

Boise/Ada County Homeless Coalition Meeting Minutes

October 9, 2024

The meeting was conducted by Pete Schroeder.

Also in attendance were: Lila Fetherolf; Denise Caruzzi; Jim Grunow; Kelli Parker; Don Ruffing; Neysa Jensen; Wayne Rancourt; Pam Roemer; Stacy Lawrence; Richard Morgan; Denise Caruzzi; St. Vincent de Paul, Mareesa Rule, Chad; Declan North; Jennie Buley; Refugee Resettlement Services; Katie, Sunny, Lisau; Kelsey Cooper; Peg Richards; Rowan, CCH; Anonymous Zoom User; Jim Grunow; Vivian Parrish; Gayle Wilde.

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

- Pete Schroeder opened the meeting.
 - September Meeting Minutes and Treasury Report were approved unanimously.
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Spotlight Guest: Saint Vincent de Paul (SVdP)

Chad Lahti

Reentry Career Development Specialist

- Chad guides individuals transitioning back into society after incarceration.
- His work focuses on providing support and opportunities for personal growth, emphasizing strong community relationships.

Mareesa Rule

Development Director

- Mareesa oversees fundraising and community outreach for SVdP.
 - She highlighted major initiatives like the 'Thanksgiving Food Box Program' and the essential role that thrift stores play in supporting SVdP's mission.
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SVdP Updates and Services

Mission: Prevent homelessness through direct support and community assistance.

- **Direct Financial Assistance:**
SVdP provides critical support, distributing over \$55k in aid through 5,000 vouchers last year.

- **Thrift Stores:**
These stores are a major revenue source and offer vouchers to neighbors in need.
- **Food Services:**
 - 114,000 people were served last year, with a 44% increase in pantry visits.
 - **Key Challenge:** An increase in new visitors is straining resources, creating an urgent need for funding and volunteers.
 - Food distribution takes place on Tuesday and Friday afternoons; other days are dedicated to preparing and sorting food.
 - **Location:** 3209 West Overland Road, Boise.

Reentry Program:

- **First Day Out:** This initiative provides immediate support to individuals released from incarceration, offering food, clothing vouchers, and connections to health and welfare services.
- **Career Development Expansion:**
 - SVdP meets with individuals while they are still incarcerated to develop a reentry plan, assist with resumes, and connect them with potential employers.
 - **Impact:** SVdP has built strong relationships with the Idaho Department of Correction (IDOC) and reduced recidivism rates for participants to 18.8%, compared to the state average of 38.8%.
 - **Program Growth:** Originally driven by the lack of support for individuals post-release, this program has grown into a full-fledged reentry service, meeting individuals at the gate upon release and guiding them through their first steps back into the community.
- **Recent Grant:** SVdP received a Murdoch Foundation grant to support reentry services expansion.

Holiday Programs:

- **Thanksgiving Meals:**
 - Registration is available online and in person.
- **Toy Store:**
 - Serving children ages 0-18. Parents can select toys for their children at various physical locations in Mountain Home, Ontario, Ada County, and Canyon County.
 - The Christmas phone line opens on November 4th for school counselors or guardians to register.
- **Cookies for Corrections:**
 - Volunteers deliver cookies to Idaho Department of Correction residents weekly during the Christmas season. Last year, 6,000 residents received cookies, bringing a touch of humanity to the incarcerated.
 - SVdP encourages cookie drives to support this program.

Roundtable Discussions

Advocacy Report (Vivian and Denise):

- **Voter Registration Events:**
 - The coalition continues its nonpartisan voter registration efforts, stressing the importance of community participation in elections.
 - Ada County Commissioners Debate is scheduled for October 24 at Whittier School. Details are available on the coalition's website.
 - Vivian encouraged members to submit any questions for the debate.

Book Club Update (Jim):

- **Current Book:** *Young, Unhoused, and Alone in America*.
- The next discussion is scheduled for Friday, October 11. On October 25, the author will join the discussion.
- Participation is open to all, even if they haven't attended previous discussions. Meetings are held via Zoom.

Service Learning Project (Denise):

- A team of BSU students is working on a service learning project focusing on unhoused students at BSU.
- Their survey draft is in progress, with completion expected by the end of the year.

Leadership Team for 2025:

- Coalition members interested in taking a more active role in the leadership team are encouraged to express interest by November 13.
- The Leadership Team will propose a slate of members for ratification by the end of the year.

Organization Updates

Mountain View Church of the Brethren (Pam R.):

- The church is planning a program to support men on the verge of homelessness, focusing on ex-offenders who have completed recovery programs.
- The project involves the development of a large apartment complex with three floors of dorm-style housing, featuring 96 bedrooms and a 4-bedroom unit.
- **Status:** The project is in the early planning stages and will take several years to complete. There are no architectural plans yet, and the church anticipates needing a re-zone to move forward.

- **Community Concerns:** Neighbors are concerned about the number of men living in one location, but the church sees this as a significant opportunity to help the community.
- **Key Regulation:** No more than six registered sex offenders can live in the same complex.

Salvation Army (Stacy Lawrence):

- The Salvation Army is preparing for its annual Christmas assistance programs, including food and toy drives for families in need.
- **Key Focus:** The organization is in full preparation mode for the holiday season, ensuring that no one is left without support during this critical time.

Intermountain Fair Housing Council (Peg Richards):

- The council received a special award from HUD to support its education and outreach initiatives.
- Upcoming events will be posted on Eventbrite, and Peg encouraged coalition members to attend and support these efforts.

Low Income Support, Inc. (Don Ruffing):

- The organization is at capacity, with high demand for both automotive repairs and housing assistance.
- Don shared that participating in the book club has given him valuable insight, particularly in learning “patience.”

IRC – Intensive Case Management Team:

- The team is attending the coalition meeting to learn more about available homelessness services and how they can better assist individuals through their case management efforts.

Corpus Christi (Rowan):

- **High Demand:** Gas vouchers are in high demand as more individuals are living in their cars, and the colder weather is expected to increase the need. \$5 gift cards for gas are available at Jacksons.
- **Hours Update:** Corpus Christi is shortening its hours as summer comes to a close, now closing at 5:00 PM and reducing weekend operations.
- **Rebranding:** The organization is preparing to refresh its name to "Corpus Commons" to better reflect its mission and values.

Next Meeting:

November 13, 2024