



*Destination: Home* is the result of a two-year collaborative effort involving over 200 individuals from throughout the community. This ten-year plan is overseen by a city-county Commission on Homelessness, with strategies carried out by its committees and coalitions, as well as many other groups and agencies in this community.

# Accomplishments



*Destination: Home – a Ten-Year Journey Toward Ending Homelessness in Evansville and Vanderburgh County*

## CLOSE the Front Door

Noting a lack of a comprehensive prevention system to serve residents efficiently before they become homeless, *Destination: Home* set forth the goal of expanding the range and availability of homeless prevention strategies, increasing immediate accessibility, and improving long-term effectiveness.

While partnerships, links, and strategies have been forming during the first few years of implementation, the greatest movement toward this goal came in the fifth year as funding through the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided for **Homeless Prevention** services. Within the first few months of services, several households have been helped to remain housed and a Prevention Coordinator is working to develop a community strategy.

The **Universal Service Program** fostered by Vec-tren Corporation has helped many households keep their utilities on and remain housed.

The work of the **Discharge Planning Coalition** is also addressing the prevention of homelessness among those who are released from health care, foster care, and corrections. A model wrap-around re-entry program is being adapted for use.

## OPEN the Back Door

Increasing safe, suitable, and affordable, housing opportunities and services is seen as necessary for moving clients out of shelter in a timely manner and helping them establish long-term housing.

The **“Housing First”** model is being carried out through programs such as **New Start** (for families/individuals), **Shelter Plus Care** (individuals). These programs combine tenants who have a disability with support services, landlords, and a rent subsidy in order to house our homeless and then provide services toward a more stable setting. **Rapid Re-housing** (with ARRA funding) has quickly moved families and individuals with few barriers from shelter or the streets and into permanent housing with supportive services.

A pilot match between an agency’s housing program and a group of volunteers under the **Compassionate Connections** umbrella was conducted. This helped to outline some basic components for the development of a supportive program through local faith-based groups with trained volunteers coming alongside families who had been homeless. The volunteers befriended the families as they were becoming stabilized in housing again after a period of homelessness.

## PLAN for Outcomes

Due to the lack of thorough information on our local homeless population, the development and improved use of a local data collection system was deemed essential to the monitoring and development of outcomes as the plan is implemented.

Most area homeless service providers are now using the **Hoosier Management Information System (HMIS)**. This web-based database facilitates information gathering and assists in the delivery and coordination of services that are based on client need and more accurate information.

Clients are given the option to share some or all of their information among service providers. This helps to lessen the time they spend filling out forms with each provider within the network. Since their service history is stored in the system, they no longer need to recite that each time they apply for additional services.

For service providers unable to use HMIS, communication among members of the Homeless Services Council assist with gathering comparable data that aids in reaching the planning goals.

## BUILD the Infrastructure

To accomplish the overall aims of ending and preventing homelessness, we must build the infrastructure of our community in ways that

- 🏠 recognize the key role of secure and affordable **HOUSING** (affordable to even the lowest incomes among us);
- 🏠 recognize the necessity of **INCOMES** that match the cost of living in Vanderburgh County;
- 🏠 facilitate access to existing **SERVICES** and create new services that both prevent and address homelessness; and
- 🏠 raise community **AWARENESS** about the real facts and long-term solutions to ending homelessness

The other side of this document highlights accomplishments in each of these areas.



# Infrastructure (cont'd)

## Champions to End Homelessness

– to date, those who have signed endorsements of *Destination: Home* include 98 organizations, 144 individuals, and 24 elected officials!



### HOUSING

As steps toward creating more permanent supportive housing in our community (in addition to **New Start** and **Shelter Plus Care**), three teams have spent several hours this year attending the **Permanent Supportive Housing Institute** hosted by the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. These teams created plans that are aimed at housing families, individuals, and veterans, while providing services to help stabilize those households. More than 125 additional units of permanent supportive housing are anticipated to become available over the next two years.

**Home4Good**, through Habitat for Humanity of Evansville and Aurora, is assisting three families to move from homelessness to homeownership. In addition, 27 current partner families were assisted in keeping their homes and avoiding foreclosure.

Integra Bank sponsored an intern who worked with the Housing Committee in order to promote the [www.IndianaHousingNow.org](http://www.IndianaHousingNow.org) website to landlords and other community members. The site is free for posting and searching rental properties, plus it contains helpful tools for determining how much rent a household can afford.

### INCOMES

The Raising Incomes Committee streamlined the referral process between homeless service providers and WorkOne. In addition, an administrative office has been established for its **Women, Work, & Community** social entrepreneurship project. This project is envisioned to include training, mentoring, and support services, resulting in a job that will provide self-sufficiency, while initially focusing on women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The group has gained research on social enterprises from Purdue Extension Services and has begun to draft a business plan for the project's rollout in 2010.

United Way of Southwestern Indiana serves as the contact and marketing partner for two programs assisting household incomes:

**VITA sites** (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), entering its third year of free tax help for people with low to moderately-low income, has served more than 800 clients with refunds in 2007 and 2008 totaling over \$775,000 through over 40 volunteer tax preparers.

**Bank on Evansville** was launched to offer second-chance bank accounts and free financial literacy classes.

### SERVICES

**Bike to Work** has provided and repaired more than 300 bicycles to homeless veterans and others.

The first **Vanderburgh Homeless Connect** provided coordinated services for homeless and near-homeless through 77 Vendors and 150+ Volunteers who served 360 Guests on one day at one stop.

The Homeless Youth Coalition's work saw progress through Hillcrest Washington Youth Home offering to be the lead agency for developing a **drop-in center for homeless youth**.

Seven **PlaySpaces** have been established in area shelters and transitional housing programs, with trained volunteers scheduled weekly by 4C of Southern Indiana.

The **2-1-1** information and referral phone service was initiated by United Way and has improved access to information about available assistance.

A **training and certification program** for service providers continues to be developed by the Homeless Services Council of Southwest Indiana.

More than 1,400 people have experienced training in better understanding generational poverty, affecting the perspectives and practices of service providers and employers, through the **Bridges—A Community Response to Poverty** initiative.

### AWARENESS

To increase awareness and accurate information about homelessness and the long-term solutions in our community, various means have been utilized.

Insight into the strategies, working groups, statistics, projects, and ways to get involved are available at the *Destination: Home* website [www.destination-home.info](http://www.destination-home.info) and through various e-mail campaigns throughout the year.

**Housing Matters!** has been an underlying theme in motivational presentations, including the use of activities which simulate the loss of one's home, the search for help, and/or the experience of shelter life.

To assist in furthering the work of the marketing and community education strategies in the plan, **Vectren** has invested \$65,000 as well as in-kind support.

Students from Ivy Tech Community College, University of Southern Indiana, and Reitz High School have been of help by **creating awareness projects and conducting studies** on youth homelessness, panhandling, and work/education experience of our homeless neighbors.

Look for us on **Facebook Causes** as "Destination: Home" <http://apps.facebook.com/causes/332028>

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

- Bussing-Koch Foundation
- City of Evansville
- Fifth/Third Foundation
- First Presbyterian Church, Evansville
- Mission and Ministry, Inc.
- Trinity United Methodist Church, Evansville
- Vectren Corporation
- Aurora, Inc.

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