

NEW CITIES PROJECT

San Francisco's Initiatives to End Homeless Reading Materials Provided by Trent Rhorer

Managing the Political Climate

Fagan, Kevin. "Shame of the City: Chance to solve homeless crisis". *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 1, 2004. www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/02/01/MNGOC4MLJO1.DTL

- This article discussed the political climate after Mayor Newsom was sworn in and outlines some of the many groups involved in crafting the city's ten year plan.

Fagan, Kevin. "Fewer homeless people on streets of San Francisco". *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 15, 2004. www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/02/15/MNGTKBB7311.DTL

- This article details the drop in San Francisco's homeless street population.

Fagan, Kevin. "Soon no homeless on welfare; Care Not Cash ranks falling, Newsom says". *San Francisco Chronicle*. December 21, 2005 <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/21/BAGOIGBB611.DTL>

- This article details the recent success of Care Not Cash, San Francisco's adult welfare reform measure.

Engagement of Chronically Homeless People

Fagan, Kevin. "New help for the homeless: City's unique volunteer program is growing into a genuine civic movement". *San Francisco Chronicle*. March 21, 2005. www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/03/21/MNGPVBSH351.DTL
(Attached)

- This article describes Project Homeless Connect, a city-led volunteer project serving the homeless community (further information available at www.projecthomelessconnect.com).

Fagan, Kevin. "Reaching into a void: For mayor's team of street crusaders, getting the chronically homeless into housing requires patience as they battle their addictions -- and persistence if they relapse". *San Francisco Chronicle*. December 6, 2004. www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2004/12/06/MNGNIA76111.DTL

- This article discusses the Mayor's Homeless Outreach Team and the challenges they face.

Supportive Housing

Fagan, Kevin. "Opening new doors for homeless: S.F. plan for rooms and counseling for the hard core". *San Francisco Chronicle*. June 30, 2004. www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2004/06/30/MNGVN7EB3S1.DTL

- This article describes the launching of our 10-year plan to end homelessness which calls for a shift away from emergency shelter toward supportive housing.

Fagan, Kevin. "Solving San Francisco's crisis of homelessness requires a sweeping, costly plan for housing and treatment - and political unity that has been missing for two decades". *San Francisco Chronicle*. December 4, 2004. www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2003/12/04/MNG2S3FJ6M1.DTL

- This is an article about supportive housing in San Francisco

Supportive Housing Saves Money - and Benefits Our Communities! *Corporation for Supportive Housing*. Available online at: www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=345&nodeID=81 (Attached)

- This article details the cost effectiveness of supportive housing

Ehrlich, Susan and Wilkins, Carol. "Supportive Housing and its Impact on the Public Health Crisis of Homelessness" *Corporation for Supportive Housing*. April 2002. Available online, at: <http://documents.csh.org/documents/ke/CanonKip.doc>

- A detailed study of the cost effectiveness of supportive housing at the Canyon Kip Community House.

San Francisco Chronicle

New help for the homeless

City's unique volunteer program is growing into a genuine civic movement

Kevin Fagan, Chronicle Staff Writer
Monday, March 21, 2005

Amme Hill had never talked to a homeless person before, never helped out at a soup kitchen. She's a busy yoga instructor in San Francisco. Even though her heart went out to desperate people she saw on the street, she never found an opportunity to turn her compassion into action.

So when she responded to a mass mailing and showed up at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in February for a city-sponsored gathering of hundreds of people to help the homeless, she didn't know if she'd feel repulsed, inspired, scared or sad.

That didn't last long.

By the end of the day, the mystery was gone — replaced by a new understanding for those unfortunates she used to stroll past, and by a fiery optimism that their plight can be eased.

"They're just people, like the rest of us," Hill, 31, said several days later, a tone of marvel still in her voice. "What really hit me the most is how such a lot of people were so sad, so alone. And what surprised me the most was how obvious the whole problem was, and how to fix it. Give them a place to live and counseling to get over the drug problem or whatever, and you've got it."

Meet the face of Mayor Gavin Newsom's new citizen army of volunteers — the only one of its kind in the nation devoted to tackling homelessness.

What began in October as a 200-person corps of virtually all city employees who answered the mayor's request to pitch in on their own time has evolved over six months into the makings of a genuine civic movement, drawing not just on government staff but also nonprofit social services agencies as well as real estate agents, teachers, lawyers, carpenters and other ordinary folk.

The monthly gathering is called Project Homeless Connect, and the idea is to have citizen volunteers gather for a day to help city counselors, welfare and housing specialists sign up homeless people for services that can get them off the street.

The third Connect gathering, held Feb. 17, drew 575 volunteers — and what excited organizers as much as anything was that one-quarter of them were not city workers, as in the past, but ordinary people who vowed to bring friends with them to the next gathering.

Many say this is the first time they've ever seen the city create a means for them to help in a significant hands-on way. And, like Hill, they say they have long felt a pent-up longing to do something after watching homelessness in San Francisco metastasize into the nation's most visible crisis with street people.

"As I look around the country, I have seen nothing like this anywhere," said Philip Mangano, President Bush's point man on homelessness. Some cities, such as Boston, muster citizens once a year to work on homeless issues, he said — but enlisting them once every month or so hasn't happened before.

Word of the periodic gatherings is spreading around the country through social worker networks. Dozens of organizations from cities including New York, Denver, Indianapolis, Nashville and Los Angeles have called Newsom's office to see if they can copy the technique.

"Everybody in the country is looking around for what works, and what's going on in San Francisco is very unique and exciting," said Becky Kanis, director of innovations for Common Ground of New York, one of the nation's premier providers of supportive housing for the homeless. "I am going to bring city commissioners and people from other nonprofits with me to come look at the Connect project, see how we can do that here."

The Connect project has been an awakening experience for both the people helping out and for homeless people themselves.

"I'd always just bitched and moaned about walking over the homeless every day when I went out for lunch, but then I heard about this Connect thing," said real estate agent and lifelong San Francisco resident Ali Tejada. "I told myself, 'OK, why not?'"

What she found when she showed up last month at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium – which had been turned into a giant MASH-like service center for Project Homeless Connect – was a roomful of eager volunteers and 200 homeless people lined up outside waiting for the doors to open.

"Some (of the homeless) smelled so bad, were in wheelchairs, were really messed up, but I actually got to talk to them for the first time, and I realized, 'Hey, these are real people with real problems,'" said Tejada, 50. "It was a little daunting at first. But they felt so respected by us shaking their hands, calling them by their names, actually remembering their names, that I began to really respect them, too."

She spent six hours escorting homeless men and women to food lines and booths of social workers who signed them up for drug rehab, shelter, housing or counseling for welfare or jobs. By the end, her opinion of the drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes, out-of-work carpenters and other hard-luck cases she talked to went from disgust to compassion, she said.

"The minute I got home, I took a shower because I didn't want the homeless smell all over me – but the next thing I did was go to our closet and clean out absolutely everything we didn't need. The next day I dropped it all off at St. Anthony's, a big Hefty bag full."

That's just the sort of thing Newsom and his organizers hoped would happen.

"There is such a hungry appetite to contribute, but people didn't know how to help," Newsom said at the February gathering. "They wrote checks, or they helped out on a holiday at a church – which are good things – but this is face-to-face, totally real and intensified."

Michael Simpson, 41, came to the auditorium that day after shivering all night on Market Street under a thin blanket. He'd heard on the street that something special was going on, and tears rolled down his grubby face as he sat with hands around a coffee cup.

"My wife died in 1998, and I went off the deep end," he said quietly. "I need housing, food, counseling, everything." He looked up as a passing volunteer patted his shoulder.

"I can't believe these people don't treat me like crap," he said. "Maybe those people who walk by me every day aren't such jerks after all."

The sheer size of San Francisco's homeless population -- at least 6,248 in this winter's city-run count -- combined with budget cutbacks make it imperative that the city get as creative as it can, said Newsom's Deputy Chief of Staff Alex Tourk, who runs the Connect program.

So it was only natural to begin enlisting ordinary people to help, he said.

"I think what's really gotten people engaged is that we're not just dictating to them what to do," said Tourk. "We're listening to feedback, strengthening what works and throwing out what doesn't work."

The three Connect operations since October have housed or sheltered 140 people, more than half of them in permanent housing, enrolled 116 in intensive drug rehabilitation or mental health programs, and signed up 282 up for welfare. A total 2,352 homeless people were interviewed by the volunteers, and those who didn't get housing or rehab got sessions with psychiatric counselors, medical doctors or job advisers. Most also got food or clothing.

The next Connect, on March 28, will be a planning session only for volunteers, and the one after that on April 21 will be another rollout of services for the homeless. Tourk intends to continue that formula of alternating planning sessions one month with hands-on help the next, and his goal is to add new services each time.

For instance, organizers plan to have 100 hotel rooms to hand out in the April Connect. They also want to have 100 doctors on hand, about four times the number in February.

The statistics mean less to the volunteers than the thrill of putting their hearts into action.

"It was an incredibly powerful experience," said Brian Hughes, general manager of the stylish Argent Hotel, who went for his first Connect last month. "It confirmed some of my preconceptions about why people were on the streets -- mental illness, drugs, poverty -- but I was amazed at how there was never a moment that I felt hostility or fear."

In his crisp, blue suit and silver cuff links, Hughes looks like the last sort of man who would want to shake hands with junkies who slept in the street so long the grime won't wash off in a day. But he says he liked it so much he's taking his friends with him this month.

"I've heard some people calling this thing a populist movement, and that sure fits for me," he said. "We're all just people trying to help other people. "

Even Phil Smith, who runs the Salvation Army's Harbor Light drug rehab center in San Francisco, came away with a new sense of purpose. Like many Connect volunteers who work at nonprofit social agencies, he is well familiar with the problems of poverty but said he'd never felt invited to pitch in by the city before. At least not in a way that wasn't contractual.

"I wanted to get a feel for it first, to see if it was worthwhile," he said. "I found it amazing. I'm going back, and this time I'll take some of my staff -- and some residents (in the Salvation Army's program) too, if they want. Think of what an incredible thing that would be for their self-esteem, helping people with the same kinds of problems they had."

Kendra Stewardson knows about that.

An Army door gunner in the Vietnam War, Stewardson became a transgender woman in the early 1970s and eked out a living as a carpenter until quitting to care for her ailing mother for the past decade. Her mother died last year -- and suddenly, with no income, the 54-year-old found herself on the street.

Volunteers found Stewardson sleeping on the sidewalk during December's Connect, and by February she was living in a hotel -- and working as a volunteer on that month's muster.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," she said during the Feb. 17 session at the auditorium as she steered a line of homeless people to the welfare intake table. "For a transgender person like me to get help so fast, instead of just another dead end, really says something."

Some longtime advocates for the homeless remain skeptical, though.

"The question I always hear after one of these Connect things is, 'What is the follow-through for these people who get contacted?' " said Sister Bernie Galvin, head of Religious Witness With Homeless People. "I wonder, because clearly there is not enough housing or services in this city. So how many are really getting helped?"

She also is concerned that shelter beds set aside for Connect mean that other homeless people are left outside at night.

Newsom responds by saying the critics should appreciate that 140 homeless people have been moved inside through the initiative, and give it more time to work. As for the shelter beds, he pointed out that there are about 100 vacancies every night in the city's shelters.

"If anyone has any criticism about what we're doing, I just tell them, 'Come on down to the next Project Homeless Connect,' " Newsom said. "See what we're doing. Give us your advice, right on the spot. Be part of the solution."

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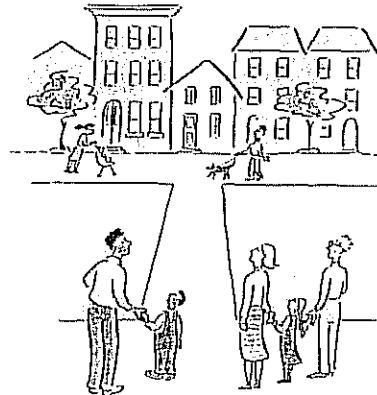


Corporation for Supportive Housing

Supportive Housing Saves Money - and Benefits Our Communities!

It costs essentially the same amount of money to house someone in stable, supportive housing as it does to keep that person homeless and stuck in the revolving door of high-cost crisis care and emergency housing. CSH's cost studies prove that we can either waste money keeping people homeless or spend those dollars on a long-term solution that produces positive results for people and their communities.

The most comprehensive case for supportive housing is made by a recently released study from the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research. Researchers tracked the cost of nearly 5,000 mentally ill people in New York City for two years while they were homeless and for two years after they were housed. They concluded:

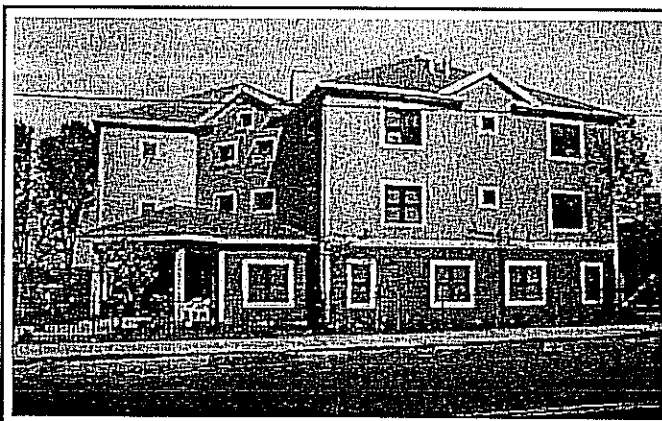


+ Supportive and transitional housing created an average annual savings of \$16,282 by reducing the use of public services: 72% of savings resulted from a decline in the use of public health services; 23% from a decline in shelter use; and 5% from reduced incarceration of the homeless mentally ill.

+ This reduction in hospitalizations, incarcerations, and shelter costs nearly covered the cost of developing, operating and providing services in supportive housing. After deducting the public benefits, the average NY/NY supportive housing unit cost only \$995 per year.

In other words, based on the most conservative assumptions - without taking into account the positive impacts on health status and employment status, or improvements to neighborhoods and communities - it costs little more to permanently house and support people than it does to leave them homeless.

Further evidence shows that supportive housing provides public benefits beyond these savings. An analysis of the Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program found that supportive housing improved neighborhood safety and beautification, increasing or stabilizing property values in most communities. Years of experience confirm that neighbors embrace supportive housing as an asset to their communities.



"Anytime you put \$1.2 million into a development in the middle of a neighborhood, along with social services, a well-kept, nice building on the outside, it is a major asset to the neighborhood. I have toured the facility and was impressed. It was a well-conceived and well-executed project."

(from a survey of neighbors and business owners, published in the Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program Evaluation Report, October 1999)