

## OP/ED

## GUEST COLUMN

# Home Again St. Johns: Our mission has not changed

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St. Augustine

The Board of Directors of Home Again St. Johns hopes this letter clarifies some questions arising from recent St. Augustine Record articles. Home Again continues to operate at its current State Road 207 site. Our mission has not changed and we continue to provide services to the homeless at this site including:

- We provided 3,991 showers for the homeless in 2018 and a washer and dryer so they can clean their clothes. We also provide toiletries.
- Transportation to medical, mental health, Social Security appointments.
- Client Support Services such as case management, state/federal benefit applications, job search assistance and referrals to other client meetings.

We also continue to operate the Dining with Dignity program, feeding 70 people each night. This is accomplished through the coordination of 44 volunteer groups, organizations, churches and civic clubs; comprising more than 400 volunteers who serve a balanced and nutritious daily meal to our community's homeless population. These meals are provided 365 days a year in our down-

town site provided by the City of St. Augustine and 156 days annually at our S.R. 207 location. No one deserves to be hungry.

St. Johns County and Home Again continue to work together to make both the Integrated Service Center and the housing component a reality. The services that are scheduled in the Integrated Service Center are the same services that Home Again has worked toward since 2012. St. Johns County's ability to leverage HUD money after Hurricane Matthew is finally moving us toward that goal. As Joy Andrews has said, "Home Again Board set an important foundation for the future vision of the S.R. 207 Site project. St. Johns County is able to carry on that same vision with the resources allocated through HUD CDBG-Disaster Recovery fund. The mutual goal is that we can start to chip away the high demand of serving the vulnerable population with their housing and service needs."

The housing component was always a second phase for Home Again. Thanks to

St. Johns County, that phase can be completed sooner. The makeup of the housing units was always going to depend on the funding sources requirements. That has not changed. Once the housing component is built there has to be a funding source to house those at risk. The current model planned by St. Johns County accomplishes that mission.

Joseph Giammanco with St. Johns County provided the list of services that will be provided at the S.R.207 site. They will include up to five buildings for Supportive Housing and the Integrated Service Center. The Supportive Housing complex will provide approximately 80 units, including one, two and three-bedrooms to accommodate different family sizes, with a minimum of 51 percent devoted to low-to-moderate income (LMI) households. The Integrated Service Center will focus on providing support services to the most vulnerable populations in the community and residents of the Supportive Housing units.

Services may include assistance with housing, medical, dental, administrative offices, food pantry, kitchen facilities, meeting space and other social services. The Integrated Service Center will also serve as an emergency and

evacuation shelter during inclement weather.

Home Again will continue to operate at the current site until St. Johns County begins site development for the Integrated Service Center and the housing component. We will then move to another site to continue serving those in need until the Integrated Service Center is completed.

Home Again is working with St. Johns County to relocate in the summer of 2020 when construction begins on the S.R. 207 site. We will continue to provide services to those working to transition from being homeless to a job and a place to live.

Home Again looks forward to working with all of the great local agencies that work so hard to help those with so little. We know all of those agencies will benefit from the Integrated Service Center and supportive housing complex.

Thank you for your support!

*Home Again VP Mike Davis and the Home Again board of directors, St. Augustine*