

=====  
HNS addressing emergency needs, working toward solutions  
-----

Daily Reporter-Herald, The (Loveland, CO)-February 15, 2010  
Readability: 11-12 grade level (Lexile: 1290L)

Glorie Magrum

Guest columnist

The House of Neighborly Service would like to offer an update on homeless day and night sheltering provisions in Loveland. This is a complex issue, and the solutions must be approached with care and community input.

In the past two years, we have seen an increase in people needing emergency shelter. This is a problem much more prevalent than most realize. From January 2009 until December 2009, HNS received more than 300 homeless surveys and requests for emergency shelter. Most of these were not single adults living on the streets, but families with children who reside in our city and whose children attend our schools.

HNS has limited resources, but we reserve a small fund to place families with children in motels as they interact with Neighbor to Neighbor, Interfaith Hospitality Network, and the Loveland Housing Authority to find housing.

Single adults who do not have a connection to Loveland are referred to the major shelters in Larimer and Boulder counties.

Our day center has 36 volunteers, the night shelter 45 volunteers, with more than 70 volunteers providing the evening and morning meals throughout the week. Eleven churches host the rotating emergency night shelter and one has also provided a van to transport people from the day shelter to the night shelter. One HNS staff person works full time to coordinate the operations.

All guests are encouraged to walk six blocks to the Community Kitchen for a hot lunch. The day center is not equipped to provide meals.

The Christ Church of the Rockies in downtown Loveland generously opens its doors and welcomes anyone to the "Front Porch" for fellowship, warm drinks and food. They also provide showers and a laundry facility.

While it is true nationwide that one in four homeless men are veterans, that doesn't seem the case in Loveland. One of the shelter coordinators is an experienced VA counselor and can act as an advocate for benefits.

In addition, the Murphy Center in Fort Collins offers services that address physical and emotional needs, substance abuse issues, housing and job-related services, available under one roof. The Murphy Center is willing to drive to Loveland each week and transport anyone interested in their services and transport them back to Loveland.

There are many programs in Loveland that address substance and drug dependency, and the guests of the shelters who struggle with those issues are encouraged to participate.

Most of the people using our emergency shelter are clients of House of Neighborly Service and have been homeless for as many as 10 years.

Prior to the inclement weather shelters, HNS would refer homeless adults to one of the county facilities, unless they were connected to Loveland with a current job or medical need. Typically, these shelters would fill up fast and HNS would need to provide motel vouchers.

The ongoing concern that is addressed by our emergency shelter is preventing serious health endangerment and possible death due to the elements, freeing up more motel vouchers for those with children. The city of Loveland is providing the day shelter building at no cost.

Homeless Gear is another community resource that specifically focuses on outdoor winter clothing, shoes and provisions and has been making monthly distributions to homeless at the day shelter and through the HNS Clothing Program.

The Colorado Homeless Coalition reports that 80 percent of the homeless across the country ask for work and a place to live, but what is actually provided at most shelters are a meal and a bed to use for the night.

Let's plan ahead. Let's continue working together to find true channels for restoration. We need to partner with existing programs that are serving the homeless and design a comprehensive model leading to self-sufficiency. We recognize that homelessness is not something we can control or end, but we do want to send the message to homeless people that they have the entire community behind them to help them get back on track.

It is only wise to design a program that is proactive while the homeless population is manageable.

HNS has been addressing emergency services, including emergency shelter, for 49 years in Loveland and Berthoud. Yes, we have seen a gradual increase of homelessness, and yes, this has been exacerbated by the economy.

We have received generous support from the city of Loveland, United Way, the faith community and many other groups and individuals. The House of Neighborly Service would be happy to hear ideas, input or resources that can help solidify and enhance our efforts to provide a safety net for those in need.

Glorie Magrum is the executive director of the House of Neighborly Service.

Section: APage: 4  
Record Number: 1171211Copyright 2010, Daily Reporter-Herald, The (Loveland, CO). All rights reserved.

[http://docs.newsbank.com/s/InfoWeb/aqgdocs/NewsBank/12EC509933BF0260/0F3A552076B8B92E?p\\_multi=LLRB&s\\_lang=en-US](http://docs.newsbank.com/s/InfoWeb/aqgdocs/NewsBank/12EC509933BF0260/0F3A552076B8B92E?p_multi=LLRB&s_lang=en-US)