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Homeless shelter not needed in Loveland

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Readability: 5-6 grade level (Lexile: 860L)

To the editor:

This letter is based on more than five years of working with Loveland's "street homeless." The opinion is my own, and may not represent the views of any other person or agency.

The duration and severity of this cold season have prompted comments regarding the need for a "permanent homeless shelter."

I do not agree. I firmly believe that our community has a humanitarian obligation to provide emergency shelter when conditions threaten the health or safety of our citizens. I also believe our community is now meeting that obligation.

The city of Loveland, through its grants, supports many of the nonprofits dedicated to care of our needy. The Community Kitchen provides a nutritious mid-day meal to any who need it. The street homeless are assisted by the day warming center. The heated building is provided by the city of Loveland. When weather dictates, it is operated by House of Neighborly Service volunteers.

Emergency overnight shelter is provided during extreme cold by HNS and local churches. Churches that can accommodate the shelter rotate weekly to provide space.

HNS provides the necessary cots, bedding and expendable supplies, and transports guests from downtown to the on-call church.

Church and HNS volunteers supervise the shelter. An evening meal is provided by HNS or church volunteers.

The day and night shelter programs have distinct advantages over a "permanent homeless shelter." They can be manned by volunteers. They are operated only when needed. They use existing facilities. They do not have high initial and maintenance costs. They promote person-to-person community involvement in, and understanding of, homeless causes and needs.

Perhaps most important, these programs do not promote homelessness. Vagrants are not attracted to a cozy, long-term "homeless hotel."

The temporary nature of the shelters dictates that the homeless retain their mobility. They arrive at the shelter each day with the possessions they carry; they leave that evening or the following morning with those possessions.

We do not need more "facilities" for our homeless. We do need more volunteers. To help, please contact the House of Neighborly Service.

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