

How Great the Needs

By Charlotte Crane

The poor among us are becoming poorer, and their numbers are growing, according to recent U.S. census figures.



Social service agencies in our region are coping with that trend, person-to-person: At Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida. “I’ve been doing this for 30 years, and this is the worst I’ve ever seen it,” says Sandra King, program coordinator of emergency assistance. “We’re getting requests for help from over 300 families a month; a year ago it was like 100. People are being laid off, or their hours are being reduced. Some try to rely on families and friends, but that can only last for awhile. And our contributions are down.”

At Salvation Army. New applicants for assistance in the past 12 months have increased by 32 percent compared to the previous year, according to social services director Mattie Broxton. “We received about 650 calls for help in August; we spent \$14,000 in August, compared to \$8,000 a year ago.”

At Manna. Food demand has increased 25 percent through September of this year, compared to the same period last year, according to director DeDe Flounlacker. That’s an additional 10,000 people seeking help to sustain themselves and their families. About 40,000 people received Manna food in the prior 12 months; 38% are under 18. The agency’s stresses were magnified when discount grocer Angel Food Ministries closed its doors in late September, meaning its customers too are increasingly looking to Manna for their food needs. Other food providers also will feel the increases.

At Waterfront Rescue Mission. “All three sleepover facilities were maxed out last week,” development associate Sophia Young reported recently. As of late September in 2011, the mission had sheltered 18,329 homeless men, a number predictive of surpassing in 2011 the 2010 total of 26,382 (which was up from 22,782 in 2009). The mission is expanding to meet increasing needs: Its new shelter building, to be completed next June, will double the accommodations (from 65 beds to 120) and increase kitchen space. Renovations on an existing building next door to the new mission will provide a day resource center, for laundry, showers and communications.

At Bay Area Food Bank. The agency, which provides food to distribution organizations such as Manna Food in three states, including seven counties in Northwest Florida, estimates it distributed 4.4 million pounds in our region in 2010 (1.8 million pounds came to Escambia County). That regional total is up from 1.9 million pounds in 2008.

But the latest distribution amount probably still falls short: “We think 2010 demand was at least 6 million pounds,” says Bay Area executive director David Reaney. “We’ve been playing catch-up for so long it’s hard to estimate what the true demand is.”

Studies made on “food insecurity” – that’s not knowing where the next meal is coming from – indicate that 29.8% of children in Northwest Florida’s Congressional District 1 fall into that category, says Reaney. The U.S. average for food insecurity among children is around 25%; in Florida, it’s 27.5%.

Brunie Emmanuel, project manager, Fund for Gulf Communities-Florida, summarizes: “Social Services agencies are closing right and left. Funding for essential services is decreasing, while need is not only increasing, it is accelerating. “It is hard for our people these days.”



100,000 Homes

By Charlotte Crane

A place to live that's not in the woods or an alley is the first stop toward meeting the needs – and solving the problem – of vagrants and panhandlers in the Pensacola area, says Rick Dye. He's not alone in that philosophy. Recently, a national 100,000 Homes campaign began recruiting communities across the country to accelerate housing placement for the most-vulnerable homeless/panhandlers in their neighborhoods.

It's estimated that on any given night there are more than 600 homeless in Escambia/Santa Rosa counties, that about one-fourth of those are veterans, and about 10% of the total number will be most vulnerable and in need of help.

Dye, founder and chief volunteer at FaithWorks InterFaith Ministries Network, is leading a local effort to join 100,000 Homes. His goal: to find homes for 12 of those homeless most likely to succumb to cold and hunger during the coming winter, and homes for 36 homeless over the next three years.

He's recruiting human services agencies to join, and help meet other needs of the homeless. He's hoping to sign-up 25 volunteers to survey the area's chronic homeless, and to secure 12 federal housing vouchers that could be used to open doors of foreclosed and vacant homes held by local banks. About 30-to-35 people attended the first local organizing meeting.

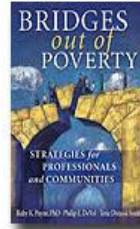
"We'll conduct the vulnerability index survey, i.d. the top 12 and then a couple of us will go into the communities and find them and hope they will accept our help," says Dye. The group also will link the 12 with medical clinics, VA and case workers. Nationwide, about 100 communities have signed up for the 100,000 Homes campaign.



Bridges to Circles Volunteer Training

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY

Concepts training orients thinking around the culture, hidden rules, familial patterns and belief systems characteristic of generational poverty. Book authored by Dr. Ruby Payne, Philip DeVol and Terie Dreussi Smith offers practical strategies to better lives via role models, support systems, emotional resources and mentoring.



November 10, 2011

or

December 1, 2011

ALLY TRAINING

This two-hour session presents an overview of the Bridges to Circles poverty initiative and begins to equip the individual to serve as an ally for an individual moving from poverty to self-sufficiency.

November 17, 2011

or

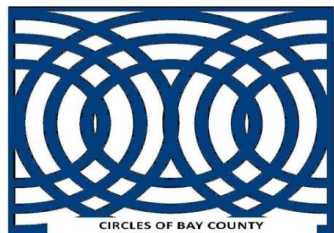
December 8, 2011



***All training is conducted at the
Catholic Charities Outreach Center
1815 N. Sixth Avenue
from 6:00-8:00 pm.***

*For more information, contact Haley Richards,
Bridges to Circles community organizer
at (850)429-7296, ext. 17 or email
richardsh@cc.ptdiocese.org.*

BRIDGES TO CIRCLES



Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida is replicating *Bridges to Circles* in Bay County, Florida. The new initiative is kicking off on Wednesday, October 19, 2011 with a luncheon at Gulf Coast State College in Panama City, Florida. The kick off event will feature keynote speakers and a video presentation demonstrating the need for this type of initiative in the community. The Bay County site is currently building capacity and plans to begin working with families motivated to move out of poverty in 2012.

The Circles® Model is currently operating in 63 communities across the United States and growing. *Bridges to Circles* in Escambia County is now a National Circles® Training Center for the Gulf Coast Region. As a designated National Training Center the Escambia County Circles® site can provide coaching and training for the new site in Bay County and other additional new sites in the region. Training and consulting fees will provide a new source of funding for *Bridges to Circles* to be reinvested in the initiative .

Poverty Costs All of Us Video

The *Poverty Information Group* has produced a new YouTube video addressing the myths of poverty in Escambia County. Follow the link below to watch the video and share with a friend.

[Watch Video Click Here!](#)



CONGRATULATIONS

Bridges to Circles of Escambia County
for being selected as a
2011 Catholic Charities USA
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Family Strengthening Award Finalist!



Register Now

Poverty Solutions Rally at WSRE Jean & Paul Amos Studio
Saturday, November 19, 2011 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

The event will feature a Poverty Simulation, Proclamation from the City of Pensacola, panel discussion and opportunities for you to reduce poverty in Escambia County!

To register contact Haley Richards

(850) 429-7296, ext. 17 or email richardsh@cc.ptdiocese.org

For more information about the Prosper Pensacola, including our Mission, a Call to Action for both individuals and businesses, Definition of Terms, Team Descriptions / Contacts and Training Programs, visit www.uniteescambia.com.

Together We Achieve More!