

Homeless Efforts in Bakersfield



Recently, there have been news stories regarding a homeless camp on an island in the Kern River. Several people have lost what little belongings they had, including a few puppies. This was a devastating story to hear, especially since one of the major goals of the ILCKC is to combat homelessness. After watching the news stories on Channels 17, 23, 29, I was saddened to hear that many people in need do not know of the services and assistance available for them. The ILCKC helps per-

sons with disabilities that are homeless find shelter, and homes conducive to their disability. We work in collaboration with the Kern County Homeless Collaborative, a network of dozens of local organizations working in Kern County to reduce homelessness by providing housing, supportive services and financial stability opportunities. The program staff at ILCKC work daily with consumers seeking housing and have been extremely successful in finding emergency care. The major partners in the Homeless Collaborative are: the California Veterans Assistance Foundation, who helps Veterans find adequate housing; the CA Parole also helps transitioning parolees find housing in accordance with their parole requirements; Kern County Mental Health assists in housing for persons with mental health issues; Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance offers legal aid to low income

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Kern County Homeless Collaborative

families with attorneys dedicated to the homeless population; The United Way of Kern County has supplied thousands of dollars to combat homelessness in Kern County; Community Action Partnership helps with child care, tax assistance, and a plethora of other services for people who are homeless; Employers Training Resource also offers free training for people to find adequate employment in order for them to afford to live in a home independently; the Social Security Administration also ensures that all persons who are eligible for assistance have filed to obtain the funding; Stewards Inc. is a bonded, public, non-profit agency licensed by the Social Security Administration to manage the income of challenged individuals needing assistance; the Department of Housing and Urban Development supplies grants and funding to each of these agencies in order to get families housed; the Bakersfield Homeless Shelter offers emergency shelter for women and families, while the Bakersfield Rescue Mission offers emergency shelter for men. Both the BRM and the BHS have food pro-

“We are still masters of our fate. We are still captains of our souls.”

—Winston Churchill



vided by their organization, the Food Bank, Flood Ministries and Love Inc. CHW Wellness Center, Friends of Mercy, San Joaquin Community Wellness and Clinica Sierra Vista all offer free medical screenings and services for people with no income. All of these organizations work diligently to combat the homeless problem in Bakersfield. We hold several outreaches a month, together and independently, to try to get the information to the community that these services exist. With all of our combined efforts, events such as those that have recently occurred should not be happening.

Special Report: The Island People

KGET Channel 17
May 12, 2011

They are castaways of a different kind, living on an island in the Kern River off North Chester Avenue.

For over a decade, homeless men, women and couples turned a marshy enclave into a refuge, until recently when their protected island went up in smoke.

Larry Brackett has lived on an island in the middle of the Kern River for roughly three years.

But, he's not the longest inhabitant.

David Hussy, a man badly burned in Monday's fire on the island, is said to have lived there for some 15 years.

"He's a good guy, was married, has kids, had a house. Him and his wife had problems and he went the other route," said Brackett.

Why this island? It's no tropical paradise. To get to it you have to cross waist-high freezing cold water and the mosquitoes are everywhere.

But, this island refuge is tucked away, separated from land by flowing water, where police and muggers chose not to cross.

"They don't want to cross the water."

"When I come home there's nothing but peace."

"I don't have to worry about a cop tapping me on the foot and saying you can't be here."

"You don't have to worry about somebody coming hitting you on the head and taking everything you got."

Bakersfield police say this area of the river is heavily populated by homeless people. Some 30 people live along the river. Seven of them were living on this island, ravaged by two fires this week.

That happened twice in less than a 48-hour period. You gotta question that, you know, it's just really scary," said Janice Davidson.

Brackett, a former oil field worker who got hurt on the job over a decade ago, and his disabled wife Janice Davidson have been married for 23 years.

"I used to work and everything. No place will hire me now because I can only be on my feet basically two hours and I have to take a 20 to 30 minute break and nobody likes that," said Brackett.

Tuesday's fire was unmanageable and the entire island burned.

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined."

—Henry David Thoreau

Special Report: The Island People

Larry Brackett did not find out until late that night. "Did we lose everything? Everything?"

Although not much to most of us, their small campsite was everything to Brackett and his wife. It was their home.

"My tent, it was kinda nice. It had a bed in the middle of it, stove, dogs had their little bed off to the side. Like if you walked into somebody's bedroom is what it looked like," said Davidson.

Those belongings and a helpless litter of puppies that were rescued in Monday's fire were all wiped away in Tuesday's blaze.

Another homeless man who asked to remain anonymous was trying to rescue Davidson for the second time when his feet were severely burned. "I ran across, started fighting the fire to try to give her enough time to where she could get off. The fire encircled me."

But, with large gaping wounds in-

fection could easily spread.

"If he's living outside, living in a campsite, then somewhere nearby is a latrine. Hopefully he's not walking through that," said Louis Gill, Bakersfield Homeless Center.

The homeless center provided the displaced people with blankets, tents and food on Wednesday.

"Just because someone's made a poor choice doesn't mean they drop out of humanity. They don't lose value as a human being. It just means they're going through a hard time, added Gill."

Davidson needs a wheelchair, but is hopeful she'll be okay.

"As long as I have a tarp, a roof, anything over my head, my dog and my husband, that's all I need. It'll always be okay."

To see the video, please visit KGET's website http://www.kget.com/news/local/story/Special-Report-The-island-people/i_He4qh_AO-z_HWTyXBD3Q.csp

"A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds."

—Francis Bacon

Kern County Homeless Collaborative

Combatting homeless is not a unique problem to Kern County. Many organizations and local government agencies have been met with resistance from the homeless population when policies have been put into place to help those most in need. There are a variety of psycho-socio issues related to homelessness, both from the tax payers and those who live without shelter. Studies have shown that those who are prone to chronic homelessness are often consumed with fear and thus resist change or help from others because of the uncertainty that comes when one changes their habits. A vast majority of those who suffer from chronic homelessness are living with cognitive disabilities and do not have access to the medication or services they need to be able to live independently with their disability. The ILCKC helps these individuals everyday find services and proper medication so that they can break the cycle. The Kern County Homeless Collaborative is dedicated to finding the best practices from other regions and recommend housing solutions and types of development needed to complete the goals laid out in the Mayor's 10-year plan. They also coordinate organizations involved in providing housing/services to the homeless to focus the housing strategies on targeted solutions and populations. The Continuum of Care also identifies potential private sector stakeholders and private-public partnerships that can be utilized to develop housing solutions.

“There isn't a person anywhere who isn't capable of doing more than he thinks.”

—Henry Ford

What is Panhandling?

Panhandling is a problem in Bakersfield. Panhandling is when a person approaches a stranger and begs for money. Typically, panhandlers are aggressively asking for change and usually have a story as to why they need money. Studies have shown that those who are chronically homeless are not panhandlers. Please stay tuned for more information from the Panhandling Project, “Give Help, Not Handouts” from the Bakersfield Rescue Mission.



League of Dreams Hits a Snag

KGET Channel 17

May 3, 2011

Field of Dreams is a sports league for children with special needs.

The league plans to build a rubber baseball field for the players, but plans came to a standstill because of an environmental study.

They already have baseball diamonds out at Fruitvale Park, but special needs children often have problems steering their wheelchairs through the dirt and grass.

A new field made entirely of rubber is ready to be built, but the project has a roadblock from an unlikely source: burrowing owls.

Nearly every kid wants to play sports, but children with special needs often only see the field from outside of the fence.

"Raymond used to watch his big brother, so for years we would go out to the field and he would only watch," said Susan Lara.

Five years ago, Tim Terrio started the League of Dreams.

"For the first time these kids are able to be on a sports team," he said.

The more than \$120,000 project is funded

by private donations and the Federal Housing and Urban Development Program. The latter of the two donors is where the project hit a snag.

"When we went out and looked at the piece of property, even though it's a park, we determined along with the California Department of Fish and Game, that we had to have a simple survey to show us if we had any burrowing owls," said Lorelei Oviatt, Kern County Director of Planning and Community Development.

That's where the project stopped. The county says the survey will start in a few weeks, but Terrio says he didn't get an answer until we investigated.

"It sped up all of a sudden because we didn't even have an answer," he said.

Terrio is hoping for a fall baseball season. However, if the survey isn't completed soon enough, they'll have to postpone construction until the fall because of rubber construction premiums in the summer.

To see the video of this story, please visit KGET's website <http://www.kget.com/news/local/story/League-of-Dreams-hits-a-snag/7noacaOMwU-v3ktnTE3dfw.csp>

Veterans Disability Claims Delayed

KGET Channel 17

May 18, 2011

The Integrated Disability Evaluation System aims to process claims in 300 days or less, but new numbers show it sometimes takes a year or longer.

On Wednesday, veterans and politicians spoke out against the new system saying it's not cutting any bureaucratic red tape.

"I cannot help but wonder if what we have done is to just create more bureaucracy," said Republican Senator Richard Burr of North Carolina as he addressed the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in Washington D.C.

Vets in Kern County agree.

"I hate to say it, but I think he's right," said Vietnam veteran Wayne Wright.

Wright is upset that the Integrated Disability Evaluation System

isn't living up to its promise to process disability claims within nine months. On average, it's taking more than a year.

"It should take no more than six months," said Wright. "And, six months is a long time to wait once they get into the system."

The Bakersfield Veterans of Foreign Wars organization helps more than 8,000 vets file claims every month. There are more than 125,000 vets in the county.

Wright says it's unforgivable to make them wait on disability claims.

"For us to be able to put people on the moon, and we still can't feed our veterans, get them the assistance that they need in a short period of time, is unforgivable."

It's estimated that nearly 14,000 troops are using the new system right now and it has worked for some. It may not be perfect, but all sides agree the system is better than any that came before it.



“Accept challenges so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory.”

—George S. Patton

Disability Capital Action Day



“Go to the people. Learn from them. Live with them.”

—Lao Tzu

*By Brandy Morgan
ILCKC Systems Change
Advocate*

Rain or Shine

Not even a day of rain could stop the group of eleven advocates and consumers from Bakersfield from attending the educational rally and march in Sacramento on Wednesday May 25th. This event was attended by nearly two thousand people. Our determined group made the five and a half hour train ride each direction, marched in the pouring rain and then stayed on the steps of the

Capitol for four hours.

After the rally we went into the Capitol and visited with our local legislators to discuss the budget and legislation that is currently being proposed. It’s important that we let our legislators know how we feel about what’s going on. If you have any questions or need information about how to contact your legislator contact Independent Living Center of Kern County at 661-325-1063.



Congratulations!



The Independent Living Center of Kern County would like to congratulate the six students of the Independence High School Falcon Autistic Solar Team (FAST). The team was honored by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for their work educating other students about the necessity of environmental stewardship. These students were able to work with their disability to educate the young community about Kern County's vital energy business.

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Independent-Living-Center-of-Kern-County/361813474707>



Do you have unwanted items? Donate now!

Item	Item	Item
Backpacks	Professional Clothing	Wheelchair lift for vehicle
Blankets	Sleeping bags	Wheelchair parts
Canes	Manual wheelchairs	Shower rails
Pre-paid Cell Phones	Power wheelchairs	Art supplies
Office Supplies	Sanitation equipment	Folders
Mobility Instructors	Sign language instructors	Disposable cameras
Paper Towels	Wireless head set for phone	Computer software
Toiletries	Plastic bins	Toothbrushes
Bottled Water	carts	toothpaste




Independent Living Center

...Serving Kern County

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Have something you want to include in the ILCKC News or Calendar?
 Email Jenifer@ilcofkerncounty.org

June 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 2 pm: Computer Class	3	4  Poppin' Popcorn
5	6	7	8	9 2 pm: Computer Class	10	11
12	13	14	15	16  Third Thursday Downtown	17	18
19  Father's Day	20 10 am: Food and Nutrition 11 am: Money Management	21 10 am: Movie Class	22	23 2 pm: Computer Class	24	25
26	27	28 11 am: Peer Support Group	29	30 2 pm: Computer Class		