

Homeless - 1990

Donors rescue homeless center

By KAREN CLARK
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A windfall of cash, much of it from the business community, has brought the Homeless Community Resource Center back from the brink of closure.

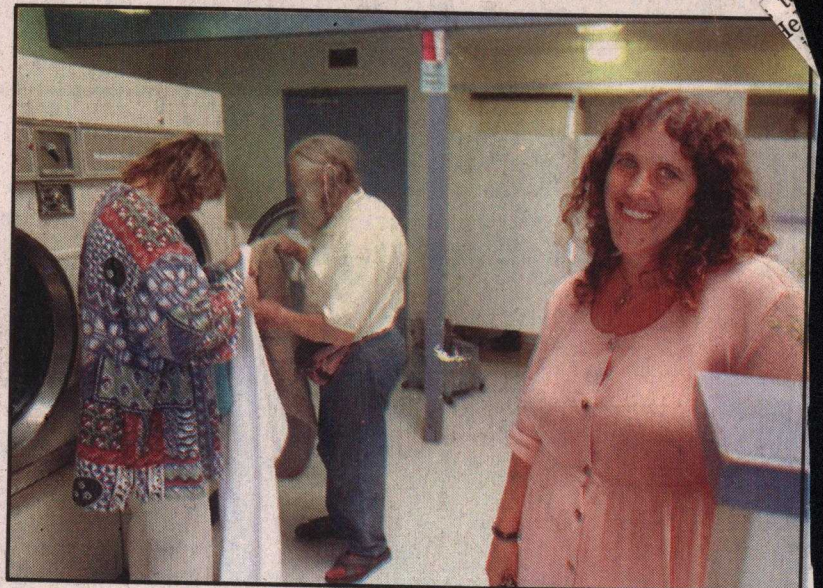
'This is beyond my wildest imagination.'

— Karen Gillette, center director

Nearly \$30,000 was raised in five days to erase the budget deficit and restore the cuts that had forced some 250 of the center's

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clients to go without breakfast every day this week. "This is beyond my wildest imagination," said Karen Gillette, executive director of the center, which was in danger of closing July 1 without an infusion of cash. "I'm overwhelmed at people's generosity. ... We believe in what we do, and it's so gratifying that other people believe in what we do, too."

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel

'I'm overwhelmed,' said center director Karen Gillette.

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Downtown businesswoman Donna Maurillo and local attorney Marsha Shanle, both members of the center's board of directors, spearheaded the lightning response to the financial woes made public Saturday.

"When the news hit the streets that the (center) was in trouble, response was immediate," said Maurillo.

Longtime philanthropists and newspaper publishers Rowland and Patricia Rebele donated \$10,000 to kick-start the fund-raising.

"Use it as an impetus to get more people on the bandwagon," said Rowland Rebele when Maurillo approached him. "This organization must be kept alive."

The Coral Street center serves about 250 homeless people each day, providing showers, meals, counseling, lockers to stow backpacks and sleeping bags, computers to draft job applications, an address for mail delivery, telephones and other services.

Strict rules prohibit drug or alcohol use, fighting, or other irresponsible behavior.

Another huge donation to keep the center open came from Mary and Richard C. Solari of Granite Construction Co., who contributed \$10,500.

Coast Commercial Bank and Redtree Properties each donated \$1,000, and Nell Cliff of the Sesnon family gave \$2,000.

In addition to the \$2,500 donated by the Downtown Association, individual members also contributed. These included New Leaf Community Markets (\$500), Berger-Lewis Accountancy (\$250),



Rebele



Solari

the Walnut Avenue Cafe (\$300) and Comerica Bank (\$200).

Individual donations came from Superior Court Judge Robert Yonts (\$200), former restaurant owner and Santa Cruz County Administrative Officer Ted Durkee (\$500), and resident Rosiland Hastings (\$150).

Chris Quinn, co-owner of New Leaf, also "panhandled" for three hours on Saturday, setting up a donation station at the downtown store and collecting some \$100 in contributions, including money from Mayor Cynthia Mathews and District Attorney Art Danner.

"I think it says a lot about this community that the private sector has stepped to the plate in order to assist this ... credible and highly respected program," said Councilwoman Katherine Beiers, a longtime supporter of the center.

Gillette said the list of contributors paints a revealing picture.

"I really think the community needs to take note of who it is who's helping us survive," said Gillette, adding that homeless issues often have been considered a "far-left" cause. "We don't provide these services with peace, love and

far-left politics. We provide these services with money."

Gillette said the \$30,000 raised so quickly gives center officials "breathing room" to figure out how best to raise \$75,000 in local funds to balance the next fiscal year's budget.

"I'm speechless," said Derrick Fortner, assistant site manager at the center. "Over the years we've taken a good beating in the image department, and I'm just grateful these people have seen past that."

Pedro Cosme, one of the center's clients, said the program is an essential element in the community's response to homeless issues. "This place is always constant," said Cosme. "There's no judgment why you're homeless. ... I know there are folks in Santa Cruz who are caring people, (but) this is more than I expected."

Among the center's clients who applauded the community response to their plight was Arnetta Thomas, who said she came to Santa Cruz after being a victim of rape.

"This shelter and services gave me a lot," she said, noting that without the center, "I would become unemployed again and totally homeless. I'd be devastated."

Gillette said when the financial crisis became known to her clients, many of them offered to take fewer showers or eat less if it would help keep the doors open.

"It was so touching because they were willing to curtail even the small benefits they have," said Gillette.

For more information about the center or to make a donation, call Gillette at 458-6020.