



COMING HOME



Welcome to our fourth issue!

With the founding two years ago of the organization *Bringing Our Community Home (BOCH)*, implementation began on the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Santa Barbara County. Efforts toward that end continue as we make great strides toward meeting our goals.

Highlighted in this issue are the Mental Health Association's grand opening on Garden Street, the Project Healthy Neighbors' Homeless Health Fair and the groundbreaking of Homebase on G, a supportive housing project soon to be part of the Lompoc community.

Coming Home is produced by the BOCH executive director 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

Opening the Doors of Hope: Garden Street Center In Full Bloom

December 3rd, 2008 marked a momentous occasion for the housing community of Santa Barbara, as the doors to the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara's "Building Hope" project opened, ensuring a broad scope of programs, services and living space for those with mental health disabilities and their families.

"This miracle at 617 Garden Street could not have been possible if it weren't for the many supporters and partners of this grand undertaking," said Annmarie Cameron, Executive Director of Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara County. "This is a community resource and blessing to those who are among the most vulnerable in our society."

The building encompasses 113,000 square feet, including 51 apartments that provide a bright and comfortable space to call home — a place beyond value in the lives of so many whom this project has reached. Thirteen of the apartments are occupied by low-income downtown workers, the other 38 are designated for people living with mental illness. There were over 300 applicants for these 38 apartments, highlighting the staggering need for continued support and assistance.

The Garden Street center is equipped with a full range of amenities to enhance the lives of its occupants and visitors. Features include a communal dining room and a full-service industrial kitchen equipped to serve 100 people



"Building Hope" on Garden Street. Photo by Baron Spafford.



Ribbon cutting to officially open the doors of Hope, from left: SBC 2nd District Supervisor Janet Wolf, City Councilmember Roger Horton, Mayor Marty Blum, City Councilmember Grant House, Board President of the MHA David Prenatt, Congresswoman Lois Capps, City Councilmember Helene Schneider, Jeff Bermant of Bermant Development Corporation, and Executive Director of the MHA in SBC Annmarie Cameron. Photo by Baron Spafford.

each day. The calm environment of the library also doubles as a space for support groups and meetings.

Also onsite is the Care Closet, a thrift store operated by and for Mental Health clients, which provides clothing and other personal living items. The Fellowship Club provides a venue for members to be welcomed with understanding. The building features a patio for socializing while playing ping-pong or board games, or for curling up with a book.

Creative outlet is found in the Arts and Crafts Studio, in which clients may express themselves artistically and therapeutically in a variety of media. Upstairs offices are occupied by staff of the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara, with space to work with partners, mental health educators and other specialists.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 20% of adults are living with a diagnosable mental illness, equating to over 66,000 residents of Santa Barbara County. Many of these conditions are considered severe and chronic, impacting the quality of daily life.

The completion of the "Building Hope" project and the opening of its doors on Garden Street mark a turning point in the lives of its new residents, who are now immersed in an environment of support with which to face the challenges each day brings.

Project Healthy Neighbors Brings Health Care to the Homeless

What brought together over 100 volunteers, including physicians, nurses, dental medicine and hygiene professionals; more than 20 local health and social service agencies and organizations; along with numerous students and community leaders? The answer: Santa Barbara's Project Healthy Neighbors, at the fourth annual Homeless Health Fair, the only event of its kind in Southern California. Held November 17th, 18th and 19th — timed in preparation for the winter ahead — the Health Fair offered a critical range of medical and other services, for free, directly to over 450 of Santa Barbara's homeless residents.

Project Healthy Neighbors is a community collaboration, providing services that include medical treatment, disease prevention, wellness care, mental health and substance counseling.

The Health Fair, held outside the Casa Esperanza homeless shelter, featured a series of large tents under which one could receive flu and pneumonia immunizations, HIV and tuberculosis screening, wound care, physician consults, and mental health screening. This year's range of services was expanded to include dental hygiene care, women's wellness, and housing referrals provided by the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara. Medi-Cal and Veterans' resources were available, along with counseling for drug and alcohol abuse, rape crisis and domestic violence.

The event reached over 450 homeless individuals and families. Each homeless participant who was immunized received a survival backpack containing a rain poncho, a knitted hat, socks, a sweatshirt and personal care items, thanks to a group called Families United to Nurture Dreams (FUND). Free haircuts were provided by the Underground salon, and 375 pairs of shoes were donated by Soles4Souls. (Please see page 4 for more on Soles4Souls.)



Project Healthy Neighbors participants help screen for diseases and administer vaccines.

"The time, effort and resources contributed to make Project Healthy Neighbors happen, from the most experienced professionals to the young volunteers just starting to seek out ways to make a difference, is awe-inspiring and a spiritual gift to and from the community," said Ken Williams, homeless outreach social worker and Coordinator of Project Healthy Neighbors. "Project Healthy Neighbors has truly become a community-wide effort to improve the health and safety of some of our most vulnerable neighbors, and the health of our entire community."

Five years ago last winter, a pneumonia outbreak in a local shelter necessitated the intervention of officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Project Healthy Neighbors was founded the following November, with a focus on prevention. The fair has provided critical health alerts: in 2007, three cases of tuberculosis were identified, leading to further testing of the homeless population once public health officials were informed. Ultimately, the fair was the impetus for the identifi-

cation of several more cases of the highly communicable and potentially deadly disease.

The aim of Project Healthy Neighbors is to prevent disease, illness and death amongst the homeless by delivering services with compassion and respect, acknowledging the harsh environment endured by homeless individuals. For those three days, the volunteers, donors and organizers of Project Healthy Neighbors not only provide much-needed medical and social services, but also reach out to share a common humanity with neighbors who find the streets their home.

To encourage attendance, outreach workers visited locations frequented by the homeless, distributing leaflets and convincing many to take advantage of the potentially life-saving services offered over the course of the fair.

The collaborative of organizations that teamed up to help meet the pressing needs of the community are as follows: The Santa Barbara County Departments of Public Health, Social

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Lompoc Supportive Housing Project Breaks Ground

Homebase on G Development to Offer Beautiful, Affordable Housing for Homeless and Disabled

It was a groundbreaking event in more ways than one. Nonprofit executives and county leaders gathered September 29th to plunge their shovels into the soil of a vacant lot at 513 North G Street in Lompoc, marking the ceremonial start of construction of “Homebase on G” — the first North County supportive housing project under the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

When completed in Fall of 2009, Homebase on G will provide low-cost housing and residential services to very low income and homeless or near-homeless citizens of Lompoc, some in mental health recovery.

The project is the fruit of collaboration among numerous nonprofits and government agencies, particularly Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) and the Santa Barbara Housing Assistance Corporation (SBHAC).

Guest speakers at the event included Lompoc Mayor Dick DeWeese; Ann Detrick, director of the Santa Barbara County Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Services agency (ADMHS); Roger Heroux, executive director of Bringing Our Community Home (the organization overseeing implementation of the 10 Year Plan), and Jill Bolster-White, Executive Director of TMHA.

“We would like to extend our warmest thanks to everyone whose generosity and ingenuity is making this endeavor a possibility,” said Bolster-White, “including the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara, the City of Lompoc, ADMHS, and our partners, Santa Barbara Housing Assistance Corporation. Homebase on G represents our shared goal of caring for people in Lompoc who desperately need mental health and supportive services, and — most of all — a place to call home.”

A \$9 million venture two years in the making, Homebase on G will offer a supportive independent-living residential environment. The facility will include 39 units of housing



Agency and community leaders breaking ground on the site in Lompoc.

(including 19 dedicated to people who have been homeless with a disability, seven to low-income disabled adults, up to 11 for low-wage workers, and two for live-in residential managers), and a 15-member, on-site team of service providers.

The units are studio apartments, intended for one or two people, and will have their own handicapped-accessible bathrooms and kitchens. Given the anticipated income levels of the individuals who will reside in Homebase on G, rents for the units will be affordable: between \$396 to \$485 per month, including utilities.

“Transitions-Mental Health Association has agreed to serve a vital role in the success of Homebase on G by supporting residents’ efforts to live and work as productive members of the Lompoc community,” said Frank Ricceri, associate director for Santa Barbara County programs at the 25-year-old nonprofit. “We look forward to complementing this new resource of low-cost housing by providing ‘wraparound’ services such as mental health treatment, alcohol and drug counseling, job training and life skills education.”

A relatively new innovation, such match-ups of affordable housing and on-site support services have, in the past decade, proven effective nationwide in housing, stabilizing, and healing the most challenged and challenging segment of the homeless population: the “chronically homeless” — that is, people who have been homeless repeatedly or for a long time, and who have one or more physical or mental disabilities.

Supportive services at Homebase on G will include support for disabled clients to develop independent living and work skills and to be integrated into the community in places of worship, recreation, social activities and employment. Professional staff will be on-site 24 hours a day to provide assistance to tenants, observe visitors and to ensure that residents responsibly observe rules of conduct regarding noise, guests, parking and behavior in the neighborhood. Loitering or vagrancy will not be allowed.

SBHAC is coordinating the funding and construction of Homebase on G. The City of Lompoc has provided a mix

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Soles4Souls: Changing the World One Pair at a Time

Soles4Souls has a simple mission: to impact as many lives as possible with the gift of shoes. They get shoes, and give them away. The concept is basic; the impact is extraordinary.



than 300 million children around the world don't own a single pair of shoes. In American landfills, the same amount of footwear is disposed of each year. Elsey's passion for service led him to trade his industry position to become CEO of Soles4Souls™ Inc.

Soles4Souls facilitates the donation of shoes, which are then used to aid the hurting worldwide. They receive large donations of both new and gently used shoes from footwear companies, retailers, churches, non-profit ministries, civic groups, schools and individuals.

When the 2004 tsunami hit Southeast Asia, Wayne Elsey, an executive at a large footwear company, felt compelled to do something. While contemplating what action he should take, he saw an image on television of a single shoe washing up on the beach. A few phone calls to other footwear industry executives set things in motion, and soon a quarter of a million shoes were being distributed to victims in the devastated countries.

A year later when Katrina hit, Elsey reached out to the same group, and over a million pairs of shoes were sent to the gulf coast communities. Realizing that the need is not one brought on solely by catastrophe, Elsey evaluated the situation. More

"We understand that footwear doesn't cure cancer, or alleviate hunger, or fight AIDS," he said. "But shoes certainly do play a part in lifting the spirits of people struggling to improve their lives. It's a simple yet effective way to erase the stigma of poverty, stop puncture wounds, end scrapes and prevent burns to feet of the poor and destitute. And it's something we all have, in abundance, lying in our closets."

In 2007 alone, the charity grew from three employees to over 20, leasing warehouses to handle the outpouring of shoes from all over the country. That year they reached 58 countries on five continents worldwide.

Soles4Souls is a 501(c)(3) organization recognized by the IRS, and donating parties are eligible for tax advantages. For more information on Soles4Souls, or to find out how to take action in your community or around the world, visit www.soles4souls.org.

Project Healthy Neighbors

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Services, and Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health; Direct Relief International, Soles4Souls, FUND Families, Veterans' Administration, Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara, Easy Lift, New Beginnings Counseling Center, Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, Casa Esperanza, Parish Nursing, Bringing Our Community Home, Domestic Violence Solutions, UCSB Street Health Outreach, and the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA).

Project Healthy Neighbors exemplifies collaborative strategy in addressing issues surrounding homelessness in the community. Working together for the greater health of all, as well as caring for the personal health and morale of each individual, the participants in this project remind us that regardless of where we call home, we are indeed all neighbors.

Lompoc Groundbreaking

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of grants and deferred, low-interest loans. The County Housing and Community Development Departments, along with funding from the Mental Health Services Act through ADMHS, are slated to contribute funds. The project has also received \$1.64 million from the Governor's Homeless Initiative and has earned \$6.3 million in federal low-income housing tax credits.

Other businesses, nonprofits and government organizations involved in the development of Homebase on G thus far include the City of Lompoc's Mayor, City Council and Community Development Department; the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara, the California Department of Housing & Community Development, the Red Stone Group, the Peikert Group, Santa Barbara Bank & Trust, and McGillivray Construction.



Volunteers assist in distributing shoes from Soles4Souls at Project Healthy Neighbors' Homeless Health Fair in November.