

League of Women Voters – Placer County
General Meeting
Max's - Auburn

December 5, 2013

- Called to order at 11:45am by President Randi Swisley.
- Next General Meeting of the LWVPC will be at Max's, 110 Grass Valley Highway, Auburn, at 11:30am and will feature Money in Politics presented by LWV California
- Bernadette introduced the featured speaker, Suzi deFossett, Executive Director of The Gathering Inn, a service provider for homeless individuals. Suzi has an MA in Psychology with an emphasis on substance abuse.

Suzi deFossett has been the Executive Director of The Gathering Inn for nineteen years. During that time the organization has grown from fifteen churches providing meals and overnight shelter to forty-seven, with a total of sixty-five churches involved. No religious message is involved. There are two intake sites: D Street and Richardson in Auburn and 201 Berkeley in Roseville. The organization provides transport for 1500 people a year. The operation costs \$500/night to run.

The Gathering Inn has also been able to expand its services. There is a community health clinic at the Roseville site staffed by four volunteer doctors, many volunteer nurses and dentists who volunteer for the two-chair dental services. The services are available only to people who are in the shelter. There is also ongoing TB testing under a grant from Kaiser in partnership with Placer County.

The Gathering Inn also provides year-round County emergency shelter services with average stays of fifty-one days; these individuals must be working and cannot stay longer than six months. There are 126 transitional beds available in Placer County. The shelter costs \$40,000 to \$45,000 per weekend. It has eleven staff, four of them full-time, with the rest consisting of volunteers to cover nights. The closet is also operated by volunteers. All operations are 90% volunteer.

Two prior grants from HUD have just been halved. One provided for a TB test, Placer identification and help/prevention for emergencies with the proviso that the recipient was clean and sober and was not on the Megan's Law list. The other provided a security deposit and a couple months' rent as long as the individual/s are in a position to be self-sustaining and meet the clean and sober requirement.

HUD requires a homeless count on June 30th every two years. Placer is unable to get an accurate count and Suzi estimates that there are 800-1000 homeless people in the County at any one time, broken down by approximately 40% women, 60% men and 18% children [I know, that's 118%, but I am reporting what Suzi said. I believe that she meant that 18% of the total are children]. Of that total some 80% have a mental health issue.

The overall budget for all Gathering Inn services is \$700,000/year. Forty percent of the budget comes from grants (now in danger because of the HUD cutbacks), a third from donations and the balance from fundraising.

- Meeting adjourned at 1:05pm.
- Note from Pat: Suzi sat and ate lunch with members before her talk. This seemed to be a great ice-breaker and I would like to suggest that we consider trying it again.