

# Chinook Observer

Peninsula, county making progress on homelessness

Nationally, local governments and non-profits are moving towards providing permanent housing for the chronically homeless for one simple reason: it works. Long-term housing stops the cycle of homeless and saves money compared to emergency housing, which becomes a revolving door for many. Even more important to recognize is that adequate, stable housing is not the carrot, it is a basic need.

We are fortunate to have an enthusiastic group of people with the non-profit Peninsula Poverty Response (PPR). It is a pivotal time for this group, as their efforts over the past three years are materializing in big ways. These include Project Homeless Connect (PHC), the Overnight Winter Lodging (OWL), and a pending grant to provide permanent housing to the chronically homeless.

PHC is a once-a-year event that puts individuals in contact with services that may otherwise be out of reach. This includes medical, dental, and optical checks; identification replacement and veteran's services. It provides the seemingly simple service of a haircut and a warm meal. This event also gives us a count and an idea of the type of homelessness that people are experiencing on the peninsula.

OWL is a collaboration among multiple churches and Peninsula Poverty Response with some funding from the county for coordination. It provides a warm, dry place to sleep during the most difficult months of the year. OWL works on a rotating schedule with each church taking one or two nights a week through February.

Lastly, the county wrote a state grant and was ranked number one in the state for homelessness funding. Now they are waiting to hear if the federal government will fund Washington state's proposal, which would provide funds for establishing permanent housing for the chronically homeless in Pacific County.

Efforts like PHC, OWL and permanent housing are not mutually exclusive events. They work on a continuum, and are a continuation of the work that's already being done. None of these efforts are a silver bullet for homelessness, but in conjunction they can begin to address the need.

We are fortunate as a community to have had Pastor Adrienne Strehlow, who formed PPR. She brought people together and the momentum necessary to address these issues. It is with a joyful and heavy heart that we say good luck and good bye as she moves to be closer to her family.

Strehlow has the heart of a pastor, but has the mind of a great one. She explained to me how helping individuals in our community means we are healing not a stranger, but our neighbor. We are not only healing an individual, but our community and therefore ourselves. This sort of work builds a community around the people who most need a group of caring people. It truly is in the hands of our citizens to heal our community.

If you are interested in volunteering for PHC or OWL, or finding out more about PPR, please visit [www.peninsulapovertyresponse.com](http://www.peninsulapovertyresponse.com).

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