

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

**Executive Director's Report
November 2, 2009**

Homeless Prevention/ Rapid Rehousing Fund:

After multiple delays, we finally received our check on October 19, which was the same day checks were received all over Northwest Florida. Lydia, Keli and CC spent the week reviewing over 200 applications to determine who met eligibility criteria, who still needed assistance, and assign priority ratings. We were able to get \$20,000 out the door on Friday, October 23.

We have moved to a schedule of pre-screening one week, full intakes the next week, review committee meetings and fund disbursement at the end of the second week. Thus, we will be sending out rent and utility checks every other week.

Challenge and HHAG Grants:

We have received our executed contract with the Department of Children and Families for our \$96,000 Challenge Grant, and I have submitted our request for funds. A sent out contracts for our sub-grant recipients last week, which will take effect as soon as I get them back and can sign them. While I cannot disburse funds until the state deposits money into our account, costs incurred from the time the contract is signed by the provider and Opportunity, Inc. can be reimbursed on a monthly basis upon invoice. I have copies of the new reporting form which will be required by the 5th of each month.

I have met with Children in Crisis, and we are ready with that contract as soon as word comes in that it is ready. Since it is a construction grant, DCF is a little slower than with the Challenge Grant, but we expect the contract to come through in the very near future. Children in Crisis is already clearing land in anticipation of the initial date.

Communication/ Coordination Issues:

Back several months ago there was a call for better communication to inform the membership of what services were being regularly rendered and what special events were being planned so to avoid duplication. This was promptly accomplished by the Monday Update and adding the pages to the Calendar section of the web site.

Sadly, less than 25% even open the Monday Update and even less click on the links to the actual calendar pages.

In an effort to target those who are in most need of this feature, I strongly suggest you supply us with names and e-mail addresses of one or more people in your organization who would find this information of value and use. We will e-mail only the Update to these added names - they will not receive the other information coming to you from this office.

Most of the Updates to governmental e-mail addresses are blocked. So please unblock these updates or send an alternative e-mail address so you are not left out.

Please e-mail the additional name(s) and e-mail address(es) to calendar@okaloosawaltonhomeless.org.

Opportunity Place:

Opportunity House has been in operation nearly four months, and is feeling fairly permanent now. We have not only welcomed babies, watched them learn to walk, sent kindergartners out for the first day of school, and helped older people as they found a safe retirement, but we even held our first wedding on Saturday (Halloween). The residents and friends decorated the place so beautifully that we feel we could rent the place as a wedding venue - it made a great backdrop for pictures. We will be putting some shots of our wedding finery on the website, so you can see for yourself. Thanks to Martin Fancher for officiating, Mental Health Association for marriage license fees, Gloria Battle for flowers, and Duane St. John for the catering. The cake was supplied by Publix by way of Destin Harvest. Originally it had a Sponge Bob sitting on top, but was otherwise quite appropriate. So Sponge Bob came off, a bride-and-groom figurine went on in its place, and we were set. A resident with an incredible voice provided the vocals - it was a lovely, and memorable, ceremony.

As the need for food and our ability to procure food donations increases, we are looking forward to the construction of the shed out back. The exterior is about 90% completed, after which we will begin on outfitting the exterior. Insulation is necessary, if anyone has a good source. As soon as the building passes inspection, we will use it as a community food pantry and storage facility, allowing us to keep all the premises cleaner and neater.

We have a number of collaborative partners working with us at Opportunity Place - Bridgeway Center sends over a trauma counselor every week, Shelter House sends over a domestic violence counselor every other week. The Mental Health Association is supplying a financial counselor/ family budget expert. JobsPlus helps out every day, as does anyone else who is listed in CC's phone. We are grateful for all of you, and especially our volunteers who do more than anyone to keep us going.

Other Funding:

Residents are currently applying themselves to making reams of Christmas crafts and presents for an Opportunity Place Open House December 5, 10-3. The idea is to foster community interaction with the shelter, and to raise some funds through the sales. Craft supplies and volunteer help is appreciated.

November 20 is the day of the Youth Village dinner theater, which I hope we all support, since 50% of the proceeds are going to us.

Raffle ticket sales have brought in about \$1500 to date, primarily because Judy and Jackie can sell tickets like nothing you have seen before. They could use some help.

Stand Down:

The Stand Down was a huge success, and although we didn't get a lot of credit outside Judge Maney and other organizers, we did a lot. The grant we wrote allowed Jim and Dr. Woo to arrange for medical and dental supplies, and paid for 20 veterans to receive picture IDs. Our volunteers managed the intake process, and ensured that veterans and other homeless got to the services they needed. Our secretary, Francis, did the haircuts. All told, we provided 133 flu shots, 41 pneumonia shots, and 38 tetanus shots.

Department of Health:

We have an executed contract for the Department of Health planning grant, and are moving forward with the work of creating provider and consumer needs surveys. We are collaborating with the University of West Florida to ensure question and method reliability, so that results can be presented with confidence. UWF will also present data analysis of the results gathered.

HMIS:

Now that all relevant contracts are in, we have issued bids for an HMIS software vendor. The final cut-off date for bids is November 4, and we may come to a decision that afternoon. We have done an in-depth review of all potential providers, with an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. This will be compared to costs, with quality and cost efficiency measures weighed equally. Terms of the bid required installation of the web-based program in early November, training throughout November, and usage by the end of November. We will bring the HPRP sites on line first, followed by Challenge Grant recipients. We hope to have the first 20 providers on line by the end of spring.

SAMHSA Grant:

Bridgeway Center, Inc. received the SAMHSA mental health treatment for homeless grant, and hosted their first partner meeting on Friday. Other partners include OASIS, JobsPlus, and the Mental Health Association. This is expected to be a significant resource for our chronically homeless for the next five years.

Community Awareness

We continue to garner a lot of publicity, both for the homeless prevention/ rapid rehousing fund and for Opportunity Place. CC met with Bob Mearns, the new FWB city manager. I spoke at the Military Comptrollers group representing Eglin and Hurlburt on October 22, and CC and I attended the Krewe of Chameleons Founders meeting. CC and Keli Cummings are all over everywhere networking and arranging for services that we can provide, and that others can provide us.

DCF Site Visit:

April Hargrove, our contract manager, and her supervisor, Darlene Seer, came on October 14 to visit Opportunity Place. They interviewed clients, inspected each room, and came away glowing with praise. We get tremendous support from our circuit and regional offices, and always welcome their visits.

Travel:

I will be attending my final meeting of the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence November 9-11 in St. Pete Beach. After this meeting, I am no longer the president and can retire from the Board. I will be in Tallahassee for a personal leave day on Friday, the day after Thanksgiving.

Meeting Dates:

The next Board meeting is scheduled for December 2, at the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, at 3:30 p.m.

- Lenore Wilson