

## After study shows who Path of Life helped, association designates another \$334,000



Dorothy and William Tapia fill out paperwork while receiving aid at the Health to Hope mobile clinic. Craig Patrick, right, and other medical staff were helping people living near a vacant gas station in Coachella. JAY CALDERON/THE DESERT SUN

# CVAG votes to add homeless services

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USA TODAY NETWORK

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments has voted to expand a program to combat homelessness, following results of a study showing CVAG funds reached 65 people in the program's first seven months – including some that are now in permanent homes.

CVAG Executive Committee voted on April 30 to expand the scope of a contract with Riverside-based nonprofit Path of Life Ministries, which oversees the homelessness prevention and response program CV Housing First.

CVAG's original contract with Path of Life authorized the nonprofit to provide short-term rental assistance to keep people in their current homes as well as to provide temporary rentals before placing them into permanent housing. The contract also allowed Path of Life to operate physical offices in the Coachella Valley and to establish an emergency hotline. It budgeted under \$865,000, according to a staff report.

The report by Palm Desert-based research

### The youngest Path of Life client in the Coachella Valley was an infant.

firm HARC, Inc. found the youngest Path of Life client in the Coachella Valley was an infant. The oldest was 94 years old. And in between, the report identified veterans, survivors of domestic violence and people that have lived with a disability among the clients that entered Path of Life programs.

The vote to expand CV Housing First designates an additional \$334,000 in order for Path of Life to establish these new services and funds:

■ A pair of two-person "outreach navigation teams" to field calls about people living in parks, encampments and on the streets. The teams will visit people experiencing homelessness, inter-

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view them and offer to connect them to housing, healthcare benefits and employment support. The teams will cost \$244,316.

■ A \$36,000 "special needs fund" for small miscellaneous expenses, like helping a client to pay a fine, purchase a license or repair a vehicle.

■ A \$36,000 fund for rapid rehousing assistance, which can help clients cover rent for six to 12 months.

■ An \$18,000 marketing campaign to advertise CV Housing First.

Because CVAG's contract with Path of Life allows it to reimburse the nonprofit for \$2.5 million over two years, the change does not add funding to the contract, according to a staff report. As of April 2, CVAG had reimbursed \$502,000 to the nonprofit and raised more than \$1.7 million to fund the contract for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

The vote to expand the contract comes after a preliminary study tracking participants in CV Housing First followed 161 people served by Path of Life between July 1, 2017 and January 31, 2018 – counting 65 people in programs funded by CVAG and 96 people in programs not funded by CVAG.

Palm Springs Councilmember Christy Holstege, who serves on the CVAG Homelessness Committee, said the preliminary report persuaded her to support expanding the contract. It's important for CVAG to take a "data driven" approach, she added.

But another member of the Homelessness Committee, Cathedral City Councilmember Mark Carnevale, said he's not satisfied with Path of Life. He said the nonprofit wasn't available to field the city's phone calls, and he doesn't think it has done enough to reach out to people experiencing homelessness in his city.

"I don't feel that Cathedral City has gotten the value from Path of Life at all," he said.

The CVAG Housing First program took shape in the summer of 2017, after the emergency homeless shelter Roy's Desert Resource Center closed in Palm Springs.

The CVAG Homelessness Committee initially set out to hire a contractor to provide homelessness services in the West Valley, but expanded the contract to cover the entire valley as six cities, Riverside County and the Desert Healthcare District kicked in funding.

The focus of CV Housing First is to



**Now homeless, Sherwin Goynes holds a picture of himself from his younger days when he worked as a clerk at the Coachella City Hall.** PHOTOS BY JAY CALDERON/THE DESERT SUN



**A makeshift structure provides shelter for homeless people at an abandoned gas station near the Dillon Road exit of Interstate 10 in Coachella.**

prevent people from becoming homeless or to get them back into a home.

HARC's initial report, released in April, describes the population served by

the program in its first seven months.

Here are some preliminary findings:

The HARC report also recorded the housing outcomes for 56 people that left

Path of Life programs by the end of January 2018.

"Looking specifically at clients who have exited the program under CVAG-funds, the program seems to be quite effective, as 82.6% exited to a permanent destination, and all because they completed the program as intended," the report says. "Additionally, average income slightly increases among participants at exit."

A more comprehensive study to be published by HARC in June will aim to show the impact of Path of Life over time, and to compare those outcomes to Roy's Desert Resource Center.

"This will help to determine not only if clients are exiting to permanent destinations, but also if the Housing First model being employed by CVAG funds results in more permanent destination outcomes compared to Roy's Desert Resource Center emergency shelter model," the report says.

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