

RESPONSE TO MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Report Title: *Marin's Homeless: The "Invisible" Problem That Won't Disappear*

Report Date: April 13, 2009

Response by: Town of Fairfax

By: _____ Mayor

FINDINGS

The Grand Jury Finds that:

- F1.** The Marin County Board of Supervisors, the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services and a number of boards facilitated by Home Base has each exerted leadership regarding the homeless, yet none accepts overall responsibility. **(response not required)**
- F2.** There is a need for a county office and coordinator responsible for overseeing agencies and programs aiding the homeless. **(response not required)**
- F3.** The Board of Supervisors' list of top five priorities does not include homelessness. **(response not required)**
- F4.** Estimates of the number of homeless in Marin vary widely, from a low of 1,770 to as many as 6,000. School officials estimate there are more than 1,500 homeless youth. **(response not required)**
- F5.** Hundreds of homeless need emergency shelter. They sleep in Marin's open space or their cars, having been turned away by nonprofits because of bed shortages or drug and alcohol restrictions. **Agree**
- F6.** Many Marin residents are unaware of or uneducated about the hundreds of homeless in the county. **Agree**
- F7.** The cities of San Rafael, Novato and Sausalito, along with the unincorporated areas of Marin, comprise the pockets most peppered with homeless. **Agree**
- F8.** Project Homeless Connect marks a noteworthy start toward offering homeless a one-day, one-stop entry point for services. **(response not required)**
- F9.** County officials, working in tandem with Home Base, obtained \$2.3 million in federal Housing and Urban Development funds, underwrote Project Homeless Connect and provided medical respite beds. **(response not required)**
- F10.** Many nonprofits – including but not limited to Homeward Bound, Ritter Center, St. Vincent's, Buckelew and Helen Vine Detox – supply valuable and wide-ranging services to homeless individuals. **(response not required)**
- F11.** Controversy surrounds Marin's \$100,000 annual contract with Home Base. While its supporters claim the firm has been building a coalition, many nonprofit officials reject that idea and charge it also is being paid too much. Home Base's work could be done more effectively in a county homelessness office. **(response not required)**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1.** The Marin County Board of Supervisors establish a full-time coordinator and office dedicated to overseeing the agencies, organizations and programs that collectively provide care and services for the homeless. **(response not required)**
- R2.** The Board of Supervisors establish a facility for a permanent homeless shelter – at least for winter months – where non-disruptive drug and alcohol users are welcomed. **(response not required)**
- R3.** The Board of Supervisors make homelessness one of its top five priorities. **(response not required)**
- R4.** The Board of Supervisors and leaders of each Marin County municipality jointly launch a comprehensive campaign to heighten public awareness of homelessness and make the “invisible” problem visible. **Fairfax needs to determine the scope of homelessness in Fairfax before implementing any public awareness campaigns. The nature of the homelessness (adult, youth, substance abuse, etc.) will affect the type of campaign launched. Additionally, Fairfax borders unincorporated Marin County, and would therefore need to work with the County to prevent duplication of efforts. Estimate about six (6) months time is required.**