Healthcare for Homeless Veterans conducted outreach to identify homeless veterans in the Tent City area in the fall of 2008. They estimated that 7-8 persons living in Tent City were veterans and actively encouraged these veterans to enter the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, also known as HUD-VASH. The HUD-VASH program combines HUD rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Veterans Affairs. The program coordinator notes that outreach was conducted in Tent City again in June of 2009 through the HOME Van and the Office on Homelessness. Though several veterans have been housed in HUD/VASH program that began in October 2008, no new homeless vets came forward to be housed after Tent City was closed.

Homeward Bound referral – Outreach conducted by the Office on Homelessness referred 3 people to St. Francis House to utilize the Homeward Bound program. The "Homeward Bound" Family Reunification Program is designed to help homeless persons locate family members who would be willing to take the homeless persons in and help them get back on their feet. One-time bus transportation is provided to unite homeless persons with families in other cities or states. St. Francis House staff confirmed that **2 persons have utilized the program** from June 11-June 24, 2009.



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St. Francis House began taking accepting additional persons in its emergency capacity on the night of Thursday June 18th. The first night after (June 18) only 3 persons stayed at the facility because staff was waiting for official approval from the City Commission. From June 18, 2009 through June 24, 2009, **145 people have used the emergency shelter additional capacity.** This is an average of 21 persons per night since the emergency order took effect. It is important to note that this number is 21 people more than their normal nightly capacity of 35 persons. **St. Francis House has consistently been at capacity since the emergency rule took effect.**

Throughout this provisional period, both St. Francis House and Alachua County Housing Authority have continued to serve people since the numbers in the report above have been identified. At this time, St. Francis House is completely full to capacity, which indicates a critical need for the City Manager or City Commission to consider extending the emergency ruling another 2 weeks to continue efforts to accommodate the evacuation of homeless residents at Tent City.



Homeless Encampment examples:

1. Pinellas Hope Camp is a camp run by Catholic Charities in the Arch Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida. It features 270 single-person tents on land owned by the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg in a wooded area north of the city, has room for about 270 and has been filled to capacity since it opened two years ago. The camp's residents range in age from 18 to mid-70s. No families are allowed. The camp has a food hall, bathrooms and showers, a laundry room and a few computers for residents to look for jobs and prepare resumes.

Sarasota was named the top of the nation's 20 "meanest" cities for the homeless in a list compiled by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty in 2006. A tent city on private land was removed with force and several tents were slashed in that year. The area began to realize they needed a new way to deal with homeless and encampments. After two years of advocate work, Pinellas Hope Camp was opened in the fall of 2008. Pinellas Hope was welcomed by St. Petersburg. Mayor Rick Baker said the city contributed \$250,000 to the camp last year and city crews helped clear the land.

Intake and logistics: Camp rules include no drugs, no alcohol and no violence. Residents come and go during the day but there is a 10:30 p.m. curfew during the week and midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. People are referred to the tent city by teams of local police and social workers.

Security is provided by an off-duty officer during the eight hours of night after curfew each night. The site is fenced. An FDLE background check is completed on all clients before admission to the program. Persons with a criminal background will not automatically be turned away; however, sexual predators or those with a history of violence will not be admitted. Intake occurs one day per week. Once they are accepted, residents are assigned to one of three case workers to try to help them get jobs.

Sheila Lopez, the chief operating officer for Catholic Charities, said the average stay is about 77 days but many stay longer.

Funding Sources: Funding is provided by Pinellas County, the cities of St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Largo, and Seminole and both in-kind and monetary donations from individuals, businesses and organizations. All funds, both revenues and expenses, are accounted for through this single-defined, designated fund. No administrative fees or monies are withdrawn by Catholic Charities or other organizations that do not go strictly for the use of the care of the homeless in Pinellas Hope.

Ms. Lopez has offered to share camp rules, program agreement with the city, user statistics and some of her operating budget with Gainesville if the commission or members of the 10-year plan to end homelessness's Implementation Committee are interested in learning more.



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In 2009-2010 they plan to add another 80 units of Quonset huts to the facility.

(Sources: Interview with Ms. Lopez and Reuters news article by Robert Green dated June 16, 2009. "Florida tent city offers hope to homeless.")



Photo: Camp Pinellas Hope in St. Petersburg, FL. Each tent is numbered, each camper is registered and assigned a caseworker, and all are required to abide by camp rules, including a 10:30 p.m. curfew.

It is important to note that while there are several homeless encampments throughout Florida, few have sustained the level of support of Pinellas Hope and no other *publicly supported* example could be identified within the state of Florida (Source: Tom Pierce, Florida's Office on Homelessness, Department of Children and Families).



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2. Keys Overnight Temporary Shelter (KOTS) is a low-demand shelter located in Key West, Florida and was created by the local homeless coalition and the City as an alternative to tent cities growing on the beaches and in the mangroves of the islands.

Intake and logistics: The KOTS Facility offers showers and Temporary Overnight Shelter for approximately 150 persons nightly. Four military-style Quonset huts are used as dormitories for men, and two converted mobile homes are used for women. Ten showers are on site and towels, sheets and personal hygiene kits are provided.

Gates open at 6:00pm daily and the facility is completely fenced. Two attendants are on site at all times. All guests are discharged at 7:30am daily. Referrals and information are available for community based programs, but there is no case management associated with the facility. Drugs and alcohol are not allowed on the property.

Funding Sources: The Florida Keys Outreach Coalition (FKOC) runs the shelter. The City has a contract with FKOC to manage the facility whereby FKOC manages the facility, but the City pays for most of the costs of operation including most utilities, maintenance, and general liability insurance. The facility is located on ground owned by the sheriff's office. The sheriff's office provides electricity for the site. They also provide a crew of inmates to do the laundry and housekeeping. This work crew significantly reduces the maintenance costs of the facility.

(Source: Interview with Dr. Reverend Stephen Braddock, Chief Operating Office for the Florida Keys Outreach Coalition)

3. Dignity Village in Portland, OR is a Tent City in Portland, OR founded by homeless people. Dignity Village has now grown out of the "tent city" mode and has become a village. They have set up administrative and legislative branches of government and are working on a judicial branch.

The Village has moved away from an all "tent city" to small houses built primarily by the villagers with the help of some of supporters from the wider community. For those that could not build because of physical disabilities a work exchange program was created.

They also have 24 hour security headed up by residents. Every person in the village must put in minimum of 2 hours per week on security. They have worked very hard to insure the safety and peace in the Village. The security team not only enforces the rules but, keeps an eye on those that are not in good health, watches for fire, guards the gate from people that could do harm to the village and/or the villagers.

They have five basic rules. No violence to yourself or others. No theft. No alcohol, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on the property or within a one block area. No continuous disruptive behavior. Residents must contribute to the maintenance and operation of the Village.



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All villagers must give 10 hours labor to the Village per week unless they work 16 to 30 hours or go to school half days. Then the time is reduced to 6 hours. If they work 30 or more hours or go to school all day then the time is reduced to 4 hours.

They have an intake committee of residents that require new persons to fill out paperwork and agree to the rules.

The Portland City Council agreed on August 21, 2001 to let the group camp at a city lot called Sunderland Yard, seven miles from downtown in the Sunderland neighborhood. Portland City Council has guaranteed the community's existence through at least 2010. (Sources: www.dignityvillage.org and *Street Roots* newspaper article printed October 24, 2003. Portland, OR. "From Doorways to Dignity" by Israel Bayer.)



Examples of homes built in Dignity Village

(Source: www.dignityvillage.org)

Cc: Russ Blackburn, City Manager
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