



# Great Falls Inter-Faith Association

April 25th, 2013

**Opportunities Inc. –Resource Center**

Ray opened the meeting with reading from Deuteronomy, chapter 15 verse 7 and a prayer. Ray asked that we go around the room and introduce ourselves and give any updates with their organization.

Mary announced that Union Bethel AME Church was hosting an event on Saturday from 9-3 with a continental breakfast and lunch provided. The topic for their event is child abuse. Their church is located at 916 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. South.

John said the Crop Walk raised \$5000.00 and 25% of that would go to the Great Falls Food Bank.

Chris said that Deb will be the facilitator for the Homeless Task Force meetings. MT Farmers Union also has camps and will get a list to John.

Fred talked with Deb about the progression needed to get to the Action Plan and defined a goal of the Task Force. The goal is to be building opportunities for the homeless to transition and opening bigger channels of support agencies.

Jim said that they are celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rescue Mission with two banquets on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> at the Mansfield Convention Center. There will be a lunch banquet and a dinner banquet that starts at 6:00pm.

Jill said that HUD has definitions of homelessness. They are literally homeless, imminent risk of homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, temporarily homeless and chronically homeless. Chronically homeless is defined as homeless more than 4 times in one year. Jackson said the school says there are 4 types of homeless, sheltered (Rescue Mission), couch surfing (moving from house to house), unsheltered (living under the bridges) and motels. The top three reasons people leave home are conflict with family, loss of jobs and rent problems.

Services needed to stay in home are mental treatment, substance abuse treatment, jobs, and utility help and security deposits. One of the problems homeless people have in getting SNAP benefits is

they have no permanent address and that is required. For students, they cannot get Snap benefits if they are under 18.

Some of the challenges our community faces are an unsafe downtown which is getting worse with no out of town bus service. The Shelby prison brings released convicts to Great Falls and drops them at the Bus Depot downtown and there is no bus to take these convicts to their own home town. Lack of suitable housing in our community is becoming a huge problem. There is limited mobility in our community at the buses don't run 7 days a week and only until 6pm. People have difficulty in getting to their jobs. They are hoping to increase the hours of the public transportation, possibly 10-2 on Sundays. There is a lack of communication between service providers. And of course Employment opportunities are lacking.

The homeless are divided into 5 focus groups. Homeless youth, ex-offenders, families, veterans and mental health/substance/domestic abuse.

Kate with Family Promise said that they are currently working on legal paperwork (articles of incorporation and 503c). They are also working on transportation; a Day Center is a possibility, working on Host and support recruitment (getting churches on board). They are getting a committee together to work on fundraising and they have a grant writer on board.

Kim said that they have gotten additional funding, for people that qualify for assistance.

Chris said the Grace Home for Vets is ready to open. They just need the funding. It will house 20 vets. Vets for Vets are holding a planning session tomorrow @ 1pm at the Center for Mental Health.

Jim said were awarded a grant for bedding and construction.

March minutes were read and approved.

Ray adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted.