



## *Early Observations* from Vanderburgh Homeless Connect 2009

### **OVERALL**

In feedback from Guests, Vendors, and Volunteers, the general consensus was that Vanderburgh Homeless Connect (VHC) 2009 was a tremendous success! 360 people were interviewed at Guest Intake and 45 children received care. 77 Vendors with 250 staff made it possible for 4,985 points of access to services. Nearly 150 Volunteers assisted in various ways as well.

### **GUESTS**

Most Guests who went through Check Out said they **got what they came for** (223 out of 259 Exit Interviews). Of those who said they didn't, "not enough time" was a common reason.

The Best Thing. When Guests were asked "**What one thing did you like best?**" most said "Everything," followed next in frequency by "People/Volunteers." Some noted specifics such as massages, food, haircut, foot help, various health screenings, marriage help, birth certificate, ID, utilities, legal services, tax prep, and "FSSA paperwork done." Vendors who were named as liked best included Vectren (3x), Goodwill, CAPE, WorkOne, and Social Security. In addition, comments remarked about the convenience of everything in one place and the attitudes of people at the event.

How Treated. Several Guests commented on **how they were treated** by those serving at the event: "how nice people were that helped you," "more people who care than those who don't," "kind," "friendliness," "nice people," "BMV nice," "Everyone was friendly...very nice...", "haircut lady 'extremely nice,'" and "Help was very helpful."

In General. General comments from the Guests included: "This would've been three days worth of walking around town;" "Liked everything; shot hurt;" "Good food;" "Thanks for all of the help;" "Enjoyed myself."

Suggestions. Guests were asked, "**If you could change one thing about today, what would it be?**" Many said, "nothing." Yet, as with other participants, the majority of suggestions revealed what the planning team already had known, heard, witnessed, and confirmed: a "bigger location" is needed for this event. That change alone can address the other concerns listed regarding long lines and waiting outside. In addition, addressing the date of the event can help create a greater possibility of accomplishing Guest suggestions of "warmer time of year." Several other Guest comments will provide specific feedback for future planning as well.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

The majority of Volunteers responded that they felt they were adequately trained to perform their duties. Still, comments supplied will be helpful in planning for Volunteer training and informing in the future. Some comments revealed responses that could have come from Volunteers who did not attend an orientation and/or review the printed packet supplied.

Good Things. As the Volunteers commented on "some of the good things" about their volunteer opportunity, those who served found their eyes opened, their hearts touched, and their hands able to serve others. Many noted the value of all the services together in one place. Comments included the realization that "a lot of people do need help." Others noted: "Grateful people," "People were pleased to have these services provided," and "Hope in the eyes of people attending after receiving help."

Suggestions. The Volunteers' suggestions for improvement regarding their volunteer roles linked with needs noted by other participants. Several ideas offered will supply special feedback for future planning regarding Volunteer training and roles. Their notes were of the general consensus regarding the size of the facility and thus addressing the ability to alleviate lines, especially outside, and to better accommodate people and services.

Expectations. 86% said their experience met their initial expectations. One said it "furthered my expectations. I didn't expect to have so much fun."

Value. Very few Volunteers responded when asked how valuable they believed the event was **for Guests**. Those, who did comment, made mostly positive and a few negative observations. “I had about ten good things said to me by Guests for every one bad thing.”

Most Volunteers believed the event was good **for the Vendors and Volunteers**. One shared this story: “I enjoyed meeting people. One woman talked to me while waiting outside for 15 minutes. She said—when she was done venting about her situation—“Thank you so much for just listening to me. I feel better just being able to vent to someone.”

Strengths. Strengths noted by the Volunteers generally included the organization and provision of several services in one place. Many comments highlighted “people helping people,” which “shows the Guests the level of concern.”

Returning. 100% of Volunteers responding said they would volunteer again for VHC.

## **VENDORS**

Vendor feedback was primarily positive, describing the event as a success and valuing the design of having so many services all in one place.

Suggestions. Being right in the thick of providing services, the Vendors have provided some very specialized feedback that will aid future planning. Some even suggested offering the event more than once a year and for extended hours.

Vendors noted various concerns. Those included the known need for a “bigger place” as well as Vendor-related concerns about some Vendors packing up and/or leaving before the inside ending time of 3:00 and the offering of more services and not just information at booths. Many noticed their own need to have more staff at their booths to better and more efficiently meet Guest needs.

Value. The majority of Vendors viewed the event as valuable to Guests, Volunteers, and Vendors.

Strengths. The strengths noted by Vendors were similar to other participants. These are reflected in comments like “that it brings together many agencies in one place to make it easier for our Guests to receive services.” The event was noted as a “true service-oriented fair, valuable and realistic services that are needed and wanted.”

Returning. 92% said they would recommend their organizations participate in VHC in the future.

## **SUMMARY**

An account shared by a Vendor (see below) and many comments of a similar nature may serve as catalysts for the consideration of a means for essential services to be together or at least consolidated with transportation provision arranged on a regular basis in our community.

This story, which best describes the value and effectiveness of VHC, came from a BMV booth staff: “Because we were here, Guest came in for identification. They had to get social security verification—got that. They needed birth certificate—got that. Then they could get state ID. They got their ID and then could apply for food stamps.”

Those Vendor tables noted above were near one another in a “U” shape. When one considers the location of the offices involved in meeting that Guest’s needs (Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Social Security Administration, Health Department, and Division of Family Resources) and the time/means of “getting there, waiting there, meeting there, leaving there,” ... the time saved—in addition to so many other services at hand—is reflective of the intended design of VHC.



The first Vanderburgh Homeless Connect has proven to be an effective means of connecting those who need help with those who have the help they need.

Community members who were not even at the event have been touched by the needs made visible and the services made accessible.

For at least 1 Day, at 1 Stop, 1 Mission was carried out: 360 people were viewed and treated as Guests in our “community’s living room” by more than 350 service providers and volunteers, receiving the help they sought and often desperately needed.