

**Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/
Opportunity, Inc.**

**Executive Director's Report
July 6, 2009**

Opportunity Place:

We have spent our first month completing renovations to the property in preparation for homeless women and families to move in. Due to the generosity of Nate Smith, we have tiled and painted the building containing the Sheriff's Office. We have painted all the posts and much of the trim, creating a brighter, more welcoming, and much more attractive look. With the help of community service volunteers supplied by community leaders CC Fearson and Barry Gray, we have completely overhauled the landscaping, set up sprinkler systems, sorted through the many wonderful donations that blocked access to the dormitory building for a while, and done minor maintenance throughout all three buildings. We hosted a church group, which sent over 88 young teenagers for a work project, which was lively if nothing else.

In terms of operations, Lydia has expanded her client intake capacity by a tremendous amount. Unfortunately, she does not have any funds to work with. Clients are lined up by 8 in the morning, and pretty much all we have to offer are phone numbers and creative thinking. Fortunately, Lydia has a large supply of both.

In terms of operational funding, we received a \$50,000 award from the Emergency Shelter Grant program. We are expecting a contract this month. The grant is cost-reimbursement, so we need to build up our coffers in order to get started drawing down funds. We also submitted a small grant proposal to Sam's Club, after they invited us to do so. I am currently writing for two other grants, which should address long-term funding issues if awarded.

Challenge Grant:

The evaluation committee has met, and grant proposal scores have been submitted to those members of the Board of Directors who have no connection with any of the applicant agencies. The BOD members will recommend which agencies should receive how much funding, according to the three possible grant funding levels. This decision should be reached by the time the membership body meets, as it has to be included in the grant application due into the Office on Homelessness on July 10. The decision will be a difficult one, as virtually all applications scored to a very high level this year.

The final Challenge Grant reports are due today. Agencies which do not get their final invoices in by the time of the membership meeting will not be reimbursed for their expenses. This does not apply to the majority of agencies and churches, which have either already received all their funds, or have submitted their final reports.

Strategic Plan:

The strategic plan, also to be included in the Challenge Grant application due July 10, has been updated and amended based on input from the membership and Board of Directors, as well as from committee reports. The section on Challenge Grant funding merely reflects the names of organizations and churches who submitted grants, and for what purpose request was made. After the BOD voting committee makes its recommendations, I will remove those applicants, if any, whose funding was denied. The strategic plan is still subject to member review, so please take a look at it and see what

should be added or subtracted, changed or left in place. After the vote at today's meeting, the window for further input will be closed.

Funding:

Whether it was because we moved and people didn't know where to send checks, or because of the recession, or what, the membership drive has been stalled considerably this year. Given that we are expanding all over the two-county area, and are expanding our outreach and community awareness efforts on a constant basis, and our regular sources of income (Bingo and DCF) are contracting, this is distressing. Please, if you have not renewed your membership, do so today.

Community Awareness:

Our grand opening produced a flurry of editorial coverage and interest throughout the community. In the course of a week, we were featured on Channel 3 news, WTFT radio, the Northwest Florida Daily News, and the Crestview Bulletin. Generally the reaction was extremely positive.

Renee Crosby is currently making a video to take to the pastors of the 30 largest churches in the area not currently involved in Opportunity, Inc. She is also scheduling appointments with these pastors, armed with literature, talking points, and the video. This is an important outreach, and we are extremely pleased with her willingness to step forward.

Homeless Prevention/ Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP):

I spent most of the third week in June in Atlanta, attending the federally sponsored HPRP technical assistance conference. The key piece of information, as to when exactly these funds will be available, was not provided. The eligibility rules, intake forms, documentation requirements, tracking expectations, outcome measures and reporting, were all thoroughly explained. The grant is very exacting, and will require a huge expansion in our HMIS capacity. Unfortunately, the HMIS grant awarded by HUD has not yet been executed by the government, and so we are delayed in our ability to prepare for these new capacity demands.

The Florida Office on Homelessness has called a conference call for July 14. Since all the local plans have been submitted, and most all of the applicants have attended the technical assistance conference, it is expected that the purpose of this call will revolve around timing issues. If so, I will send out an e-mail immediately giving some time lines as to when this funding is expected to arrive.

Stand Down for Vets:

I have completed the grant application for the Stand Down for Homeless Vets grant, and am waiting for some outstanding letters of support. The more the merrier, so if your organization plans to help with the Stand Down in any way, and I haven't contacted you, please feel free to submit your own letter addressed to me. The grant proposal is for expanded medical and dental services, and to provide gift certificates to local fast food restaurants, enabling recipients to get a warm meal out of the cold and/or wet.

Travel:

I will be in the office (with the possible exception of a trip to Tallahassee to deliver the Challenge Grant) throughout July. My only scheduled trip in August is for the 13-15, for the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence Board of Directors meetings (next to last one).

Lenore Wilson