

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

**Executive Director's Report
May 3, 2010**

Fifth Anniversary:

Hard as it is to believe, we are celebrating our fifth anniversary this month. We incorporated in April, 2005, and received our designation as the state-recognized homeless coalition for Okaloosa and Walton Counties in May, 2005, along with a small state contract for direct assistance. We picked up the Challenge Grant that summer and began distributing those funds to our local service providers. In April, 2007, we moved to a new office and permanent staff, and it's been a rocket ride ever since. Thanks to the hundreds of persons who have worked to assist the homeless, and to expand options for homeless assistance, during all this time. You are completely awesome.

Help Wanted:

In line with the rapid expansion noted earlier, we are looking for a part-time bookkeeper. If you know of anyone who has experience with Peachtree Accounting and enjoys grant management, please let us know.

Strategic Planning:

It's time to get our strategic planning off the ground. Generally we have committees review the progress in their areas, and report back on the desired goals and action steps for their areas of interest. This year we will be setting the major goals for the Continuum at the May meeting, then assigning committees to determine how to make these goals a reality. Please come with your ideas as to the strategies and projects we need to secure a better, brighter future for our homeless population. Also, please refer to the website, <http://www.okaloosawaltonhomeless.org>, for the point-in-time data we will be using to drive this process.

Department of Children and Families Proposed Budget:

I visited with Sens. Gaetz and Peaden in Tallahassee on April 8. Both were comfortable that the bills relating to homeless funding will pass. By the time we have our meeting, the budget will have been passed and we will know to a certainty if and how much of the homeless funding was restored.

Homeless Prevention/ Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) Fund:

Third quarter funding arrived on Wednesday, April 28, and disbursement began Friday. This program has been a lifeline to many families, and we are very fortunate in having this available for them. We have been awarded an additional \$74,813 for July-December, of which we will be able to use \$70,000 for direct assistance (the rest goes to paper, stamps, ink cartridges, partition file folders).

Opportunity Place:

I have been talking about the success of Opportunity Place for some time, and decided to look up the numbers to document my frequently expressed impressions. It was better than I had imagined. Over 80% of adults exiting the program left with secure employment. Since many of our adults are part of two-parent families, our numbers of households exiting with employment was even higher. Only a handful of families left without secure housing – the vast majority moved into permanent housing, with seven families reuniting with other family members (generally we are talking about very young single moms reuniting with parents) and two families moved into transitional housing. The full details, along with lots of stories, an explanation of our policies and procedures, and other bits of background information can be found on the new link on our website. Go to <http://www.okaloosawaltonhomeless.org>, and look on the line right under the header. Click onto Opportunity Place for the full rundown.

HUD/ HMIS

I didn't get to the HUD meeting in Jacksonville, or even to the Continuum meeting on April 5, since my granddaughter chose that day to arrive unexpectedly early. Mom and baby are beautiful, healthy and thriving.

CC went to the HUD meeting, and picked up a great deal of information about the HMIS contracts. Steve Hopkins continues to get administrator training and work with community agencies in getting HMIS set up for multiple sites. The process is picking up steam, and at least two providers should be on line within the next couple of weeks.

Challenge Grant:

We have disbursed all the Challenge Grant funds from the second draw, and expect the third draw very soon. We will pay out on the April reports as soon as the funds hit the bank account. Spending has not been an issue, but now that the cold weather season is over, there may be some churches or others who are not going to draw down all their funds. Please let us know as soon as possible, because there are other churches and agencies that can definitely use them. It will be too late to redirect funding by the time the June reports come in.

HHAG (Children in Crisis) Grant:

We have been able to get Children in Crisis half their funds so far, which is wonderful, as they are over half-way toward completion. Drawing down these funds has not gotten easier, but at least it does happen now. The site looks wonderful.

Travel:

It's the summer and I have a new granddaughter, so will be taking several long weekends to visit. I'm not sure exactly when, but someone will be on hand at the office and elsewhere all summer.

Meeting Dates:

The next meeting will be held June 7, at 3:30 p.m., at the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce.