

Homelessness *cont. from page 5*

According to a COC census, people with substance abuse problems comprise only 7 per cent of the local homeless population, contradicting the self-serving misconception promoted by local officials that drug and alcohol rehabilitation is all that's needed to eliminate the major cause of homelessness. The general public has been led to believe that Shasta County's only homeless shelter, the Rescue Mission, is able to accommodate every homeless person who is "willing" to let go of their addictions and criminal behavior.

The Rescue Mission has a maximum capacity of 170 people, which means that (by COC estimates), there are at least 3,428 homeless men, women, and children in Shasta County the Mission cannot accommodate on any given night.

Convincing the public that a good portion of the homeless in our area came from other places is another tactic that has been used successfully in other cities to disclaim responsibility and to enlist public support for the City's program to "run transients out of town". This process has already begun in the form of issuing citations of \$335 for the first "offense" and \$3,000 for the second.

In relation to the abundance of housing services we're told Shasta County offers, the Rescue Mission turns the majority of its "residents" out after 30 days to face the same severely limited low-income housing market that brought many of them there to begin with.

People of Progress offers occasional one-time help to people with a combination of catastrophic illness and an unusual emergency, by supplying them with a portion of their rent to help avoid eviction. In all of 2005, P.O.P. was able to help less than 50 households with "up to \$300". Northern Valley Catholic Social Services helps a small percentage among the very limited category of "families with young children on CalWORKS living in motels" with a one-time "loan" to cover a security deposit. The Shasta County Department of Social Services will – in rare instances – provide people who are too physically disabled to stay at the Mission with a voucher for 14 days in a motel.

An April 9, 2006 article in the local media stated that the City of Redding now has \$61 million in its General Fund, and that "the City has managed to carve out fat cash reserves" in recent years. The same article informed us that the City has plans to "redevelop" the Lake Boulevard and Buckeye Terrace areas in the same manner as Parkview. This will further elevate the cost of remaining rentals, and has the potential to add thousands of human beings to the already staggering number of homeless in our area. The various organizations involved in the COC have stated repeatedly at their meetings that lack of affordable housing is a major obstacle to addressing homelessness in Shasta County. Vouchers for subsidized housing through the City of Redding currently take one to three years, while the Shasta County Department of Housing will not venture a time-frame for its waiting list. However, being in possession of a voucher does not guarantee that hous-

ing can be found, and it is often the case that these vouchers reach their expiration date without the recipient having found a place to use them.

The following is a partial list of recreational and "beautification" projects the City and County have funded since Redding's version of "urban removal" began: the "Big League Dreams" Sports Park, the Sundial Bridge, yearly installments of \$400,000 each to Turtle Bay (which has been operating in the red since its inception), the renovation of the Cascade Theatre and the approval of \$350,000 to be set aside for the new downtown location of the Riverfront Playhouse. Obviously, funds *have* and *do* exist which would allow local government to take responsibility for a tragic situation it is largely responsible for creating. As a beginning toward that end, the community should demand that the City halt its plans to displace even *more* low-income families, the elderly and the disabled until replacement housing is made available.

According to the Coroner's Office, at least 25 people lost their lives in Shasta County in 2005 as a direct result of being homeless (this "official" figure represents only those among the homeless for whom no relative could be located). The homeless are 3 to 4 times more likely to die prematurely than the general public.

If you are interested in helping to address the growing homeless epidemic in our community, please call (530) 226-0404.

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

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Coming Events

Citizens for Responsible Government
P.O. Box 993904, Redding, CA 96099-3904
Doug Bennett, Chair, CRG (530) 224-4010
website (under construction): www.crgredding.org
email CRG: crgredding@peaceredding.org

CRG believes in alternative media and community education.



SEPTEMBER:

Kim Spencer, founder of LINK TV, will discuss alternative media. Details TBA.

SEPTEMBER 12:

CRG Book Discussion Group
the group will meet the second Tuesday of every month from 7 to 9 p.m., beginning September 12, at Yaks Koffee House, 3274 Bechelli Lane, Conference Room.
Book: *Democracy Matters* by Cornell West.

SEPTEMBER 21:

International Peace Day
Watch for details about local events.

CRG has monthly meetings on the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the First United Methodist Church, Room 10, corner of South and East Streets, Redding.

OCTOBER 6:

Brady Kiesling, first Foreign Service Officer to resign in protest of the Iraq War. Lecture and Book Signing. Friday, October 6, 7:00 p.m. Shasta College, Rm. 802.

OCTOBER 28:

Nadia McCaffrey, "Journey to Peace: One Mother's Quest to Stop the Suffering of War." Her son, Patrick, was killed in Iraq. Saturday, October 28, 7:00 p.m. Location: TBA.

