

## CHOC and the Homeless Face Growing Challenge

As the Community Homeless Outreach Center approaches its second anniversary, the fortunate timing of the Center's founding could not be clearer.

Opening just before the start of the economic recession, CHOC has been available to help families and individuals who have experienced the hardships of lost or reduced income as well as diminished funding for social services.

The impact of these economic troubles is apparent in the number of homeless individuals visiting CHOC, which soared during the past year. From July 2008 to July 2009, the daily average number of visitors more than doubled, from 40 per day to 85 per day.

"There's no question that we're experiencing the impact of the economic downturn," says Adrian Rodriguez, CHOC director. "We're seeing it in the raw numbers, and we're hearing it in the stories of the individuals and the families who are coming to us for help and direction."

While CHOC has been an invaluable asset during the downturn, it has faced challenges of its own. CHOC relies entirely on contributions from foundations, businesses, the faith community, and individuals to keep its doors open. In tough economic times, maintaining a sufficient flow of contributions can be difficult.

"We have had outstanding, ongoing support from a wide variety of contributors who have believed in the CHOC mission from the very start," says Mike Weaver, chief operating officer of the Weaver Group and chairman of the CHOC Steering

Committee. "Now, it's essential that we establish a broader base of committed support to continue serving the poorest and most-disadvantaged people in our communities."

CHOC Director Rodriguez expects CHOC's attendance to top 100 people a day as temperatures fall into late autumn and winter. The good news, he says, is that CHOC has had

tremendous success in connecting homeless individuals with service providers — while also enabling them to take showers, do laundry, use the telephone and receive mail.

By connecting quickly with services that allow them to increase their income, access health care and find temporary housing, CHOC clients are able to secure permanent housing suited to their situations.

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***CHOC Mission Statement:*** *Lancaster's daytime outreach center meets the basic needs of the chronically homeless in a safe, supportive, minimally intrusive environment, while also identifying opportunities to connect members of this population with appropriate services and agencies in Lancaster County.*

Please consider contributing now, so we can continue to welcome and assist the disadvantaged homeless people in our community.

Contribution coupon, p. 2

## In Their Own Words

*Another in a series of success stories from our CHOC clients*

### **Terry S.**

First visit — 12/07

Last visit — Continuing as volunteer

Outcome — Permanent housing

**F**ifty-two-year-old Terry S. was living on the street, too ill to work, too poor to find an apartment, and just days away from starting to drink after three years of sobriety.

But before he picked up the bottle, Terry took the advice of another homeless man who recommended he pay a visit to the Community Homeless Outreach Center.

That was the winter of 2007, just a few weeks after CHOC had opened. Within days, Terry was connected with a social worker and beginning his climb out of homelessness. After several months on a waiting list for the Transitional Living Center, a spot opened up and he was accepted into the facility.

In the meantime, he applied for permanent housing placement in one of the facilities sponsored by The Lodge of Pennsylvania. In December of 2008, he got the call and moved in.

“Before I came to CHOC I had been homeless since 2002,” says Terry, who now volunteers at the Center. “I was in and out of the shelters, but I was getting tired and frustrated. If it wasn’t for CHOC and the people at my church, I know I’d be out there drinking. Now, I have five years of sobriety and a good life.”

## Message from the Director: CHOC’s Cost Effectiveness

More than ever, people want to know that their charitable contributions are being used cost-effectively. With CHOC, the answer is a definite “yes.”

By drawing on the resources of our partners — Tabor Community Services and the Water Street Mission — we have been able to greatly limit our overhead costs. In fact, it costs us just \$7,500 a month to operate the Center, which serves 70 to 100 people every weekday.

We’re cost-effective in another way, too. By helping move chronically homeless individuals into permanent housing, we allow social services funding to stretch further. Studies have found that 50 percent of funding for homeless programs goes to serve the chronically homeless (as opposed to the transitionally homeless), who make up just 10 percent of the homeless population.

In my mind, CHOC’s most-important role is serving people who are literally struggling to survive and demonstrating that we care about them as neighbors and love them as brothers and sisters.

But it’s also reassuring to know that we’re able to provide that service in a way that makes the most of our supporters’ generous contributions.

**Adrian Rodriguez**

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To support the Community Homeless Outreach Center in its mission to help chronically homeless individuals make a better life for themselves, I am contributing:

- \$340 to keep the Center open for a full day, serving an average of 90 homeless individuals.
- \$1,700 to fund one week of operation.
- \$7,500 to keep CHOC open for an entire month.
- \_\_\_\_\_ to help as many people as I can on a path to permanent housing.

Mail this form to: Community Homeless Outreach Center, c/o Tabor Community Services, P.O. Box 1676, Lancaster, PA 17608-1676