

EAST WASHINGTON COUNTY SHELTER PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL, INC. HISTORY

The East Washington County Shelter Partnership Council, Inc. was formed in March of 1999, a month after the homeless shelter, formerly called the "RITE Center", in Tigard, Oregon closed. The newly built 36-bed shelter opened in Nov. of 1998 and closed in February 1999 due to lack of funds.

Many concerned citizens came together and formed a coalition to get organized and reopen the shelter. The former RITE Center board of directors and shelter staff had alienated many donors and volunteers within the area and it was decided to start completely fresh and form a new board.

Through the Community Block Grant Office in Washington County, we were encouraged to get organized and take responsibility for reopening and running the shelter. Washington County had an agreement with the Interfaith Outreach Services board who had built the shelter and ran it, that if they defaulted and were unable to run the shelter, Washington County would buy out the interests of IOS. While negotiations between the IOS board and Washington County were going on, the group of citizens now called the East Washington County Shelter Partnership Council, Inc., started meeting and developing a strategy to secure funds to open the shelter. A budget analysis determined that it would take about \$170,000 to run the shelter the first year. Also, working in the background, the Community Block Grant office was able to secure \$100,000 from two recipients who weren't quite ready for their grant money. With commitments from three cities and some funds left over that were dedicated to the RITE Center, it was determined that there was enough money to open the shelter for one year. The EWCSPC, realizing that they had no experience in actually running the shelter, decided to form a coalition with Community Action Organization, a non-profit social service agency in Washington County who was already running two shelters. Through a letter of understanding between the board of CAO and the shelter council, CAO agreed to run the shelter for one year and the shelter council would pursue raising funds for the next three years. At the end of the first year, both CAO and the shelter council would review the relationship and decide whether to renew the coalition or the shelter council would run the shelter by themselves.

This coalition between CAO and EWCSPC has allowed the shelter to proceed with the opening of the shelter on Sept. 13, 1999. Staff was hired with the shelter council participating in the hiring process and both groups have held an open house to encourage volunteers and donors. EWCSPC has incorporated, begun approaching cities within the area to increase their budgets for the shelter, started forming committees for Strategic Planning and Fund Raising, and opened a checking account to start receiving money.

A fundraising event is being prepared for Dec. 5, 1999 called, "A Day to Care and to Share". We are asking all the churches in the surrounding areas to set aside a special collection for the Good Neighbor Center. Our goal is to raise \$100,000 in December.

Considering there are over 100 churches in the area, this seems like a doable task. However, support from all the communities is critical also. We have made presentations to city councils in Tigard and Beaverton. We are also approaching the communities of Sherwood and Tualatin. We are also starting to plan several fund raising events, including coin box campaign called "Quarters for Quarters" that would be done in schools, churches and businesses. If everyone in the cities of Tualatin, Tigard, Beaverton and Sherwood would contribute one dollar, we would have the necessary funds needed to run the shelter for a year.

Our Strategic Planning committee anticipates that we will be doing lots of public relations work to speak at clubs, city councils, churches, and meetings to bring awareness to the plight of being homeless. We feel that the community support that helped build the shelter will also get behind the new EWCSPC and continue support. We also anticipate that we will have secured enough funds at the end of one year to begin running the shelter on our own, but have a close coalition with CAO so that all shelters in the county work together to help shelter the homeless.