

**Date:** 20 May 2010

**From:** Don Hawkins, Executive Director of Homeless & ReEntry Helpers, Inc.

**To:** Anyone interested in Street Outreach and Street Ministries in Indianapolis

**Subject:** Organizing Volunteers, Street Outreach & Street Ministries into a “Homeless Helpers Task Force”

I have been called a lot of negative things in my short 63 years, and some of them I probably deserve, but none of them have gotten me more motivated as being called an “enabler” in the context that it is being used today. As a volunteer, I have always believed that by my helping or giving a homeless person food, clothing, etc. that day, that it would “enable” him or her to get to the next day, in hopes that it would be a better day for them.

We all have read what the Press and some of our fellow street outreach and service providers have said about us and our efforts to help the homeless and we are not happy about it. That is not to say that some of their criticism was not correct, because it was, and we collectively, have to do something about it. We need to organize ourselves into a more cohesive group, a team if you will, that will make us more productive to the homeless people we serve and to the existing service providers that are currently trying to help them.

We now know that not everyone got what they wanted when Davidson Street Bridge and other “camps” were closed down, because as we all know, there are no easy solutions to these kinds of problems:

- The neighbors did not get all the homeless out of their neighborhood
- The homeless that the HELPERS were working with, in establishing relationships, got displaced AGAIN
- The service providers and HELPERS that were helping them before the move, had to find there new locations and re-establish contact with them to regain their trust, of which I believe they done a great job.
- To those that live on the street, we just scattered a bunch of broken homeless people, proving to them that once again society really doesn't give a damn about what happens to them. We know that this is not true, but we sure have a hell of a way of showing it sometimes.
- So Now What? Keep the status quo? Or, do we start doing something about it?

I, like you would prefer to do something about it. If you are currently helping to do something about it, or you want to help do something about it, I hope you will join with me in forming a short-term problem-solving task force. Attached are my notes for a proposed “Homeless Helpers Task Force” that we volunteers, helpers, street outreach and street ministries are going to put together to expedite some short-term solutions to the homeless problems.

I am not expecting our little group to solve any long-term homeless problems, but I would like to begin compiling some notes and suggestions from you on how we can start working together on some solutions that may help solve some of the short-term problems. Especially the problems brought to our attention by the news media, the business community, and the local neighbors the last few weeks, caused by the Davidson Street Bridge incident, like:

- Too many homeless in one neighborhood because of the door-to-door delivery service from our volunteers
- Too many volunteers going to the same location, too often, delivering too much food, clothing, etc.
- The homeless harassing the neighbors and businesses customers
- Trash and human waste in the neighborhoods from the homeless
- The homeless misusing the business owner's property and restrooms

**Together, we can help solve these short-term problems.** We need to get organized, educated, and trained on how we can be better serve the people we are trying to help. We, as a team, need to learn which service providers are better qualified to get the homeless off the streets of Indianapolis and into some kind of permanent housing so they can begin getting their life back together.

