



## MORGAN HILL POLICE DEPARTMENT FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

### Chief's Corner

In the spirit of community, I am happy to collaborate with the City's Housing Services Division to highlight the Focus Safe Parking Program in this issue. This program provides families in our community without permanent shelter a safe place to stay overnight and provides them with services and support. I am proud of this program and the positive impact its already had on the community.



### FOCUS Safe Parking Program

by Guest Columnist Christie Thomas, Housing Program Coordinator

The "Focus" Safe Parking Program (Focus Program) is a pilot project created in collaboration by the City of Morgan Hill, Morgan Hill Police Department, County of Santa Clara, Morgan Hill Unified School District (MHUSD), Gilroy Compassion Center and the local faith based community. The Focus Program is designed to provide respite and resources for local unsheltered families or persons living in cars or RV's. The goal of the Focus Program is to facilitate family transition to more stable housing.



Launched in July, the Focus Program is a pilot program funded by a grant from the California State Board of Corrections. It is limited to eight vehicles (cars or RV's) and a maximum of fourteen persons and for a period of thirteen weeks, with the possibility of modification and extension after an evaluation for effectiveness.

Potential clients of the Focus Program have been identified and vetted through Morgan Hill PD, MHUSD, Gilroy Compassion Center and local faith based communities. Clients will continue to be identified and vetted as space becomes available. Initial outreach was to families and single parents with children, followed by adult singles.

Clients have been asked to sign a code of conduct "contract" outlining the expected conduct of the clients while on site. No alcohol or drug use is allowed, and violators will be removed from the program. Clients are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of their space. Spaces are supplied with garbage cans, tables, chairs, portable lighting, cleaning supplies, and flashlights. There is an on-site bathroom, equipped with a shower, toilet, sink, and washer and dryer. Two porta-potties and a hand washing station have also been provided.

The Focus site is open from 7:00 pm to 8:00 am daily. Clients and their vehicles are required to vacate the site no later than 8:00 am each morning and return each evening between 7:00 pm and 10:00 pm. During this time, the clients have the opportunity to meet with a case worker and volunteers to help them with things that they may be struggling with, but also to have some companionship.



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A light breakfast and a to-go lunch is provided daily by Second Harvest Food Bank. Dinners are available in Morgan Hill through Martha's Kitchen and served at churches Monday – Thursday weekly (Monday – St. Catherine, Tuesday – Advent Lutheran Church, Wednesday - United Methodist, Thursday – Community Christian). Friday dinner is provided by the community hosting the given week, a BBQ, catered meal, or by gift cards donated by local restaurants. Saturday dinner is provided at the Compassion Center in Gilroy, and Sunday dinner at the Lord's Table at St. Mary's in Gilroy.

A "tiny house" has been placed at the Focus site for volunteers, program management, office and caseworker space and storage. Wi-Fi access and staff cell phone are available.

Implementation of the Focus Program is a coordinated effort of the City of Morgan Hill, the Morgan Hill PD, the County of Santa Clara, Catholic Charities, Gilroy Compassion Center, MHUSD and volunteers from local faith based groups and interested community members. Daily management of the Focus Program is handled by Dirk Caudill from Morgan Hill Bible Church, Jeanette Thatcher and Carol Lillig from St. Catherine Church.



After completing a volunteer orientation, faith groups, nonprofits and community members, can sign up to "host" a car park for a one-week period: each team is responsible for providing two volunteers from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm for preparing the site, welcoming and checking in clients, providing resource referrals, visiting with clients, facilitating showers and laundry, and scheduling appointments with the case manager. Two additional volunteers are available for a morning shift from 6:00 am to 8:00 am., to assemble a light breakfast and to-go lunch, dismiss guests, and close-up the site for the day. Volunteers check toilets, laundry, showers, garbage areas and refresh the site as necessary. Clipboards and a whiteboard are provided for daily communication about guests needs and experiences. A weekly summary is passed from each week's team to the next.



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Other supportive services are provided to clients by providing a list of local resources that can be utilized for counseling, case management, career/vocational training, food stamps, transitional housing, job referrals, mail services, internet access, medical, dental, etc. St. Vincent de Paul Community Closet volunteers fill weekly personalized clothing lists for each guest. The program management makes arrangements for these services to be provided at the site whenever possible. In addition, worship services are provided for those clients that wish to participate. The volunteers at the “tiny house” office keep a supply of local resources (food, bill pay, health, etc.).

A case manager from the Gilroy Compassion Center provides the Program with 20 hours per week of social services. The case manager facilitates background checks and checks eligibility criteria for the clients who wish to enter the program. Upon intake clients meet with the case manager and design a tailored case plan of goals that help the family work towards self-sustainability with the ultimate goal of housing. The case manager assists with client follow through and helps to remove barriers that may arise that could keep clients from attaining their goals. An important part of achieving self-sustainability includes connecting to community services such as job training, food banks, state benefits, clothing closets, etc. The expectation is to utilize as many community services possible to assist with day-to-day needs during the process of securing long term stable housing.

We are excited about the Focus Program and the successes the clients have experienced so far. In just a few months, the program has made a positive impact on clients’ lives, such as:

- One family regained full custody of their children since the program offered them stability, consistency and safety
- One family moved into apartments in San Martin
- One family rented a room in Hollister
- One family was able to participate in a family retreat bonding therapy weekend
- One family has graduated from an accelerated job training program and has landed a living wage job

As noted, volunteers are a key part of the program who work in the morning and evenings to make the Focus Program happen every day. It is truly a community effort that gives families in Morgan Hill the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives with support and guidance. If you’re interested in learning more about the Focus Program you can email [Danielle Causin](mailto:Danielle.Causin@morganhillbiblechurch.com) of Morgan Hill Bible Church. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with the Focus program, [click here](#).