

THE CRISIS SOLUTIONS CENTER: BIRTH OF A NEW PROGRAM

Imagine riding your bus home from work on an average Wednesday afternoon. There is a man on your bus in obvious distress. Perhaps he is experiencing symptoms of PTSD, a manic episode, or coming off of drugs. His erratic and unusual behavior is causing a disturbance and putting you and everyone else around you on edge. The bus driver calls the police and the man is escorted off of the bus into their custody.

At this point things can turn unnecessarily worse: this man may be booked into jail and held until his behavior modifies. Despite having no criminal record and harming no one, when he is released he'll have a record of being arrested. As a result he may lose his job or have greater difficulty in being hired in the future, suffer financial setbacks, and possibly lose his home. Now one more person will live on the streets. Lacking health insurance, he may attempt to medicate his symptoms with street drugs, end up in the ER or back in jail, and the cycle will continue. He'll rack up a great deal in tax payer expenses, and his health and self worth will take a beating.

Later this summer, DESC will be able to offer a far more healthy and productive alternative for people in behavioral health crisis. Instead of being shuffled off to jail, staff from DESC's soon-to-open Crisis Solutions Center (CSC) will partner with first responders such as the police to quickly assess the problem and devise a plan to address the root cause and effects of an individual's crisis. Professional staff will connect these people in crisis to primary health care, mental and behavioral health services, or drug and alcohol treatment as needed. If homeless, they will be offered short-term housing while their

condition is stabilized and until permanent housing can be secured.

The Crisis Solutions Center is an innovative program, unlike any other in the Seattle area. It is a program to decriminalize mental illness and provide cost-effective solutions that will benefit both the client and our community. The CSC combines the best of DESC's signature programs (outreach, shelter, clinical care and housing) all in one facility that will move at a very rapid pace.

Program Manager Kathy Ryan recognizes the challenges of crafting an entirely new program, but is excited by the opportunity to care for a previously un-served population. She has a strong team backing her up in all aspects of the project, from the renovation and design of the facility, to technical and computer aspects, administrative details, vendors, and hiring. Hiring is one of the biggest challenges. The CSC will employ a total of 78 trained medical and mental health providers, but with a shortage of professionals in Washington State, we're taking our search national. Fortunately, our reputation for innovative clinical programs and the opportunity to be a part of an entirely new service system has brought some incredibly creative and skilled applicants to our door. In the end, Kathy will strive to ensure that our core values which are the hallmark of the organization are carried forward into this new program.

Bringing together all of the most innovative aspects of DESC together in one program would feel overwhelming to some, but Kathy and the rest of the DESC staff are excited and up for the challenge.

WAKE UP TO THE AROMA OF BACON

RECENT BUDGET CUTBACKS HIT SHELTER BREAKFAST PROGRAM HARD. MICROSOFT VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS COME TO THE RESCUE.

Who doesn't like waking up to the smell of coffee brewing and bacon on the stove? On April 16th long time volunteers, Hamad Khawaja, Rameez Satwani, and Phil Camp banded together to bring a little morning joy to 200 shelter clients by cooking a rare hot breakfast.

Recent cuts in funding have hit the shelter breakfast program hard, forcing staff to replace healthy oatmeal, milk and fresh fruit with prepackaged cup-o-noodles, granola bars, and day old bagels. Khawaja and Satwani, both Microsoft employees, collected donations from coworkers for DESC's breakfast program. Matching funds from Microsoft Corporation doubled their purchase power and allowed the three friends to create a healthy home cooked breakfast of bacon, eggs, hash browns, and seasonal fruit for shelter clients.

How do you make breakfast for 200 people? According to Phil Camp there's nothing to it. Just take 5 dozen eggs, 3 lbs. each of mushrooms and peppers and scramble them up into fluffy yellow curds.



volunteers Hamad, Rameez and Phil

Meanwhile fry 18 lbs. of turkey bacon until crisp and 15 lbs. of hash browns until golden brown. Slide it all onto a plate and watch the smiles appear. The three friends hope to make the shelter breakfast party a regular event, with the continued support of their friends and coworkers.