

THE ISSUE

Homeless people, aka unhoused, are a growing and visible segment in nearly all communities in the United States, including Grand Junction/Mesa County.

The recent closure of Whitman Park by the City of Grand Junction highlighted the issue to local media, advocacy groups, and critics.

BACKGROUND

Some communities have responded with pilot programs to provide housing and financial resources. Somewhat related, years ago, families of disabled adults, including those with mental health disorders issues, were given aid (including financial) to ensure those individuals received care at home rather than nursing home care which was and is expensive and often funded with state/federal resources. There were some requirements: a family members needed to know CPR and First Aid; no drugs or alcohol in the home; and scheduled visits from social services.

ASSUMPTIONS

- This community and leaders are looking for solutions that are both short-term and long-term for substantial numbers of homeless (unhoused) individuals.
- Solutions are inconsistent. Affordable housing, counseling, etc., are scoped but may take a significant amount of time, commitment, and financial aid.
- Goals are not readily defined. Drug and alcohol addiction "cured"? Steady employment for the homeless? These may be viable in some circumstances, but since surveys indicate this is a large number of older homeless, these goals may not be feasible or attainable.
- Majority of homeless are "from" the area or nearby. (*This is backed up by recent surveys*).
- Some of them, not all, maybe not even a majority, have family in the area or nearby.
- For various reasons, those families cannot or will not help their homeless relatives. (For this proposal, the "will nots" are not considered).
- If a family cannot, there may be financial reasons.
- Other reasons may be lack of knowledge about local resources such as counseling, rehab, help with general health and dental.

THE PROPOSAL (draft, no title)

- As identified by homeless individuals, families are approached to gauge interest in reconnecting and providing support.
- A family member would have to apply, with criteria/ requirements such as suitable housing, no drugs or alcohol.
- Funding and/or gift cards to local grocery stores, etc. will be available.
- Community involvement on all levels solicited, encouraged.
- Full range of counseling and other support services will be available to all family members and perhaps in some cases, mandatory.
- On-site visits, monitoring.
- There will be failures, but monitoring should recognize problems at an early stage and help provided.
- There will be successes, too.
- A pilot program, beginning with 25 families. Evaluate after six months.
- If some success is identified, extensions available to initial families.
- More families added.

This would be only ONE program to augment many others already in existence, and others that might be planned.