HOPE’S VILLAGE OF SLO
“Showers of Hope”
Business Plan

Since there are no public showers in SLO, the Hope’s Village Board of Directors was inspired by other groups across the nation to open the first mobile shower program in SLO. “Showers of Hope” operates as a program under the umbrella of Hope’s Village of SLO’s nonprofit public charity 501(c)(3) California corporation.

Start up date/data: Official start up date was Tuesday, September 5, 2017 at 10:00am.

Stats: As of February 17, 2019, we have provided approximately 2,200 people with hot private showers, clean clothing, food, haircuts, pedicures, backpacks, sleeping bags, resource info, hope, compassion and love. We find out what they need in the way of housing and jobs - four have now been housed and five are working, which is what we strive for.

Team: Dedicated volunteers worked for three months so our shower trailer would be stand alone/self-contained. We currently have 10 dedicated operations volunteers who work the showers; we train on-site to offer love and compassion to our chronically homeless people who “live” in SLO but have no way other to clean themselves. (Current volunteer opportunities include operations, shower trailer maintenance, greeting our guests, hair cutting, doing pedicures for those with diabetes, and provide simple wound care (another RN is needed). We recently added a manager of clothing and toiletries inventory and purchasing.

Goal: Get more of our Central Coast community businesses to partner on this program; locate an organization or group to offer up hot food each shower day; a group to do more outreach and public relations in the community; someone to organize haircutters so we always have one on hand for Saturdays.

Sites: Since SLO has the majority of homeless people in the county, Showers of Hope will be operated exclusively in the City of SLO. We currently operate at on Saturdays at the SLO United Church of Christ at 12245 Los Osos Valley Road.

Days/Times: Showers of Hope started out small ~ we learned by doing. Currently we offer showers every Saturday, rain or shine, from 9:00am until 1:00pm. Set up starts at 7:30am and we stay until everything is cleaned and put away and all guests have left the grounds (around 2:00pm).

We used to offer our guests all the time needed to shower and shave…there were no lines of people waiting. But have now reduced time to ten minutes since we often hit our max (30-40).

We tried taking reservations but this was not successful…we continue to operate on a walk-in basis. (The very first day of showers, we picked up homeless folks from Meadow, Mitchell and Santa Rosa Park where we knew homeless people were - we continue to pick up folks who can’t even make it to the bus stop even if they did have bus passes.)
Check in: Trained “greeters” interview guests and ask for names, cell numbers, where they consider home (most of our guests are local), their age, if they’re a veteran (so we can hook them up with our RVs for Veterans program); how long they’ve been homeless, what their income is, any issues they have (alcohol, drugs, PTSD, etc.) and how we can help. The more they come to showers, the more they trust us and the more info we obtain - for our information only. We provide stats on how many showers we give to city and county every quarter.

We find out what people want or need in the way of housing, jobs, medical care, psychiatric help, counseling, etc. We serve as a reference center for other homeless services in the county.

Current Partners:

Dignity Health French Hospital Medical Center donated $25,000 toward the purchase of our mobile shower trailer…they know the health advantages of people who can get and stay clean.

United Church of Christ: Pastor Jason has been so helpful in our shower ops - welcoming us to park in the church parking lot to give showers. They donate all the electricity we need, and someone in the church anonymously donates water for our use.

Transitions Mental Health Association: TMHA sends out a staff member each Saturday to talk with our guests and see what they need (and how they can help); many will not venture out far from where they call home to go downtown to an appointment, which often cannot be kept due to lack of transportation, clean clothing, etc. And they’re fearful of losing their belongings if they leave them for too long.

Paul’s Dry Cleaners: Paul’s has been laundering our towels and guests’ clothing since the program’s inception, which we take in twice a week.

Harvey’s Honey Huts: The owner of this business has generously offered their help by having staff come remove our black water from the church parking lot - and they do so for free!

SLO County Food Bank: We have been passing out no-cook to-go food banks supplied by the Food Bank; we are now working with them on supplying protein and other foods to us as well.

Endorsements: We have the blessing of Mayor Heidi Harmon, the support of Sheriff Ian Parkinson, SLO County Public Health Director Penny Borenstein, SLO Police Chief Deanna Cantrell, and many others.
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**Donors:** Donations come by way of Pay Pal and mailed checks. We give yearly presentations at Laguna Middle School and Cal Poly on homelessness and Hope’s Village. Two classes of Laguna Middle School students hosted bake sales and donated $200 for our showers. These are 12 year olds learning how to help those who have much less than them.

**Items Needed:** People drop off toiletries, towels, clothing, shower shoes, feminine products (a local attorney and a midwife are providing these for us for life); tents, sleeping bags, backpacks, tarps, ground pads and monetary donations. We encourage folks to bring us whatever they’re not using in the way of clothing and camping equipment. Our guests greatly appreciate the help.

**Term length:** We will be operating our shower program indefinitely until we find a minimum of two acres on which to build our sustainable community village. When our own shower facilities are built, we will offer our mobile shower trailer to another group who is willing to provide showers for homeless people here in SLO.

**Utilities/water/dumping:** Our mobile shower trailer is completely self-contained. We remodeled it to enable us to operate “off the grid” anywhere it’s legal to park in SLO. We carry our own water, propane, electricity, and a dump tank.

**Shower trailer:** Our trailer was custom built by Comforts of Home in Illinois ([www.cohsi.com](http://www.cohsi.com)) and delivered to SLO. It has two separate and private units with sink, toilet and shower - one side is ADA compliant and has fold down seat in shower. We also have a steel ramp for those in wheel chairs, if needed.

**Space needed for shower trailer:** Our shower trailer and truck take up just two parking spots (length of approximately 38 feet total) as well as at least ten feet on side of trailer for our clothing and supplies tables.

**Demos:** When requested, we take our shower trailer to demonstrate how well this program works. Thus far, Los Osos and Morro Bay have had demos. We are working on shining a huge light on just how many folks we have living without the basic needs that the rest of us take for granted.

**Mission:** *The most important thing we do* is to help our homeless guests get services and items they desperately need (shoes, a motel stay if they are ill, medical help - we deliver them to the ER if necessary)...what they need in the way of housing, and referrals to these resources (Dee Torres - SLO Housing Connection; Transitions Mental Health Association re housing and services; Gryphon Society/Gatehouse, Inc. - Bull Chaney’s five clean and sober living homes county-wide; HomeShare SLO, etc).
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We help people in their search for jobs (if they are not disabled and can work); take them to the America’s Job Center on Sacramento Street. If they are a veteran, we refer them to housing programs (our own “RVs for Veterans” program has now passed on 85 RVs to local homeless veterans and others. We get folks to the SLO Veterans Service Office on Grand Ave. for benefits, counseling, medical care, dental work, glasses, psychiatric care, rehab, etc. or the Veteran’s Office on Southwood Street in SLO. But most of all we offer love, compassion and hope - each guest gets a big hug when they come. We ask how they are doing and how we can help.

Who we help: People we work with have little or no income and are ineligible for Prado/MLM for many reasons. Prado does the best they can with what they have; they need to provide a safe atmosphere for others who use their facilities. Some of the homeless people on the streets suffer from mental illness and act out, and thus get kicked out of Prado, our only shelter.

Some of the folks we serve haven’t been away from the creek in a while…they are hesitant to “come out…” some have behavior issues. We are there for them - showering them with not only water, but love, hope and community. Many have had their possessions stolen - backpacks, money, debit cards, cell phones, and are completely cut off from the outside world. Through the goodness of our donors, we step in and help replace items. It’s a daily challenge for people trying to eke out an existence on the street.

Data: We provide city and county staff detailed information regarding number of showers taken each quarter; average age, time of homelessness, number of volunteers we have, how many homeless guests are now in housing thanks to showers, how many have obtained jobs, what their issues are, and other valuable info so they can see who we work with, and how they can help too.

Future: Hopefully our mobile shower program will prove to the City of SLO how many people are living on our streets today in inhumane conditions - cut off from clean water, food, telephone use, case management, safety, and unable to clean themselves. SLO needs public showers (as other cities have - Pismo, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Cayucos, and Avila) for our homeless people who remain unhoused, and have no other way to get clean.

Needed: A mobile home/RV park could easily be set up for very low income people in SLO where folks could live - where they can pay on a sliding scale. It’s the humane thing to do. And we could help. Any questions, please call…

Because we can reduce homelessness in our town, in our time.

Becky Jorgeson, M.A.  
Founder/President  
805-234-5478

www.hopesvillageofslo.com