

Homeless funding rebounds

► Grants to Oklahoma agencies were up 65 percent from shortfalls last year.

By **GINNIE GRAHAM**
World Staff Writer

After losing about 45 percent in funding for homeless housing programs last year, Oklahoma agencies rebounded with an increase of grants by 65 percent.

The Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Awards are competitive grants from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development for agencies that provide an array of services, including transitional housing, mental health support, job training and substance abuse counseling.

The grants are submitted through each community's continuum of care system, which is a network of homeless providers working with the city for an overall plan to eliminate homelessness.

Rather than individual agencies in a community competing against each other, the HUD awards are judged on each continuum's plan. The grants are based on how well the agencies in each continuum work to meet local needs.

Oklahoma upped its share

Tulsa Homeless Assistance Awards

Mental Health Association in Tulsa, \$916,431

The Salvation Army, \$447,110

Domestic Violence Intervention Services, \$149,370

Volunteers of America, \$285,579

12&12, \$112,458

Legal Aid Services, \$111,920

Community Service Council, \$129,113

Emergency shelters, \$164,183

Source: U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department

from \$4.2 million last year to about \$7 million. Tulsa agencies received about \$2.3 million.

"The effort put into the funding for the continuum grants does reflect well on the state's job in describing and defending that funding," said Jim Lyall, associate director at the Tulsa Community Service Council.

"Everyone is happy because we felt slighted last year. Even strong continuums performing at a good level took a hit last year."

The grants are not the sole

funding source for the programs. Many of the grants require a match, and most programs cost more to operate than the grant amount.

"This represents an opportunity for Tulsa foundations, business community and other funders to increase more matches and be a partner in the homeless issue," Lyall said.

The Mental Health Association of Tulsa received \$916,431 in six grants, which is the most of any of the local agencies. Most of the grant money will be used to operate services for its 219 housing units for people who were homeless and have mental health problems.

"Without these HUD grants, there would be a mass exodus of homeless into the streets," said Greg Shinn, associate director of the Mental Health Association. "These grants are absolutely critical for the housing programs in Tulsa. Many people would become homeless again without these programs."

The Mental Health Association owns its housing units, but funding is needed for operating the wrap-around supportive services. Services range from 24-hour supervised care to periodic visits from a case manager. The type of housing depends on the needs of the individual.

Grants also will fund the

homeless street outreach team and the Homeless Management Information System maintained by the Tulsa Community Service Council.

The information system is a computer network linking the city's homeless providers to allow for more specific information gathering and population counts over time.

Emergency shelters are funded based on a federal formula. Tulsa emergency shelters will receive \$164,183.

Nationally, the grants increased slightly from \$1.33 billion to \$1.36 billion. President Bush has requested \$1.6 billion for next year. More than 5,300 agencies received funding.

Tulsa's four major homeless shelters served about 4,149 people last year. Of those, 2,851 were male and the majority — 2,089 — were white. Most of the homeless — 3,072 — are between 18 and 55 years old, according to the Homeless Management Information System.

HUD requires an annual one-night count of homeless for its census. Oklahoma had about 4,869 people in shelters in the one-night homeless count in 2005.

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SARAH ORR/Napa Valley Register/AP

Kate Hanni speaks with a client in Napa, Calif. A few weeks after a long and unpleasant ordeal during a trip to the Gulf Coast, she took her fight for an airline passengers' bill of rights to Capitol Hill. And politicians are listening.

Real estate agent leads airline fight

► Travelers are calling for a bill of rights for airline passengers.

By **MARCUS WOHLSEN**
Associated Press

NAPA, Calif. — For more than eight miserable hours, Kate Hanni sat aboard a grounded plane at a Texas airport, yards from apparently empty gates. A few weeks after that December ordeal, the brassy real estate agent from California's wine country took her fight for a passengers' bill of rights to Capitol Hill.

And politicians are listening.

On Saturday, as JetBlue was in the middle of a meltdown that left some passengers trapped aboard planes for almost half a day, Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., introduced a bill that would prohibit airlines from keeping travelers on the tarmac for more than three hours.

And Hanni's congressman, Democratic Rep. Mike Thompson, plans to file a similar bill in the House. He credits her with calling the issue to his attention.

"We need the legislation right now because the airlines won't police themselves," Hanni, 46, said recently in an interview in her bright Napa living room, where windows frame vineyard-covered hillsides.

A mother of two who moonlights as the lead singer of a funk band, Hanni has become the unlikely leader of a gathering movement. She has apparently tapped into a deep well of anger among many travelers.

Hanni's American Airlines flight was diverted from Dallas to Austin on Dec. 29 because of storms. The agonizing wait on the tarmac, she said, was only the beginning of her frustrations.

Hanni, her husband and two sons waited another 2½ hours at the baggage claim before being told the bags would remain on the plane because the flight would continue on in the morning, she said.

American offered the put-out passengers only \$10 discount vouchers for hotel rooms, Hanni said. (A spokesman for American

could not confirm the amount but said the customer contract makes clear the company does not fully cover lodgings for weather-related cancellations.)

When she finally arrived in Dallas the next day to make her connecting flight to Mobile, Ala., Hanni said, a gate agent informed her that her bags were on the next flight to Mobile, but she was not.

"We're not going to quibble with the fact that we put our customers in a situation that they never should have been in," American spokesman Tim Wagner said. Passengers were kept on the plane in hopes of still getting them to Dallas that same day, he said.

In the end, Hanni said, it took her, her husband and two sons 57 hours to travel from San Francisco to Mobile, finally arriving at their ultimate destination, a lavish Gulf Coast spa, late on New Year's Eve.

Hanni said her December trip was supposed to be a restorative vacation, after she was jumped and beaten in June by a man in a ski mask at a house she was trying to sell. She ended up spending a big part of her trip in cramped airline seats and hotel rooms, wearing the same clothes day after day.

After returning home in January, Hanni began gathering the stories of fellow passengers' frustrations by e-mail. She posted many of them on a blog that quickly became the focal point of the passengers' bill of rights campaign.

By the end of the month, Hanni was in Washington, lobbying for pro-passenger legislation.

The movement gained momentum last week when a snowstorm left passengers trapped inside JetBlue planes at New York's Kennedy Airport for up to 10½ hours. JetBlue introduced its own customer bill of rights earlier this week.

Along with imposing the three-hour limit, Boxer's bill would require airlines to provide food, water and sanitary bathrooms to passengers stuck on the tarmac.

<http://strandedpassengers.blogspot.com>

Smith's burial decided by daughter's lawyer

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Anna Nicole Smith will be buried in the Bahamas, alongside her son, it was announced Thursday after a tearful judge left the decision up to the attorney for the model's baby daughter.

Richard Milstein, the court-appointed lawyer for 5-month-old Dannielynn, announced the plans not long after a judge gave him control of Smith's final resting place. He gave no timeframe for the burial.

Circuit Judge Larry Seidlin steered a surprise middle course in a dispute that became more urgent by the day when the medical examiner warned that Smith's body was rapidly decomposing.

"Who is entitled to custody of the remains of Anna Nicole

Smith?" Seidlin wrote in his ruling. "There can be only one proper and equitable answer to that question: Dannielynn, Anna Nicole Smith's only child, heir and next of kin."

The ruling came a full two weeks after Smith died at a Florida hotel at age 39 of still-undetermined causes.

Smith's estranged mother wanted her buried in her native Texas, while Smith's boyfriend wanted her laid to rest in the Bahamas.

The judge, who choked up frequently and sometimes blubbered as he explained his decision, compromised and gave custody to Milstein.

Smith's mother planned to appeal the judge's order, according to one of her attorneys, Tom Pirtle.

Two with ties to state still 'Idol'-ing

The Top 24 "American Idol" contestants were narrowed to 20 performers during Thursday night's live results show on the Fox network.

The two male and two female singers with the fewest votes were sent packing but were allowed to sing one last song in front of millions of viewers.

Former Tulsan Melinda Doolittle and Phil Stacey, who has ties to Shawnee, both moved on to the next round of competition.

But Paul Kim of Saratoga, Calif., said, "It hurts, man. It hurts," after he failed to snag enough of the 32 million

idol moments
by matt gleason

votes cast this week to make it into the Top 20.

Amy Krebs of Federal Way, Wash., didn't make the cut, either, because, as "Idol" judge Simon Cowell explained, she didn't make a strong enough impression.

"Idol" judge Paula Abdul called Nicole Tranquillo of Philadelphia a "brilliant singer" and Rudy Cardenas of North Hollywood, Calif., "fantastic."

But Abdul didn't have the final say. The country did.

PLAN:

Williams says he has contracts to buy land from the two main property owners.

FROM A-1

"The project I have planned — if it comes into fruition — will be a tremendous asset for Tulsa," he said. "It will be done well. It will be done right, and it will be done architecturally compatible. It will be a class act."

Williams said he has contracts to purchase land owned by Bill White and aerospace component manufacturer the Nordam Group, as well as a few other properties in the area called the East End.

The area is generally located between Detroit Avenue and U.S. 75 and between Eighth and First streets.

Nordam owns the most parcels in the area, with White next in line. When Nordam Chief Executive Officer Ken Lackey was asked if Nordam was negotiating with Wal-Mart, he said, "It's not Wal-Mart directly."

The White and Nordam properties had been part of a larger mixed-use development proposed by Global Development Partners, based in Washington, D.C. That proposal included plans for a new minor-league baseball stadium to house the Tulsa Drillers.

But Lackey said Nordam's land purchase contract with

Global was terminated in early January after Nordam asked a judge to release it from the agreement.

"They (Global) were never able to consummate the transaction pursuant to the terms of the contract," Lackey said.

He said Nordam's contract with Williams still depends on winning certain concessions from the city, such as tax increment financing.

White said Global "obviously got into financial difficulties and kept having delays."

"You know, a businessman can only wait so long," he said regarding why he opted to contract with Williams instead of Global.

Global Development's Tim Kissler said the level of complexity of what his company was proposing and the complexity of the financing made it a time-consuming process.

"We certainly gave it a solid effort. We came up with the financing, but albeit just a little too late for the sellers," he said.

Kissler said the proposed baseball field would have been on the White and Nordam properties.

"So, basically, you've taken the core of it, and we can no longer do what we planned with the stadium," he said.

The city's economic development director, Don Himelfarb, said that no matter what occurs with either proposal, "the city is committed to having the Tulsa Drillers in a downtown venue."

He also said the city has seen the proposed plans from both developers and that "we're confident either one would be a great addition to the East End."

Kissler said his mixed-use de-

velopment proposal is on a wait-and-see status.

"We're still interested in doing a project like we proposed in Tulsa, and we'll be exploring our options," he said.

Tulsa Development Authority Chairman Carl Bracy said whatever is developed in the East End needs to be something that helps downtown grow.

"Wal-Mart could be a tremendous engine in terms of funds for a Tax Increment Financing District," he said.

But he questioned whether a Wal-Mart would affect locally owned specialty shops intended for downtown.

"We need to look five to 10 years down the road and decide what we really want downtown to look like and work towards building a key destination point for all ages," he said.

Bracy said Wal-Mart has redesigned its stores that are in urban environments.

"In Little Rock, there is one in an exclusive neighborhood. I drove past it, and I almost didn't recognize it," he said. "It's amazing how they can fit right into the environment."

Jim Norton, president of Downtown Tulsa Unlimited, said he can't talk about a possible Wal-Mart store until an actual deal is made.

But he did say that if any big-box retailer plans to locate downtown, the appearance, landscaping and parking cannot destroy the fabric of downtown.

World staff writer D.R. Stewart contributed to this story.

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