

Homeless in Kapolei

Forum tackles the issues; seeks solutions

According to a point-in-time count taken on January 24, 2016 by Partners in Care, the number of homeless in Ewa increased by 98 percent since 2015. The count for “unsheltered individuals” was 202. During that same period, the number for downtown Honolulu decreased by 19 percent, which suggests that increased enforcement of the sit-lie ban has been effective. However, it also implies that the displaced homeless population has relocated to other parts of O’ahu, including Kapolei.

For several years now, Kapolei has been faced with the problems that come with homeless encampments on private property and in parks and on the beaches. Jayne Arasaki, director of operations for Seagull Schools, was one of the first businesses to reach out for help from area legislators, including Councilmember Kymberly Marcos Pine, Representative Sharon Har and Senator Mike Gabbard. There had been an increase of homeless families camping in front of the school, which serves children and the elderly. Safety had become an issue. “I appreciated how quickly they responded by putting me in touch with the people who could help,” said Arasaki.

Homeless Forum

However, as shown by the increase in numbers, the problems had escalated. This prompted



Councilmember Pine to bring the community together to get first hand perspectives on the issue, and come up with a coordinated effort to find workable solutions. Pine reached out to Kapolei Properties Division for help in contacting landowners and tenants. She organized a forum, which took place on September 15, 2016, and included businesses, organizations and government agencies. Arasaki was one of the 40 participants.

“I learned that there are four types of homeless: lawbreakers, the mentally unstable, people down on their luck, and those who want

to be homeless,” she said. “It’s obviously very complicated, which calls for a lot of different approaches.”

Participants also were able to describe their particular problems, as well as offer suggestions for steps that could be taken to deal with the various issues that were discussed. These were later referred to the appropriate legislators and/or government agency for follow up and action.

Some solutions

Some of the suggested actions businesses could take included enclosing dumpsters to reduce

access to free food, eliminating public access to power sources, cutting back bushes and trees to discourage camping and illegal activity, hiring security and installing surveillance cameras around businesses, and installing a city-wide surveillance system.

First, call service providers

One participant recommended that businesses having a homeless problem first call outreach teams, rather than the police. The service providers will work to give the homeless individuals a helping hand and get them into a shelter; the police’s job is to enforce the sit-lie law, which only displaces them to another location.

Who to call

U.S. Vets – Barbers Point is leading the effort to aid Kapolei businesses seeking help. Please contact Darryl Vincent or Kim Cook of U.S. Vets at 808-672-2977.

Next steps

Pine says the forum was a good first step.

She said the plan of action is for concentrated and continuous monitoring and follow up with businesses, the community, area legislators, and government agencies to find the best, most manageable solutions.

“We appreciated our City and State officials and community leaders taking the time to contribute to the discussions on ways we can compassionately address the homeless situation in Kapolei and Kalaeloa,” said Pine. “This is part of a cooperative initiative to help the homeless find the housing they need.”

