

Cold Weather Collaborative

Notes: 1/30/2018

Housing Panel

In attendance:

Stephanie Manuel (DSD – Homeless Student Liaison), Christina Helfrick (DSD Social worker), Mike Wills Donegal Presbyterian Church), Barbara Basile (Milanof-Schock Library), Glenn Musser (MJ Car Ministry), Lorita Valente (Luther Care for Kids), Judy Bush (Mary Mother of God Church), David Forwood (CBC Marietta), Karen Everhart (community Volunteer), Grace Lyham (UPENN/LGH) Jonathan Kauffman (Calvary Bible Church), Suzette McCarty (Faith Homes), Chris Chavez (One Main Financial), Ryan Koser (Juvenile Probation), Traci Glover (Zion Lutheran), Gina Barrett (St. John's Marietta), Sarah Clarke (St. Marks Church), Jen Koppel Coalition to End Homelessness), Barb O'Neal (First Presbyterian Church), Lisa Heilner (Rep Dave Hickernel's Office), Larie Miller (Marietta Community Chapel), Scott Albert (Mount Joy District Justice) and Nicole Carson (Mount Joy LCCTC)

1. **Barbara Basile:** Welcome and Introductions
2. **Christina Helfrick:** Review from last meeting
 - a. Information collected during November meeting and the survey (attached)
 - b. Resource list review (available on Facebook)Changes or additions should be sent to Donegalhub@gmail.com.
3. **Stephanie Manuel:** Networking activity
Break up into groups of three to Think, Pair and Share:
 1. What was a story behind an encounter you had with someone who was homeless or in jeopardy of losing their housing?
 2. What were the initial steps taken?
 3. What were the long term steps?

Comments:

- Faith Homes has 20 years of experience in serving men and women in the community with transitional housing. Sustaining their mission is getting harder. It takes longer than 3 months to move people out of homelessness. Issues are bad credit, no affordable housing and good paying jobs for low skilled workers.
- People experiencing poverty do not understand budgeting and goal planning.
- People think services should just be there for them and they should not have to do anything for them.
- Realistic goal setting is needed.
- People do not want to, or cannot, move to Lancaster where services may be more readily available.

Panel Discussion

Jen Koppel, Director of Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness

- Jen brings a wealth of experience to the topic. She grew up in the Mount Joy area and currently lives in Elizabethtown though she has worked throughout the US in multiple leadership capacities to end homelessness and empower change.
- Jen defined homelessness in terms of the government and funding.
 - Department of Education: Families doubled up for financial /economic reasons (no funding streams).

- HUD: Folks living in Emergency Shelters or living in a place not meant for human habitation.
- The Coalition's goal is to end homelessness in Lancaster County. One subset of the population they have solved the problem for is Homeless Vets.
- They spend \$3,700,000 annually on activities, which prevent and/or divert homeless. They work with communities where they are to create the resources they need. ECHOS is an example of a program they fund as is the Together Ministries in Paradise.
- They monitor the funding, ensure compliance, pay bills, set and monitor standards.

Ray D'Agostino, Chief Executive Officer of Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership (LHOP)

Ray brings lots of governmental experience to the table. Including working for State Senator Smucker, Mount Joy Borough Manager and as a member of Lancaster County Planning Commission

- LHOP's goal is to understand the issues surrounding housing affordability and affordable housing and help people with Low and Moderate income achieve homeownership.
- People with 80% of the area median household income
- They work with people who have credit issues
- They assist people how have fair housing problems
- They have written a booklet, which is available in several languages, called Landlord-tenant Activities
- Community Equity Rental Program: guarantees 2.5% of rent to landlords giving low income folks a chance to rent without having to save up first and last months' rents plus a security deposit.
- LHOP seeks ways to create low income housing in the community. They recognize we can no longer count on the Federal Government to fund low income housing. They have seen local groups and Faith based organizations create fair and affordable housing
- LHOP will help agencies build capacity for this
- LHOP tries to remain flexible so they can partner with groups where they are and for what they need to create solutions.

Deb Jones, Director of ECHOS and ECHOS Winter Shelter

Deb lives in Elizabethtown. She has worked as a social worker in the area of mental health services for a number of years. She is now the director of ECHOS. ECHOS has been operational for only 16 months and has grown to a staff of seven as they work to help people move through the issues causing housing crises. In addition to Etown, Rheems, and Bainbridge, they provide referral services and emergency shelter to Mount Joy, Marietta and Maytown.

They have consolidated a variety of services and created a central intake point for families receiving supportive services. This goal relieves people of the stress of meeting some of their basic needs while creating an accountability for folks who are working on their self-sufficiency goals.

- They operate the Emergency Shelter in Etown.
- They have a furniture bank, apartment start-up bank, and a clothing bank.
- Service recipients are given a mentor to monitor goals and plan next steps.
- Assisted 407 families in 2017
- 31 into new home
- 46 kept from being evicted
- \$85,000 spent in 2017

Question: How do we connect people to your services?

Jen – we do not serve people directly. We partner with 160 agencies to provide services. We do have goals we hope will streamline access including a coordinated assessment form. People should only have to tell their story once.

Deb – we have a simple one-page assessment we share across the service providers in E-town and with the Coalition. Our purpose is to connect people to the services they need and provide mentoring to help people move out of poverty. Contact information is on the Facebook site.

Ray – LHOP people can visit our website to see the services we offer and call us to set up an appointment.

Creating Affordable housing – contact Ray

CREF – Community Rental Equity Fund is coming soon. A client will need to be referred by social service providers or landlords.

Lisa Heilner- LIHEAP, SNAP and other State programs – Contact State Representative Hickernell’s office. They also have connections with the utility companies.

Question: Can you give us your elevator speech on the current housing situation.

Jen – Average rent in Lancaster County is \$900. This puts low income wage earners in a precarious situation. A living wage for a family living in a \$900/month apartment would be \$15+/hour. Food insecurity would still exist for the family. 50% of low income families spend 50% of their income on housing and transportation. We advocate minimizing the social disconnect and stigma by building relationships.

Ray – there are 4 contributing factors

1. Though good jobs are out there, people need training and housing where the jobs are located.
2. There is a high demand and low supply for rental properties.
3. We are in one of the top 3 tightest rental markets in the US. We are not building as much as we did.
4. The population in Lancaster County is growing.

Solutions: People need to get involved at a local level and advocate for solutions. Quality low income housing is fought against so low quality housing emerges.

Deb – there are multiple issues to deal with such as, medical problems, unreliable transportation, job layoff, and cost of child care. Families become discouraged and lack motivation. We are working to create solutions, to build relationships, and to mobilize the community giving the family a support team. We are holding them accountable to set and make progress toward their goals.

Question: What are some ways that the community can help? What could we be doing that is more harmful than helpful?

Jen – Keep pulling together.

Tackle one or two things at a time.

Approach the borough and township folks.

Understand who is having the problems and advocate for them.

Develop relationships with other service providers.
Focus on commonalities.

Ray – I echo what Jen says and add don't give up hope. For some people it takes a long time to come around. Let them go and be there for them when they are ready.

Deb – As a caring compassionate community we are doing it. Methods of communication are improving. We are working together to stabilize folks and help them move forward. We also need to educate the community to debunk the stigma of homelessness.

Next meeting:

March 12 at 8:00 a.m. at Milanof-Schock Library. If DSD is delayed, the meeting will begin at 10 a.m.