

Minutes  
LAFAYETTE COUNTY HOMELESS COALITION MEETING  
THURSDAY May 18, 2017 8:30 a.m.  
Darlington United Methodist Church  
Darlington, WI 53530

**Mission Statement:**

- a. **Learn** about and define homelessness and its causes in our county.
- b. **Coordinate** community networks which promote self-sufficiency and stability for families, and
- c. **Advocate** for locally driven solutions to end homelessness.

Individuals in attendance: Hannah Campbell Gustafson, Family Promise of Grant County, Rev. Craig Simenson, Grace Lutheran, Darlington, Dr. Lori Neuman, community, Angela Swinhart, Salvation Army, Tony Ruesga, Lafayette Co. Board, Lee Gill, Human Services, and Rev. Connie Matye, Peace Lutheran, Belmont.

The meeting was called to order by Hannah at 8:32 a.m.

1. Approval of minutes: Tony motioned that we accept the minutes from the meeting on April 20, 2017. Lori seconded. Motion passed.

2. Speaker: Shari Ruesga from Monroe Clothes Closet.

The Clothes Closet began through a class on leadership provided through the UW Extension in Green County attended by the Green County Leaders. The closet was the final project. Rick Gleason, Director of Green County Family Promise had a vision regarding offering free clothing to people in need. A Facebook Page and a website were created to generate interest both in donations to the closet and volunteers to help staff the closet. There are four volunteers per shift. The clothing is offered to people "no questions asked." All clothing is free. The Clothes Closet began in March of 2017 and is open every Monday from 3p.m. to 7 p.m. These are the only hours of operation but there is an allowance for emergency situations. Location of the closet is in the basement of the Church of the Nazarene in Monroe. There was a question regarding the availability of clothing for infants. There is clothing for infants. They have clothing of all sizes.

There was discussion regarding the need for a place people can access free clothing in Lafayette County.

Angie noted that they recently had a situation in the Salvation Army that someone needed clothing for their daughters and they needed that clothing to be free. There are no options in the county for that so the Salvation Army paid toward the persons rent so that they could use that money for clothing.

Lee reported that the St. Vincent's in Shullsburg has given clothing free in cases of extreme emergency.

Again, discussion revolved around the need for this in our county.

Discussion then began around the need for cribs and car seats for people who cannot afford to purchase those. The Salvation Army can help with this, and will keep this need in mind at the end of the budget year. However, then there was discussion regarding the need for car seats to be inspected. Tony was certified to do this but due to a lack of people accessing this service his certification ended and he did not renew it. There is much to be done to become and maintain this certification. An opportunity to have car seats inspected was offered in the county but it was very poorly attended.

3. SWCAP update: Michelle Friedrich was unable to attend but Hannah reported that Michelle was currently working on several grant applications.

4. Iowa/Lafayette County Family Promise update: E-mail communications have been sent to the group to update them on what is happening. There is some interest in the group gathering in person for further conversation. Family Promise of Grant County has been contacted and there needs to be further discussion among the Iowa/Lafayette group about this. Stay tuned.

5. Salvation Army update: Money has been used since the last meeting. There is still approximately \$7500 left. Letters have been sent to local churches and food pantries to share that money is available.

6. Point in Time count and Christmas in July.

The next Point in Time count will be July 26<sup>th</sup>. There is a possibility that the nursing students from Edgewood College would assist in this. Hannah gave a brief overview of what happens in these counts. There was discussion about the appropriateness of these counts, especially in rural counties but they need to be done in order for grant money to be obtained. There was a suggestion made that there should be some kind of training given to those that participate in these counts. Perhaps as simple as some role playing prior to the count. There was a suggestion made that we invite someone who is or who has been homeless to come and speak to our coalition to help us better understand what it means to be homeless.

Discussion then began on the need for cultural training in our county especially in relation to the Hispanic population in the county. There was an event in Grant County which was fairly well attended. It was a good program but many who were there already were open to other cultures. Tony reported that there is presently much fear among those who are Hispanic given what is being reported in the news in relation to ICE.

Christmas in July: Tony agreed to chair this project but asked for help as it was a big job last July. Lee and Connie agreed to help in their respective communities. Volunteers to ring the bells are the key to success.

7. Future Agenda Items:

Blanchardville Box of Balloons: they provide birthday items for people who cannot afford them.

Poverty Simulation: to give people an opportunity to experience what it is like to be poor and/or homeless. This would require at least 30 participants and 15 volunteers. This will be explored for our county.

Clothes Closet: to be revisited in relation to Lafayette County.

Blessings in a Backpack: Presently being started in Belmont School. Group would like to invite Kim Voigts to talk about the program so that it might expand to all the schools in the county.

Next meeting to be held June 15<sup>th</sup> at United Methodist Church at 8:30 a.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Tony. Seconded by Lori. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:27 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Connie Matye, Acting minute taker.