

Who We Are

Who We Are

By Gaye Reyes

This is to introduce you to a Village called Dignity Village, Inc. We are a formally mobile Tent City founded by homeless people for those in the homeless community that were sick and tired of living on the streets, under bushes and in doorways. Dignity Village has now grown out of the "tent city" mode and has become a true Village.

We have set up our own administrative and legislative branch of government and are working on our judicial. At this time the administrative (village council) is trying to do both judicial as well as administrative.

The Administrative branch of Dignity Village, Inc. is comprised of a council and (Board of Directors). Chairperson is Timothy McCarthy, Vice Chairperson Laura Brown, Secretary Ross Bennett, Treasurer Alan Rocheleau the remainder of the village council are Bob, Ken, Ivan, Dean, and Gaye Reyes. The legislative body is the membership of Dignity Village, Inc. No law or rule is passed or contract signed without going to the membership for approval.

The Village has moved away from an all "tent city" to small houses built primarily by the villagers with the help of some of our much loved supporters from the wider community. Chrysler Chelle (our building coordinator) and her building crew have done a remarkable job. Ken, Travis, Big Al, Big Red, Shorty, Timothy and many others have worked to that end. For those of us that could not build because of physical disabilities we set up a work exchange program. If Chelle and her crew are working on a house then the person that the house is designated for will pull her security duty or the security of one of her crew. Not only does this help to get the building done but, allows the person the building is for to feel they are participating, and to that end gives them pride of place. In other words, "Dignity", self-respect, and the knowledge they can accomplish good things for themselves without a hand out.

We also have 24 hour security headed up by Bob and Ed our coordinators. Every person in the village must put in minimum of 2 hours per week on security. They have both worked very hard to insure the safety and peace in the Village. It is not easy to be the "top cop" here. The security team not only enforces the rules but, keeps an eye on those that are not in good health, watches for fire, guards the gate from people that could do harm to the village and/or the villagers.

We have five basic rules. No violence to yourself or others. No theft. No alcohol, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on the property or within a one block area. No continuous disruptive behavior. You must contribute to the maintenance and operation of the Village. Bob and Ed and Louie the Hour's Recorder, (better known around here as the bean counter). They do a great job seeing these rules are enforced. Louie keeps track not only of the hours worked in the village but the hours worked outside as well. To encourage people to go to work or school the Village does a reduction of work hours. All villagers must give 10 hours labor to the Village per week unless they work 16 to 30 hours or go to school half days. Then the time is reduced to 6 hours. If they work 30 or more hours or go to school all day then the time is reduced to 4 hours.

Ken is the donations coordinator. He and his crew receive, log and disperse to the village, and outreach, any donations that come to us by our very wonderful supporters. He keeps us dressed, warm, fed, and clean. He also does his best to give us the extras that help our houses become real homes. One of the most difficult departments we have is "Tents and Population". This is kind of a misnomer. It is really the intake committee. Big Tom (the Chairman) Laura, Dean, Shorty, Bob, and Dread Dave are the first ones you meet when you come to apply to stay here. They help you with paperwork and take you under their wings to get you set up.

A very important department is headed up by Beckie. She is the head of Trash and Sanitation also Recycling. Beckie and her crew work to insure we live up to our mission statement by recycling everything we can. Not only does it help the environment but brings much needed revenue into the village. We have other committees that we serve on to insure the continuing growth of the village.

Timothy heads Outreach and we have one group that has no department head but is very important and that is the group that works with Kwamba Productions. We are working with Wendy and Heather of Kwamba Productions to work on the documentary and other tools that the village needs to help us operate more smoothly. Chelle, Ross, Gaye, Sue, Tami, Dean, Timothy and Travis all give up their Sundays for the village to do this work.