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Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center is an interfaith outreach of compassion-- educating, assisting, and supporting the needs of all in our community. Through our faith conviction, we feed the hungry, clothe the poor, and equip the least among us by providing opportunities and a place for all to give and receive hope.

January 26, 2021

Greetings Mayor Chris Alhouzos, Vice Mayor Jacob Karr and Board of Commissioners!

Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center (the Shepherd Center) offers you a heart-felt thank you that defies any closures or quarantines in our community. Nothing can hold back our prayers of gratitude for what you do for our community. I am writing this letter because during the Commissioner's meeting to be held next week regarding the homeless, which is time constricted, I wish to give you an update of what we have achieved in 2020 at the Shepherd and HOPE Center.

The HOPE Center opened the first week of August and began to provide services on August 17, 2020. Not only have we served hot meals from one location (the HOPE Center) 6 days for the homeless and anyone needing a meal, but we have also provided showers, laundry services and counselling. One day a week (Thursdays) the meal continues to be served at St. Timothy's, where they worship and praise lead by our esteem Pastor Curt.

Because of the challenges we have faced due to COVID-19, our numbers have grown with people who have lost their employment and are in need of food and clothing.

We have expanded services to help provide a pathway out of homelessness and toward an improved quality of life. These numbers include the amount of community residents seeking food and services through our Outreach Services at the Shepherd Center.

2020 Program Report	
	Yearly Grand Total
Registered for SNAP Program - New Client	26
Registered for SNAP Program - Existing Applicant	118
Registered for Food Pantry- NEW CLIENT:	334
Re-certified for Food Pantry— EXISTING CLIENT:	181
Receiving food for the first time:	2,687
Pantry Clients:	37,157
Of the total, the number of households:	17,235
Of the total, those that are homeless:	3,603
Total people in households	5,943

HOPE CENTER • FOOD PANTRY • COMMUNITY KITCHEN • COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER • RESALE OUTLET

Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. A copy of the official registration (CH1364) and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services on their website (www.800helpfla.com) or by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

Of the total, those that are homeless:	2,523
Hygiene supplies:	1,110
Assisted clients with...	
Utility:	6
Bus Passes:	2
Birth Cert:	1
Prescription:	2
Voucher Totals	743
Clothing:	628
Household:	102
Furniture:	13
Emergency Food: No one is ever denied food.	1,763
Homebound Delivery to the elderly and disabled:	1,438
Community Kitchens	
Total number of meals served:	42,690
Of the total, those that are homeless:	11,437
Food Drops	
Total people	2,681
Total number of bags distributed:	2,008
Of the total, the number of households:	977
Of the total, those that are homeless:	4
Distributions: Amt of people receiving food from Churches/Organization pick-ups in Pinellas County	85,238
GRAND TOTAL/ Clients served (includes duplicated clients served):	
Includes Pantry, Emergency Food, Homebound Delivery, Community Kitchens, Food Drops, Community Meals and Organization p/us	178,318
Weight- Food Donations (LBS)	2,100,347
Weight- Food Donations (VALUE)	4,200,692
TSSC Volunteers	414
TSSC Volunteer Hours	9,192

We have been helping local homeless and community clients for years with services such as help with applying for food stamps, the Florida Blue card, and birth certificates; housing referrals, mental health referrals, clothing vouchers, emergency food bags, hygiene kits, mail services, DMV letters, and more. Since we opened the HOPE Center in August, we have been able to provide nearly 444 showers and have completed approximately 290 loads of laundry for our local homeless population. Most recently, we have added resume services, job interview prep, and help with tax filing for stimulus payments. We also have several homeless clients who are volunteers, and we also allow volunteers who need to complete community service hours. Clients are able to pick up lunch and come eat out on the courtyard in a safe environment (while socially distancing). Many clients have told us it makes them feel more “human” and feel like they have a little bit of “dignity” through an act so simple as being able to sit at a table and eat a hot, delicious meal in a welcoming environment, instead of eating on a street curb.

In the past 6 weeks, we have helped 8 clients with resume preparation, and 5 of them have landed jobs. Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center has also provided part-time employment to five (5) additional individuals, who’ve demonstrated the ability to stay clean and do the job they were hired to do. We recently, on behalf of a homeless veteran who was diagnosed with stage IV throat cancer, helped get him housing, a cell phone, and subsequently Medicaid. He is currently undergoing cancer treatment. Another client who is well known to Tarpon Springs is currently succeeding in rehab, and we are in the process of helping this population, seek out a better life for themselves by beating their addictions. They are so grateful for this opportunity and have become one of our best workers. All they need is an opportunity to show that they can contribute to the needs in our community. We don’t judge our clients; we simply help them where they are on their journey. Most are Tarpon Springs residents and they stay because this is their home. We service approximately 35-40 homeless individuals. Out of the 25,000 residents in Tarpon Springs, there are only less than .2% to the homeless population. By working together, as a community, we can all be a part of a solution to try to end homeless in Tarpon Springs.

For your perusal, below are the number of services provided to homeless and clients sleeping in family and/or friends’ homes by the HOPE Center.

HOPE CENTER SERVICES	Totals	%
# of Showers	444	
# of Loads of Laundry	290	
# of Other Services*	119	
Gender		
# Male	374	84%
# Female	70	16%
Veteran Status		
Veteran	49	11%
Non-Veteran	395	89%
Race		
White	238	53%

African American	189	43%
Middle Eastern	17	4%
Asian	0	
Multi-racial	0	
TOTAL	444	100%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	68	15%
Non-Hispanic	376	85%

After much discussion and groundwork, the Pinellas County Mobile Medical Unit will be coming to the Shepherd Center on the 1st Monday of each month, with telehealth visits for follow-up appointments. We will host telehealth follow-up visits in the Outreach Department.

We have built relationships in our community with the Healthcare for the Homeless Board, Faith Community Nursing/BayCare, Pinellas County, and other organizations, in order to provide the best services possible to our homeless and the underprivileged in our community. We also have plans to offer more programming in the upcoming months (as COVID allows) that will assist our clients professionally and spiritually.

We have hired a Mental Health Counselor to address the needs of clients/homeless needing and wanting mental health services. The Mental Health Counselor is a licensed mental health professional and responsible for the mental health needs of clients including assessments and case management.

Co-Vid Measures:

- March 16, 2020: Co-Vid 19 – Converted to Tele-health program.
- Phone sessions are scheduled 3 days week (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday for 30-45 minutes)
- Continue to expand knowledge on Co-Vid practices and procedures.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING	ANNUAL TOTAL	%
Case Load	186	
# of Counseling Sessions	464	
Gender		
# Male	85	46%
# Female	101	54%
Housing Status		
Homeless	105	56%

Stably Housed	81	44%
Race		
White	104	56%
African American	51	27%
Middle Eastern	26	14%
Asian	0	
Multiracial	5	3%

The numbers represent the number of services provided in 2020. Our clients come to the HOPE Center because they feel welcome; they know we genuinely care for their well-being, and we give them a sense of belonging. Attached, for your reference, is a list of a few success achieved in 2020.

There was an issue with our Gazebo and we have plastered it with no trespassing signs. We try to be vigilant by making sure that the signs are respected and it has made an impact. My intent is to move the Gazebo and place it in the HOPE Center courtyard, which is fenced. It takes money to move it which is why it hasn't been already moved. But we will get it done.

There is a solution to homelessness but it will take a community to make it happen. In the meantime, people in our community continue to hurt, to hunger and to suffer. Yet the sun continues to shine because they have food on the table for their families, we continue to love, trust in the Lord and the Lord continues to bless His children. This is something to be grateful for and celebrate every moment of every day.

If you have any questions on how we can work closer together, please reach out to me. I truly appreciate your time in reading about the successes we have been able to accomplish during this pandemic. I pray that the Lord will continue to keep you all safe and healthy, that God will provide protection and safety to our police officers, who continuously risk, protect and serve our community, that businesses begin and/or continue to flourish and to all I pray that when your work in our community feels overwhelming due to the pandemic and/or complaints, I pray that God brings you peace and clarity of mind. You are in my prayers always. May God's blessings to you and yours be continuous and abundant.

In Jesus Name!!!



Ada Del Gais
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Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center 2020 Client Success

Client #1

This story goes back 5 years. Maria arrived looking for help with a utility bill. She had two teenagers at home and her older daughter had arrived with her two children under 5. The client, while having a job herself, was facing increased expenses with 3 more mouths to feed, more water usage and much higher utility bills. We got her registered for the food pantry, and referred her to the Salvation Army for her electric bill since it was more than we could help with. Over the years, she consistently registered for the Project Thanks and Adopt a Family programs. Her daughter got a job and eventually moved out. The teens have since graduated high school so our client no longer needed to be our client. But, the foundation that the Shepherd Center provided for her and her family led her to create her own non-profit that would help people. This year, her organization sponsored 10 children with gifts for our Adopt a Family Program. It was so rewarding to see an individual move past their early adversities and find a meaningful path that is now giving back to her community.

Client #2

Tammy, client family that began using our services after the birth of their second child has also made strides in their life with the support of the Shepherd Center. Consistent employment has always been a challenge, especially for the husband. When he finally received a well-paying position a few years ago, he mentioned that they were hopeful to become a "past" client. Unfortunately, he was hit by a car and became disabled from his injuries. Hence, support from the center was needed more than ever. Food stamp application was updated, Obamacare insurance was re-evaluated with the assistance of the providers that come in to the center and they continued to access the food pantry. All of this has helped sustain the family in the two-year struggle to receive disability benefits. Those benefit were awarded during the fall. The family is finally getting on a more solid foundation. The father told us that they will become a "past" (client) again within the next few months.

Client #3

Frances, with Outreach resource assistance, recently obtained an apartment on her own having been homeless for over a year. The Shepherd Center provided food, hygiene, clothing and home furnishings.

Client #4

David had been looking for a job for over a year, while he slipped into homelessness. The Shepherd Center provided food, hygiene, clothing (for job interviews) and job search assistance in the Outreach Department. After a three (3) month search, he obtained full-time work as a tele-marketer and is in the process of moving into an apartment with a roommate.

Client #5

A family (couple and three (3) children) arrived in Outreach from out-of-state and living in their car. TSC provided resources of food, hygiene, clothing and furniture. In addition, housing and employment resources were given and state benefit applications (ACCESS). In less than a month, they are stably housed, children in school and both adults, fully employed.

Client #6

Olivia, a single parent with two (2) children arrived in the Outreach Department. Homeless, unemployed and hungry she received food, hygiene, clothing and birth certificates applications were filed for her and her children. Three (3) months later, she is now employed, stably housed and has received the necessary birth certificate credentials to obtain state benefits.

Client #7

David, new to Tarpon Springs, arrived in Outreach in need of clothing, food, use of the computer and phone. His goal was to get his life back together so he could reunite with his high school sweetheart. Within two weeks, he returned to Outreach having obtained employment and subsidized housing. He said he was 'On his way to his sweetheart.'

Client #8

Cathy had been looking for a job for over two (2) year following a major medical illness. During this time, she 'couch'-surfed' with friends and relatives. She received food, hygiene, clothing (for job interviews) and job search assistance in the Outreach Department. After a three (3) month search, she obtained employment in health care, applied for subsidized housing and is saving for a 'car'.

Client #9

Stanley, a Korean War veteran, considers The Shepherd Center a 'God-send'. He spends most of his time, alone, and looks forward to his weekly food pantry visit to see the familiar staff, volunteers and clients. Recently, he celebrated his ninetieth (90th) birthday and he was presented a birthday cake and everyone in the pantry and outreach sang him 'happy birthday'. To which, Stanley, with tears in his eyes, said it was his best birthday in years.

Client #10

Greg arrived in Outreach, delivered by Police Department who picked him up trespassing at a hospital. His physical health was unstable, and 911 called to evaluate and clear him. Shelter placement was initiated and by the end of the day he was in a shelter, receiving his medications and stabilized.

Client #11

Kevin, homeless for six (6) years, recently got an apartment and a part-time job. Through the years, the Shepherd Center provided hygiene, clothing, mail services, resources, counseling, encouragement and furniture and housewares for his new 'home'. In addition, through the Outreach Department with Mease Health Care Navigator through Pinellas County Health Care for the Homeless, obtained health insurance for Kevin, scheduled a primary care appointment and transportation.

Client #12

Dwayne, a homeless client was experiencing decreased physical health, specifically he was losing vision in both eyes. He arrived in Outreach to pick-up his mail and was instantly connected with the Health Care Navigator who was able to provide health insurance, schedule a primary care and eye specialist appointments, and round-trip transportation.

Client #13

Hope, a victim of human trafficking is making considerable improvements with mental health counseling and support resources. Recently, she was successfully placed in a shelter and it is predicted, she will continue to make progress.

Client #14

Mark: Homeless, diagnosed with stage IV throat cancer. By working with other local agencies, we were able to get him stable housing, a cell phone, signed up on Medicaid and Disability, and cancer treatment.

Client #15

Bo, homeless, diagnosed with terminal cancer, was assisted with food, clothing, hygiene, showers, and was driven by a staff member for his medical and radiation treatments. The Program Supervisor became an authorized signer that would enable her to make medical decisions on his behalf and to take other actions pertinent to his care in the event he was incapacitated. After being placed in a Hospice, the Program Supervisor engaged in finding a family member in Facebook. She was finally able to contact his brother in St. Augustine who was happy to find Bo. His brother drove to Tarpon and picked him and took him home. We continue to be in contact with the brother and with Bo. He says he misses the Shepherd Center.

Client #16

Danielle, homeless, suffered domestic abuse and had to run from her husband from another state. She came back to Tarpon where she was raised, but doesn't have any family. She has been sleeping in her car. She came to the Shepherd Center shaken and afraid. She started getting counselling with the Mental Health Coordinator and a few months later she started to volunteer at the HOPE Center. She bathes, does her laundry, has hot meals and started to feel good about herself. She became such a good worker that she has been hired to work in the pantry at the Shepherd Center.

Clients JH, MF, TW, RS, and CW:

Sat down with them and created resumes, and all 5 have jobs now and will soon have stable housing. The Supervisor of Program also did 10 additional resumes.