



PRESS RELEASE
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Suncoast Partnership Receives Grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation for Plan to End Homelessness in Sarasota County

Sarasota, FL – Early in 2011, prompted by Sarasota County Government, the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness initiated a process to develop a Plan to Prevent & End Homelessness in Sarasota County. With funding from Gulf Coast Community Foundation, the organization is moving forward to produce and begin implementing the Plan.

Gulf Coast recently awarded the Suncoast Partnership a \$50,000 grant to complete a long-term strategic plan with goals, leadership, costs, and measurements to better coordinate and streamline efforts to prevent and end homelessness in the Sarasota community. The Suncoast Partnership will present the Plan for adoption by Sarasota County, municipal governments and other community stakeholders later this year.

“The Gulf Coast Board recognizes that homelessness is a multifaceted community challenge that impacts everyone,” said Mark Pritchett, senior vice president of community investment at Gulf Coast Community Foundation. “High unemployment and foreclosure rates have resulted in a new economic reality. We need a smart, cost-effective approach to address this regional issue.”

The face of homelessness has changed dramatically over the past several years, with 37% of the current homeless population experiencing homelessness for the first time. In 2010, Sarasota agencies provided financial assistance and other services to 4,283 people who were homeless and an additional 11,951 people at imminent risk of homelessness. Additionally, the State of Florida Department of Education recently reported that 1,259 Sarasota County schoolchildren were homeless during the 2010-2011 school year.

Beginning in January, over 600 community members, including many people experiencing homelessness or who had once been homeless, participated in community workshops in North Port, Sarasota, and Venice to learn about and address major barriers to preventing and ending homelessness. Following in the footsteps of communities nationwide, the purpose was to achieve a community consensus on goals and strategies to prevent and end homelessness resulting in reduced community costs for health care, public safety and criminal justice as well as improved quality of life for the entire community. The workshops were led by Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason and Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness Board Chairman and former public defender Adam Tebrugge.

“This is a community Plan,” said Richard Martin, Executive Director of the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness. “If we are to achieve excellence in our mission, community members from across Sarasota County need to be engaged. Everyone is both an ambassador and stakeholder in the success of the Plan.” Martin, a former Sarasota mayor, is also Board President of the Florida Coalition on Homelessness.

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