

Many wonderful things are happening in Santa Rosa County and I want to help keep you informed as to how things are progressing.

Over the past few months the EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless (ECOH) has initiated the "Faces of Homeless" Speakers' Bureau Project in Santa Rosa County as a key element of my AmeriCorps VISTA assignment this year. As a result of presentations made by this Speakers' Bureau, several organizations requested that we try to organize a group of interested folks in south Santa Rosa County to pursue the development of a Day Resource Center and look for additional ways to alleviate some of the struggles facing our ever-growing homeless population.

As of today, ECOH has facilitated three community meetings where many of you participated and formed working committees to move forward the goals for developing a Day Resource Center and affordable housing options. We also met with representatives from the Veterans' Service Organization (VSO) and are helping them with preparations for the opening of their second home for homeless vets along the Gulf coast. (minutes from all three meetings are attached )

In addition, we recognized a need for a cold weather shelter in the south end of the county and worked with Safer Santa Rosa and Billory Baptist Church and now have two cold weather shelters in Santa Rosa County - Ferris Hills Baptist Church in Milton and Billory Baptist Church in Holley-Navarre.

As a result of all this activity and the increasing needs ( last week Santa Rosa County Schools reported 1,008 homeless students) there will be several important meetings in January. Please try to attend them if at all possible. Also, as we approach the end of the year, please take one more look at how you can personally contribute. Our food pantries are low and the lines are longer than ever, our people are cold and need warm clothing, our agencies are understaffed and need volunteers, we have people sleeping on floors that need beds, sleeping outdoors who need tents and sleeping bags, and the list goes on and on....any contribution you can make will help.

Your support is greatly appreciated whether it is a monetary donation, supplies, or the personal time, talent and expertise that many of you are giving regularly. The opportunity to excel in these areas will be greater in 2010 than we have ever seen in our lifetime. The current economic climate has created a crisis all across our nation and Santa Rosa County has some tremendous needs that will only be met with your help. So please take time to mark your calendars now and plan to attend the following meetings and activities.

Friday - **January 1st** - Inaugural Penquin Plunge - Juana's Pagoda - Navarre Beach - to benefit the EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless - Noon - ?? Everyone Welcome!  
See attached flyer for more details.

Tuesday, **January 12th** - ECOH general meeting - Santa Rosa United Way - 1:00PM  
(monthly meeting - everyone is always welcome)

This is an opportunity to network with other service providers and get the latest information on issues surrounding homelessness and poverty in our local area.

Wed. - **January 13th** - Special Mtg. re: homeless in Milton - 10:00 AM - Locklin Tech

Anyone interested in any part of the homeless issue is encouraged to attend one or both of these meetings.

Thurs. - **January 14th** - Day Resource Center Work Group - 10:00 AM - GBUMC

This meeting will help organize the local churches and other interested organizations for operating the programs at the new Day Resource Center in South Santa Rosa County.

Thurs. - **January 14th** - Special Mtg re: homeless in Navarre - 1:00 PM - Navarre C C  
Anyone interested in any part of the homeless issue is encouraged to attend one or both of these meetings

Wed. - **January 20th** - Navarre Community Mtg. - 10:00AM Navarre Tourist Info Ctr.  
This is an open meeting for anyone interested in the development of the Day resource Center and Affordable Housing for South Santa Rosa County.

**T B A - Santa Rosa County quarterly Food Solutions Circle Mtg.**

These meetings are held quarterly to help identify needs and solutions for issues of feeding the less fortunate in our local area. All organizations interested in food distribution via food pantries, soup kitchens, community gardens etc....are encouraged to attend these meetings regularly so that the latest information and schedules can be

[janis.wilson@ecoh.org](mailto:janis.wilson@ecoh.org)

**850-255-5570 (cell)**

**850-733-0169(home)**

[www.ecoh.org](http://www.ecoh.org)

[www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)

[www.csa-sailing.org](http://www.csa-sailing.org)

[www.bhafoundation.org](http://www.bhafoundation.org)