

City Solutions - Harvey West Community Safety

Research: A LA Times article gave the impression that Arcata was working to change their image so that they were not being viewed as a Mecca for transients. Team members were assigned online and interview research to see if things have really turned around. Our focus was to be with Arcata's day service offerings. As a result of the interviews, we learned about more about the change homeless services and their tight relationship to the city.

Interviews by: LK

Research by: LK and PM

Date range of research: 2013-09-01 - 2013-10-01

Summary:

1. If Arcata changed their image to be less inviting to transients, it was not as overtly done as the LA Times article implies. The closure of homeless services was due to the lack of funding and failing internal HSC structure.
2. Two of Arcata's homeless services have merged and Arcata is entering a new chapter
3. Though the city providing little funding, the city is closely engaged with the HSC as the city and the citizens was not pleased with the former HSC policies.
4. The night shelter is in a remote location and not adjacent to day services.
5. Arcata's night shelter is small (20 - 25 beds). They require agreement to rules, drug testing and 50% of the client's income set aside for housing.
6. In the old program, Arcata's AHP provided services to people who abused services (broke and hungry because they had spent all their Social Security money on drugs.)
7. There are 4 areas to get food through churches and day old food stock.
8. During the interview with the city manager concerning transients and homeless management, there was a side discussion about panhandling. Arcata has been sued concerning their panhandling policy. The Arcata City Manager's recommendation is that "before establishing a panhandling ordinance, a city should have an extensive file of written complaints that articulate the reason for the panhandling ordinance."

Here is the article that triggered the research:

LA Times Article: Panhandling in Arcata tests the city's tolerance

<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/06/local/la-me-arcata-panhandling-20120806>

Quotes from the article:

- But in 1999, when the city leased a building one block from the plaza to the homeless resource center, matters intensified. "You could watch the change," Stillman said. Word got out to young adults traveling a circuit from Santa Barbara

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to Eugene, Ore. "It became a magnet," the councilwoman said. "They served lunch every day. You didn't have to do anything — just come eat."

- A homeless resource center that had provided daily meals was closed, along with the recycling center that for many was a source of income.
- But balancing the comfort of the haves with tolerance for the have-nots has come down to a complex question of just who is worthy of help: The chronic homeless or the recently down-and-out? What about the in-your-face drifters who take handouts with little gratitude?

2011 Homeless Count for Santa Cruz and Arcata*

*The 2013 Homeless Census results have not been released by the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

California County CoC (Continuums of Care)	County Homeless Count	County Population (US Census Bureau 2011 estimate)	Number Homeless per 10,000
Santa Cruz County (Santa Cruz)	2,771	264,298	105
Humboldt County (Arcata)	861	134,761	64

Interview Highlights:

Interview was with Randy Mendosa, Arcata City Manager and former Police Chief.

- City has an excellent working relationship with Arcata House Partnership
- They are open 5 days a week and they don't take on more than they can handle
- The former organization spread themselves too thin
- The day services and office has a commercial kitchen at no cost by the city. They do pay a monthly maintenance fee. The food truck delivers meals as well.
- In 2013, the city put in 800 hour budget and \$40,000 towards maintenance and improvement.
- The improvement ran \$20,000 so the Arcata House is raising the funds
- There is a lease and management agreement between the City and AHP
- Arcata had an aggressive pan handling ordinance that got overturned in court
- Hopefully your city has a big fat file of written complaints that articulate the reason for the panhandling ordinance.
- The people that cause the city the most problems cause the AHP the most problems

Interview was with Karen Fox Olson, Director of the Arcata Homeless Partnership (AHP)

- The interview was quick, but informative, as Karen had intakes to complete.
- The last program had "no boundaries and they ran it into the ground." The community was very displeased.
- In revamping the program:
 - They eliminated the "frequent flyers" who abused services. (i.e. people who showed up broke, homeless and hungry after the 14th of the month)

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because they had spent all their Social Security money on drugs and prostitution).

- The HSC also drug tested the "hosts" at the long-term shelter and conducted room searches. Found some were using and selling meth, so they were evicted. Those folks were a bad influence and jeopardizing peoples sobriety.
- Arcata Homeless Partnership today:
 - Currently city funding has "dried up" but the city gives AHP use of a building. AHP pays a \$500 month maintenance fee. Sounds like no conditions attached, but they work closely together to run a tight ship. AHP is "serious about the Rules."
 - There are no day services or on-site.
 - Meals are delivered to outside locations 4 days per week. The food comes from churches or is "gleaned" donated from Supermarkets (day old).
 - AHP opens at 2:30 pm and they do intakes for Shelter Beds.
 - Intake is comprised of gathering info, reviewing the rules, and developing a case management plan (for housing, food Stamps, ID, etc).
 - Clients must agree to save 50% of their income in order to stay at shelter, and to the rules, including drug testing, if asked.
 - The night shelter is 1.5 miles away (remote area). They're fed dinner and breakfast from glean food (clients pick it up from supermarkets).
 - Grant funds are used for obtaining California Id and drivers license.
 - AHP uses the HMIS system. No background checks, but they get to know people quickly. Arcata is a close-knit community.
 - AHP serves only 20-25 "enrolled clients" who agree to the conditions, or move on.
 - No priority is given to "residents" since they're located on the 101 and get a lot of out of town visitors.
 - Last year, 60% of clients were non-residents which Fox thinks may displease some in the Community, as they also have many local homeless too.

Contact Information:

- Randy Mendosa, Arcata City Manager and former Police Chief - Phone # 707-822-5953
- Karen Fox Olson, Director of the Arcata Housing Partnership - Phone # 707-633-6236

Online research findings:

We can't find that the city council had much to do with the North Coast Resource Center being closed. This talks about the closure:<http://www.arcataeye.com/2011/12/north-coast-resource-center-suspending-operations-%E2%80%93-december-13-2011/>

This article talks about the same building being repurposed for a similar use by a different outfit:

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http://www.times-standard.com/ci_21937895/council-discuss-former-ncrc-building-uses-arcata-house

And this link talks about the new merger between two outfits who are running the Arcata Service Center: <http://www.arcatahouse.org/news-events/arcata-house-partnership>

“The merger is especially timely given the recent closure of the Arcata Service Center. Since late December there has been no place to screen clients for the night shelter, no bathroom, laundry or shower facilities and less access to food for the poor and homeless in our community. Arcata House and Humboldt All Faith Partnership staff and board members have been meeting with city staff and elected officials, other community agencies, church and business people to brainstorm the best way to restore needed services in a way that is sustainable financially and has the support of the community. We will be submitting a proposal to the City Council to deliver limited services at the Arcata Service Center. Taking on running the Arcata Service Center might have been too big a stretch for either agency on its own. Together we feel confident that we can provide excellent services that meet the needs of our community.”

The Arcata city council minutes can be found here:

<http://www.cityofarcata.org/government/city-council-meetings-agendas-archives>

We looked at Yelp reviews from places around the plaza and can't find many complaints post-2011 (which is not to say they don't exist, they just aren't easy to find if they do)

Arcata House programs: <http://www.arcatahouse.org/programs/arcata-house-programs>

City of Arcata, Letter of Collaboration for Arcata House Partnership

http://arcata.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=6&clip_id=1432&meta_id=86543

Indie Article & overview of AHP services & requirements:

<http://flapjackchronicle.wordpress.com/2012/12/05/working-on-homeless-issues-in-arcata/>

Quotes from the article: A common challenge for many homeless is avoiding addiction. “The biggest deal-breaker for us is substance abuse,” said Stone. “Our perspective is kids don’t like parents who aren’t sober, and landlords don’t like tenants that are spending their rent on drugs or alcohol.”

The families save half their money in a client housing account controlled solely by AHP. The families only use that money when they longer need to be assisted, it’s then given back to them. The transitional housing program is designed to help people learn to budget their limited incomes, and to receive general life skills regarding money.

City of Arcata, Homeless Services Plan: 2007-2016

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http://www.cityofarcata.org/sites/default/files/files/document_center/Building%20-%20Planning/Documents%20For%20Review/Final%20Homeless%20Services%20Plan.pdf

Judge tosses most of Arcata panhandling ordinance

http://www.times-standard.com/ci_21642313/judge-tosses-most-arcata-panhandling-ordinance-city-can

Arcata City Ordinances 2006 to Present

<http://www.cityofarcata.org/departments/city-clerk/records-management/ordinances>

Panhandling Ordinance

http://www.cityofarcata.org/sites/default/files/files/document_center/Government/Ordinances/1418%20Anti-Panhandling%20City%20Parking%20Lots.pdf

The panhandling ordinance was struck down but the following remains
The court let stand the banning of aggressive panhandling, as well panhandling near ATMs and on a bus, but struck down the rest, more or less as follows.

SEC. 4282. Unlawful Panhandling.

It is unlawful and a public nuisance for any person to:

A. Panhandle in an aggressive manner in any public place;

~~B. Panhandle within twenty (20) feet of any check-cashing business, or within twenty (20) feet of any automated teller machine; provided, however, that when an automated teller machine is located within an automated teller machine facility, such distance shall be measured from the entrance or exit of the facility;~~

C. Panhandle within twenty (20) feet of the entrance to a supermarket, retail store, restaurant or bar;

~~D. Panhandle in any public transportation vehicle, or within twenty (20) feet of a bus stop or bus shelter;~~

E. Panhandle in any City-owned parking lot or parking structure accessible to the general public, or within twenty (20) feet of the entrance or exit to such any parking lot or parking structure;

F. Panhandling while on any public pedestrian foot bridge, or within twenty feet of the entrance or exit to a public pedestrian foot bridge; or

G. Panhandle within twenty (20) feet of any intersection.