

Home for homeless hits a stumbling block

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Armed with \$3,000 in grant money and private contributions, some administrators at local shelters have come up with a plan they hope will end the homelessness of some street people for good.

According to the Rev. Paul Pfothenauer, chairman of the Church Satellite Shelter Program and one of the organizers of the new project, the money will be used to pay a first and last month's rent and security deposit to establish six homeless people as tenants in a permanent home.

"We're targeting people who have SSI (Social Security) — we would hope to get about four of those in a community, plus about two people who already have jobs.

"Persons on SSI now spend a major part of their income the first few weeks living in a hotel and then they come to us for the rest of the month. We think that wouldn't happen if we could combine (their incomes)."

So far, the toughest hurdle for the fledgling program has been reluctant landlords. For the past two months, Pfothenauer and Fred Gray, operational manager at the River Street Shelter, have contacted landlords and answered ads without sparking any interest. "I think people are reluctant to rent to us. Some people shy away — thinking in terms of homeless people. Our hope is that if we get one place started it will have a cumulative effect," Pfothenauer said.

According to Paul Brindel, direc-

'In talking with the homeless it became evident that some of them have funds. On their own it isn't enough.'

— Rev. Paul Pfothenauer

six shelters in the county providing emergency shelter services: First Step, New Life Center, the St. Francis Shelter, the Pajaro Shelter for Women and Children, the River Street Shelter and the Church Satellite Program. According to Brindel, this is the first attempt in Santa Cruz County to establish any kind of permanent housing for the homeless.

Funds for the project have been provided by a \$1,500 grant from the national Lutheran Brotherhood, and through contributions made by members of churches participating in the Church Satellite Shelter Program.

The 2-year-old Satellite Program shares a budget with the River Street Shelter, and provides a meal and a night's shelter at area churches which open their doors on a rotating basis.

Through his work with the Satellite Program, it occurred to Pfothenauer that there might be other ways to deal with homelessness.

"In talking with the homeless it

Pfothenauer recognizes the value of the Satellite Program, but says it's inadequate. "We provide some kind of emergency shelter, but it's hardly humanizing."

The Satellite Program is also only a seasonal service. It houses 40 to 45 people a night, according to Brindel, but only offers that service during the winter months. In its first year, the program operated November through May. This year, according to Pfothenauer, funding will only take the program through March, though it hopes to continue offering services at least through April. While the River Street Shelter operates year-round, it can accommodate only 14 people a night.

When no shelter services can be provided, the homeless "hit the woods or sleep where ever they can," said Pfothenauer. "Part of the problem is, it's against the law to sleep outside," he added, referring to a county ordinance that bans camping outside of designated areas.

According to Brindel, the homeless population nationwide "is estimated to be 25 percent heavier than last year." In Santa Cruz County, Brindel said numbers are up "a little bit more than last year."

Faced with these figures, organizers are putting their hopes and funds into the new project. Not to mention their reputation.

"The insurance we're offering is that we take responsibility. If something goes wrong, we'll fix it up. We'll see that they get paid regularly. We have a stake in seeing that it works," concluded Pfothenauer.