

Southernmost Homeless Assistance League, Inc.

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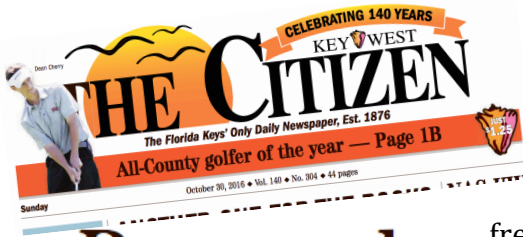
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SHAL Monthly Report

October 2016 SHAL News



Proposed shelter moving forward

BY SCOTT UNGER
Key West Citizen

A local agency's proposal to manage the homeless shelter on a long-term basis remains in the early stages, but details are coming together.

Officials with the Southernmost Homeless Assistance League are in talks with local agencies to fine-tune future plans for the Keys Overnight Temporary Shelter, following a vote by the Key West City Commission to commence negotiations on the deal.

"Everything is going on concurrently," said SHAL Executive Director John Miller. "We're talking to

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Walgreens, Health Department Give Flu Shots to Homeless

A local Walgreens drug store has volunteered to provide free flu shots on November 10th and 17th to residents of the SHAL homeless Shelter. Walgreens joins with the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County who visit the Shelter each month to provide free flu shots and other services for residents of the Shelter. SHAL is inviting its unsheltered clients to take advantage of the program as well.

Flu shots are important for homeless people because of their generally lowered immune systems, which make them more likely to become infected. Flu shots are also important for the community because vaccinated people are less likely to pass the flu along to others in high-risk groups (babies, elderly, pregnant, those with respiratory conditions, etc.)

In an attempt to be a good example, SHAL Executive Director John Miller has volunteered to get the first shot!

Homeless Myth #5 (of 7)

#5 "If they have a choice to get services, they will choose not to. Why wouldn't they?"

Experience has shown that very, very few people would choose to be homeless over having permanent housing. And while some may not voluntarily choose to use services to address medical, behavioral or other issues immediately, experience has also shown that formerly homeless individuals do avail themselves of needed services promptly.

(Citizen story continued on page 4)

SHAL SHELTER OPERATIONS

Shelter Usage

The Client Track database shows that there were about **106** clients sleeping in the Shelter on an average night in October, and there were **312** different (non-duplicated) individuals staying at the Shelter during the month. Along with SHAL Outreach, SHAL served a total of **350** unduplicated homeless persons during the month of October.

SHAL washes every sheet, towel and blanket used every day, so the wear and tear on our laundry equipment is extensive. At the current Shelter we have to use residential quality washers and dryers, and so they do wear out frequently. This week we have lost a dryer, so anyone who might have a used one to donate, please contact John Miller at exdir.shal@gmail.com or 502.876.5092.

Since nutrition is so important to escaping homelessness, SHAL Shelter Director **Mike Tolbert** worked hard to add St. Mary's Soup Kitchen serving to SHAL's regular breakfast during October, with the morning offering funded in part to a grant from the **Community Foundation of the Florida Keys**. This month we have purchased another new freezer (the donated one gave up the ghost) in order to store the expanded breakfast servings as well as some food from St. Mary's Soup Kitchen.

Volunteers are always needed as food "schleppers" to bring the wonderful meals from St. Mary's to the Shelter. The trip is easy and takes no time at all, but it helps immensely. Contact John Miller at exdir.shal@gmail.com or 502.876.5092 for information.

Mike also reported that there were several donations of food from local restaurants and caterers this month that we added to the evening meals from the Soup Kitchen. These types of donations are wonderful and help us serve a more delicious offering to our residents.

SHAL works to make improvements like food, as well as enhancements in safety, cleanliness and other operational changes so that more homeless persons will utilize the shelter, helping to integrate them into SHAL programs and Case Management, and move them more quickly toward self-sufficiency. ***We believe that a person cannot overcome homelessness if they are tired or hungry or sick or have no income.***

There were **no** EMT calls made for Shelter clients in October. Clients with non-urgent medical needs are transported via automobile, saving the City the cost of an ambulance run.

SHAL OUTREACH

Service Summary Report • October 2016

SHAL Outreach provided **600** services to **105** different clients in October. This included services to **48** Sheltered and **57** unsheltered homeless persons in Key West & Marathon. Although there were a number of requests, no Outreach clients were relocated back to the mainland and other states, where they have housing and/or employment awaiting them, in October. The Monroe County HSAB Board claimed that the SHAL bus ticket program was somehow “duplicating services,” so we have been forced to suspend the SHAL reunification program as of the end of September until we can replace that funding. SHAL continues to get client requests and even calls from other agencies for relocation money, which makes the “duplication” argument even more ridiculous. In general, no other agency relocates sheltered or unsheltered homeless back to the mainland. **SHAL has provided and paid for over 350 bus tickets for homeless persons since 2014.**

**Total Services: 600 Health Care Services Referred: 14 Mental Health: 1
Coordinated Assessments: 13.**

Other Services:

Case Management: 122
Information Services: 110
Cell Phones: 21
Food/Clothing: 2

Birth Certificates: 22
Food Stamps: 16
Mailing Address: 127
Long Dist. Relocation: 1*

ID/Residency Services: 67
SS Issues: 3

*SHAL solicited a local business owner to pay for a ticket for a woman abandoned by her husband.

SHAL October Success Stories

SHAL Outreach success stories for October:

- SHAL helped a male client get a replacement direct express card so he could relocate himself back to Clearwater where he will receive the medical treatment he needs and housing with a friend.
- We purchased a monthly Lower Keys bus pass for a male KOTS resident so he could get back and forth to a job at a marina in Sugarloaf Key paying him \$18/hour!
- SHAL helped a male client to finally get approved for SSDI, with a back pay of 7 years! He is currently hospitalized in Miami and we are working into getting him into an Assistive

Other Highlights

- Continued shower services to unsheltered clients.
- Continued to provide temporary mailing address for SS, Food Stamps and Birth Certificates.
- Continue expanded services to the middle Keys.
- Assisted clients with scabies obtain their medical appointments and prescription treatments.
- Continued meeting with the Substance Abuse Council, which is also providing some valuable insight and networking to other agencies and potential services.
- Continued communication with the Sheriff's Department regarding a diversion program and also a better-integrated care plan for released inmates to receive follow-up case management assistance.

Shelter

Continued from Page 1A

people about construction, we're talking to the city about their part of it and we'll be talking to the county about their part."

The proposal includes a 10-year operating agreement between SHAL, the City of Key West and Monroe County, plans to build a new shelter on the former Easter Seals property on College Road and new guidelines that would free up space and costs in the Monroe County Detention Center, which frequently houses area homeless, Miller said.

"The whole plan is to fix all the problems and then save everybody a lot of money," he said.

Monroe County incurs approximately \$5 million in costs per year due to the homeless being sent to the detention center, according to Monroe County Mayor Heather Carruthers.

"We're eager to back off on some of that," Carruthers said.

The current shelter has begun taking homeless that would otherwise be taken to jail or Lower Keys Medical Center — if they meet certain criteria. A new shelter would allow the group to further cut down on the number taken to jail because of expanded facilities with segregated areas for different groups of homeless, Miller said.

"Anytime anybody brings somebody that's appropriate for the shelter, we take them no matter what," he said. "It's less than \$8 a day for us to take somebody for the night, while the estimates for the jail are well over \$100 a day."

Costs associated with food, medical care, legal expenses and staffing lead to the high price of housing homeless at the jail, Miller said.

"There's all kinds of costs, where we can do it for \$8," he said. "It's just a better way of handling it and it's better for the homeless person. Being homeless is hard enough without having a record."

No discussions have been held concerning the county's involvement in the plan, but Carruthers indicated it is open to some form of assistance with the project.

"We're open to assisting at an appropriate level and we'll have some discussions as to what that is," Carruthers said.

Although the city and county would be indirectly paying for construction costs on the new shelter through its operating agreement, SHAL will be able to construct the facility cheaper than a government entity through a commercial construction loan, Miller said.

"(We) should get a low rate and good terms because banks cooperate with non-profits," he said. "Because we can build a shelter for a lot less than a municipal government would have to spend, there will be less to borrow, so there will be less debt."

If a deal is worked out among the three parties, the new overnight shelter will be a hub of homeless services and will be less visible to the public on Stock Island, Miller said.

"We really think College Road there will be cleaned up quite a bit, the way we're designing the facility."

sunger@keysnews.com

Living Facility up there.

- SHAL purchased some non-slip shoes and pants for a male client so he could start work at a local restaurant. He has been working full time ever since and is saving for his own place to live!

- Last month the Executive Director and Outreach staff helped a client get into the Domestic Abuse Shelter. This month we purchased birth certificates for both of her children, helping them get enrolled in school down here. We also provided papers to help her get an address change so she could get a job. Her children have successfully been in school for 3 weeks now and she has 2 jobs!

- And SHAL Shelter helped a woman staying in the shelter because she was abandoned by her husband to get a bus ticket home, paid for by a local businesswoman. The County HSAB Board cut SHAL off from relocation funding and Housing First funding, so we are currently searching for sources to replace that vital money. Donations for this can be made at shalkw.org.

- Mike also reports that the Shelter found jobs in October for a number of clients at local hotels and restaurants.

Outreach Director **Elicia Pintabona**, and case managers **Amy Yancich** and **Channing Lamar** are reaching new heights each month to help homeless persons reach self-sufficiency.