Get to Know Us Better

Our Achievements, Looking Ahead

Ways to Get Involved

Sharing Your Professional Talent

Donation Information Inside Back Cover
The Lee County Homeless Coalition, Inc. was incorporated on December 4, 2008 as a private, not-for-profit Florida corporation under the provisions of Chapter 617 of the Florida Statutes. The function of the Coalition was established pursuant to Florida Statute 420.623 to plan, network, coordinate, and monitor the delivery of services to the homeless. The Coalition operated under the umbrella of the Department of Human Services from October 2004 through August 31, 2009.

On September 1, 2009 the Lee County Homeless Coalition officially separated from the Lee County Department of Human Services (now the Lee County Department of Human and Veteran Services) as an independent agency. The mission of the Coalition is to “advocate, educate, and promote awareness of issues and obstacles facing homeless individuals in Lee County through community collaboration, planning and implementing solutions.”

The Coalition has 72 paid members including nonprofit agencies, businesses, faith-based organizations, advocates, and people who are currently or have been previously homeless. The general Coalition meets monthly as do the committees that focus on Community Resources and Needs, and Research and Awareness. We are active in the Governance Board of the Continuum of Care in Lee County, the Coordinated Entry Committee, By Name List Committee and the Bob Janes Triage Center Governing meetings to name a few.

The Coalition was involved in a variety of activities and media events designed to raise public awareness on homeless issues. Included in this Annual Report are some of the activities and community events that the Coalition engaged in during this past fiscal year.

**The Lee County Homeless Coalition Community Grant**

The Coalition continued to work with individuals and agencies to identify potential gaps within our local continuum of homeless care. Our provider agencies continued to be stretched to capacity and worked harder than ever to deliver effective services often with diminishing funding. The Lee County Homeless Coalition made available a total of $50,000 to member agencies in grant funding. The purpose of this grant was to assist member agencies fulfill their mission and serve those who were homeless. The following member agencies received funding. The Coalition was pleased to be able to offer this grant to our members and assist those who needed help.

| Abuse Counseling and Treatment, Inc. (ACT) | $1,500 |
| Affordable Home Ownership Foundation, Inc. | $1,500 |
| All Soul’s Episcopal Church | $4,000 |
| Children’s Network of Southwest Florida | $5,000 |
| Community Cooperative | $5,000 |
| Harry Chapin Food Bank / $2,500 |

| Lee County Housing Development Corporation | $5,000 |
| Lee Health | $5,000 |
| The Midwest Food Bank | $5,000 |
| Our Mother’s Home | $2,500 |
| Project Dentist Care | $10,000 |
| The Salvation Army | $3,000 |

**14th Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, December 1, 2018**

The Lee County Homeless Coalition raised more than $25,000 during our “Come as Your Favorite Character” themed fourteenth annual dinner and silent auction held December 1 at Colonial Country Club in Fort Myers. There were six Gold Sponsors, seven Silver Sponsors and eight Bronze Sponsors. Approximately 185 guests
attended and bid on fifty-five donated auction items. Roger Mercado, Director of the Lee County Department of Human & Veteran Services, served as the master of ceremonies. The event featured special guest speaker Michael V. Martin, Ph.D., President of Florida Gulf Coast University. The funds raised help the Lee County Homeless Coalition and its partners to continue their mission to end homelessness in Lee County.

This past year’s Dean Blietz Annual Memorial Award for outstanding community service was presented to A’lea Ward. A’lea was nominated by Community Cooperative where she began as a volunteer and later was hired to be a Case Coach. She was quickly promoted as her leadership skills grew and she became a champion of the homeless and impoverished persons in our community. During the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, A’lea rose to the challenge and took on long-term recovery efforts. She worked tirelessly to assist those who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. She is highly motivated, reliable and organized. Her dedication and commitment shone through everything she did. Congratulations A’lea!

Homeless Challenge, November 17, 2018

The Lee County Board of County Commissioners officially proclaimed the month of November as “Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Month”, a time designated to educate the public and bring awareness to the needs of the homeless. Each year, the Coalition hosts a homeless challenge in mid-November to correspond with Hunger and Homeless Awareness Month. The Lee County Homeless Coalition sponsored several events during November to engage the community. This year’s Homeless Challenge, “Walk a Mile in Their Shoes”, took place on November 17.

Those participating in “Walk a Mile in Their Shoes” became familiar with the social services network and methods of everyday survival. The activity was designed to educate and promote awareness. They joined together for a meal and walked several miles to visit various homeless provider agencies and shelters. The day’s agenda included discussions with law enforcement, emergency room staff, and some of our partner agencies. The goal was to have participants come away with a better understanding of the scope of the problem and how the system dealt with the hardships of homelessness.

For those unable to attend a “Walk a Mile in Their Shoes”, there were other ways to participate in National Homeless Awareness Month. Individuals were encouraged to collect or donate non-perishable food or clothing, volunteer professional services to provide aid to the homeless, ask their employer or school to host or sponsor a fundraising event, donate funds to a non-profit shelter, food pantry or support “FPL’s Care to Share” program.

22nd Annual Candlelight Vigil, December 21, 2018

The community came together on the steps of the Old Courthouse to memorialize thirty-two homeless individuals who died during the year while living on the streets or in a homeless shelter in Lee County with the lighting of candles. However, the weather did not cooperate. There was wind and rain. Luminaries were set up with battery operated candles because it was too windy to light a flame. Then a downpour drenched all the luminary bags and they couldn’t be used. We continued and over sixty people braved the weather and came out to pay their respects. The rain eased up for the ceremony but returned shortly afterward.

The Candlelight Vigil included remarks from Janet Bartos, executive director of the Coalition, and William Rodriguez, past board chair. An opening prayer was presented by Bishop El Johnson of New Life Worship Center. Taps was performed by Harvey Charter, Commander Victor Paul Tuchman Post 400 Jewish War Veterans. Music was provided by New Life Worship Center Choir. This event continues to bring attention to the tragedy of
homelessness and educate our community about the lack of affordable housing, shelter, living wages, and accessible health care.

**Census Blitz (Point in Time Count), January 27, 2019**

Every year the Coalition and its volunteers conduct a Point in Time (PIT) census to count the homeless and provide data to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The PIT count is also used to gather information that allows local service providers to target services to meet the specific needs of the homeless in our communities.

This year, our Continuum of Care used a service-based (post-night of the count) methodology. HUD allows counts at service-based agencies to be conducted within a 7-day period after the designated count night. Seven locations throughout Lee County participated with the final count conducted at our Homeless Service Day and Veteran Stand Down. Flyers were developed to drive people to outreach locations. Volunteers used both paper surveys and ArcGIS to conduct unsheltered homeless counts. ArcGIS is a geographic information system for working with maps and geographic information. It allowed the volunteers to use their phones instead of a paper survey. Those participating in the survey were provided backpacks with hygiene items, resource guides and bus passes. The coalition built a special website at [www.homelesscount.com](http://www.homelesscount.com) for the event where volunteers could sign up and view training videos.

The PIT count, which asked people where they slept the night of January 27, 2019, included both sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families. The PIT count documented 630 homeless persons, of whom ninety-six (15.23%) were chronically homeless according to the HUD definition. HUD defines chronic homelessness as “an unaccompanied adult homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either continuously been homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.” Among the 630 persons surveyed, 38.22% percent reported having a disabling condition. Also, among the 630 were fifty-six families with seventy-seven children. Veterans made up 3.49% percent of those surveyed. Data obtained through the Lee County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and PIT count found that during the year, there were an estimated 2,853 people experiencing homelessness in Lee County.

Housing and service programs for the homeless are provided in part through Continuum of Care funds from HUD. The 2018 Continuum of Care funding announcements were made in February 2019. Lee County was awarded funding to sustain three programs and begin a new program to survivors of domestic violence. These programs are operated by Community Assisted and Supported Living, Lee County Housing Development Corporation and The Salvation Army. The total awarded amount was $1,835,581.
The Lee County Homeless Coalition would like to extend a special thank you to the volunteers that assisted with this year’s PIT count.

Homeless Service Day and Veterans Stand Down, February 2, 2019

“Stand down” is a military term describing soldiers taking care of other soldiers in a safe, secure place. The goal of this event was to provide services that can help break the cycle of homelessness and encourage hope, vision, and health. Once again, this year’s event was held at the City of Palms Park in Fort Myers. We served 221 people at the Homeless Service Day and Veterans Stand Down. Twenty-five identified themselves as Veterans. We had approximately 240 volunteers participating in the event.

There were approximately forty agencies and community groups providing services. Local providers assisted with services such as clothing, mental health referrals, substance abuse referrals, immunizations and health screenings, employment, housing services, veteran’s benefits, Social Security, spiritual counseling, haircuts, and transportation. Participants received back packs, resource books, hygiene kits, bus passes, tarps, blankets, flashlights, food bags, and army surplus items. Hot meals were provided. Participants were offered flu, pneumonia, and tetanus shots. This year, Lee County Domestic Animal Services provided limited veterinarian services for those who had pets. All participants were asked to complete a survey for the Annual Census Blitz. The success of this event was due to the wonderful collaboration of agencies and volunteers who came together to help the community.

Committee Meetings

Community Resources and Needs Committee
This committee gathered and evaluated data regarding community resources and needs and recommended actions to transform homeless services into crisis response systems to prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing. This committee was responsible for developing resource guides and conducting the annual provider survey. They also reviewed gaps in services and discussed community needs. Meetings were held the second Thursday of each month from 12-1:00 pm at Fort Myers Regional Library.

Research & Awareness Committee
This committee provided and promoted collaborative leadership in different community sectors to inspire and energize residents and service providers to commit to preventing and ending homelessness. This committee also organized and executed the annual Point in Time Count, Homeless Service Day and Veteran Stand Down, the Candlelight Vigil, and activities during the Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Month. Meetings were held the first Tuesday of each month from 12-1:00 pm at CityGate.

Supportive Housing Steering Committee
Last year we participated in a Supportive Housing Community Dialogue on developing permanent supportive housing. The event was facilitated by the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition. The conversations enabled us to formulate an action plan and develop a steering committee which met every other month. The group shared ideas advocated for permanent supportive housing and supported each other’s achievements.

General Coalition Meeting
This meeting took place the third Thursday of every month at the Salvation Army. Attendees included nonprofit
homeless assistance providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, veterans service providers, homeless and formerly homeless individuals, and other service organizations. These meetings reflect the full membership of the CoC, affirm and vote on members of the CoC Governing Board and the Coalition Board of Directors. Each committee report to the General Coalition. One agency is highlighted each month and has an opportunity to share their mission and accomplishments. The General Coalition Meeting provides an excellent opportunity to network and share information.

Advocacy and Education
The Lee County Homeless Coalition participated in 152 activities that promoted awareness and education of homeless needs in our area. We continued our Awareness Campaign, which included advertising on a bus bench. The Lee County Pocket Guide to Emergency Assistance (Green Book) was updated and printed twice this year. The booklet was provided to those who needed services and to service providers and agencies. To save cost on printing, the Coalition designed a “Homeless Survival Guide”, a one-page document that lists many of the agencies that provide service to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is a smaller version of the Green Book that is placed on the website available for download and printing. In addition, we revised a Free Meal Sites Brochure as well as the Lee County Reentry Resource Guide. These resource guides can be found on our website. The Coalition provides referral information and helps those in need make connections that could help them avoid homelessness. This year the Coalition was able to assist 879 individuals by referring them to services.

Over 1,000 bus passes were provided to the community during the Homeless Service Day and Stand Down and regularly to our member agencies to assist their clients needing transportation for employment or obtaining social services.

The Coalition advocated for homeless needs during the 2019 Legislative Session. We kept abreast of the issues and sent out action alerts when necessary. We participated in conference calls with PinPoint Results, a governmental and business development consulting firm that represents the Florida Coalition for the Homelessness (FCH). FCH and PinPoint Results worked together to successfully implement legislative and executive agendas that represent the interest of Florida’s twenty-seven Continuums of Care.

This partnership has yielded significant results. They continue to assist us in establishing our priorities and advocating for them. Phone calls and letters were sent to our Legislators in support of homeless funding and services during the session of the Florida Legislature. As a result, no cuts were made to base operation funding (Staffing Grant) and the legislature funded, as RECURRING, the Homeless Challenge Grant Program. The Legislature also kept most of the funds in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This year $200,600,000 was kept in the Trust Fund for housing, while also using $115 million of the Trust Fund on SHIP and SAIL Affordable Housing Hurricane Recovery.

Continuum of Care (CoC)
In Lee County, the Continuum of Care is a broad group of individual stakeholders and organizations who are engaged to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time. Collaboration among CoC members occurs through regular meetings of the Lee County Homeless Coalition and various subcommittees. By design the CoC
promotes a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. It is a prerequisite to applying for federal housing grants through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is done by the Lee County Department of Human and Veteran Services, the lead funding applicant.

The Coalition worked in conjunction with the Lee County Department of Human and Veteran Services to coordinate many facets of the CoC, such as holding meetings of the full membership, appointing committees, subcommittees, or workgroups to address CoC goals and objectives and plan and conduct the annual HUD mandated Point-In-Time (PIT) count of persons who are homeless.

- **Governance and Ranking Committee**

The passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009 changed how programs and funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) work to help the homeless. One of the requirements in the HEARTH Act was the formation of a Governing Board for each local Continuum of Care (CoC). The Lee County CoC Governing Board responsibilities include adopting a process for future board members, approving policies and procedures for the Lee County CoC, working on goals, objectives, and performance measurements for the CoC, and providing semi-annual reports to the general membership of the CoC. The Governance Board spent much of their time developing a new CoC Strategic Plan which will replace the 10-Yr Plan to End Homelessness.

Our CoC is expected to address homelessness through a coordinated community-based process of identifying the needs and building a system of housing and services that addresses those needs. The CoC Governing Board established a process for applying, reviewing, and prioritizing project applications for funding in the annual HUD CoC funding competition, DCF State Office on Homelessness funding, and any other funding for which the CoC Collaborative Applicant is the eligible applicant on behalf of the CoC.

- **Coordinated Entry**

The Lee County Continuum of Care (CoC) established and operated a Coordinated Entry System (CES) that provides an initial, comprehensive assessment of the needs of individuals and families for housing and services. Coordinated Entry has been designed to provide standardized access and assessment and coordinate housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Coordinated Entry facilitates referrals and housing placements to ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness receive appropriate assistance with both immediate and long-term housing and service needs.

- **Systems Performance**

HUD has developed seven system-level performance measures to help communities gauge their progress in preventing and ending homelessness:

1. Length of time persons remain homeless;
2. The extent to which persons who exit homelessness to permanent housing destinations return to homelessness;
3. Number of homeless persons;
4. Jobs and income growth for homeless persons in CoC Program-funded projects;
5. Number of persons who become homeless for the first time;
6. Homelessness prevention and housing placement of persons defined by Category 3 of HUD’s homeless definition in CoC Program-funded projects;
7. Successful housing placement; The purpose of these measures is to provide a more complete picture of how well a community is preventing and ending homelessness.
The number of homeless persons (measure number three) correlates with a CoC’s progress toward eliminating homelessness by counting the number of people experiencing homelessness both at a point in time and over the course of a year. The six other measures help communities understand how well they are reducing the number of people who become homeless and helping people become quickly and stably housed. System performance measures data that enables communities to evaluate and improve their performance. Because these are system-level measures, they can reveal significant information about how well homelessness assistance programs are functioning and where improvements are necessary.

The data helps identify CoC gaps in data and services. It is critical for CoCs to consider the populations they are serving when evaluating their performance and potential system changes. Populations such as youth, victims of domestic violence, and people experiencing chronic homelessness have unique circumstances. Coalition committees are active in reviewing the data and identifying unmet needs.

System Design Clinic – May 6th and 7th, 2019
Kay Moshier McDivitt from the National Alliance to End Homelessness presented a two-day workshop that was hosted by the Lee County CoC. The System Design Clinic focused on transitioning Lee County from a collection of individual programs that address homelessness, to a crisis response system that makes strategic, data-driven decisions to achieve program-level and system-wide outcomes that impact homelessness.

We looked at elements of an effective response system, then reviewed our performance and our system flow. Recommendations for improvement in our system were provided. New committees were recommended to be formed to look at data and communication. Data will be used to guide and track system performance. Continuous communication with system wide messaging regarding diversion, housing focused practices and ensuring homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time will be implemented. The workshop was very informative and those in attendance were eager to initiate the strategies.

Thank You for Continued Community Support

The Lee County Homeless Coalition is funded in part through contracts from Lee County Department of Human Services and the State of Florida Department of Children and Families. The Coalition also receives private donations as well as those received through fundraising and membership dues. Approximately 350 volunteers assisted the Coalition this year. We had several businesses and organizations that collected donations for us.

Professor Billy O’Dell’s class from Florida Gulf Coast University began a Kindness Project. The students made back packs filled with hygiene and other necessary items and donated to the coalition, not just one time but numerous times. This is an on-going project that we very much appreciate. Donations were also received from the Southwest Florida Whisker Society, the Go Go Diner, Cycle Forward, Feet Fleet, Gateway Charter Elementary School, Pine Lakes Woman’s Club and All Faiths Unitarian Congregation. We also receive many financial donations from the public. The community’s generosity and support are amazing. The Coalition is required to have its finances audited each year. If you are interested in our financial reports, they can be found on our website. The Coalition appreciates the community coming together and supporting our efforts to end homelessness in Lee.
County. We could not do what we do without our volunteers! Many thanks to all our volunteers for their support and contributions. Let’s all work together to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time.
To learn more about the Lee County Homeless Coalition, please visit our website at www.leehomeless.org.
LEE COUNTY HOMELESS COALITION

1500 Colonial Boulevard, Ste. 235
Fort Myers, Florida 33907
(239) 322-6600
Annual Report
July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019

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LCHC is funded by the Lee County Department of Human and Veteran Services and your thoughtful and generous contributions.

Lee County Homeless Coalition

Lee County Southwest Florida

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We thank you for your support and kindness!