



5-2011

# Addressing Homelessness Through the Private Sector

Mindy Nakamura  
mnakamur@utk.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj](http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj)

 Part of the [Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons](#), [Business Law, Public Responsibility, and Ethics Commons](#), and the [Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Nakamura, Mindy, "Addressing Homelessness Through the Private Sector" (2011). *University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects*.  
[http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_chanhonoproj/1371](http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/1371)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Tennessee Honors Program at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).



# Addressing Homelessness Through the Private Sector

An Examination of a Private Sector Replicable  
Business Model to End Homelessness Across America

Mindy Nakamura  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Global Leadership Scholars Program  
7 April 2011

Supervisor: Tom Graves

## Executive Summary:

This research study attempts to explain the thesis statement that the federal government cannot effectively or efficiently provide adequate services to eradicate the problem of homelessness in our country. This problem needs to be addressed at the micro-level, in communities and cities, by social cause organizations who want to see the problem eradicated. The problem of homelessness plagues the United States, with hundreds of thousands of people living on the streets every day. This paper intends to explain that solving the problem locally in the private sector is more efficient than using government resources. The primary research involves studying Crossroads Welcome Center, a branch of one non-profit organization in Knoxville, Tennessee, and how it attempts to deal with the problem on a local level. Crossroads exemplifies how collaborating with several other local organizations is the most efficient way to get the homeless the help they need by not duplicating services and wasting time and resources. This study also concludes that the Crossroads business model can be adapted and replicated in any city across the country. A second day room service from Lexington, Kentucky, called the New Life Day Center, was also researched. This center has yet to open, but during its planning stage representatives visited Knoxville to observe Crossroads in order to find best practices of operating a day room facility. They felt that the Crossroads model was efficiently handling the problem of homelessness and wanted to learn from them in order to have the same effect in their city.

## Introduction:

Homelessness is an ongoing issue that affects the entire country. It is a problem that plagues every U.S. city and one that needs attention in order to be solved. Due to the recent economic downturn, the amount of people classified as homeless is also on the rise. The U.S. government controls its own federal programs that attempt to deal with the concern, but the government does not provide enough resources to correct the problem on its own, nor can the problem be fixed on the national level. Because of this deficiency of resources, private social cause organizations have to intervene and work in communities to help deal with the problem and figure out how to get them the resources they need in order to get out of their situation. It is much smarter to tackle this problem at a micro level, in communities, where the problem is evident.

The thesis statement of this research is that the federal government cannot effectively or efficiently provide an adequate service to help the problem of homelessness in our country. This problem needs to be addressed at the micro-level, in communities and cities, by social cause organizations who want to see the problem eradicated.

The focus of this research is to identify one such social cause organization that is helping a community to deal with its problem of homelessness. Knoxville Area Rescue Missions, located in Knoxville, Tennessee, is a non-profit 501(c) company that focuses on the issue of helping the homeless to rise out of their situation. Along with many sides to its business, it operates a Welcome Center during the day called Crossroads.

This research project uses Crossroads as a model of how a social cause organization aimed at helping the homeless can be effective. It will discuss the purpose of this organization and the day-to-day operations of how it serves the homeless population in Knoxville. It also demonstrates how multiple social cause organization in a city after the same purpose can work together as a conduit in order to maximize their efficiency as a group. The fight for funding and donations has increased across the non-profit sector due to the economy, but an increase in this competition shouldn't hurt the people they are all trying to serve. Instead, Crossroads looks at ways they can partner

with organizations so that each can have a core competency in its own area and then work together to better serve the homeless. Lastly, this project looks at how a model like Crossroads can be replicated in any U.S. city. The problem of homelessness is far from going away, but in order to get on the right track organizations need to take positive effective steps to help.

Literature Review:

### **Homelessness**

#### ***Definition:***

The Congressional Research Service Report for Congress states that

“most federal programs for the homeless define a homeless individual as a person who lacks a fixed and night-time residence or whose primary residence is a supervised public or private shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, an institution accommodating persons intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings,” (CRS Report for Congress 2).

This means that one is considered homeless if he or she is sleeping on the street, in their car, or in a public or private shelter. But the problem of homelessness is even deeper than just having a place to stay. Granruth and Smith, in their research about housing services, also include the need of not only having a roof over their head, but having a “permanent, safe, decent, affordable place to live” (Granruth 15). They point out that housing is a basic human need and right, and that it is critical to becoming valuable members of society.

Going along with their definition, you can look at Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in Appendix A and see that at the second level, shelter is a part of safety needs. Without a constant in this area, the theory states that no other level can be obtained, leaving the homeless longing for more with no hope of achieving levels higher than that.

**Demographics:**

For the past five years the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has created the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. The study includes information on the national estimates for homeless people, characteristics and trends, and the use of residential housing programs across the country. The 2009 report states that on one night in January 2009, there were an estimated 643,000 homeless people nationwide, with half of those people being unsheltered and on the street (AHAR 7). Due to constraints, that figure is probably on the low end because there is just no way to account for everyone who does not live in a permanent residence. And that is just one night. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that each year, more than 3 million people experience homelessness on at least one night, including 1.3 million children (Homelessness and Poverty in America 1). The National Alliance to End Homelessness states that 37% of the homeless population is comprised of families, and that families are one of the growing segments of the homeless population (Snapshot of Homelessness 1). This alliance also states that non-chronic single adults represent the largest group of people experiencing homelessness.

The 2009 AHAR also stated that the problem is getting worse. In a study of the use of family shelters, there were 62,000 more family members in a shelter in 2009 than in 2007 (AHAR 5). This is due to the ongoing effects of the recession and the problems parents are having trying to find jobs. See Appendix B for more detailed information.

In 2010 the U.S. Conference of Mayors supplied a report on hunger, homelessness, and poverty in cities. Twenty-seven cities took part in a survey about these issues, and overall the results found that the number of people experiencing homelessness increased by an average of 2% from the previous year (Hunger and Homelessness Survey 1).

**Contributing Factors:**

There are several reasons people become homeless. Among them are the chronically homeless, the lack of affordable housing and income, employment issues, mental illness and addictions, veterans with disabilities, and domestic violence.

**Chronic Homelessness:**

The National Alliance to End Homelessness defines someone who is chronically homeless as “either having long-term or repeated bouts of homelessness coupled with some sort of disability (physical or mental)” (Snapshot of Homelessness 1). This is the group that most people think about when their thoughts turn to the homeless, but in fact it is a minority, representing only 20% of the population. Approximately 124,000 people across the nation are chronically homeless by this definition. This is probably the hardest type of problem to combat, and is getting a lot of attention across the country. The struggle is when these people view being homeless as a lifestyle choice and don’t want to recover.

**Lack of Affordable Housing/Income:**

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty states that almost half of the homeless population works, but does not earn enough to pay for their housing (Homelessness & Poverty in America 1). The incomes of the poorest Americans have not kept pace with the rising housing market costs, forcing them onto the street.

**Employment Issues:**

Unemployment has become a significant factor contributing to homelessness. Thousands have lost their jobs due to the recession, and those who did not have savings or were left with nowhere to turn are now living on the streets. The U.S. Conference of Mayors also pointed out that “among households with children, unemployment led the list of causes for homelessness” (Hunger and Homelessness Survey 5).

**Mental Illness and Addictions:**

In their report, the U.S. Conference of Mayors stated that 24% of the homeless adults in the cities they studied are severely mentally ill (Hunger and Homelessness Survey 11). This appears mostly in the chronically homeless category and creates many problems when trying to get these people back to supporting themselves. Also, people with mental illness are hard to convince that they even need help, so extra care and attention is needed to reach out to them.

Addiction is hard to trace since so many people won't admit to it, but the National Health Care for the Homeless Council conducted a study in 2005 and found that among those surveyed 38% had an alcohol problem, and 26% reported problems with other drugs. There are many rehabilitation programs across the country to help the homeless overcome their addictions, but not all actively seek out this kind of help.

**Veterans with Disabilities:**

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in 2009 there was an estimated 131,000 homeless people who were veterans. That accounts for about 20% of the entire homeless population. The National Alliance to End Homelessness suggests that often a war-related disability makes it difficult for veterans to readjust to civilian life. Such disabilities include physical, mental, and post-traumatic stress. These inabilities coupled with unsafe behaviors including addictions can very often lead to homelessness (Snapshot of Homelessness 1).

With such a large percentage of the overall population, Barack Obama stated in the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness that "veterans should never find themselves on the streets, living without care and without hope" (Opening Doors 2). This group is now a target area for eradicating the problem of homelessness nationally.

### **Domestic Violence:**

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence stated that in 2001, approximately half of all women and children experiencing homelessness were fleeing from domestic violence of some sort. Often, women have to choose between either domestic violence or being homeless.

### ***Cost to society***

Although the general public doesn't always see the need to donate to the homeless, whether handing over money themselves or donating to an organization, they should understand how much it actually costs society. In Knoxville, TN, the Volunteer Ministry Center found that it cost roughly \$37,000 to maintain one chronically homeless person (VMC 1). This means that an average of \$37,000 is spent on each homeless person from the money donated either to private sector organizations or government funded ones. It also stated that if instead each person was maintained in housing it would cost less than half of that per year. So, if homelessness could be eradicated it would produce significant savings over time.

On the national level, in 2006 there was a study done and printed in Forbes magazine entitled "Cutting the Cost of Homelessness in U.S." by Oxford Analytica. Of the chronically homeless population, they found that the cost to the U.S. government was almost \$11 billion of public funds per year. But if this group of people could be permanently housed, the expected cost would drop to just under \$8 billion per year.

### ***Federal Response***

The most recent attempt to end the problem of homelessness was announced on June 22, 2010, by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. It is the first comprehensive federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. Called "Opening Doors," it aims to accomplish four goals:

1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in five years
2. Prevent and end homelessness among veterans in five years

3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in ten years
4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness

This project states that homelessness is unacceptable and expensive, but definitely solvable and preventable. The government wants to help eliminate the problem by collaborating with the best agencies already in place to find the best practices while not duplicating services. But the federal government alone will not be able to resolve the issue, and they recognize that.

### ***Collaboration***

As stated in the guiding principles of the “Opening Doors” project, collaboration is key to making the plan work. In the introduction, Barak Obama is quoted saying that

“...preventing and ending homelessness is not just a Federal issue or responsibility....Tremendous work is going on at the State and local level—where states, local governments, nonprofits, faith-based and community organizations, and the private and philanthropic sectors are responsible for some of the best thinking, innovation, and evidence based approaches to ending homelessness. These State and local stakeholders must be active partners with the Federal Government, and their work will inform and guide our efforts at the national level,” (Opening Doors 4)

Also, the Chair of the USICH, Shaun Donovan, states that

“This Plan outlines an interagency collaboration that aligns mainstream housing, health, education, and human services to prevent Americans from experiencing homelessness in the future. We propose a set of strategies that call upon the federal government to work in partnership with the private sector, philanthropy, and state and local governments to employ cost effective, comprehensive solutions to end homelessness,” (Opening Doors 5)

The federal government realizes that in order to solve this problem of homelessness, action needs to happen at the state and local community level, because that is where the problem lies. It also recognizes that monetary investments can only be made in the most promising strategies. The government cannot afford to waste money in ideas and organizations that aren't helping to solve the problem.

### ***Knoxville Response***

There are now around 239 Ten Year Plans located across the country aimed at ending homelessness. In Knoxville's plan, it states that

“On any given night in Knoxville and Knox County, approximately 900 people sleep in emergency shelters, on the street, in cars, in transitional housing, or doubled up with friends. The homeless population is not a static one and over the course of one month approximately 1,900 different individuals in Knoxville and Knox County will experience homelessness. Projecting these numbers over the course of a year suggests that as many as 8,000 to 9,000 different individuals may experience homelessness at some time,” (Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness 2).

More statistics for the homeless population in Knoxville can be taken from the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) database. According to KnoxHMIS, the average chronically homeless individual in Knoxville is a single, white male age 46 from Knox County with a high school education, has never been to prison reports his primary reason for homelessness as loss of job, and is not a veteran. Last year 751 active clients in HMIS were chronically homeless and 169 new chronically homeless clients were added into HMIS. More data from this database can be seen in Appendix C.

Overcoming homelessness is a big challenge for the entire community. But like the federal government, the city of Knoxville also realizes that more can be done through collaboration than any organization could do on its own. In its plan, it seeks to end homelessness through “cooperative effort by government agencies, private and public services, businesses, faith-based organizations, and neighborhoods. This plan calls for a coordinated effort to inform and communicate with the broader community about homelessness,” (Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness 6). Former Knox County Mayor Mike Ragsdale commented on the Ten Year plan by saying "For years we were rather disjointed in our efforts to help homeless individuals. We had a lot of different organizations going a lot of different directions. Now we're coming together." This new effort at collaboration has allowed each organization to focus on its own strengths and competencies and network with other organizations to help solve the problem of homelessness.

### ***Knoxville Area Rescue Mission***

KARM was founded on December 8, 1960, by five local pastors. They recognized the need for a permanent ministry effort to meet the growing need of the homeless people in the area. They offered shelter, hot meals, decent clothing, and a smile to all who used the facility. Along with meeting the physical needs of those they worked with, KARM also was a spiritual outlet for people. They shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who entered their doors and tried to inspire hope in those who were hopeless. The mission of the organization is “to seek to rescue the poor and needy of the Knox Area by providing recovery services in Jesus’ name.”

KARM offers several services to the people of Knox country, including three meals a day; overnight, emergency and long-term shelter; residential recovery services to the poor and homeless, victims of domestic violence, displaced families and disenfranchised men, women and children; job training; employment and educational assistance, counseling services; a welcome center for day use; and rehabilitation programs. KARM serves between 1000-1500 meals per day for free, and allows over

400 people to stay in its facilities overnight. KARM also operates two thrift stores locally which offer discounted clothing, household items, and furniture.

Crossroads Welcome Center is a part of KARM that offers a day room service to the homeless people of Knoxville. Its objectives are to “meet the homeless where they are - on the street and introduce them to the opportunities, resources and services that will help them correct their presenting problems and issues causing their homelessness.” Crossroads is a safe place and a starting point for people who are homeless and need a place to stay during the day, as well as a hub where the needy can come and be assessed and get in contact with the correct organizations to help them. It is breaking down the walls of competition between social cause organizations by collaborating and partnering with other organizations in Knoxville in order to get people the help they need quickly.

#### Methodology:

First, I researched various social cause organizations in Knoxville in order to gain an understanding of what services were being provided for the homeless. Upon learning about Knoxville Area Rescue Missions and the work they do to help the homeless, I got in contact with Tracy Hicks, the Director of Business and Community Development for KARM. After sitting down with her and discussing what was to be accomplished through my research she told me about Crossroads. I was extremely interested when she explained how it worked with various organizations across Knoxville to be more efficient in helping solve the problem of homelessness in the city. She then gave me the contact information for Greg Lay, Director of Outreach for the Crossroads Welcome Center.

After speaking with Mr. Lay about the intentions of the project, he allowed me access to observe Crossroads on a daily basis. This qualitative part of the research proved invaluable, as I visited Crossroads on several occasions to see the daily operations. This gave me time to make my own observations of how effective the program was, as well as talk to staff and volunteers. I conducted short interviews with a

few of the staff, as well as asked operational questions when they would present themselves during their work. They were also able to show me first-hand the kind of help they could give and how they can get someone in contact with the right people. I also conducted a full scale interview with Greg Lay so he could give me a deeper insight into the operations as he has worked with Crossroads since its inception. See Appendix D for a list of questions.

Finally I conducted another interview, first by e-mail and second in person, of Christian Postel, the Project Coordinator of Lexington Rescue Mission. Mr. Lay informed me that a few months before I contacted him a team from Lexington Rescue Mission had visited Crossroads in order to gain information because they wanted to create a Day Center like Crossroads in Lexington. Because this project is also about replicating the Crossroads model in other cities, I contacted Mr. Postel and asked him what he had learned from his visit and what he wants his organization to look like.

Results:

### ***Background Information***

The city of Knoxville has been very careful over the last five years to not duplicate services in order to save money and not be wasteful. Before Knoxville Area Rescue Mission opened Crossroads, the Volunteer Ministry Center ran a Day Room. It was a basic place where the homeless could come during the day to get off the streets. About three years ago the VMC approached KARM and told them that there were shifting their focus away from operating a Day Room to working more on housing services and wanted to see if KARM would want to take on this responsibility. Somebody needed to step up and fill the void that the VMC was leaving, and so KARM decided that they needed to be the organization to do it.

The transition process was very collaborative. KARM first had to decide where the new Welcome Center would be. They already operated a large facility and ended up using a large room that was usually used as a storage space for coats and food. Next, the leaders of KARM met with the VMC directors and talked about the timeline of when

the VMC would close down their service and when Crossroads would have to open. Although they did technically open overnight, there were many weeks before that where the VMC advertised that Crossroads would be the new location for daytime services.

In the very beginning the goal of Crossroads was basic: to provide a place for people to come in and get out of the weather, store their bags, and provide a few basic services to help them in the recovery process. It has since morphed into engaging the homeless where they are and tracking their progress in order to get them on the road to recovery more quickly.

Crossroads seeks to provide direction to someone in order to get reconnected with the community. The main goal now is to not only allow someone who is homeless to be comfortable throughout the process, but to challenge them and help them to move forward. When at first the staff was satisfied at people coming to use the facility, now they want to help be a part of that individual discovering what it takes to get them out of the mission and back to their life. Crossroads is very intentional about finding the right services that people need and connecting with them in order to get them help.

Crossroads took the foundation of the VMC model of a day room facility and added significantly to it. The VMC had a bag storage system, distributed mail, and did a limited amount of case management. But Crossroads then put its own spin on the organization. It first wanted to create a space that was friendly for community agencies. They needed a few cubicles in place where representatives could work out of on site. From the beginning Crossroads saw themselves as a collaborative center where people could meet and get help easily. They also expanded by providing computer and internet access as well as offer more telephone services. Crossroads attempted to be strategic when planning their referral process as well. It was designed to be part of the daily routine instead of just an afterthought. Also, the Triage interview process was a new idea. It helps to find out what the most critical needs are and what pathways need to be taken to get someone back on track.

Finally, Crossroads added a spiritual flavor to the day service. They believe that to make a big change in your life and heart God must be present. Crossroads seeks to share the gospel message with the people it works with and show Jesus' love to all. This non-judgmental love allows the people it serves to be trusting quicker, and to be inspired and excited to change their life. Getting connected to a church also helps in the recovery process because it creates a safety net and accountability circle where there are people supporting you throughout the process.

Crossroads is open seven days a week, from 8am-11:30am and from 1-4:30pm. It is closed for lunch daily, as KARM serves lunch in another part of the facility. There are six staff members who work in Crossroads, along with 21 volunteers that work at various times during the week. On a typical day around 200 homeless people utilize services in the facility.

Basic rules for using the facility include keeping the noise level low, no food or drinks in the room, no holding large bags, no sleeping, and limiting phone and computer use to 10-15 minutes. A TB shot must also be administered once a year in order to have access to Crossroads.

Everyday is different at Crossroads. There are always new problems brought to light and new unique situations that people are in that need to be shown help and compassion. It takes a lot of problem solving and case management in order to successfully help the homeless population of Knoxville to get back on their feet.

### *Daily Operations*

#### **Bag Storage:**

Before Crossroads even opens its doors in the morning, a baggage drop system is open to people who need it. Starting at 7am during the week, and 8am on the weekend, people who need to unload any bags they have can come to Crossroads and leave them there for the day. This is most helpful to those who have jobs and can't bring all that they own to work with them. It is also helpful for those who just need to

unload and not worry about carrying all their things with them as they try to get things accomplished during the day. There are two different places available for the bag drop, and the bags are tracked using each person's HMIS ID number. Bags must be picked up by 4:30 when Crossroads closes, but if someone has a job or needs to pick them up at a different time they just need to talk to the staff and special arrangements can be made. If bags are left for over three days though, their contents are thrown out or given to other organizations that could have use of them. This system is messy in that people do leave their bags for long periods of time and then staff has to determine if there are important papers to save or not.

#### HMIS System:

The Homeless Management Information System is a centralized internet-based system that provides a database of homeless information. Appendix F shows the form that has to be filled out in order to enter someone into the system. It is a national system, but Knoxville keeps its own data as well. Each person who comes into Crossroads must scan their HMIS ID card in order to use the facilities. If it is their first time using the facility, they will be enrolled during the course of the day and given an ID card. This system helps keep track of who comes in everyday, what their issues are, and alerts staff if there are any problems. There are currently 12 organizations in Knoxville who use this system, which means that they can all share information more easily and not duplicate the services being provided. The push is for all social cause organizations to implement this service in order to make it easier to help each individual person by sharing information. Upon scanning someone in, each organization can see what other places that person has been to and what help they have received. This makes case management easier because you can see the patterns of a person and what help they are already receiving and where. Also, the more comprehensive the database, the easier it is to get grants for the organization. HMIS also helps with reporting trends in the population and makes it easier to write up monthly reports. For example, staff was able to see that there was a growing number of 18-24 year olds using the facility on a

regular basis. Seeing this information made them realize they needed to offer more services tailored to them, like the Job Corps.

A problem with this system that was seen originally was that people would sneak in and not scan their ID card, but it is actually to their advantage to get checked in everyday. Referral letters are based on how long they are staying at one facility or another, and that information is taken from the HMIS database.

#### Referral Letters:

Referral letters make up a large part of what Crossroads does. It writes over 100 referral letters a month to various agencies. Since the homeless have no address to give to people, once someone stays at KARM for three nights they can request a letter to be written to other organizations to say they are receiving help there and get them other help. Letters to Cherokee Health Center, Knoxville Community Development Corporation, Human Services, Volunteer Ministry Center, and local libraries to obtain library cards are among a few of the places where letters can be written. These prove that KARM knows who these people are and are willing to help them.

#### Transportation:

There is a bus that makes rounds to local organizations three days a week. This service is important and necessary for Crossroads because it helps people get to places to get the help they need. The bus runs twice a day, at 8:45am and 11:30am, and tickets are given out before departure. The stops on the route are: Knoxville County Health Department, Community Action Committee, Cherokee Health Systems, Tennessee Career Center, Department of Human Services, and Social Security. Some of these locations are many miles away from downtown Knoxville, and a free transportation service is the only way some people could get to these places. This service is necessary in a city like Knoxville because the public transportation system is not the easiest to use. Also, if a special request is made for a stop not on this route it may be cleared with a staff member beforehand.

#### Mail:

Having a place to receive mail is also vital for someone who is homeless. KARM's address can be used to receive any letters or important mail, like disability checks, and is handed out on a daily basis. Every day at 1:30pm, excluding Sundays, mail is checked and distributed. HMIS ID must be shown to collect mail, and one must pick it up themselves or give written or verbal consent to have someone else retrieve it for them. Mail left after seven days is sent back to the Post Office. When a staff member knows that it is a check of some sort, it is put into a different pile of mail and tracked separately.

#### Messages:

Like the mail system, telephone messages may also be left at Crossroads. Each message is taken down and left in tray for people to look through. This system is time-consuming for the staff members and unorganized for the homeless to retrieve their messages.

#### Technology Available:

There are currently four telephones and two computers available for use. Telephones may be used for ten minutes at a time and computers for 15 minutes. If, however, someone is using the computers in order to job search or fill out applications, their time may be extended. A television is also on during the course of the day. If not broadcasting the news, a PowerPoint presentation is scrolling with information relating to Crossroads and when organizations will be on site.

#### Space Provided:

The actual sitting room for people to use in the facility is a great service on its own. Some people need stability and structure in their day, especially those with mental illness, and being able to have a safe place to come, sit down, not worry about their bags, is what they really need. There is only a problem with this service if people

come in day after day and after a long period of time are not engaged by any of the staff. Crossroads does not intend to be a day care for these adults, but to provide a secure place for the homeless to re-start their lives.

The outdoor safe space is also an asset to Crossroads. It seems contradictory that a day room would need outside space as well, but the people who use this facility spend most of their time outside, and just one hour inside can feel like a whole day because they feel trapped in. But having a place off the main streets where they can sit is also a necessary resource.

### *Triage*

Triage is where the process of recovery starts. It works just like a hospital emergency room does. Each time someone new is entered into the HMIS system they are interviewed and asked questions about their problems and how they came to be in their current situation. Triage will also be conducted when someone walks in with a crisis. From there, a staff member assesses their situation and figures out how urgent their problems are. The staff has to look at what each person needs and determine the quickest and best way to get them help.

Crossroads is aimed at developing pathways to assess people where they are, and then to engage them and point them in the right direction so they can take the steps they need to solve their problems. Crossroads does not want to become a place where people get stuck. But each person that comes in is different. For example, someone who is using the facility for the first time may only need a little help. They might have job skills and some money but they just need a safe place to stay for a short time. Or another example would be that someone admits to struggling with an addiction. There is a small window of opportunity to get them help while their emotions are raw and they want to change. If something like this has happened to anyone they can be referred to KARM's recovery programs. On the other end of the spectrum though are those who don't have any job skills or those who struggle with mental illness. Those people are going to take longer to get back on the right path and

they will need more help. This process helps create structure and accountability. Once someone is directed somewhere to get help, they are to report back on what they found out and the next step they are going to take.

This formal process also helps by making it easier for a staff member to get involved. If a staff member was to just sit down with someone and ask what all their problems were the one getting help might feel intimidated or stop communicating because they are embarrassed. So doing this in a formal interview setting allows them to avoid an awkward situation and understand that someone is really trying to assist them in getting connected to someone who can help.

### *Organizations Involved*

Crossroads views itself as the starting point for homeless people seeking assistance. Once someone comes to the Welcome Center they can figure out what resources that person needs and get them connected with the right people to help them. That is why partnerships with other organizations are so important. Crossroads can't fix every problem, so it tries to be a facilitator and bring in the right people who can fix help in specific situations. This helps Knoxville by first not duplicating corrective services. Each organization has its own field of expertise and specializes in that one area. Crossroads is about efficiently leveraging each organization's strengths to its best capabilities. This conduit also helps by cutting down on the amount of lag time a person entering the system encounters before they can get assistance. By assessing their needs quicker through triage, they can be connected faster to the services they require and their time is spent more productively.

Before Crossroads even began steps were being taken to get outside organizations involved. First, staff leveraged previously established relationships with people they knew and had already worked with in the past to inform them about Crossroad's mission and how they wanted to achieve it. It started with Burt Rosen, CEO and President of KARM, talking to anyone who would listen about the design of the Welcome Center. He networked with other presidents and directors in the area that he

had previously had relationships with. This form of active recruiting was the most beneficial. Once they would describe the mission, people could come down and look at the facility and talk about how they wanted to be involved. Almost everyone they talked to was interested, but the biggest challenge was whether they could afford to send a staff member down to Crossroads for a few hours a week. A compromise was reached with some organizations where Crossroads wanted the outside staff to feel comfortable walking in at any time and they would be given space to do work in when it was convenient for them. So some organizations come in on a consistent basis weekly or monthly and others come by when they have the time to help. This process of recruiting is on-going as well. Networking is constantly being done to seek out organizations that could supply helpful resources to those in need.

### *Partnerships*

#### Cherokee Health:

Offers indigent primary healthcare to those in need but who do not have insurance or income. Cherokee Health recently won the contract to provide this service because they can do it more efficiently and cost-effectively than the Health Department can. They also provide free flu shots to the homeless. It is the biggest organization that Crossroads works with because it is easy to get people physical or mental healthcare from them, and it is conveniently located. The transportation bus line stops at its main facility, or people can walk to the nearby clinic facility. Crossroads writes referrals to this organization.

#### Knoxville Health Department:

Nurses visit on-site monthly to administer TB shots and return a few days later to administer test results. They also come quarterly to do STD testing for people. The bus line operated by KARM also stops at the Health Department so people can receive some healthcare services under TennCare insurance.

Veterans Association and the VOA:

The VA visits on-site on Mondays, Tuesday s, and Wednesday s from 9-11 and attempts to connect with veterans who need healthcare or financial assistance. The VOA comes once or twice a month, and works to give housing, employment, and training to homeless veterans.

Job Corps:

After seeing the need to help the population of 18-24 year olds, Crossroads contacted the local Job Corps. If there is a request someone from the Job Corps will come in on the last Wednesday of the month. Participants will be given assistance filling out applications, interviewed, and receive a follow-up appointment at the Job Corps office where they will get further assistance.

Department of Human Services and Social Security Office:

Crossroads writes referral letters to both of these organizations and directs people to get in touch for assistance with food stamp services, Medicaid and TennCare, family assistance services, and various other issues. Both offices are stops along the transportation route.

Samaritan Ministries:

On-site HIV testing is done quarterly in collaboration with the Health department and Helen Ross McNabb. Samaritan Ministries runs the test and does follow-up counseling after a positive result. They also provide counseling services on a normal basis.

Helen Ross McNabb:

HRM helps those with mental illness. Their homeless program, PAC, works to connect those in need with the correct resources to receive stable housing. Andy

O'Quinn, who is the organizer of PAC, visits multiple days a week and is a case manager for several residents.

Community Action Committee:

The CAC helps people get into housing. The biggest way in which Crossroads works with them is by getting people connected to their Homeward Bound program. It is a program that assists the homeless in achieving self-sufficiency through case management, basic skills training, employment, housing, and transportation assistance.

Knoxville's Community Development Corporation:

Crossroads talks constantly to KCDC. It is the city's primary housing management organization, and all of their programs can be used by Crossroads to get the homeless a place to stay. Staff will write letters of recommendation to KCDC to get them housing, and if denied will personally attend the appeals sessions.

Compassion Coalition:

This organization strives to bring awareness to both churches and social cause organizations and show how working together will be more beneficial to all as opposed to working separately. It attempts to educate each group about the resources available in the community and be a networking tool. KARM is able to get a lot of volunteers from this service, which helps them run Crossroads more efficiently.

Carson Newman College:

Nursing students visit Crossroads once or twice a week during the semester to administer blood pressure tests and lead health presentations. They attempt to educate on various relevant topics such as back care, hygiene issues, building self-esteem, and taking medications.

## Chiropractic Services:

An individual doctor donates his time every Wednesday afternoon to offer chiropractic assistance and personal prayer.

## *Resources Wish List*

Being a non-profit organization, there are always going to be resources that would make the Crossroads service even better. Listed below are some of the requests from the staff.

### 1. Space:

One of the top things on the list for Crossroads is a larger space. The current room they operate in gets crowded and does not have enough room for private conferences or consultations. There are no offices for other organizations to maintain permanent space in as well. When Crossroads initially opened, they underestimated the number of people who would use the facility, and that means the space needed was underestimated as well.

Crossroads hopes to be moving into another part of KARM in the near future, and remodeling the outside space as well to include a small amphitheatre and more sitting space. The new Welcome Center will be much larger, and will have private conference rooms to make someone feel more at ease when seeking help.

### 2. Basic Amenities:

A resource that would go along with the triage process would be having a room of standard emergency supplies for people. Socks, backpacks, a change of clothes, hygiene necessities, and over-the-counter medications would help set people more at ease when they are just coming into the situation of being homeless. These resources would allow someone physically and mentally to get back in control of their life.

### 3. Physical and Mental Health

Basic medical equipment would also be a significant addition to the facility. Currently the staff has ibuprofen they can give out, but it would be better to have a

basic set of equipment they could use in case of emergency. Also, having a trained nurse on staff or even there on loan from another organization would be a big help. Instead of having to go to the hospital a nurse on site would be a more cost-efficient way of helping. A nurse could also answer basic health questions and educate the people.

Aside from physical health, having a trained therapist on site would do a lot of good for the mental health of the homeless who use the facility. A lot of people become homeless because of some traumatic event, and they need to deal with that before they can get anything else accomplished to get back on their feet. A real human connection is sometimes better than any medicine, and would be a great addition to the services that Crossroads already provides.

#### 4. Transportation

Being able to offer more transportation services is also on the wish list of resources. The bus they currently operate is only in service three days a week, and can only take around 12 people at a time. It would a great service if they could offer the bus to go more places around the community and to drive people to their personal appointments.

#### 5. Technology

More technology is also needed. There are only two computers for people to use, and approximately 120-170 people use the facility a day. That just isn't enough to allow people to check their e-mail or look for jobs. Someone to train people how to use basic computer programs would also be a nice addition.

A community voicemail system would also be a piece of technology that would make the process of receiving messages more efficient. When talking to a member of staff, they said that writing down messages took up a lot of time and the process of handing them out was inefficient. They said that instead if each person could have their own voicemail account box in the system to retrieve their messages, it would streamline the process and allow the staff to not have to lose time working on that and instead

focus on other problems. A grant can be sought for the technology to make this solution available.

## 6. Volunteers

More volunteers are also needed in Crossroads. They seek after volunteers who can make a commitment for a year, working a few hours a week. Currently there are 21 volunteers, but in reality they need at least 42 in order to run more efficiently.

## 7. Specialized Services

Crossroads would also like to expand in the area of tailoring services to meet their guests' needs. The vision would be having rooms available for people with similar needs to be able to go into and have workshops throughout the day. This could help multiple people at one time, and then people would also see that they are not alone in their situation and that hope is not gone.

### *Learning Curve*

It took many months to work through all the initial problems. At the start it seemed that everything they were doing was a problem. Initially only three staff were hired to work in the facility, and no volunteers. Crossroads was only open Monday-Friday, and they didn't know what rules were necessary for the space. Luckily, they went into it knowing they would have to be flexible and be determined to learn from their mistakes. These mistakes can become lessons on how to replicate this business model more effectively from the beginning.

The first thing that Crossroads learned was that they underestimated the amount of people that would use the Welcome Center. When they first opened, they expected 50-75 people to use the facility every day. However, currently they consider a light day to serve 150 people. This led to space being a problem almost immediately. Along with the shortage of space that was available, the flow of the room was a big problem. When it was initially opened, the check-in table to scan ID's was located in the opposite corner of the room as the main entrance, which led to people not checking in and making the area very congested. A systems engineer was brought in to do a

consultation of the room to make it flow better. In an already chaotic environment, an effective and organized layout calms down the room. They also didn't anticipate needing office spaces for on-site visits from local agencies. A fundamental part of Crossroads was going to be working with outside agencies to be more effective in helping the homeless population, but bringing those groups on-site to do consultations and talk to people was not something they considered. It has helped tremendously in getting the homeless the resources they need, but the current room doesn't have private offices and makes that task a little harder.

Other problems included not having an organized system for mail filing. There was at first one small area for mail, which is now made up of two large file drawers and is organized. Also, one computer and two telephones were all they had initially. The amount of people using the facility just grew so quickly and Crossroads had to learn to adjust as well.

### *Expansions Plans*

Crossroads is anticipating expanded its current facilities in the next few months. First is the plan to move into a different room in KARM. This new room will be more functional in many ways. It will have private offices in the back of the room, which will allow more organizations to come in and let more personal interviews to be done. It also hopes to add a full room of computers so more people will have access to technology. Hopefully there will also be an assistant who can monitor the room and help people set up e-mail accounts and search for jobs.

Secondly an outdoor park project is looking to break ground in the course of a few months. The current parking lot will be converted into an outdoor park area. This area will contain more tables and chairs, bathrooms, a bag storage area, a concession stand, and a stage for music and other outdoor events. This project is two years in the making, and hopefully ground will be broken in the next couple months.

### *Replication*

Crossroads can easily serve as a model of a day room facility geared toward helping homeless people to get in touch with the services they need. Mr. Lay talked about how, if a city already has a mission center, it is really easy to duplicate Crossroads because most of the resources required are already present. It would be working with the same donor base, there would already be relationships established with local agencies in the city that would buy-in to the project, and a suitable facility might already exist inside the mission.

If an organization wasn't affiliated directly with a mission of sorts, its best option would be to target local churches in the community to help raise awareness for the need of this service and get them to support the project. Then it would be wise to visit places like Crossroads to see how this service was already being done and what it has learned and how it has grown. Not everything from the Crossroads model might be the best fit for every community, but the basic foundations are surely important and then can be built upon. That is what Crossroads did in the beginning by working with the VMC and seeing how they operated their day room service. A few organizations have visited Crossroads in the past to use as a benchmark for the purpose of creating their own day room facility. One such is the New Life Day Center located in Lexington, Kentucky.

### *Lexington New Life Day Center*

The Lexington Leadership Foundation has taken on a project to help the homeless and is working to create a day room facility in downtown Lexington. LLF is spearheading this project, but it has a lot of support from local churches, small businesses, and organizations like the Board of Sleepless in Lexington. The New Life Day Center will be an interdenominational faith-based facility, like Crossroads.

The goal of the center is to “provide direct support to persons experiencing homelessness, bridging gaps between our homeless neighbors and the operating resources currently existing to serve them as they overcoming life’s most challenging

barriers. Our services focus on individual strengths and needs through fostering attitudes of hospitality, respect, and love.” This is similar to Crossroads in that it is working to get faster and more efficient help to people in need. It is also attempting to be a bridge to the resources already available in Lexington and doesn’t want to duplicate help already being provided.

Knoxville and Lexington are similar in the size of the homeless population they are trying to reach. The city of Lexington is very scattered though. The layout of organizations makes it difficult for someone to get access to the services they need without help. Often the homeless are also uneducated about the services offered to help them out of their situations. With a place like the New Life Day Center, they can learn what steps need to be taken to help them recover quickly. Also, there is no service like a day room in Lexington currently. There are many shelters where the homeless can go at night to sleep, but no place for them to spend the day. This creates a problem for the city as a whole. Many businesses downtown suffer due to the amount of homeless people wandering the streets and using their facilities.

The New Life Day Center is not open yet, but that is due only to the fact that they do not have a space to operate in. Funding for year one of operations is already in place and a 15 passenger van for transportation has already been acquired. They have been looking for a facility downtown, and should be able to open in the next few months.

During the process of getting this project underway, representatives from the Board of Sleepless have visited three separate day room facilities in order to set benchmarks for operations and learn what they have done in order to be successful. One of these included KARM’s Crossroads Welcome Center. When Christian Postel visited Crossroads, he had three main questions to ask:

- What do you wish you would have known on Day One?
- What would you have done differently based on that knowledge?
- With your knowledge now, what do you think you could have done but didn’t think to do when you started?

These questions were necessary in order to start off the New Life Day Center as successfully as possible. Since Crossroads is three years ahead of Lexington, it was a good idea to learn from them and others what worked and what didn't.

One of the best lessons Lexington learned from Crossroads was that the flow of the room is extremely important. Crossroads had to bring in an engineer to help them better design how traffic would come in and out because their first set-up was inadequate. Because of this knowledge, the New Life Day Center plans to bring in an architect once a facility is acquired to help them lay out the room in a functional way.

Lexington will start operating the HMIS system that Crossroads uses. It will help to keep track of people using the center and give demographic information as well. The system also helps by identifying what each person's problems are when they first start using the facility and keeps track of their progress as they go along.

The New Life Day Center is also copying the transportation service that Crossroads provides. In a city like Lexington where everything is spread out a bus taking people to partnering organizations and appointments and interviews is vital.

Even though the point of a day center is to be a place where the homeless can come inside and receive help, an outdoor space is also necessary. Crossroads taught Mr. Postel that being inside was less comfortable for them because they were used to open spaces and moving about freely, so having a safe and comfortable area outside was also important to the success of the center.

The way that staff and volunteers should dress was also a big learning point. Crossroads found through use of surveys that the staff dressing casually made the facility more comfortable for the people using it and made themselves more approachable. Dressing nicely in business attire further separated the staff from the people they were trying to help and created unnecessary barriers.

When collecting personal information, private spaces are also necessary. The New Life Day Center will include several private offices because they learned that homeless people are more responsive and willing to give out this kind of information when they feel safer.

Small notes on efficiency have also been extremely helpful. Ways to administer bus passes and allow time for computer use are helpful because Lexington can see how they already work and why. All of these things have helped to give ideas to creators of the New Life Day Center and put them ahead of the learning curve so that they can be more efficient more quickly and help the homeless population in Lexington.

Along with the basic structure of services that this day room will provide, it is adding several other opportunities to the homeless it aims to help. First, Steve Polston, the Executive Director, has found that of the population of homeless people a significant portion are art-oriented in some way. By offering art supplies to people who use the facility, they will have an outlet for artistic expression. The New Life Day Center hopes to be able to have art shows every few months to showcase the artwork being done. Volunteer opportunities will also be available to those wishing to serve. Small groups with their life coaches will be able to go on outings like picking up trash and painting various facilities throughout the day. The New Life Day Center wants to help people get the help they need, but also wants to provide ways for them to stay motivated. When someone doesn't have a job or anyplace to be, there is no structure or discipline in their life. So by providing them with tasks to accomplish, they will learn what it feels like to be successful again and continue to be motivated to get out of their situation of being homeless.

The Lexington Leadership Foundation also realized that being faith based was important in providing a service like this. The government can provide this service and they do in some areas, but Mr. Postel said that it would probably be a lot less beneficial to the community. The commitment that comes from volunteers in a faith-based environment is typically stronger than the commitment and sense of purpose that springs from hired employees. Also, the only way the government would provide this service would be if the community spoke out about it, and it is easier to get the work done if it springs from a private organization.

## Conclusion:

Knoxville needs Crossroads. If not for a day room service like this one, there would be an extra 200 people out on the streets every day. These people could be committing crimes, creating pollution, or scaring the tourists. Instead, Crossroads is a place where these people can come and be safe and figure out how to recover from their state of homeless. These people can get back to being a contributing member of society again. The private sector should be providing this service as well, not the government. The government spends billions of dollars every year on national recovery programs for the homeless, when instead the problem lies locally, and local organizations need to step up and fix the problem. It can be done quicker in the private sector as well, where politics won't slow down decisions.

Suggestions for possibly improving Crossroads include looking at how the New Life Day Center is going to structure its volunteer opportunities. I think that supplying the homeless people with outlets to serve and accomplish things is a great idea. It is understandable that without structure someone can start to feel unmotivated and lose hope about getting out of their circumstances, but by having something to do it could help to spark that desire to change.

A service like Crossroads can also be replicated in other cities. It is a solid benchmark for organizations to look at that is effectively helping the homeless people of Knoxville to gain access to the services they need. It has already been in operation for three years, during which it has learned a plethora of information about what some of the best practices are for a day room service and how to partner with local agencies to achieve maximum results. The problem of homelessness may never truly disappear, but organizations like Crossroads and the New Life Day Center are setting the stones to strategically attack the problem in hopes of one day putting themselves out of work because no one will need their service any longer.

## Works Cited

Granruth, Laura Brierton and Carla Hett Smith. *Low Income Housing and Services Program: Towards a New Perspective*. National Low Income Housing Coalition. Washington. 2001.

*Homelessness & Poverty in America*. National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. <<http://www.nlchp.org/hapia.cfm>>.

Knoxville Area Homeless Management Information Systems. 2009 Annual Report.

Knoxville Area Rescue Mission. <<http://www.karm.org/>>.

Maslow, Abraham. *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. 1943.

<<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>>.

Oxford Analytica. *Cutting the Cost of Homelessness in U.S.* Forbes.com. August 28, 2006. <[http://www.forbes.com/2006/08/25/us-homeless-aid-cx\\_np\\_0828oxford.html](http://www.forbes.com/2006/08/25/us-homeless-aid-cx_np_0828oxford.html)>.

*Snapshot of Homelessness*. National Alliance to End Homelessness.

<[http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/about\\_homelessness/snapshot\\_of\\_homelessness](http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/about_homelessness/snapshot_of_homelessness)>.

United States. Conference of Mayors. *Hunger and Homelessness Survey*. Washington, 2010.

United States. CRS Report for Congress. *Homelessness: Recent Statistics, Targeted Federal Programs, and Recent Legislation*. Washington. GPO, 2005.

United States. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*. Washington. 2009.

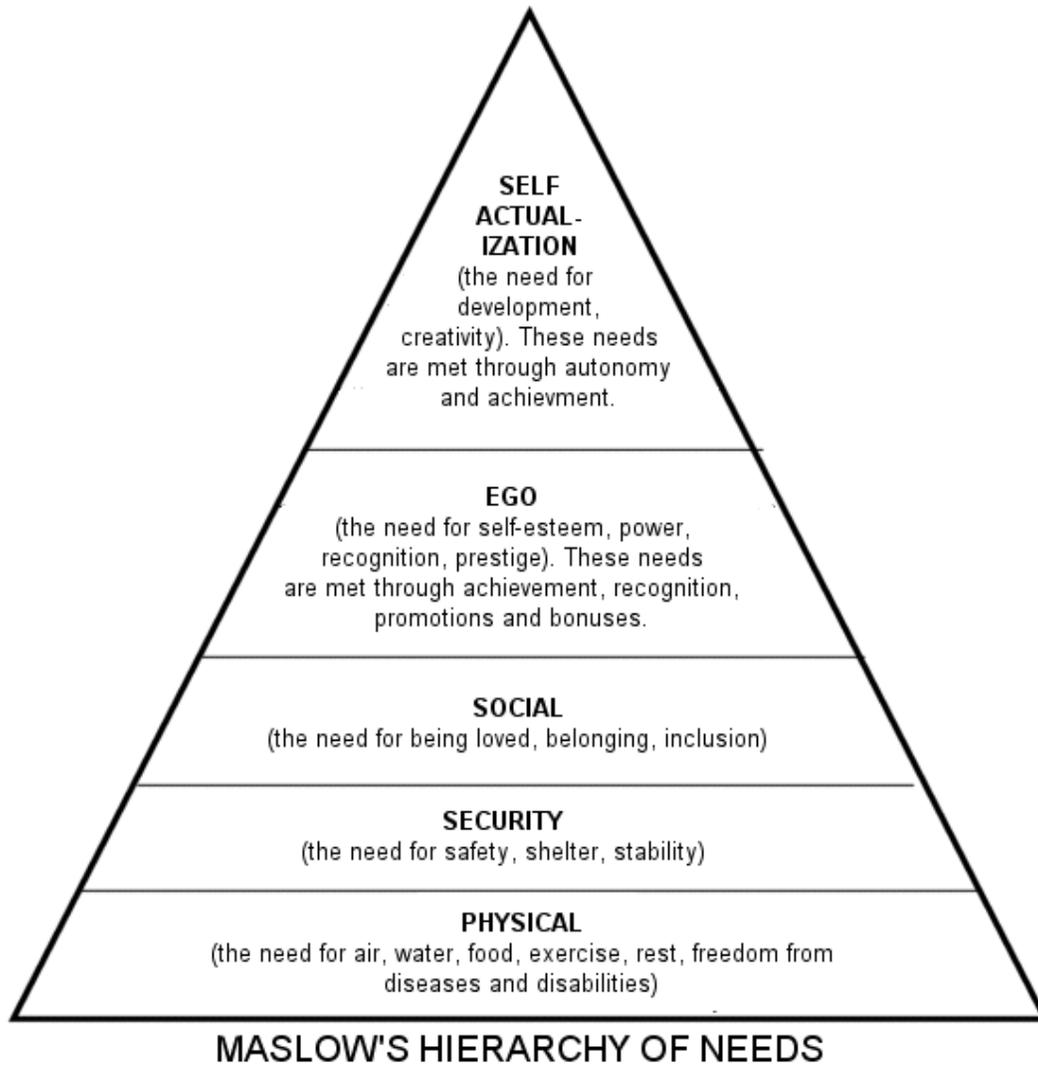
United States. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. *Opening Doors:*

*Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.* Washington. 2010.

The Volunteer Ministry Center. <<http://vmcinc.org/about>>.

Appendix A

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



## Appendix B

### U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress

#### Homeless Persons and Households by Sheltered Status, Single Night in 2009

Household Type	Number	Percentage
<b>Total People</b>		
Sheltered	403,308	62.7%
Unsheltered	239,759	37.3%
Total	643,067	100.0%
<b>Individuals</b>		
Sheltered	215,995	53.3%
Unsheltered	188,962	46.7%
Total	404,957	100.0%
<b>Persons in Families</b>		
Sheltered	187,313	78.7%
Unsheltered	50,797	21.3%
Total	238,110	100.0%
<b>Total Family Households</b>		
Sheltered	60,843	77.5%
Unsheltered	17,675	22.5%
Total	78,518	100.0%

## Appendix C

### Knoxville Area Homeless Management Information Systems 2009 Annual Report.

#### Active Clients in KnoxHMIS from September 1, 2009 to September 1, 2010

- 62% of active clients were male while 38% were female
- 68% of active clients were white and 26% were black
- 23% of active clients were employed

#### 44% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Knoxville have a disability

	Chronically Homeless	Not Chronically Homeless
Mental Health	34.49%	29.36%
Physical/Medical	17.25%	23.74%
Alcohol Abuse	15.99%	14.03%
Drug Abuse	13.35%	10.36%
Physical	6.40%	8.97%

#### Overall Trends in Homelessness:

From January to September 2010, 3,251 individuals sought services for the first time.

Of those individuals:

- 14% were chronically homeless
- 31% were children
- 49% were either a single female head of household or a child in a family headed by a single woman
- 8% were U.S. Military Veterans

Since the 2009 KnoxHMIS Annual Report was released, there has been:

- A 9% increase in the number of children entering homelessness
- A 31% increase in the monthly average of new individuals experiencing homelessness in Knoxville

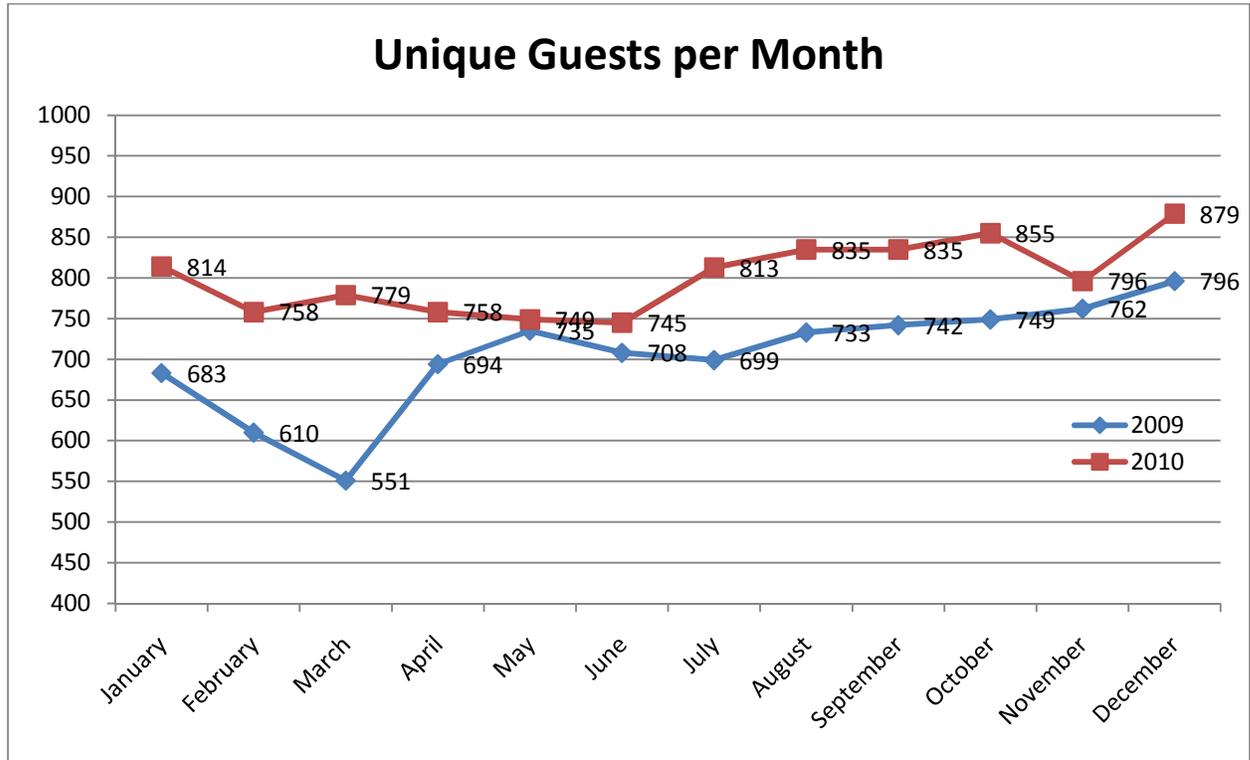
## Appendix D

Interview with Greg Lay, Director of Outreach for the Crossroads Welcome Center  
March 7, 2011

1. What was the need for an organization like Crossroads?
2. What are the differences in what you do and what the VMC did?
3. What were the goals/mission of Crossroads from the beginning?
4. What problems did you want to help solve? / What service are you delivering?
5. How was the idea created? How did it get put into action?
6. What were some of the initial problems you had?
7. Why did you want to partner with outside organizations? How did you go about getting other organizations involved?
8. What does a partnership look like? (Do they visit you or do you go to them?)
9. How does working with outside organizations help to maximize efficiency?
10. How does the HMIS system help that?
11. How many people work/volunteer? What about as case managers?
12. Are the recovery programs part of Crossroads or KARM?
13. How do you receive your funding?
14. What shortcomings or weaknesses do you have as an organization?
15. What are common daily issues/problems?
16. Do you think being a faith-based organization makes a difference?
17. What are some of your plans for the future? Do you want to grow?
18. What are some resources that would be on your wish list?
19. Is there a problem with people just sitting during the day?
20. Why do you think Knoxville needed an organization like this? How does Knoxville benefit?
21. How do you think Crossroads is replicable in other cities? Why?
22. What are suggestions you would give to other organizations wanting to start something like this?

Appendix E

Crossroads Welcome Center Yearly Demographic Information



Appendix F

HMIS Common Intake Form (see attached pages)