

May 14, 2018 – RMGA Membership Meeting
Coalition for the Homeless
2211 Champa Street, Denver, CO 80202

Short Business meeting: Chaired by President Mike Pearl. Introduced new member Brad Hatfield, and guests – David White (D-Tours) – his other job is an Adams County police officer. David did a fall ghost tour on Capitol Hill that Jessica said was really good. Also, Adrian brought a friend, Robin, who is a nurse.

Program Chair Dawn Nelsen introduced Meredith Ritchie and Jill Gulatto of Coalition for the Homeless.

The Coalition owns the building – built about 1910 or so. They have 600 employees. We each received an 8 page handout based on the Coalition's power-point presentation. Meredith noted that their role is advocacy for the homeless. We asked how we can help – they noted that the Coalition participated in 45 bills regarding homelessness in the just ended state legislative session. They did not feel that they were very successful in their efforts this session.

The power-point presentation is noted below:

- Many people are just one paycheck, disaster, or medical bill away from homelessness
- At least 3,500,000 people nationwide are experiencing homelessness (this number could be as high at 10 million, many are unaccounted for). To add to this number – there is a shortage of 3,500,000 housing units nationally.
- The next slide showed state by state, the approximate numbers of homeless – The West Coast, Texas, Florida, New York and Pennsylvania show the highest numbers. Colorado is not far behind. The other Midwest states are lower on the scale of the number of homeless.
- In Colorado there are almost 11,000 individuals that are homeless, including - approximately:
 - 1,100 veterans
 - 2,300 are chronically homeless
 - 3,400 are individuals in families
 - 763 are unaccompanied youth (roughly age 18-26)
 - There is only one program in the state for these unaccompanied youth
- In the 7-county Metro Denver area:
 - 5,100 individuals
 - 570 are veterans
 - 1,100 are chronically homeless
 - 1,450 are individuals in families
 - 395 are unaccompanied youth
- Homelessness is bigger than Denver:
 - Rural towns – opioid epidemic – difficult for people to get to treatment centers
 - There are 52 programs in Colorado to work with those addicted to opioid – 12 in the Front Range
 - Colorado Springs – not enough shelter beds – a shelter in Colorado Springs closed
 - There are food banks in Vail and Aspen – seasonal workers cannot afford housing in the ski resort areas because they are not paid enough and there are few affordable housing options available
 - 79 of the largest communities in Colorado have ordinances against being homeless
 - This pretty much guarantees that if you are homeless you will be breaking a law and be labeled a felon
 - January 26th of each year, there is a census taken of the number of homeless – called a “Point-In-Time” count

- This census is taken nationwide – volunteers go to places where homeless tend to be and ask many personal questions
 - Basic questions include: Length of time homeless, gender, age, family or individual, homeless because of domestic violence, drugs, mental illness.
 - The numbers probably are much higher than those counted
 - Those in the hospital aren't counted, those sleeping on a friend's sofa, in jail, or at a motel and those who just refuse to answer the questions are not included in the count.
 - Families are really undercounted – they fear that their children may be taken away so they don't answer the questions
- The Federal definition of homelessness (Housing and Urban Development) has two categories – sheltered and unsheltered
 - Unsheltered includes those whose primary nighttime residence is a tent, or a public/private place not designed for accommodation for human beings
 - Sheltered includes those living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements.
- How did we get here?
 - Broken systems:
 - Minimum wage versus cost of living – lack of opportunity – must earn \$24/hr to afford a 2 BR apt
 - Access to healthcare – can't pay medical bills – illness may cause job loss – vicious downward spiral
 - Criminal justice system – if you have any felony conviction you probably won't be able to get a job or a place to live
 - Job opportunities – most available jobs pay only minimum wage
 - Generational poverty – this is cyclical – family poor, you have fewer opportunities for education or training for a better job
 - Discrimination – “Redlining” (not renting/selling apts/homes to non-whites was a law in Denver until 1968) – neighborhoods didn't want non-whites
 - Affordable housing shortage – builders are required to provide x number of units for low income housing when they build new apartments. However, they don't comply and just pay the fine, eliminating low-income housing (currently rental prices are \$1,400 - \$1,800/month rents) – those making minimum wage cannot afford this.
 - Personal barriers:
 - Eviction – almost always goes in the landlord's favor – once evicted may never get another apartment
 - Domestic violence – about ½ of women/children that are homeless is probably due to domestic violence
 - Mental illness
 - Job loss
 - Physical disability
 - Unexpected or expensive bills

Substance use disorder (may be considered mental illness)
 - Trauma:

“Trauma is often the cause, but almost always the result of homelessness”

 - Any Adverse Childhood Experience can cause trauma
 - It can also cause other illnesses, physical problems
 - It probably will result in homelessness and/or mental illness
- Addressing the problem:
 - Systems of support:

- Shelters
 - Extreme cold weather shelters
 - Case management services
 - Rapid rehousing
 - Permanent supportive housing – the Coalition does permanent supportive housing
 - Housing choice “Section 8” – The Coalition must follow the MANY government rules and regulations
 - Outreach – The Coalition helps the homeless connect with people who can help them
- Organizations in Denver Metro that help the homeless
 - Access Housing
 - Beacon Place
 - Christ Body Ministries
 - Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
 - Comitis Crisis Center
 - Denver Homeless Out Loud
 - Denver Rescue Mission
 - The Delores Project
 - Family Homestead
 - Family Tree
 - Family Promise
 - Father Woody’s Haven of Hope
 - The Gathering Place
 - Growing Home
 - Hope Program
 - Joy House
 - Sacred Heart House of Denver
 - The Salvation Army
 - Samaritan House (Catholic Charities)
 - Shannon’s Hope Maternity Home
 - Senior Support Services
 - St. Francis Center
 - Urban Peak
 - Volunteers of America
 - Warren Village
- Gaps in the System:
 - Knowing where to start
 - Identification cards and Documentation -- If you become homeless, the odds are good that you will be mugged within 24 hours and your identity stolen
 - Aging out of foster care – kids are turned out on the street at 18-20 years of age with no support system to help them with jobs, where to live, etc.
 - Difficulty using vouchers for housing, food – there are rules and more rules
 - Weekend and after-hours services – most of the places above are open Mon-Fri from 7-5
 - Personal barriers
 - Rules instilled by Organizations
 - Health conditions by age – health issues that develop that make your health age about 20 years older than your chronological age.
- The Coalition for the Homeless supports:
 - 18,032 individuals
 - 1,159 families
 - Using the Housing First model they support people of any:
 - Religion
 - Sex
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Color
 - Refugee status
 - Immigration Status
 - Gender expression
 - Sexual orientation
 - Disability
- Housing First
 - Combines low-barrier affordable housing, health care and supportive services for individuals and families
 - The Coalition has 19 properties and has assisted 3,369 households

- The thought that the homeless prefer to be homeless is a myth – when asked, only 1 out of 100 turned down housing
 - 95% of those in Coalition housing stay at least one year, nationwide – 88% stay more than 5 years
- The largest Coalition population are medically fragile
- Drug users can be housed, even if still using
 - Except for meth users – meth gets into the walls of the house and makes it unlivable for others. Meth users use in winter to keep their body twitching and moving
- Housing is Healthcare – facility is on Stout Street
 - Served 18,032 patients, had 38,667 health center patient visits, 4,002 mental health patients, and 1,050 patient visits on the HOP
 - Hypothermia and drug overdose are often causes- the most prevalent are diabetes and hypertension
 - Healthcare includes primary care, behavioral health, pediatrics, dental, vision, pharmacy, triage, respite, Medicaid enrollment
 - They served 13,400 people, 3,000 dental patients, 300-400 pairs of eyeglasses dispensed monthly, and 900 prescriptions filled daily.
- Support services include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family support services ▪ Community resources ▪ Project to Assist in the Transition from Homelessness (PATH) ▪ Case management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vocational Programs ▪ Emergency Shelter information ▪ Transportation assistance ▪ Referrals ▪ Housing information
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- Coalition Outcomes:
 - 1,225 participants with 967 job placements – 80% of whom make less than \$13.68/hr.
 - 88% of Fort Lyon Recovery program residents participate to get jobs.
 - The home entry system tests for vulnerability – the most vulnerable get housing before the other 6,000 on the waiting list
 - Same Café – it's a pay what you can for a meal – you can purchase a chip for \$12 and give it away to anyone
 - The Coalition lobbies against the camping ban in Denver – this makes everyone on the street a felon whether they've done anything wrong or not.
 - The camping ban costs a lot more than finding these people a place to live.
 - Tiny homes are not really an option – the money they have would construct 6 tiny homes – a drop in the bucket of the 6,000 on the wait list
 - The Coalition works with education and advocacy
 - They partner with the City and the State on many programs, also partner with national organizations, local organizations and government agencies

Contact information:

Meredith Ritchie, Communications Manager

303.312.9642

Mritchie@coloradocoalition.org

Jill Gulotta, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator

303.312.9633

jgulotta@coloradocoalition.org