

Alaska Food Coalition
January 19, 2011 Teleconference
2:00 pm

Participants

Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition
Jennifer Lewis, Food Bank of Alaska
Darrell Hess, Municipality of Anchorage
Annabell Stevens, Anchorage United Way
Margaret Duggan, Anchorage WIC
Rob Marx, RurAL CAP
Carol Cozzen, Valdez Food Bank
Susannah Morgan, Food Bank of Alaska
Linda Swarner, Kenai Peninsula Food Bank
Alan Budahl, Lutheran Social Services
John Pendrey, Veteran's Administration
Gus Marx, Juneau Youth Services
Connie Logan, DEC, Juneau
Heather Harris, Alaska Youth and Parent Foundation
Monica Dahlberg, Chugiak Eagle River Senior Center
Sue Lambert, State of Alaska, DEED

AGENDA

Welcome

AnnaBell Stevens, AFC Executive Committee

Member Highlight

Rob Marx, Housing Services Specialist, RurAL CAP - Update on Karluk Manor

Karluk Manor opened on December 8. Currently, 44 of the 46 apartments are occupied. The last two apartments are waiting for the occupants to complete paperwork. Already, 3 residents have applied for and obtained employment. A significant number of residents have decreased their drinking, which has decreased the number of problems created by drinking. Lunch and dinner is served by Bean's Café – when they first opened attendance was sparse, but now residents have meals in shifts because the meals are very popular. This is a strong indicator that residents are becoming engaged. Similar programs in the lower 48 have noted similar successes; it is an indicator residents are starting to make healthy choices.

As for some of the community concerns, it's really too early to gage this. On the positive side, neighbors have dropped off books, clothes, and offered to volunteer. Karluk Manor's operations staff is trying to coordinate volunteer efforts such as staffing card games, board games and singing. Other activities and opportunities for employment are happening 'organically' - it will take time for these things to develop into long-term projects. Residents are working on getting their ID's, accessing health care, taking responsibility. A lot of residents talk about wanting to apply for job.

The application process closed November 30, 2011. They received 160 applications. Residents were chosen on a ranking system based on years of homelessness, legal and health issues, etc. to generate an outcome score. They have currently have 70 on the waiting list. Part of the success of the program will be based on how long people stay.

Guest Speaker

John Pendrey, Chief, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans, Alaska VA Healthcare System

The Veterans Administration (VA) is working on identifying the issues affecting homeless veterans in Alaska communities. In 2009 President Obama declared having homeless veterans in the United States unacceptable; the Secretary of Defense made ending homelessness among veterans the number one priority. John became the chief for the Alaska program in 2010. The program has 6 pillars:

- 1) Outreach and Education
- 2) Treatment Services
- 3) Prevention of Homelessness
- 4) Housing and Supportive Services
- 5) Employment and Income
- 6) Community Partnerships

In 2010 the VA and HUD (US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development) identified 529 homeless veterans in Alaska. In 2011 that number dropped to 265, the VA anticipates another significant drop in 2012. Overall, chronic homelessness for veterans has decreased by 40%. The VA initiative to end homelessness ends October 1, 2014. The VA realized they may not end homelessness entirely. They are working to make sure there is a bed for every homeless veteran who needs it. This includes increasing capacity and lowering the number of people accessing beds.

Alan with Lutheran Social Services noted he is getting calls for rental assistance, he asked if there is any support from the VA for utility and rental assistance for veterans. John noted there is a HUD/VA program similar to Section 8 vouchers for chronically homeless veterans. In 2008 they distributed 28 vouchers in Alaska; 145 so far in FFY12. January 1 they receive an additional 25 vouchers to distribute. Veterans needing rental assistance need to contact agencies in their communities. The VA awarded a grant to Catholic Social Services to assist veterans, it is a prevention grant. Catholic Social Services can do a variety of things with this grant to help a veteran get or maintain housing. We can refer veterans to this program. John told us the increase in vouchers has helped decrease the number of homeless veterans, along with increasing the professional backgrounds of the staff; they now have 17 positions with the focus of getting vets off the street.

Veterans Administration Contacts:

Outreach staff: Jeremiah Newbold: 907-273-4093

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: if you are a veteran, or you know a veteran who is at risk of becoming homeless call: 1-877-424-3838. The call center routes it out to the closest VA office, the office has 24 hours to return the call. In AK, John and Jeremiah respond to those calls. VA staff is located in Anchorage, but this is a statewide initiative. Last October, they had a kick off campaign called 'Veteran's Homefront'. They received approximately 100 calls last fiscal year, up from 30 the previous year.

Annabell mentioned she had heard veterans are 23% of homeless population in Alaska, and of the 20 homeless deaths in Anchorage the past two years, 5 were veterans. John said that number has come down. Annual 'point in time' counts should show a significant decrease this year. Nationally, they showed a 12 percent decrease.

How can we support the Alaska Veterans Administration to end homelessness?

John noted needing more communities getting involved in the 'point in time' counts, especially rural and off road communities. You can contact John if you would like to get your community involved:

john.pendrey@va.gov or the Alaska HUD Office, 3000 C. Street, Suite 401. Anchorage, AK 99503. Phone: (907) 677-9800. Toll-Free (in Alaska only): (877) 302-9800. They get good numbers in populated areas, not as good for rural communities. Alaska needs more information from our rural communities to create effective programs.

Legislative Update

SB03 passed through the state Senate last session and awaits a hearing in the House Finance Committee. A companion bill has also been introduced in the House, HB132 sponsored by Rep. Kathy Munoz. House finance traditionally does not hear a lot of bills at the start of session, although they are meeting daily right now, Tuesday afternoons at 1:00 pm.

Linda Swarner, Kenai Peninsula Food Bank noted FRAC has suggested we write our Congressional delegation with statistics about school lunch and breakfast programs in our communities. Data can be found on the FRAC website. She noted we need to stay informed about the status of the Farm Bill, as many USDA food programs are funded through this bill. FRAC will be sharing information with congress, AFC members should do follow-up. Vanessa will work with FBA to find the best way to get information to our federal delegation.

Plans for the AFC annual meeting in Juneau are going well. We have several guest speakers, legislative visits are being scheduled. Meeting participants are invited to dinner at the Glory Hole on Tuesday. We have buttons to wear and hats to adorn our heads so everyone takes notice when we visit the capitol.

Member Updates

Anchorage United Way's 'Walk for Warmth' is Saturday, February 18.
<http://www.liveunitedanchorage.org/> It is a 1 mile walk to raise funds to assist families with utilities.

'Super Bowl of Caring' is Sunday, February 6. It was started by a Lutheran youth group. Kenai Peninsula Food Bank is participating by putting food barrels at local bars and convenience stores; hot spots for super bowl Sunday.

Alaska Youth and Parent Foundation will host an open house Wednesday, February 1, 5:30 – 7 pm at their youth center, POWER, located on the second floor of the Downtown Anchorage Transit Station.

Chugiak Eagle River Senior Center is hosting an all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner on Friday, January 20 to raise funds to buy disaster kits for the center.

Close: Heather thanked everyone for participating in the call.