



NEW BEGINNINGS

COUNSELING CENTER

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To Whom It May Concern:

I have been asked to provide some history and accomplishments of the RV Safe Parking Program during the last three years. In August 2006, the County Board of Supervisors gave their approval for the use of the administrative building parking lot off Victoria Street in downtown Santa Barbara. At the time of the approval, 10 designated parking spaces were allotted to the program with participants being able to enter the lot after 7 p.m. in the evening with the proviso that the vehicles would exit the parking lot the following morning no later than 6 a.m.

The New Beginnings staff established a twice weekly monitoring regiment where morning and evening drive bys took place. With the cooperation of the night watch person at the lot and the General Services office of the County we developed a system for maintaining a current list of vehicles and license plate numbers along with a permit system to insure that only approved vehicles would have access to these ten spaces. The security detail at the parking lot had explicit instructions to evict any vehicle not parked in the designated spaces or those lacking a permit. Except for a few instances where individuals did not follow the 14 rules established for participation in the program, it has run smoothly. Where individuals did not follow the rules, they were given a warning from New Beginnings staff. A repeat offense brought expulsion from the program. In the past three years only one person in one vehicle was expelled from the lot.

When New Beginnings took over the RV Safe Parking Project in 2004 there were three parking lots and 12 people enrolled in the program. Today we have 18 sites and 89 people participating. (It is also noteworthy that given the popularity of the program and the current economic climate we currently have a 40 person waiting list.) Churches, non-profit, city, county and private business lots are now participants in the program. The City of Santa Barbara provides three lots at the corner of Carrillo/Castillo, Cota/Santa Barbara Streets and Cabrillo/Garden Street. Currently, 14 vehicles can park in those three lots with plans to expand this to 25 in the near future. There are several churches and non-profits that also volunteer their lots each evening from Santa Barbara to Goleta. They include: The Mission, Catholic Charities, Holy Cross, United Way, Shoreline Community Church, the Foodbank, Trinity Episcopal Church, St. Mark's Church and Christ Lutheran

Church. The current ordinance only allows for 5 vehicles per lot. One possibility to meet the ongoing demand is to increase this number in the future. In addition, the City of Santa Barbara

expanded eligibility for the program in 2008 allowing the program to make use of one parking space at businesses on the lower eastside in the CM and M-1 zones. Currently, 4 businesses participate in this aspect of the program with more currently going through the approval process.

The program has achieved great success in achieving its overarching goal which is to encourage people to move out of their vehicles into permanent housing, participate in recovery programs and/or pursue meaningful employment. For instance, for the last fiscal year, July 1-June 30, 2008 42 people were placed in housing/recovery and another 15 were assisted to find jobs. For fiscal year 2008-09 through March 31, 2009 37 people have been placed in housing/recovery and 11 have been placed in new jobs.

The program is staffed by one full time outreach worker and a part time housing/job development specialist. In addition to working with people in vehicles or living on the street, the program receives referrals from the Salvation Army (where it has its office), WillBridge of Santa Barbara, El Carrillo, Catholic Charities, Rescue Mission, Casa Esperanza, Hotel de Riviera, Unity Shoppe, CARES (Mental Health), County Social Services and other homeless outreach workers.

While there are many people who have benefited from the program we would like to highlight two fairly typical cases where the work of New Beginnings made a difference in a homeless person's life. Within the last year the M. family came to our program with their 2 children in their RV. We assisted them financially to get a small house in Carpinteria. The outcome was that the parents found gainful employment and their children were able to get into a stable environment and attend school regularly. They are still living there and doing quite well. Also this past year our Safe Parking Program received extensive media coverage. Barbara Harvey, a single woman, who lived in her station wagon with two dogs, stayed at the Mission parking lot before finding a house in San Luis Obispo. She has now resumed her work in the financial industry and is living there.

This program has become a national model as an effective way to respond to the problem of people living in vehicles. Communities in Fremont, Ventura, San Diego and Venice, California are looking to replicate it in their communities. In addition, the national organization of Social Venture Partners is considering adopting this program as a national project. We look forward to your endorsement of this project and allowing us to extend our work in the years ahead.