

The Path of Citrus County Thrift Store



JIM SHIELDS/For the Chronicle

Recently the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the opening of the new thrift store by The Path of Citrus County. Participating were: Renee Melchionne, Chamber ambassador; John Porter, Chamber ambassador; Sherry Knight, store manager; Debbie Quinn; Danny Quinn; Donna Wyatt, Chamber ambassador; and Dennis Miller, Chamber executive vice president. The Path of Citrus County's Thrift Store is located on Hwy 19, in Nottingham Square in Crystal River, just past Crystal Chevrolet. For information call the Path's main number at 527-6500.

County needs to help aid homeless

Most Americans have no idea what it is like to be without a home. No roof when it's raining; no heat when it's cold. And because it is beyond our experience, it is many times, beyond our notice.

More than 400 people right here in Citrus County have no home and the majority of Citrus Countians are oblivious.

The homeless crisis is more evident in large cities. Solutions also are more prevalent. Homeless shelters, soup kitchens and charitable organizations try to keep up with the needs of those with no home. But it's harder in smaller communities to bring enough resources together to meet needs.

There are some groups trying to offer support, but it's just not enough. There are several churches that offer meals, thrift closets, food and financial support on an individual basis. The Path of Citrus County is a non-profit rescue mission and has a program to help the homeless. There are requirements and expectations that individuals must agree to if they are to take advantage of the programs offered by The Path, but assistance is available to get folks on their feet. The Path receives no government support but operates a thrift store to help fund its ministry.

However, The Path can only do so much.

Citrus County is in need of additional help for those disadvantaged people within its borders. Charitable and civic organizations should put this issue on their radar screen when they are funding needs. Churches need to step up and expand ministries. The county needs to be involved by looking for ways to support or, perhaps, offer assistance in providing shelter.

People find themselves homeless for many reasons. While some might have just made continual poor choices, there are those who are emotionally and physically needy; those who have

slipped through the cracks of the welfare system; those without the skill needed to live a productive life; and those who have been thrown away by an intolerant society.

It's hard to see such devastation in this fast-growing community. People are moving into Citrus County by the thousands. Beautiful homes are being built in record-breaking numbers. This community has always been known for its compassion toward those in need. But the homeless situation has always seemed far away.

It is here and as we see new homes sprout up around us at every turn, but let us not forget those who have no home at all.

THE ISSUE:

Citrus County's homeless.

OUR OPINION:

Look for ways to help.

Rescue mission makes two pledges



DuWayne Sipper, executive director of the Path of Citrus County, right, leads night administrator Becky Keene, center, and women's administrator Debbie Quinn in a prayer before the group's weekly staff meeting on a recent morning. The Path is a faith-based rescue mission and homeless shelter in Beverly Hills.

■ The Path of Citrus County vows to try not to turn anyone needing services away and to pray for supporters.

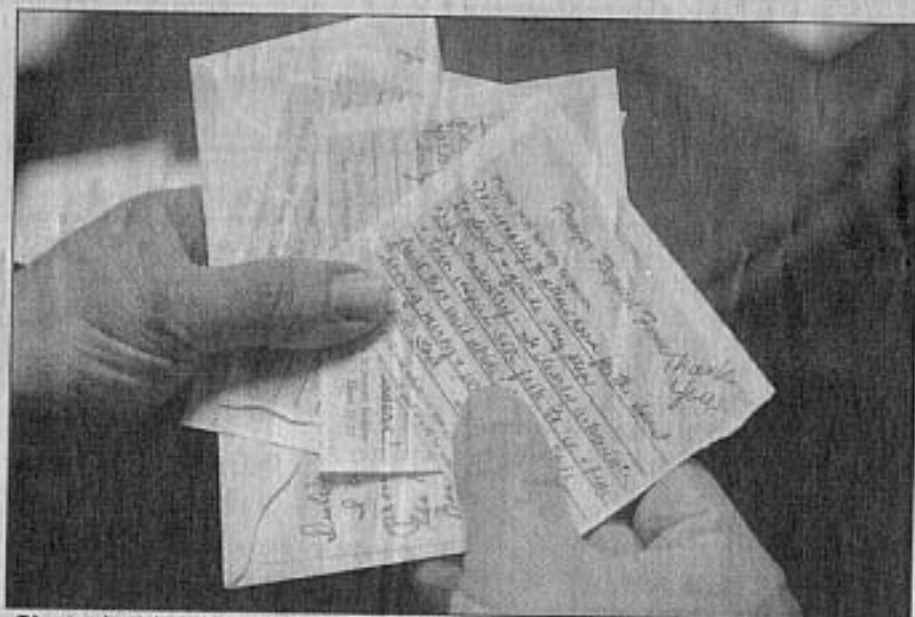
By GAIL HOLLENBECK
Times Correspondent

BEVERLY HILLS — DuWayne Sipper has a heart for the homeless. As executive director of the Path of Citrus County, he has worked for the past four years to raise support to feed, clothe and shelter those in need.

To start the new year, Sipper, his staff and the men and women receiving help from the rescue mission made two pledges to the ministry's supporters.

"We promise to pray for your needs for the entire month of January," Sipper wrote in a letter to supporters. "We will pray for you in small groups, in Bible studies and in staff meetings. We will pray for you individually, and we will pray for you and other supporters corporately in our chapel services. We will pray for you fervently, and we will pray often."

Supporters were invited to fill out a prayer card and return it to the ministry.



Sipper holds a few prayer requests he has received. Sometimes they ask for prayer in healing; other times they are simply a note of encouragement or a thank you, Sipper said.

"We also pledge to you we will help everyone in our community that comes to our door for as long as our supplies hold out," Sipper wrote. "We do not intend to turn anyone away. Anyone with real need can come to us, and we will do our best to help in every way we can, safely and according to the law."

Sipper reiterated the mission's purpose.

"I'm sure you are aware that the Path of Citrus County exists to help people who are in urgent need, people without a place to stay, hungry people, people who have been living in the same clothes for weeks, people trying to kick addictions and bad habits, people who are lonely, people without hope."

The Path offers hope by pro-

Please see **PATH** Page 8

Donations, prayers sought for homeless

By GAIL HOLLENBECK
Times Correspondent

There are many needs at the Path of Citrus County. An entire day of services for a homeless person only costs an average of \$27.77.

"Unfortunately because of the demand, we still turn down most of our phone calls for sheltering the needy in our county," DuWayne Sipper, executive director, said. "But with your help, we will get more housing to help us with the program in the Lord's time."

HOW TO HELP

Here is a list of some of the ministry's needs:

Diapers (newborn to size 4), bath wash, shampoo, washcloths, baby towels, clothes for babies; personal hygiene products for women; men's deodorant; dish detergent, laundry soap; standard-size washcloths; plastic trash bags, all sizes; clothes hampers; laminating machine; box fans; study Bibles with tabs; generator; car batteries; clean furniture; building materials; truck trailer for storage; tractor with implements; vehicles; land; volunteers to tend the gardens, work in the ministry stores, teach at the shelter and transport clients; houses to host garage sales of donated items; donations of salable items for the ministry store

Donations may be mailed to the Path of Citrus County, PO Box 3024, Inverness, FL 34451-3024. Call 527-6500 or visit www.pathofcitrus.org.

Along with the tangible help, Sipper makes it clear that the ministry is dependent upon prayer.

"The Bible gives us clear indicators that prayers are worth more than physical resources, no matter what men think they are worth," Sipper said. "I cannot tell you how many times prayers were answered because they lined up with what God had intended for us by doing what he asked us to do in the Bible. Very powerful and precious are the prayers of the saints."