



## RISING TO THE MAYORS' CHALLENGE TO END VETERANS' HOMELESSNESS

### OVERVIEW OF EUGENE, SPRINGFIELD & LANE COUNTY EFFORTS

#### Statistics

- 1,235 homeless Veterans sought services July 2014- November 2014; 778 of these were both homeless and disabled. (Homeless Management Information System, Lane County Human Services Division)
- 230 homeless Veterans estimated, based on one-day count, January 2014; (151 unsheltered, 2013 and 79 sheltered 2014. (Lane County Human Services Division)
- 211 (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) VASH vouchers allocated to our area as of October 1, of which 146 are leased up.
- 236 Veterans were encountered by the Health Care for Homeless Vets (HCHV) outreach team over the past year.

#### Key Challenges

- Lack of permanent supported housing, affordable housing, studio apartments or SROs.
- Lack of harm-reduction (wet) housing (i.e. VA Safe Haven model).
- Growing elderly population will increase demand for supported housing for medically needy vets and non-vets. (I.e. Medicaid & Medicare eligible recipients, as well as VA clients.)
- Difficulty overcoming overly restrictive funding restraints (To serve Veterans over the maximum income for VASH, but not enough income to escape homelessness, or vets with other than honorable discharges.)
- Difficulty finding landlords willing to rent to Veterans with multiple challenges, ranging from bad credit or lack of rental history to addiction, disabilities or criminal histories. Registered sex offenders (RSO) are the most challenging to place in housing.
- Lag time in filling VA/HCHV positions backs up all services, from management to outreach and intake services.
- Difficulty finding funding for alternative shelters / micro-housing/ innovative approaches.

#### Key Local Efforts

Working in partnerships with area governments, social services and the Veterans' Affairs HCHV programs, we have many projects up and running:

1. **Behavioral Health Reintegration & Recovery Services (BHRRS)**, within the V.A., provides "health care and essential social services to homeless Veterans in order to help stabilize their lives and break the cycle of homelessness, chemical dependency, and overcome vocational limitations." Outreach workers seek out homeless Veterans and connect them with housing using VASH vouchers and a close working relationship with the local housing authority (211 E. 7<sup>th</sup>. 541-242-0440).

2. **City of Eugene Homeless Veterans' Analyst** – The analyst coordinates and tracks overall community efforts to end Veterans homelessness. Duties also include research, outreach, briefings, trainings, networking, & advocacy, as well as managing the **Operation 365 Veterans Facebook page**. (City Manager's Office, 125 E. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Eugene. 541-682-8442).
3. **Community Supported Shelters** provides a secure "Vets Safe Spot" – a secure, supervised campsite providing emergency camping spots for 15 Veterans. (1160 Grant. Eugene. 541-683-0836.)
4. **Eugene Mission outreach partnership** – The local mission is our primary emergency shelter for the area, with 339 beds. They invited the Veterans Administration BHRRS staff to a mini-stand-down at one dinner hour, leading to establishing connections with 36 Veterans. Out of that meeting it became apparent that many would not qualify for veteran benefits but could use other types of assistance. As a result, a follow-up meeting pulled in representatives from **Lane County Behavioral Health** and **Senior and Disability Services**, resulting in the sharing of insights and resources. (1542 W. 1<sup>st</sup>. Eugene. 344-3251.)
5. **Grace Manor for Veterans** operates an apartment building in Eugene serving 10 Veterans.
6. **Health Care for Homeless Veterans** (V.A. program) provides grants-and-per-diem to assist public and non-profit agencies establish and operate transitional supportive housing. The goal is to help homeless Veterans stabilize in preparation for permanent housing. Short term residential treatment programs provide comprehensive rehabilitation. HUD/VASH collaborations help make housing possible, using HUD Section 8 "Housing Choice" rental assistance vouchers and VA's case management services. (211 E. 7. Eugene. 541-242-0475.)
7. **Home for the Holidays** – This December fundraiser, championed by Mayor Piercy, aimed to place a homeless family in a home during the holiday season. This year we designated the funds specifically for homeless Veterans. (City Manager's Office, 125 E. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Eugene. 541-682-8442).
8. **Hope Center** provides a weekly site at which Veterans can connect with services, along with a hot meal. The V.A. BHRRS outreach workers attend this event weekly. (1161 Grant. Eugene. 541-344-4673).
9. **Housing and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA) as of February 1<sup>st</sup> had 146 VASH vouchers leased out of 211 available. These are for Permanent Supported Housing. V.A. provides the case managers. (177 Day Island Rd, Eugene. 541-682-3755).**
10. **Housing Our Veterans** operates 6 buildings in Eugene housing 47 Veterans.
11. **Operation 365 Veterans** – Launched on Veterans Day, in conjunction with Home for the Holidays, Eugene, Springfield and Lane County governments, St. Vincent de Paul, the Housing and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA) and the V.A. joined forces to recruit community donors to help build a fund and help place 365 Veterans in 365 beds by the end of 2015. We also reached out to the local Rental Owner's Association to encourage them to make apartments available for chronically homeless Veterans. At least 72 Veterans had been placed by the end of December. (City Manager's Office, 125 E. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Eugene. 541-682-8442).
12. **Sheltercare's Medical Respite program** serves medically fragile patients leaving Riverbend hospital who need temporary housing while recovering. Although not veteran-specific, the program has served 7 Veterans. (Hwy 99N and Royal, Eugene.. 541-682-1262).

13. **Sponsors**, a model transitional program for men and women coming out of prison, offers 10 grant-and-per-diem (GPD) units of transitional housing for 10 Veterans. (338 Hwy 99N. 541-485-8341.) In addition they are in the development process for **The Oaks**, a 60 unit complex intended as housing for people with criminal history who have been through their re-entry program, are stable and have jobs. Within that population, the emphasis will be on veterans, seniors and people with disabilities. (14<sup>th</sup> and Oakpatch, Eugene. Aiming to open by summer, 2016.)
14. **St. Vincent de Paul's Vet LIFT (Living Independently Following Treatment)** provides permanent housing to chronically homeless Veterans who have often struggled with substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Vet LIFT provides housing for more than 50 Veterans. The program helps participants develop skills for independent living, obtaining/maintaining financial stability, developing a housing plan, addressing addiction/mental health issues, and transitioning to permanent housing. In 2014, Vet LIFT served 96 Veterans (individuals/families). SVDP has 15 VA grant per diem beds. (1070 W. 6, Eugene. 541-344-0465).
15. **Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)** is a St. Vincent de Paul program helping homeless Veterans and those at risk of homelessness to become or remain permanently housed. Sponsored by a grant from the Veterans Administration (VA), SSVF provides financial assistance and case management with the objective of helping our country's Veterans achieve housing stability, and to end veteran homelessness by 2016. The grant provides \$3 million, spread over a 3 year period, with a goal of housing 200 Veterans annually. SVDP had already placed 80 by February, setting a pace that should more than meet this goal if maintained. This program is primarily geared toward initial costs, although it may pay rent for a short period while ongoing benefits, such as SSI or VASH, can be arranged.
16. **Veterans' Housing Project** is a St. Vincent de Paul hosted, collaborative effort of private, public and nonprofit organizations to rehabilitate houses which can then serve as safe, affordable housing for Veterans. Founders of this program include the City of Eugene, Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), the Homebuilders Association of Lane County (HBA) and St. Vincent de Paul, along with support from hundreds of businesses, service providers, families and individuals. The Home Depot foundation donated \$75,000 for this project. (2890 Chad Dr. Eugene. 541-687-5820).

**In addition to the agencies above, who are *directly* related in sheltering and housing Veterans, many groups play critical support roles, including but not limited to:**

17. **Buster's Main Street Café.** Owner Paul Tocco has been feeding Veterans and active-duty servicemen and women for free on the 11<sup>th</sup> of every month since November, 2013. (811 E. Main St., Cottage Grove 541-942-8363).
18. **Disabled American Veterans** provide "free, professional assistance to Veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies of government." (344 8<sup>th</sup> St., Springfield. 541-726-7672)
19. **Lane County Human Services Division (HSD)** oversees social services funding from local, state and federal funding sources throughout the county and manages related projects including the Homeless Management Information System that tracks data on homelessness. The HSD also oversees the annual HUD Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count. In January of 2014, the PIT count identified 270 homeless Veterans. Over a 4 month period (7/1/14 – 11/7/14), 1,235 homeless

Veterans received HMIS-tracked services. Of that number, 778 Veterans were identified as both homeless and disabled. The HSD also launched the newly established Poverty and Homelessness Board, which includes a subcommittee dedicated to ending Veterans' homelessness. [151 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Eugene, Room 560, ( 541)-682-4629].

20. **Lane County Veteran Services** has officers who are accredited VA representatives, advocating for Veterans and their families to ensure they receive all entitlements provided by Federal and State law. In fiscal year 2013, they helped clients obtain over \$1.25 million in continuing monthly benefits and over \$12.24 million in lump-sum, retroactive benefits. Areas addressed include filing disability claims, obtaining military records, applying for VA Health Care, Education Benefits and Surviving spouse benefits. Outreach workers connect with house-bound Veterans or many who reside in care facilities throughout Lane County. (151 W.7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Room 460, Eugene. 541-682-4191.)
21. **Tamarack Pool**, free Veterans Only Swim available Mondays, 10-11am. (3575 Donald. Eugene. 541-686-9290.)
22. **U.O./L.C.C. Veterans Centers**
  - a. Help eligible student Veterans, reservists and dependents obtain educational benefits.
  - b. **The Veterans and Family Student Association (VFSA)** is a UO student organization that offers support to Veterans and strives to educate both the public and student body about the personal sacrifices made by this nation's Veterans. (EMU south, UO campus. Eugene. 541-346-3406).
  - c. **U.O. Student Veterans Center** provides a supportive gathering space and studying area.
  - d. **Lane Community College** has a student Veterans' services office. (VA Certifying Officials, 4000 East 30th Avenue, Building 19, Rm 233A. Eugene. 541-463-5663).
23. **V.A. Outpatient Clinic** provides primary care medical services for Veterans. (100 River Ave., 541-607-0897, 8-4:30) **A new, expanded outpatient Health Care Facility** is slated to open in late 2015. The new, \$60 million, 100,000 square-foot facility will be fitted to handle surgeries, podiatry, dental care, and a host of other services. (Chad Dr. and Old Coburg Rd, Eugene.)
24. **Vet Center** welcomes home "war Veterans with honor by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community." (190 E.11. Eugene. 541-465-6918).
25. **Veteran's Justice Outreach (VJO)** advocates for treatment of mental illness in lieu of incarceration. (211 E. 7. Eugene. 541-520-3447) Three Main Focus Areas:
  - a. Law Enforcement -- Provide training to local law enforcement on Veterans' issues and strategies to help increase positive outcomes of interactions between Officers and Veterans.
  - b. Courts and Attorneys -- Provide information and education about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and the VA treatment services available. Develop and implement Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs).
  - c. Jails -- Develop communication with jails to identify Veterans who are incarcerated and enroll VHA eligible Veterans in appropriate VA services upon their release.
26. **Veterans In Progress (VIP)**, a St. Vincent de Paul employment program, is supported by the U.S. Department of Labor. It helps veteran households find gainful employment and vocational rehabilitation services. The program serves households that are literally homeless or at

imminent risk of homelessness. The program offers resume crafting, educational classes about job readiness, and personalized job referrals. (456 Hwy 99N. Eugene. 541-607-0439.)

27. **Veterans of Foreign Wars** advocates for Veterans rights, provides mutual support and promotes veteran-related projects. (1626 Willamette, Eugene. 541-338-4074)
28. **VetNet** is a monthly gathering of agencies serving Veterans, for networking and mutual support. (First Thursdays, 0830, 211 E. 7. Eugene. Contact – John Robbins, Vet Center 541-465-6918).