

From the Glendale News Press Mailbag

Friday, October 9, 2007

Regarding the prospect of a 24-hour facility here in Glendale for “the most historically difficult and challenging population to serve” (the “volatile,” chronically “system-resistant” homeless) (“\$1 million sought for homeless,” Saturday): As a Glendale resident and homeowner, I find the idea unsettling, even a little frightening.

I’m certain I’m not alone in having this reaction, and it is for precisely this reason that I hope the project goes ahead and finds funding. As PATH Achieve Executive Director Natalie Profant-Komuro points out, “historically difficult and challenging” does not mean impossible.

To paraphrase a mind greater than my own, the degree to which a society can be judged to be “civilized” can be directly measured by its treatment of its most vulnerable and powerless members.

Having such a facility here, providing a harbor for the very type of individual most of us would cross the street to avoid — does sound scary and challenging.

And we know it won’t be easy. But this is civilized, affluent, progressive Glendale — the Jewel City. Let’s surprise our neighbor cities. Let’s surprise ourselves.

Who knows? We might set an example that shakes up Glendale’s image in the process.

ELIZABETH DUVALL

Glendale

Friday, October 12, 2007

In response to your Wednesday question regarding the First Step Housing Project (“How would you expect a 24-hour facility for the homeless to affect the homeless population in Glendale?”): I feel a 24-hour facility for the chronically homeless is long overdue. Finally a humane effort geared to those most in need. Thank you, PATH Achieve.

BARBARA BLAINE

Glendale

I read the article in the Wednesday edition of the Glendale News-Press describing the city Housing Authority’s approval of a proposal to expand services for the homeless through the establishment of a county-funded facility for chronically homeless people who, for the most part, do not qualify for existing programs in Glendale (“Homeless facility advances”).

These homeless people are primarily the ones who are mentally ill or are crippled by addictions. I was interested in the paper’s report of comments by the chief of police and several city councilmen.

While the project was said to be approved with only one dissenting vote, the comments, as reported in the News-Press, expressed more reluctance than celebration about the prospect of serving the homeless. I expected to see some rejoicing.

I concede that the homeless often create a nuisance. Certainly they have caused problems when they camp overnight on the property of my church, the Glendale First United Methodist Church. The nuisance that is produced is precisely one reason why Glendale stands to benefit from the proposed facility, which will give the chronically homeless a place to sleep.

I'm old enough to remember when California provided for the mentally ill in the 1950s through an impressive infrastructure of state hospitals. In those days, there were few homeless.

I can't remember seeing any in Glendale. I saw few, if any, in the Civic Center of Los Angeles where swarms now occupy every lawn or shady spot. As our society becomes more affluent, we seem less able to care for the least among us.

As for concerns that the homeless may be dangerous, the experience of the Glendale Community Free Health Clinic, which is housed in my church, belies that myth. Many of the patients of the free clinic are homeless, yet on Tuesday evenings, when the clinic is open, several popular community and church programs thrive along side the free clinic without any noticeable discomfort on anyone's part.

Also, I think, we can dismiss as nonsense the idea that a highly controlled refuge for homeless, as this project is envisioned to be, would attract legions of homeless from other communities.

Glendale residents should not fear this project. They should feel blessed that, painlessly and through little cost to ourselves, we are being offered a program that not only will get homeless people off the streets at night, but will provide life-giving service to some of the most seriously neglected of our fellow human beings.

GERRY RANKIN

Glendale

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

I was heartened to read about the First Step Housing Project for Glendale's homeless ("Homeless facility advances," Oct. 10).

The quote from Police Chief Randy Adams, however, was infuriating: "They have chosen and continue to choose to be homeless."

Who in their right mind would choose to sleep on the streets, scramble for food, baths, toilets, clothing and medical attention, be subject to busts by police or attacks by criminals?

The sad truth is that many street people suffer from mental illnesses, addiction or both.

There are those, too, whose only crime is simply catastrophic bad luck, loss of jobs, bankruptcy.

They have not freely and rationally “chosen” this way of life. In the richest nation on Earth, which claims a Christian heritage, surely we have a little money and a little compassion to invest in these struggling people.

LANI SCHNEIDER

Glendale