

# SHELTER'S A FAMILY AFFAIR



## Work starts on homeless shelter

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SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

**SANTA CRUZ** — Still short nearly \$1 million in funding, service providers on Thursday started work on a \$5.5 million shelter for homeless families.

The project will be financed primarily through private donations except for a \$500,000 state Emergency Housing Assistance grant. While backers still need \$900,000, they vowed to finish next year.

The three-story L-shaped structure will serve 100 families a year at the corner of River and Coral streets, a 15-minute walk from downtown and yards from a Metro bus line. Families will stay from three to six months.

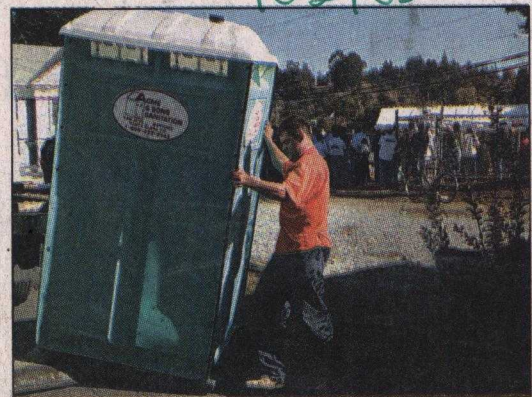
Among the features: an expanded 4,500-square-foot health center, child care, laundry, play areas

and job training.

The only similar area program is the Pajaro Valley Shelter in Watsonville, which served 29 families from July through December of last year but faced a 250-person waiting list during that same period.

Service providers believe the county's homeless numbers are higher than ever. Recent studies suggest there are 3,300 homeless people in the county on any given night, that 56 percent of the area's homeless have children and, of that group, 94 percent have two or more.

Homeless Services Director Ken Cole said the shelter will make a dent in the problem by providing counseling for the homeless and not just a roof over



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

**TOP:** Quintin Augustus, who's homeless, wields a shovel at the groundbreaking. His mother has been homeless for the past month.

**ABOVE:** While others celebrate Thursday's homeless shelter groundbreaking, Luis Morales gets down to the actual work at hand.

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# Shelter

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their heads.

About 100 people showed up Thursday morning to see 2-year-old Quintin Augustus, who's homeless, wield a groundbreaking shovel that was almost the length of his body.

His mother, Jacqueline, 38, from San Diego, has been homeless for the past month and seeking work as a bus driver while staying in a local satellite shelter. She needs a more permanent home for herself and her four children.

Cole said the agency is not yet accepting wait-list names for the shelter. He said people should hold off until it's close to being built.

Meanwhile, fund-raising efforts continue. Among those who have contributed: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$1.1 million) and Pat and Rowland Rebele (\$500,000). Other donors include Jack and Peggy Baskin, Dick and Mary Solari, the Ow Family.

To complete the project, the Kresge Foundation has agreed to commit \$450,000 — providing Santa Cruzans come up with \$900,000.

The shelter will be part of a complex that already includes the lockers-and-meal program at the Homeless Services Center, and the rooms at the Page Smith Community House and the River Street Shelter.

The complex is in a noisy part of the city, hemmed in by major highway, train tracks and a cement-mixing plant. A federally funded and mandated sound wall, costing about \$500,000, is now being built.

Paul Brindel of the Community Action Board, a private nonprofit that works for the poor, said the groundbreaking is a success story in



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Quintin Augustus got in on the action at the project groundbreaking Thursday, moving in front of some other dignitaries to move the first shovel of dirt on the family shelter project.

a year rife with big cuts to local service providers. He said calls to his agency seeking emergency rental assistance have doubled from last year.

"In the context of a budget crisis, this is an incredible boost of

morale," Brindel said.

He said, however, that emergency shelter is only part of the solution and that Santa Cruz needs to encourage more affordable housing for firefighters, nurses, teachers and others who can't currently buy

a home here.

*For information on the shelter campaign, call 458 6020, Ext. 123.*

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