

North Mason Resources is in need of more resources

By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

North Mason Resources in Belfair is struggling to keep up with the demand for services that it provides to more than 3,000 people annually.

The nonprofit resource center, which houses mental health professionals, a county nurse and services for veterans, teen mothers, the unemployed and more, needs to find a way to become sustainable or it may be forced to close, board members concluded at a January meeting.

"We are giving ourselves time to seriously talk about whether or not we can remain sustainable," said board member Kathy Tietz. "We're tapping the community every couple of months and we're not the only community group out there. It's hard."

The resource center is not behind on any of its bills, but due to a dip in donations at the start of the year and delay in funding from the county and grantors, the nonprofit has had to "rob Peter to pay Paul," said executive director Cat Ross.

Mason County pays for a homeless advocate to work out of North Mason Resources, connecting the homeless with much-needed resources, but the county had to postpone funding in January until the end of the month due to delays in its 2015 budget process.

Meanwhile, North Mason Resources received a



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North Mason Resources served a total of 3,239 people last year, including 275 homeless individuals or families. The nonprofit wants to set up a regular source of income from monthly donors so that it doesn't have to close its doors.

\$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound for 2015, but hadn't received the check yet by the end of January.

"It's just been slow coming," Ross said. "It gets down to the wire and when Jan. 1 comes along, rent is due and people need to be paid and the money isn't there. So we had to go through our reserves to stay up to date."

The cost to run North Mason Resources for one month is about \$10,604, which includes rent, utilities, supplies, insurance, gas and membership to community groups.

That figure does not include funds for the benevolence program, which helps people with paying their utility bills, gas to get to a job interview and other services.

When money is donated to North Mason Resources, often it's earmarked for benevolence, so that the mon-

ey can directly help those in need, former board member Linda Thomson said.

"The difficulty is when the money is earmarked, it ignores the organization's existence," Thomson said. "How do we pay our own bills? Where will all the clients go without the organization? I think North Mason Resources has earned respect from the community, but some take us for granted. There's a misunderstanding about our finances."

Last year, a total of 3,239 people from South Kitsap, North Mason, Lilliwaup and Shelton visited North Mason Resources for one service or another, including 275 homeless individu-

als or families who worked directly with homeless advocate Tyler Music.

More than 400 people dropped in to look for jobs at the WorkSource station during the hours it was open, while 369 veterans sought services from the Disabled American Veterans coordinator, Harry Tachell.

From November through January, Tommy Thombs from Mason County Public Hospital District No. 2 worked to help 96 people sign up for health insurance, and 235 people came in for mental or behavioral health services throughout the year.

Northwest Children's Outreach schedules clothing pickups at North Mason

Resources and the county nurse also stops in to schedule visits and work with expecting young mothers through the Nurse Family Partnership program.

Some of the various service organizations pay rent to North Mason Resources, but others, like WorkSource, do not.

The resource center would like a steady stream

of income from donations so that it can pay its bills regularly, without sacrificing the services that it provides, Tietz said.

Furthermore, the organization would like to regularly pay director Ross, who often goes without a paycheck in certain months so that the nonprofit can

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