

7-28-01

Homeless facility may be in Beverly Hills future

By Sandra S. Koonce
Editor

Rumors of two Beverly Hills homes being set aside for a Women's rescue facility and for housing the homeless - or some other type of rehabilitation housing - surfaced this week, prompting an investigation by Citrus County Code Enforcement personnel.

Gary W. Maidhof said Wednesday that a complaint had been filed with his office and a staff member has been assigned to look at the properties at 27 and 29 South Melbourne to see if someone is

already operating a facility there that might be in violation of county codes.

Maidhof explained that an organization could set one family or individual up in a home and the property would be still considered residential; however, if there were a number of unrelated persons in a home, with a manager, it would be considered a non-residential use.

The concern of several citizens surfaced as a truck from The Path, a thrift shop that is closing its doors in Inverness, moved items into one of the houses this week.

Information was also distributed by the Hernando based organization that the thrift store would become a part time operation at the homes, with Saturday garage sales set to move items formerly sold

through the thrift store.

DuWayne Sipper, executive director of The Path, did not comment on the housing situation but agreed to meet with *The Visitor* editor Monday to talk about their plans.

The mission statement of The Path reads: "Our mission is to provide a Christian living environment that allows true rehabilitation. To allow long term stays for life changing, biblical teachings to take effect. To encourage the work ethic, for those without a home in Citrus County."

George Delin of 23 Beverly Hills Blvd. is listed as a member of the Board of Directors, which has a website.

The homes on South Melbourne are in an area of the community that has no deed restrictions.

BRIEFS

Input for street lights

Homeless shelter here

... but county still addressing questions

By Sandra S. Koonce
Editor

After more than four years of being thwarted for different reasons and at different locations in Citrus County, Dewayne Sipper's dream of a home for the homeless may have come true in Beverly Hills.

His organization, The Path, is the new, legal owner of two homes on South Melbourne and work is in progress to bring the homes up to code.

On May 7, the home at 29 South Melbourne was approved for a 200 AMP upgrade to the electrical system. The same home received a new air conditioning unit this week.

It was Sipper who, in 1997, advocated that the old jail in Inverness be saved and turned into a shelter for the homeless. The building was demolished.

His Christian-based organization found a place in Lecanto, but it had to be rezoned with approval from the neighbors. It didn't make the cut.

A recent thrift shop set up in Hernando was successful in many ways, he said, but his volunteers were worked to death and the over-head was more

than the group could afford.

"The garbage bill was \$200 a month," he noted. "A lot of material that comes to a thrift shop is junk."

Then, there was land in Ozello that was given to the organization, but the land could not be developed by his organization due to flooding conditions. They sold the land and, with that money, were able to buy the homes in Beverly Hills.

Sipper is used to the rejection. The disappointment. The fact that people don't want a shelter in their area.

But, Sipper, who "came here to die" five years ago, has a vision that he continues to expect to come to fruition. The homes in Beverly Hills may be part of the answer.

When he came to Citrus County to live with his father, he said much was missing from his life. He was introduced to Jesus, he said, because he was sure he "would be meeting him soon."

He found that God was calling him and he feels that he is on The Path that God wants him to follow.

Yes, he says, he wants a shel-

ter for the homeless.

But, is a place for the homeless, he asks, for those who are bums and derelicts - or is a homeless person a battered woman who needs to escape? A person who has just lost her job and has children to support and no longer can make it on her own? A pregnant girl who has

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BRIEFS

School about to begin

Citrus County Schools will start Aug. 13. The Visitor will print bus schedules that pertain to Central Ridge students in next week's paper. Forest Ridge and Citrus Springs Elementary and Citrus Springs Middle School all have announcements elsewhere in this paper concerning open houses/meet the teacher opportunities during this coming week.

Beverly Hills MSBU council

The regular meeting of the Beverly Hills Municipal Services Benefit Unit advisory council will meet at 9 a.m. Friday, Aug. 10 at the Central Ridge Library. Residents are encouraged to attend, ask questions, and give input on proposed streetlights.

Maidhof sent a letter to Sipper on Monday asking him to file a proper application.

Sipper's Path is smooth for now

By Sandra S. Koonce
Editor

The two homes The Path of Citrus County has purchased to be used for rehabilitation or shelters are complying with directives from the county.

DuWayne Sipper sent a letter to Gary Maidhof, director of the Department of Development Services for Citrus County on Aug. 8 outlining what The Path, a Christian based organization, plans to do on the properties at 27 and 29 S. Melbourne.

In his letter, Sipper said that the home at 27 S. Melbourne would house men and the house at 29 S. Melbourne would house women. There are already residents in the homes. Sipper lives in the house that houses the men.

Sipper's efforts at cleaning up the property resulted in two, 20-yard dumpsters being filled with trash from inside the home at 27 S. Melbourne.

Addressing the issue of garage sales in the letter, Sipper stated The Path would like to have an occasional garage sale to

help raise funds. The Path had become most visible in the county when the organization ran a resale shop in Hernando for several months. There has been concern among Beverly Hills residents that the purchase of the two homes in a mixed-use residential area without deed restrictions would lead to continuous garage sales.

Sipper promised he would stay in close touch with Maidhof's office and "inform

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SIPPER

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you of any major changes that we make in the future."

"For right now," he said, "I have my hands full getting our programs stabilized."

On Aug. 18 Maidoff sent a letter to Sipper that stated that as long as the group abided by the County's standards and they obtained the appropriate

permits for construction activities, no County enforcement action was warranted.

Maidoff did specifically tell Sipper that under the County's Land Development Code garage sales were limited to a period of no more than four days in any 12-month period.

The residents of the facilities, as an obligatory part of living in the shelter, must attend church and Bible study.

They also must go to school for retraining and look for jobs.

LETTERS

Kudos to Korol for stand for homeless

To the Editor:

Bravo and compliments to Paul Korol for his terrific article with reference to the possibility of having homes for the homeless here in Beverly Hills.

Here is a man who tells it like it is, and pulls no punches.

Those who oppose this venture surely are not good Christians. Maybe they look down on their fellow man, instead of caring, sharing and helping.

Whatever happened to God's precious words, "Love Thy Neighbor"?

Too many here in our locale are oblivious to the needs of distraught, depressed, people who are very much in need of compassion, understanding and a show of concern.

Those who frown on, and will fight to maintain status quo here quelling this really fine project may someday find "No Admission" signs at the proverbial Pearly Gates.

I admire and respect Duwayne Sipper for his unending endeavors to serve the Lord by way of providing a shelter for those in need. I think it is wonderful that he pursues, despite all the past disappointments.

Try walking in the shoes those in need, imagine that you are the "me" in need - and shout to yourself aloud, "there but for the Grace of god go I."

Many of our homeless have never known what a blessing is to have these things that you take for granted every day.

I suggest, and make a plea our Beverly Hills residents search your hearts and souls, find some way to perpetuate God's works by helping at not hindering His good work.

Duwayne Sipper deserves the support he can get. Let us then turn the obstacles in opportunities.

We all give generously to many charities and we often do not even know where the money goes. Why not give time and funds to our own community where we can restore lives and faith in god for the homeless.

God Bless those who help and fill the need.

Patience Allison Hartbauer
Oak Ridge

8-11-01

Citrus County volunteers rank among the very best

Good morning, Citrus County eastsiders. Citrus County volunteers are among the best in America.

Their value is truly priceless. Consider one of the following recent requests for a volunteer:

■ **AARP Tax-Aide.** AARP Tax-Aide is an "all-volunteer" program that prepares returns, both paper and e-mail, free of charge from Feb. 1 to April 15 each year, Monday through Friday, usually from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Crystal River, Homosassa, Homosassa Springs, Inverness and Beverly Hills. Individuals with skills in tax preparation and possessing good communications skills are urged to volunteer. It's a great way to share your knowledge. AARP training is governed by the IRS via AARP Tax Aide and includes a comprehensive one-week training session. Those interested in becoming electronic filing counselors must undergo separate training. The Tax Aide program reimburses volunteers for their program-related mileage. To volunteer, call Rebecca at 382-0756 or e-mail rbachman@tampabay.rr.com.

Go to www.aarp.org/taxaide for more information.

■ **Nail care.** Sharyn Hunter, activities director of the Life Care Center, off Lecanto highway, is requesting volunteers to file and paint fingernails. You can set whatever days and times you are available. Call her at 746-4434.

■ **Help wanted.** Teleya Grinsted, activities director for

Cottages of Gentle Breeze, in Citrus Springs, is requesting volunteers for bingo, crafts and reading. Call her at 489-3979.

OKADA. OKADA, a nonprofit organization, promotes human independence and personal enrichment by utilizing the unique qualities of specially trained dogs, the majority of which come from animal shelters. These once-abandoned animals are careful-

ly trained to enhance human life, to guide, to give and/or maintain independence for disabled individuals. To learn more about OKADA Special Guide Dogs, check out their Web site: www.okadadogs.com. They are seeking volunteers to assist with web-site design, fund raising, speaking engagements, video updates, grant writing, and dog training. A foster home is needed for one dog. Call OKADA at 344-2212.

■ **Camp aid.** Camp E-Nini-Hassee, the Eckerd Youth Alternative program for girls in Floral City, is in need of volunteers to tutor students in reading, writing and math. Assistance is also needed with crafts, special projects and field trips. This is a residential program for girls who have problems at school or home. The Floral City site, which has been successfully helping youth since 1969, houses 60 girls between the ages of 10 and 18. Contact Mary Taylor at 726-3883.

■ **Wildlife help.** Nature World Wildlife Rescue needs volunteer to rescue, transport, pick up and rehabilitate injured wild animals. All vol-

unteers go through a training program. This is a very rewarding program. Monthly meetings are open to the public. Call the wildlife pager at (352) 710-0068 or call 795-7110 for more information.

■ **Shelter help.** The Path of Citrus County has opened a shelter in Beverly Hills. DuWayne Sipper, executive director of The Path, has included the following on his "wish list" for volunteers: Grant writers, letter writers, small fund-raisers, phone callers, thrift store operations, transportation, cleaning, shop work and mentoring. Call DuWayne at 527-6500 or e-mail him at diverse@citrus.infl.net.

Call our office (527-5423) in order to receive RSVP benefits while volunteering at any of the above sites or make an appointment to come in and learn about our other volunteer opportunities. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program recruits and places volunteers, with nonprofit organizations and agencies throughout Citrus County. RSVP strives to provide each volunteer with an experience that will be personally enjoyable and satisfying. All registered members of RSVP, age 55 and above, are provided at no cost with supplemental accident and liability insurance coverage while en route to and on volunteer assignments.



Doris Mauricio
RSVP

Doris Mauricio coordinates volunteer opportunities for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. She may be reached at 527-5424.

NEED CERTIFICATION?