

# News

Santa Cruz, California

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## 2-13-86 GT Funds Ensure Homeless Shelter

A SURPRISE FEDERAL GRANT for some \$124,000 should make it possible to keep shelters for local homeless people open year-round.

The money, made available through the Federal Emergency Management Act, can be used for private shelter agencies only. As the county and city will have no direct control over how the funds will be spent, the cumbersome process of opening a permanent shelter should be simplified considerably.

"We can jump into a facility without worrying about it flying politically," said Fred Gray, the chairman of the local FEMA board. "If a provider comes to us with a facility, we don't have to worry about where it is, whose district it's in, or who it's going to impact politically."

First priority will be given to shelters that exist already, and priority will be given to women with children. The 85-shelter beds that now exist, including the 25 currently housed at the Cedar Street facility, should remain (although the Cedar Street facility will have to find another location). An undetermined number of beds should be added elsewhere, perhaps to house victims of the Watsonville strike.

Gray said a better indicator of the increase in service is that the number of "shelter days" (one person in one bed for one day) should increase from



*From left to right: Jane Imler, Fred Gray, Paul Lee and Barbara Ryan*

some 5,600 last year to 8,000 in 1986.

Gray stressed that any shelter supported by the grant will be a permanent, year-round operation.

"The need for shelter is year-round," he said. "Once you have a bed in a shelter available, under no circumstances will that bed be in jeopardy later. We're not going to tolerate having shelters pop up during the winter then disappear in summer."

The grant, which Gray termed "a bush-league miracle," is more money than the city and county could ever hope to raise on their own.

"One of the killers in the solution (to the homeless problem) is where the money is going to come from,"

said Gray, who has been fighting for two years to get the grant.

"The county and city were talking about peanuts to meet a very small percentage of the problem. Now we have funds where we don't have to go through all these political hoops. The money's here; now let's talk facilities."

Gray realizes the news of the grant won't be welcomed with smiles by everyone in town, but he hopes people will not turn this into another "street-person issue."

"Street people need shelter, but they're not the only ones," he said. "You have legitimate professional people who are losing their jobs, their homes and their families. There's a whole lot of gut-level suffering implicit in shelters. I'm hoping we can have some impact." •

GREG PIO