

Vision for homeless camp begins to take shape

Homeless 2000
 Activists seek support for guarded area homeless can legally stay
9-22-18

By SHANNA MCCORD

smccord@santacruzsentinel.com



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Brent Adams and Stacey Falls are spearheading an effort to create Santa Cruz Sanctuary Camp, which they envision as a safe place for the homeless to sleep.

SANTA CRUZ — Two Santa Cruz homeless activists believe they have a solution to the long-time problem of men and women sleeping in parks and camping illegally and they're seeking political support to help get it off the ground this winter.

Stacey Falls, a high school science teacher, and Brent Adams, a documentary filmmaker, want to give the homeless their own designated campground, a place where they can pitch a tent and store personal belongings without being arrested or bothersome to other people.

It would be called Santa Cruz Sanctuary Camp. "People are already sleeping everywhere," said

SEE CAMP ON A4

CAMP

Continued from A1

Adams, 48, who was part of the occupation of a vacant former bank in November 2011. "Data shows if people have a safe place to sleep they can begin to address the issues in their lives."

Falls and Adams plan to make initial presentations to the county Board of Supervisors at 9 a.m. Tuesday and the Santa Cruz City Council at 5 p.m. Tuesday during each group's public comment period. They hope to get on the boards' formal agendas for consideration of support in the near future.

Falls and Adams didn't dream up the homeless camp on their own.

It's an idea borrowed from several larger cities, including Portland, Ore., and Seattle, where similar camps exist.

With roughly 3,000 homeless people countywide — about half of those in Santa Cruz — they say this area would benefit from having an area for the homeless to congregate aside from the Homeless Services Center on Coral Street, the San Lorenzo River levee, Pogonip and downtown.

"They have no place to sleep after dark, no place to keep their things," Falls, 36, said. "It's undignifying for them, it's uncomfortable for them. This is not a way to rebuild their lives."

What the two envision is a large swath of land enclosed by a 6-foot fence with a gated entrance staffed by two people 24 hours a day.

Rules of the proposed camp would include zero tolerance for violence, theft and use of drugs and alcohol, Adams said. Quiet hours would be enforced at night.

They estimate a camp with 100 participants would cost \$50,000 a year, though they hope the land would be donated and the city or county would cover the cost of a large trash receptacle.

A portable restroom on site would run nearly \$1,000 a month, Adams said.

Location for a camp in Santa Cruz County has not been determined, though the two say they have several spots in mind, including churches, private property and land owned by the city of Santa Cruz and county.

Claudia Brown, president

of the Homeless Services Center board, said her organization has a neutral stance on the camp proposition.

"We are narrowly focused on getting people into permanent housing," Brown said. "That said, we're not serving a significant portion of the population. They're not being served by anybody."

Adams said a sanctuary camp forum is planned at 7 p.m. Oct. 10 at Santa Cruz High School with Councilman Micah Posner; Paul Lee, a former college professor and longtime homeless activist who has contributed to the Homeless Services Center; and a representative from Dignity Village, the homeless camp in Portland.

Follow Sentinel reporter Shanna McCord at [Twitter.com/scnewsmom](https://twitter.com/scnewsmom)