

NEEDS ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE REPORT

In July of 2013, the Board of the Rotary Club of Cameron Park approved the conducting of a comprehensive community needs assessment project. There were a number of reasons for so doing including the recommendation of Rotary International that all clubs periodically assess the needs of the local areas they serve. There were other specific purposes for undertaking this project in the eyes of the Rotary Club of Cameron Park. Those reasons are listed below:

- To better understand the overall dynamics at work in our community.
- To create a detailed repository of information that community service organizations and government agencies can reference to understand the 'big picture' of the needs of all populations on the Western Slope of El Dorado County.
- To identify the greatest needs in a prioritized manner.
- To identify the resources and assets available in El Dorado County and to assess the efficiency of the usage of those resources.
- To provide assistance and direction to all organizations in targeting their efforts to address the most pressing problems identified by the needs assessment.
- To assist in improving the health of our community as a whole.

Needs Assessment Report Prioritized Needs

The results of the Needs Assessment survey conducted by the Rotary Club of Cameron Park are highlighted by the findings elicited from the organizations and agencies by the club's interviewers Overall, the findings were many and varied. The needs assessment task force, using a weighting process, developed a prioritized list of needs from the interview reports. Those needs are described below. Following the descriptions are observations made by the needs assessment task force members. The results are presented in the order of priority

Priority Need # 1--Reliable, Accessible Transportation connecting people to existing resources.

This need was echoed repeatedly by interviewees no matter whose interests they were intent upon serving. For example, assisting homeless individuals to attend meetings, shop for provisions, potential employment and to access social/mental health services was listed as crucial for them to maintain hope and determination to move toward permanent shelter. Likewise, senior citizens, poverty-level and low income earners, students of all ages whose parents are both employed outside of the County and probationers/parolees without automobiles all are reported as groups who would greatly benefit from a comprehensive system of public transportation in the County. It was noted over and over how difficult it is for those people who are attempting to better themselves to have to depend upon others for personal transport. The lack of locational independence is a major stumbling block in the lives of many County residents.

Priority Need #2— A Shelter for the Homeless Combined with a Centralized Resource Center to Facilitate Access to Available Services

Throughout the interview reports, the need for shelter for a number of County populations was a common theme. The most frequently mentioned were homeless adults and their offspring. Other groups also need at least transitional housing. For example, individuals on probation/parole, the unemployed worker who is actively seeking employment, and the emancipated adolescent who has legally gained independence all have the need for transitional housing and eventually, affordable permanent housing.

The need for additional foster homes, both short and long term, is a necessity in the County. Many youths that need foster care are being shipped to Sacramento County or other nearby counties because of the lack of placement spaces in El Dorado County.

Finally, the need for more affordable permanent housing is strong. Individuals and/or families have difficulty locating adequate housing even if they are regularly employed.

Many local jobs available are either part-time or are low paying. Individuals filling those positions find that it is nearly impossible to afford housing in the County.

Priority #3—Increased Number of Employment Opportunities in the County.

Three common threads were highlighted in the reports in this area. Those were:

- The need for **easily accessible job training and job retraining** classes.—This includes the need for training in technological tools that are most commonly used by businesses. It must also be noted that the ongoing job skill training for developmentally delayed and handicapped adolescents and adults is woefully underfunded and in reality few meaningful training or placement opportunities exist.
- The vital need for a **more successful business development program** in our community was noted by several organizations interviewed. This solution goes hand-in-hand with the retraining of unemployed or underemployed County residents. Without jobs to transition into, the graduates of any type of retraining program would still be unemployed.
- One of the reasons given for many people not seeking to be employed was **the lack of affordable child care in our area.** Most if not all of the wages of a part-time or entry-level job would be spent by the employee on the care of a child., even if that child attends school for part or all of the day. If no real income advantage is gained by working, it is an easy decision to remain at home unemployed.

Priority #4--Stronger and More Plentiful Mental Health Services

Those adults, children and families who are constantly struggling to meet their basic human needs (E.g.--shelter, food, clean water, health care) often succumb to common mental health issues such as depression and hopelessness. For both cost and transportation reasons their mental health difficulties go untreated. That fact exacerbates their difficulties. If current mental health options were not overtaxed, then some problems might be averted. (E.g.—Alcoholism; drug addiction; domestic violence; child abuse)

- The need to assist struggling adults and children in developing coping skills is high. Training and, if necessary, ongoing therapy is not readily available to those needing it in our county

Priority #5—Addressing of a Variety of Social Needs

Categorizing the variety of general social needs identified in the surveys was difficult. Three broad categories were eventually chosen. They are: Needs of Youth, Needs of the Aged and Needs of All Community Members and are described below.

Needs of Youth-- Access to organized activities is uneven based on the geography of our County (again transportation is an issue) and based upon the cost of the organized activity. Activities needed were not just athletic. The need for supervised after school study time and access to technological resources was also seen as vital.

Needs of the Aged-- The top of the list of needs for senior citizens, including aging **veterans** and **developmentally delayed adults**, is the building of additional assisted living and comprehensive care facilities. Governmental and non-governmental groups are becoming overwhelmed with the numbers of seniors needing health care, transportation and direct care.

Needs of All Community Members—General unmet needs and reduced services noted included the loss of library hours/locations, few low cost entertainment options, lack of affordable child care and cutbacks of County social services. Meeting basic human needs is a struggle for many. In addition to shelter, **nutritious food, basic clothing, usable furniture and responsive emergency services**, were cited as unavailable or inaccessible for some residents of our County.

Priority #6 The Lack of a Sense of Community in El Dorado County

The expressed desire for a stronger “sense of community” seems focused on reducing the isolation some groups of our citizens feel. For many, our area is just a place to live rather than a community, whatever that definition entails. Opportunities to gather together and enjoy activities and learning opportunities were seen as promoting everything from the increasing of community volunteers to creating a culture of acceptance. Some would like to see a unified “Community Vision” developed by a large cross section of citizens (not by government) and have that vision serve as a blueprint for all community organizations and agencies as improvements are considered.

NARRATIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

In analyzing the information we obtained from our survey effort, there appears to be a large number of resources available to help those in need. The major problem is connecting those in need with the resources to meet their needs. Primarily the need is for transportation. However, in some cases people need to know what resources are available. There also is a need to coordinate our resources so that they are used efficiently. The following is a summary of those resources we found.

1) TRANSPORTATION NEED

The major transportation resource is El Dorado Transit, which includes Dial-a-Ride . Marshall Hospital does provide some transportation for low income patients. There are a few school and church auto repair shops.

2) HOMELESS SHELTER NEED

The Community Resource Center is a starting point for any homeless person in El Dorado County. They have tents, tarps, and bags. There are several temporary housing programs in the County. Something like "Hangtown Haven" is needed to provide safe transitional shelter and a central place for more effective transportation pick up. There is some housing available for a few nights. But we did not find housing of the transitional type.

3) UNEMPLOYMENT

There is an unemployment resource center, (i.e. Job One and Golden Sierra Job Training Agency). Also Mother Lode Rehabilitation Enterprises Inc (MORE) provides training for handicapped people.

4) STRONGER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The mental health facility at the Shingle Springs Rancheria is underutilized. The County has a mental health facility. New Morning Youth and Family Services provides some services for mental health and drug abuse.

5) ADDRESS SOCIAL NEED PROBLEMS

Quote from Carolyn Gilmore of the Salvation Army "Our community is rich with resources". This is supported by the information we found during our surveys. In order to better comprehend the resources available they have been grouped into categories.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

There are about 20 food programs that we found. Other programs are available such as the El Dorado County Food Bank and those that provide meals such as senior nutrition, lunch programs, and food closets. The EDC Food Bank has begun an outreach program to serve outlying areas.

CLOTHES AND FURNITURE

There are a number of sources for clothing and furniture. Some clothes closets operate all year. Other programs are available at specific times such as the beginning of the school year and these provide clothes and school supplies for kids. Snowline Hospice has a thrift stores where inexpensive furniture can be found. Lack of transportation may limit access to these resources

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Legal services are available for seniors, children, veterans, and low income people.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Emergency assistance is available in a number of situations. The most obvious are police and fire protection. In addition, there is help for those experiencing a violent relationship, energy needs, and housing. One place that had good knowledge about what is available was the Salvation Army.

SENIORS INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

We have programs for protecting seniors, lunch programs, and care facilities. One area that was identified as needing more resources is senior recreation opportunities due to a large retirement population.

RECREATION ASSISTANCE

The Community Service Districts (CSDs) and several sports leagues have scholarships for low income kids. The Boys and Girls club and Little League also have some scholarships for low income kids.

MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

There are government health as well as private health programs for low income people. The Shingle Springs Rancheria has a medical facility that is underutilized. Several health education programs are available.

VETERANS ASSISTANCE

Resources are available from government agencies and veterans organizations

GIFT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS

We have programs for gifts of backpacks, school supplies, bicycles Christmas gifts, and gift cards. Also there are community grant programs available.

The list of resources available is very large and is difficult to navigate, Also there is a problem of getting to the resources for those in need.

6) SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Resources available here are the community centers, CSDs, libraries, and fire departments. Voluntary service organizations exist that help create a sense of community and serve others in need.

SUMMARY

The goal of this assessment effort was to identify the needs of the community and to identify the community assets available to meet those needs. The scope of the surveys did not provide an assessment of the sufficiency of the resources available to meet everyone's needs.

In order to describe the community needs it was necessary to divide them by priority and category. However, it is apparent that the categories are linked together and that resources must be available for several categories if needy people are going to improve their situation. For example: someone who is homeless, who needs mental health services, may also need job training. They will need transportation to access those services/resources. However, if there are no jobs for them, they can make no transition to improve their situation.

There many resources available, but there is a lack of coordination to insure that these resources are used effectively. Also there was an indication that some resources were fragmented and not directed toward the areas where they could do the most good.

Several people expressed an opinion that some in the community felt that if the problem were ignored that it would go away, in reference to homelessness. Actually by addressing the problem we could reduce the cost of government services such as law enforcement.

There was a suggestion, by several groups, that the community should develop a community vision which expresses the desire to work together to help those in need and to develop the will to make it happen. This effort should not be driven by governmental agencies, but should be a community effort.

RECOMMENDATIONS A CALL TO ACTION

THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS

- 1) That the needs assessment report be studied and analyzed by all agencies and organizations receiving copies for the purpose of understanding the current needs and the resources for meeting those needs.**
- 2) That there be initiatives by an ad-hoc community group or groups to study each of the priority needs areas to identify areas in which there is lack of services or an overlap of services, using the information in this report as a starting point.**
- 3) That an umbrella group (executive committee) be formed to coordinate any initiatives that result from this study of present efforts to address the priority needs of the County's residents and to develop a forum for creating a comprehensive community vision.**
- 4) That there be a concerted effort by community groups to reach out to the leadership of the Shingle Springs Rancheria for the purpose of helping them to participate in community activities, maximize the use of their community-based resources and assist in efforts to promote school attendance and integration in available activities for their youth.**
- 5) That a work shop be conducted with the Board of Supervisors to review this Needs Assessment report. All of the groups interviewed should be invited to join in this work shop.**