

Rancho Cordova PATH Changes Name to HART, Applies for CDGB Grant

*Story and photo
by Margaret Snider*

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) -

The first order of business at the March Rancho Cordova PATH (People Assisting the Homeless) meeting was to change their name. Though independent, the group is aligned with similar Elk Grove and Citrus Heights groups. Elk Grove PATH, in securing their nonprofit status, ran into a copyright issue with the name, which was already taken by an independent PATH group in Los Angeles. As the simplest solution, all three Sacramento-area groups agreed to change their name to Homeless Assistance Resource Team, or HART.

"I love that because that's what we're doing," said Karen Edwards, one of the coordinators of the Rancho Cordova group. "We are a resource, and we're a team, so from here on out we will not be referred to as PATH any more, we will be the Rancho Cordova chapter of HART."

The meeting was attended by a core group of people who are moving forward to help those in the area who lack housing. Ken Bennett, community outreach coordinator of Sacramento Self Help Housing (SSHH), was there to add his support. Rancho Cordova HART is operating under the umbrella of SSHH until achieving its own nonprofit status.

The report on the 2014/2015 Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter revealed that the Rancho Cordova faith community provided four weeks of shelter during the past winter season and did intake on 40 individuals, serving an average of 11-12 each night. Staff from SSHH came each Tuesday evening to do housing counseling and up to 10 individuals, including five veterans, were able to get into transitional housing.

Given vacations and all of the activities that occur during the



Ken Bennett, community outreach coordinator for Sacramento Self Help Housing, chats with Karen Edwards, one of the Rancho Cordova HART group founders. Discussion at the meeting of HART included the name change of the group and the possibility of grants available for transitional housing for those in Rancho Cordova without a place to live.

Christmas season, it will be efficacious to reconsider the start date for the next winter shelter, Edwards said. "We're going to have to ... start earlier in the year and work on that intake site, which was the biggest real problem that we encountered," said Edwards, who is in charge of Women's Ministry at Sun River Church.

The winter shelter brings people into view, where they can become aware of options. "Some of those people were able to get into permanent housing already," Bennett said, "and they're people we wouldn't have necessarily brought in or found."

The next step toward independence after the winter shelter is to provide a transitional house, said Edwards. When a person or family is without a place to stay, resources are not accessible to them.

"They can't really get the services they need unless they're living somewhere," Bennett said. "You can't make doctor's appointments, you can't get a job, you can't do lots of things if you don't have a place to live."

In order to achieve this, Rancho Cordova HART has applied for the Community Development Block Grant to help provide a transitional house. In order to be awarded that grant, certain things

must be accomplished. "We're applying with hope," Bennett said. "We're not applying with matching funds. We're not applying with funds in hand. In the normal course of things we would be denied automatically. Now, however, there is possibility because we told them we're going to be applying for Measure H funds to make up the difference of what they don't give us. So they might give it to us in a contingency if we get approved for the Measure H funds."

Representatives of HART will attend Measure H Town Hall meetings to put forward their cause and will submit a grant application.

The next meeting of Rancho Cordova HART is on April 16th at Sun River Church. Every interested person from the area is invited to attend.

"Hopefully we will get a good sampling from the greater community too, not just the faith community," Edwards said. "Obviously we can anchor it, but it's a collective. We're the Rancho Cordova Homeless Assistance Resource Team."

For information regarding HART, you can contact Karen Edwards at (916) 201-4633 or Karen@sunriverchurch.com or Inez Reyes at (916) 708-8026 or inezreyes888@yahoo.com. ★