



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

## VOICE

Vol. 3, No. 1, December 2007

# THE COMMUNITY

### CLIENT SUCCESS

Don proudly explains that he is enrolled in a college program, taking courses toward a counseling degree. His ultimate goal, he explains, is to achieve a master's degree in addictions counseling in order to help others who find themselves caught up in alcohol and substance abuse. He is helping to sponsor two other men who are going through their own counseling program, trying to overcome substance abuse.

Just a short time ago, Don's dreams would not have been nearly as large. He served in the US Army from 1974-1977, during the Viet Nam war era. At a rank of Sergeant E5, Don trained for a role as a military policeman and as a correctional officer. For several years, he trained new officers within the US military disciplinary program.

Just out of the military, Don began a civilian career as part of a security task force for large employers. In 1977 he was a pedestrian in an auto-pedestrian accident which left him with two broken legs. Unable to work, Don began what he describes as a downward spiral into alcohol abuse. Bouncing from job to job and city to city, Don lost his way. "My first rehab was at a veteran's hospital in Chicago," said Don. "I stayed sober four months that time, and was able to find work in sales."

But every time Don made progress, old habits pulled him back into substance abuse. He entered rehabilitation programs four more times over the years, convinced that this would be the one that freed him from his "prison." Finally, in 2005, after a heart attack, Don realized that he needed to make significant changes. He entered rehab for the sixth time.

He sought help from Austin's McCabe Center, in a VA-sponsored program. An undiagnosed bipolar condition was discovered. The 12-Step program helped, having trained counselors who believed in and encouraged him helped, and Don once again beat back the demons that had followed him so long.

Following a residency treatment program involving counseling sessions and medications, coupled with a growing optimism that he could take charge of his life, Don was referred to Veteran's Re-Entry Program, a partnership of Community Partnership for the Homeless and Caritas of Austin.

"It took a while to understand that everything was OK," said Don. "I saw the opportunities that were being given to me, and I was determined to get something out of this."

In the Re-Entry Program, Don was provided with safe and secure housing, a permanent address, encouragement to return to college, and access to supportive services to help him readjust to living independently. Don lived with two roommates, also military veterans, in one of the single-family houses that Community Partnership owns in south Austin. Don's case manager, from Caritas, provided additional stability, support and access.

After 22 months in the Re-Entry Program, Don transitioned to his own apartment, and is now enjoying the solitude of his quiet neighborhood. He takes the bus to school and to shop, rising at 4:30 every morning to get his day started. Estranged from his daughters for many years, Don is renewing these relationships and just found out that he is a grandfather.

Don just received a mid-term assessment of his grades thus far in his program: All A's!! We are pleased to have removed some barriers and paved the way for Don to return to the community --- but realize that it was Don himself who made this happen.

"I've learned that you can live your life in fear - or in faith," said Don. "A little of my fear is eliminated every day."



Don volunteering in the Community Partnership office.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

- o Community Partnership Volunteer News
- o Dell Employees team building success
- o Cosmopolitan Rotary Club beautifies veteran's property
- o Letter from Executive Director Frank Fernandez

## OUR MISSION

Community Partnership for the Homeless is dedicated to help end homelessness by providing safe, affordable housing for those working to achieve independent living. Community Partnership acquires and develops housing, refurbishes substandard housing, and provides transitional and affordable housing for homeless and at-risk adults and children in Austin/Travis County.

## OUR HISTORY

Community Partnership was founded in 1990 by a formerly homeless young woman. The agency has grown to its present capacity to serve more than 50 homeless veterans each year, providing safe and secure housing and access to supportive services to support each individual as he/she works to regain independent living. At this time, nearly 70% of clients transition to permanent housing and employment. Many of these residents have been homeless for extended periods of time. During the 17 years that it has been in existence, Community Partnership has helped more than 530 formerly homeless persons transition to independent living.

## OUR BOARD

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*T. Stacy and Assoc.*

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OUR STAFF  
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## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Why is it so difficult to look a homeless man, woman or child in the eye? How many times have you found yourself stopped at a red light, looking everywhere – except where the disheveled man with the Help sign is standing? I think it's hard to look them in the eye because to do so would be to recognize them as human beings. And we don't want to do that. It is too hard. It is far easier to view them as these vague peripheral beings that do not merit full moral consideration. It is easier to view them as victims of their own poor choices, and not victims of natural or social circumstances.

To do otherwise, to see them for who they truly are – a brother or sister, a parent, a veteran, a mentally ill former co-worker, a friend who's hit a rough patch in life – would force us to confront the awfulness of their situation. These are individuals who may have made some poor personal choices, but who often are overwhelmed by the unfortunate vicissitudes of life. They are us.

I am reminded of this by a recent "graduate" who has overcome not only multiple substance addictions, but also a serious mental health condition. During his tenure with Community Partnership, he has been able to secure his VA pension and is attending college with an interest in becoming a substance abuse counselor. In school for the first time in 10 years and getting all "A's" in class, he is doing very well. While not all of our clients achieve this level of success, Don's situation highlights the simple notion that if given the opportunity to help themselves, most people will grab the chance – just like we would.

Community Partnership's challenge is to provide this opportunity to as many homeless folks as we can. Current estimates suggest that there is a shortage of homeless housing in excess of 3,000 units. We are positioning ourselves to produce over 500 units of supportive housing over the next several years. In addition to Glen Oaks Corner, our homeless family supportive housing project opening next year, we are currently beginning to work on our first multi-family project. It will be a 100 unit development targeted to individuals who are struggling with, or at risk for, homelessness.

Please join us as we endeavor together to end homelessness.

## FEEDBACK

As we move forward with exciting plans for this year, we want to invite you to be a part of our success. We have volunteer projects that could use your expertise. Please let us know of your continued interest in supporting Community Partnership by returning this card.

- I'd like to be part of a volunteer group to help with special projects (painting houses, delivering food)
- I wish to receive only your electronic newsletter.     Please put me on your e-mailing list for announcements and electronic newsletter.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please change my mailing address to: \_\_\_\_\_

- Enclosed is my gift to help Austin's homeless: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip this box and send to:  
Community Partnership for the Homeless,  
PO Box 685065, Austin, TX 78768  
or call us at 512.469.9130  
or send email to [info@austinhomless.org](mailto:info@austinhomless.org)

## OUR VOLUNTEERS



Employees of the Dell Global Sales Division give a peeling and faded fence a fresh new look.



Nalda Garcia, Anise Hotchkiss, Natalie Figuerido, and Charles Vanzant work hard organizing non-perishables.

### DELL TEAMS

In the past few months, teams of volunteers from Dell Inc have rolled up their sleeves and helped us with several much-needed projects.

Dell volunteers from the Global Sales Division-Pacific attacked a very old fence, giving it new life by painting until it looked nearly new. This same group built an herb garden and re-landscaped the front sidewalk and entry with low-maintenance native plants. "We undertake a project each year, helping out in the community," said one of the volunteers. "We are happy to be here this year helping homeless individuals get established and have a nice house to live in."

Two other teams from Dell tackled the food pantry, with the morning crew from Dell's Commercial Support Services emptying and washing the shelves, and the afternoon crew from Dell's Software Testing Group sorting and re-stocking in preparation for weekly food distribution. Staff and volunteers who fill orders and distribute the food remarked that everything was well marked and easy to find.

While the food pantry was being polished yet another team from Dell's Software Testing Group sorted clothing items and arranged hundred of items in the new clothing pantry. Donations were sorted by sizes and types, hung on hangers and marked with signage.

Our volunteers left with bruises, sore muscles, torn fingernails – and with our sincere gratitude for their time and efforts to spiff up our pantries and properties.



Mann Kavehkar matches socks for the newly stocked clothing pantry.



Jasmine Hargrave stirs up previously bare soil to get ready for new plants.

### ROTARY CLUB TEAM

On a bright and sunny Saturday in October, members of the Cosmopolitan Rotary Club of Austin shoveled, dug, and planted native plants at one of Community Partnership's Veteran Re-Entry program houses. The Rotarians - nine in number - replaced spindly turf and hard-packed clay soil with new composted soil mixtures, planted dozens of xeriscape plants, mulched the yard, and built a patio area to retain soil and moisture. The Rotarians is an international service organization and we are grateful for the assistance of this wonderful organization.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### VOLUNTEER

Volunteers can help out in many ways: we have one-time assignments for property-clean-up, painting and landscaping, and have regularly-scheduled volunteer opportunities to help with food and supplies delivery and distribution, and office assistance.

We encourage team-building projects, and have had many groups that have "adopted" clients for the holidays, helped with gardening and landscaping projects, and provided onsite support at events.

### DONATE

Wish List of Needed Items

Community Partnership accepts both financial and material contributions that directly benefit its clients. If you wish to contribute items listed below, please contact us for delivery arrangements.

- New or gently used men's work casual or formal clothing especially jeans, jackets sweaters, and socks.
- Gift cards: HEB, Old Navy, Wal-Mart, Target, gas companies
- Gift certificates to a barbershop
- DVDs and books
- Bikes and accessories (bike locks, lights, helmets)
- Sturdy outdoor/patio furniture

## OUR SUPPORTERS

Community Partnership for the Homeless benefits from the counsel and support of the following businesses, foundations and organizations:

### COMMUNITY STARS

Austin Community Foundation  
Bank of America  
Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
Capital One Bank  
Juice Homes  
The Lola Wright Foundation  
Religious Coalition to Assist the Homeless  
Stratus Properties  
T. Stacy & Associates  
Wachovia Bank  
Washington Mutual Bank

### COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Anonymous  
Applied Materials  
Dale Watson and the Continental Club  
LCRA Employees' United Charities  
Muir Family  
The Junior League of Austin

### COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

Austin Community Eagles Society (ACES)  
Charlene Lee  
Compass Bank  
Frost Bank  
Kamran Shah  
Lively Earth LLC  
Maria Laudenslager  
Marialice Ferguson  
Wheatville Co-op

Thank you to the Lola Wright Foundation and Applied Materials for their generous support that made our Clothing Pantry possible.

A Big Thank You to those who adopted the veterans' houses for Thanksgiving: Superheroes of Dell (2 houses); Lakehills Church Christian Soldiers Church Group; Alison Villarreal, Max Rohleder, Roque Ramirez and Patrick Boyle; Gilbert Rivera; ERS Benefit Contracts Division; and ISI Consultants.

Also a thank you to the following companies and organizations that provided in-kind donorship: Ladies of Charity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Custom Stone Supply, Catholic War Veterans Ladies Auxiliary

Community Partnership for the Homeless is supported by the following federal, state and local agencies: City of Austin Health & Human Services and Neighborhood Housing & Community Development Departments, Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs, Travis County Health & Human Services & Veteran's Services, US Housing & Urban Development, and the US Veterans Administration.

### CONTACT US

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