



LOCAL NEWS

# Redlands forum asks 'How do you house the homeless?'

The event was a step to finding permanent answers that will work for the city, organizers said.



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Dora Gallo, president and CEO with A Community of Friends, discussed housing and the Liberty Lane project at a homelessness forum at the University of Redlands on Thursday, March 7, 2019. (Jennifer Iyer, Redlands Daily Facts/SCNG)

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Daily Facts

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forum on Thursday, March 7.

It was the last of four forums held by the Redlands Charitable Resources Coalition which are paving the way for a summit and culminating in recommendations to the City Council on [permanent solutions to homelessness](#) in the city.

“Whether you are a compassionate individual, or you hate homeless people, the goal of reducing the number of homeless on the streets of Redlands is what we’re after,” organizer Craig Turley told the crowd. “How we get there is what we’ll be determining.”

Dora Gallo, president and CEO, and James Ramirez, director of services, with A Community of Friends, first discussed the group’s other housing projects in Southern California before giving an update on Liberty Lane.

“Our philosophy in our social services program is recovery is possible; anyone can change from one day to the next,” Ramirez said.

The local project designed for homeless veterans and low-income families was delayed more than a year by a [lawsuit brought by a group of residents](#) who were worried about air quality, density, traffic and the effect residents with substance abuse or mental health problems would have on the neighborhood. A [judge threw out the lawsuit](#) in October.

“There are a lot of misconceptions out there about people who need this kind of housing, and whether or not they can exist and live peacefully within a community of other people,” Gallo said. “Our

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philosophy says they can with the support provided by the services staff. It is an opportunity for them to reintegrate back into society.”

With the goal of getting people off the streets permanently, there’s no other way, she said.

“You want people to have the same access to services and conveniences that we all have, and if we don’t provide that in an actual setting, how will they be successful?” she asked.

The 80-unit project is currently waiting for funding from county, state or federal sources before it breaks ground, which could be about a year away.

Plans include a community room offering healthy cooking classes, crisis intervention groups, and money management classes. There will also be property managers, security cameras, and support from county services.

Permanent housing solutions such as this do not currently exist in Redlands, she said.

After the presentation, audience members asked about what can be done now to address homelessness, and ideas were floated about allowing accessory dwelling units such as granny flats in the city, and building [tiny home](#) villages for the needy.

The

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upcoming summit in late April or early May will be a town hall format with an open mic for anyone to share their ideas before organizers put final thoughts down on paper to share with the City Council.

Attendee Cheryl diPretoro is a volunteer at the women's cold weather shelter because a homeless person once saved her life, she said, when some unsavory types took notice of her on an otherwise empty street in Buffalo, N.Y.

The forums have offered some interesting insights, she said, but seeing real change come out of them will be the hard part.

"It'll be great if the city listens," she said.

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## **Jennifer Iyer**

A lifelong Inland resident, Jennifer Iyer started working in journalism at The Press-Enterprise in 2000.