

Phillips, Jeanie

From: glennys [gu@99main.com]
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To: Phillips, Jeanie
Subject: Testimony submission

- Submitted testimony 1/30/07 for Committee for Human Services **Bill# 5633**

My name is Reverend Glennys Ulschak.

I speak to you today as the acting executive director of the Homeless Hospitality Center (HHC). In this role I have had the honor of learning first hand about what it may mean to be without the security that permanent shelter provides. I have witnessed the resilience of our guests who may seem to have nothing, but who I know possess a great many qualities that allow them to survive.

It is from this perspective that I speak.

The overnight shelter and the day time drop in center are the two central services currently offered by HHC. Open from November through April, the overnight dormitory provides guests a bed, light snacks, and recreation. There is staff and volunteer support that ensures its smooth and safe operation.

The drop in center opened its doors two weeks ago. The idea grew from the uneasy knowledge that our homeless neighbors have nowhere to go during the day time hours. While many are employed others are not or are in frail health.

The drop in center provides a central and convenient location where social workers, health care providers, and social service agencies may work with our guests. Simple things like having a permanent address and telephone number enhance the chances for employment. There is also a communications room where guests may use one of six donated computers to work on the internet or access e-mail.

The atmosphere at the drop in center is increasingly becoming one of ownership. The guests are learning that the drop in center is a place they may call their own; a place where their worth and dignity is respected and that the same is expected in return. There is a feeling of gratitude that flows from guests as well as from the staff and volunteers.

And there is a feeling of awe. Guests find it hard to believe that there is – to borrow a phrase – a “clean well-lighted place” that is dedicated to meeting their needs. Staff and volunteers – and increasingly the wider community – are in awe that it has been accomplished. And it has been accomplished through a strong partnership among many segments of the New London community: faith communities (who also offer showers, breakfast, & on a rotating basis, lunch on Saturday), community-based service organizations, the New London Police Department, local businesses, health care agencies – *and* homeless men & women.

It is important to note that over the course of these past three years, those individuals who were once only statistics, named as “consumers” and “clients” are now known by name. They want for themselves what we all crave and need: security.

In New London, we’re learning how to provide a kind of hospitality that is tailored to the articulated

needs of those we hope to serve well. With significant support from the state, this compassionate model of service provision would receive the boost it needs to take it to the next level. It is our hope that we may name you as partners in our mission.

Thank you.

Reverend Glennys Ulschak
Acting Executive Director
Homeless Hospitality Center

January 30, 2007