

Administration

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flagler County has, supports numerous homeless assistance efforts

March 14, 2019 – Flagler County has and supports numerous homeless assistance programs and efforts to aid residents of Flagler County that are currently homeless or in jeopardy of becoming homeless.

“We work with a wide variety of agencies that address various homeless issues such as housing, addiction, and family transitional housing,” said Janet Nickels, Human Services Program Manager. “It is this team approach that is the most effective.”

Human Services, with the assistance of partner agencies, in the past two months have helped transition six homeless people to permanent, supportive housing.

“AppleJack” or “Mom,” as her fellow homeless campers know her, had been homeless for more than five years. She made the decision a week before her 61st birthday to accept the help needed to change her situation.

“Finding housing that meets Apple’s needs was a process that took time and effort in bringing together the appropriate partners and resources,” Nickels said. “There was collaboration between Flagler County Human Services, Flagler County Library, the Flagler County Health Department, Advent Health, the Sheltering Tree, the Volusia-Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless, the Neighborhood Center, and Flagler Cares to make this happen *with* her.”

Apple is typical of others in that she did not start out homeless. She is a sketch artist who once managed an art gallery in Flagler Beach. A change in Apple’s family structure led to her homelessness.

“It will take time for Apple to successfully make this transition,” Nickels said. “As she set off to begin her new journey, Apple expressed grief at having to leave the people behind who she has come to consider her family.”

Flagler County Human Services currently organizes a Homeless Outreach Team that consists of the Flagler County Health Department Outreach Nurse, SMA Healthcare, the Volusia-Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Flagler County Division of Human

Charles Ericksen, Jr.
District 1

Greg Hansen
District 2

David Sullivan
District 3

Joe Mullins
District 4

Donald O’Brien, Jr.
District 5

Services. This outreach team is currently meeting with both the homeless and anyone else who wants assistance at the Flagler County Main Palm Coast Branch Library on the third and fourth Tuesday of the month to provide information and resources.

Flagler County Human Services also collaborates with Volusia and St. Johns agencies, such as St. Francis House, EPIC Behavioral Healthcare, Family Matters, Family Renew, Salvation Army, Solutions by the Sea, and Hope Place.

“In January, we conducted the Point in Time Count (PIT) with the help of local volunteers from social service agencies, and interviewed our homeless to determine their ongoing needs,” Nickels said. “Forty-two homeless people agreed to be interviewed during the count. Of those interviewed, 36 percent admitted to mental illness, two percent to substance abuse, and 38 percent to a physical disability.”

Other self-reported information is as follows: most became homeless in Flagler County; most are homeless because of family problems (not domestic violence) or employment/financial problems; and most are male. The count was made at The Sheltering Tree in Bunnell.

Flagler County Human Services and State Housing Initiatives Partnerships (SHIP) also participate in, and assist with, The Housing and Homeless Task Force run by Carrie Baird of Flagler Cares.

“This task force is a shared response to a community challenge made up of multiple social service agencies and volunteers dedicated to assisting those most vulnerable with affordable housing, homeless prevention and efforts to rapidly rehouse,” Nickels said. “It consists of two subcommittees and encourages those interested to attend meetings to work toward solutions to homelessness, and the housing issues that face Flagler County.

“Through our outreach efforts over the years, Flagler County Human Services has provided prescription assistance, dental assistance, as well as medical or surgical assistance to our homeless,” said Nickels. “We also help disabled individuals seeking Social Security Disability by providing ongoing medical case management and assistance with applying online for Social Security Disability.”

Flagler County Human Services also works with local agencies, such as Flagler County Schools, to assist with its Families in Transition Program (FIT) that strives to get families out of hotels and cars and into homes by identifying affordable housing, and/or providing a rent or mortgage payment. It also provides financial support through grants to support mental health programs, after school programs, and programs for survivors of domestic violence.

“We also grant funds to agencies such as The Children’s Home Society, who provide safe residential group homes for children that cannot live at home,” Nickels said.

Additionally, Human Services offers weekly outreach to inmates through a program called STRIDE, which stands for Skills, Transitional Support, Integrity, Direction, and Employment. Inmates are interviewed to determine their needs upon release, and are matched up to the resources that will best meet those needs.

“Over the years, the most successful way for us to operate has been one person at a time,” Nickels said. “As slow as that is, not everyone is ready (to change) just because we want them to be.”

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