

NMSU Archives
Oral History Collection

New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Mesilla Valley Community of Hope

2018

Hope Stories

Interview 4

Glenn Trowbridge Transcript Index & Excerpt

Las Vegas, Nevada's CARE Complex

Interviewed by David Lee del Norte

19 April 2018

at the CARE Complex, 200 Foremaster Lane, Las Vegas, Nevada

Sponsored by Doña Ana County Historical Society

Copyright Glenn Trowbridge — Copyright David Lee del Norte

Project History

The Mesilla Valley Community of Hope (MVCH) is a homeless services corridor in Las Cruces, New Mexico. In the 1970s, Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church began a small lunch service which later became El Caldito Soup Kitchen. As need for food and healthcare clinical service increased, the Las Cruces community supported the Saint Andrew's congregation with the opening of Saint Luke's Health Clinic. With a long history of compassionate services for visitors, the City of Las Cruces recognized the importance of limiting distance and travel-time between public health and human service organizations located throughout different parts of the city.

Incorporated as a non-profit in 1991, additional support continued to shape collaborative alliances with operations at 999 West Amador nearby to downtown Las Cruces. In 2011, following a particularly harsh "Deep Freeze" winter that caused health concerns and exposure deaths for the homeless, Mesilla Valley Community of Hope staff banded together with Hope Campus clients, appealed to the City of Las Cruces for sanctioned overnight camping status, and soon founded Camp Hope transitional living program.

In 2018, the Hope Stories project collected fifteen oral history interviews to learn about the legacy of organizational homeless services at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. The term "Corridor of Care" refers to a healthcare industry perspective known as the Consolidated Services Model that helps people to access health and human service related programs quickly, reliably, and within centrally located "Hub" or "Node" areas of potentially consistent preventative care.

This public history graduate project asked participating narrators questions about how the Las Cruces community first began to advance, reinforce, and collaborate with the actions necessary to become the Hope Campus at Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. Rather than conduct interviews with those who experienced homelessness, the project features staff and volunteer narrators who shared community engagement stories about the consolidated services “Campus” concept.

The project ended without narrators to represent the community’s food pantry. Founded in 1979, Casa de Peregrinos relocated to the Hope Campus as an alliance member during the 1991 opening, and today continues to serve Doña Ana County with increased food delivery and expanded satellite locations. Two additional perspectives from outside the Hope Campus: the fourth interview with Glenn Trowbridge took place at CARE Complex in Las Vegas, Nevada, an out-of-state counter-balance to the history of homeless consolidated services in the United States; while the fifteenth interview with Kit Elliott and Meg Long occurred at Aggie Cupboard on the NMSU campus, a satellite food pantry inspired by Casa de Peregrinos.

Today’s work to help the homeless in Las Cruces is the result of a compassionate, multi-organizational approach by non-profit service providers. In 2018, these five core non-profit organizations include Mesilla Valley Community of Hope; Casa de Peregrinos food pantry; El Caldito soup kitchen; Jardin de Los Niños educational program; and Amador Health Center (formally Saint Luke’s Health Clinic). With Hope Campus the geographic center of non-profit homeless service providers in Las Cruces, it is important to note assistance and resources offered by the City of Las Cruces, the New Mexico Department of Health, and the New Mexico Department of Human Services. For an updated and comprehensive list of regional community services, insightful for anyone experiencing homelessness, inquire City of Las Cruces or MVCH with search term “Las Cruces Community Resource Guide.”

Narrator Summary

Glenn Trowbridge was born in St. Albans, West Virginia, and lived in Las Vegas, Nevada for over forty years. With service in the United States Air Force, study in psychology at San Diego State University and business administration at National University, Trowbridge became director of human resources in Clark County, Nevada from 1979 to 2001. Trowbridge worked for a domestic violence non-profit organization called Safe Nest, served as Republican member of the Nevada Assembly from 2014 to 2016, and later became volunteer executive director of the north Las Vegas CARE Complex.

Originally an unsanctioned “Street feeder” program — today discouraged and considered an unwelcome distinction of well-intentioned “Do-gooders” — a group of advocates evolved their agenda, raised funds to purchase an abandoned drug house, and renovated the building into the Crisis Assistance Relief Effort or CARE Complex. Resources for those experiencing homelessness include a clothing closet, internet access computers, lockers to store belongings, a city bus-pass program, and services to re-establish important birth certificate and driver’s license identification documents.

In 2017, the City of Las Vegas approved the “Corridor of Hope” project on Foremaster Lane and North Las Vegas Boulevard, located within the immediate area of the CARE Complex and other homeless services. With an intentional consolidated service area similar to Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, and modeled after San Antonio, Texas’ “Haven for Hope,” the “Courtyard” outreach approach seeks to create greater access to temporary housing, medical care, counseling, legal aid, and employment resources in conjunction with CARE Complex services.

Index of first hour

- 00:04 - Interview introduction
- 01:20 - Role at CARE Complex
- 01:49 - Las Vegas, Nevada employment resources
- 02:38 - Sustainable income versus low-income housing
- 04:07 - Public transportation travel time to work
- 05:25 - Affordable living “Mini-houses” for the homeless
- 07:46 - Challenges of family housing resources
- 08:57 - “Street-feeder” program origin of CARE Complex
- 12:37 - Foremaster Lane hub for social service providers
- 14:08 - Las Vegas Catholic Charities
- 15:56 - Las Vegas Police Department “Conflicting goals”
- 16:41 - “Filling-in the gaps” at CARE Complex
- 18:33 - Theft and violence among the homeless
- 19:33 - Las Vegas homeless count by zip code
- 20:40 - Unsanctioned “Encampment” trespass laws
- 22:04 - Mental health crises in jails
- 23:25 - Competitive social workers and organizational grants
- 25:40 - Young Contractors donations to build CARE Complex
- 26:08 - The problem of homeless “Enabler” organizations

Index of first hour (cont.)

- 27:03 - Counseling services at CARE Complex
- 28:52 - Tourist views on homelessness and Las Vegas public health
- 30:09 - Undocumented migrant tuberculosis claim
- 30:46 - “Not Hispanic,” “White and Black” homeless at CARE Complex
- 33:14 - Doctor visits and Medicaid referral system
- 36:05 - Veteran homeless services and documentation
- 38:52 - Identifying specific issues related to homelessness
- 40:10 - Additional CARE Complex resources
- 41:00 - Benefit of consolidated services model
- 42:27 - Nevada rural poverty HUD programs
- 44:25 - Vouching for clients seeking housing
- 45:20 - Las Vegas soup kitchens
- 46:37 - Boomtown before to 2008 “Great Recession”
- 48:58 - Older average-age and identifying homeless
- 49:45 - “Shade Tree” women and children services
- 52:13 - Self-care and vulnerability as homeless service provider
- 53:00 - Institutional versus professional homelessness
- 55:34 - Birth certificate and identity document fees
- 57:32 - Client conversation and short biography
- 59:04 - “One-on-one” mentorship and landlord referrals

Index of second hour

01:00:57 - Volunteer training and learning social service process

01:01:58 - Nevada Homeless Alliance coordination

01:02:25 - Volunteer CARE Complex healthcare benefits

01:03:37 - Coordination between homeless services

01:05:09 - Veteran's Village and United Way grant applications

01:07:34 - Community messaging and Las Vegas generosity

01:09:57 - Las Vegas community monetary contributions

01:10:58 - "Corridor of Hope" plan for consolidated services

01:13:50 - "Shipping container" housing proposals

01:14:40 - Grant funding "Measures for success" follow up

01:17:14 - "Curing the homeless" through non-profit charities

01:18:57 - The problem with "Street-feeder" generosity

01:22:04 - Future of CARE Complex with "Coordinated service delivery"

01:23:01 - Hope Stories project description

01:24:09 - Social worker curriculum to account for funding

01:26:48 - Hope Campus Great Conversation description

01:27:31 - Organizational competition for grant money

Index of second hour (cont.)

01:30:04 - Empty baseball stadium near unsanctioned encampments

01:31:31 - Complexities of Las Vegas homelessness

01:33:54 - Challenges of resource sharing between organizations

01:35:47 - Closing thoughts

Interview 4 Excerpt — Narrator Glenn Trowbridge:

The whole issue of homeless is extremely complicated. It's multi-faceted with lots of problems, with each one of them, and if you just grab one out there, and just talk to him and say, "How come you're on the street?"

"Oh. I don't know."

We've had people come in, and talk to me in the in-processing, and they say well, they left home because they had, the chief of police was looking for them because they had a whole arm full of parking tickets that they didn't pay. And so they're away from the law is what they think.

They think the sheriff is gonna come arrest them, and take them back to Ogallala, Nebraska or wherever the hell they're from. And it's not the case at all. There's no warrant out for them. And they're not gonna do it for parking tickets anyway, but they don't know.

We have others that say the courts, you know, "I make ten bucks an hour as a fry cook at McDonalds, and the court — I work forty hours a week so I've got four hundred dollars a week coming in, and the court has ordered me to pay three hundred and seventy-five dollars to my wife for the three children."

Glenn Trowbridge:

And you say, “How in the hell am I?” You know. “I can’t do it. I’m running away. I’m going to Las Vegas.”

Unrealistic expectations of what you can do with your money. If the rule of thumb is you’re supposed to spend no more than thirty percent of your gross income on housing, and if you’re only making ten bucks an hour, and you figure thirty percent of four hundred bucks a month, it’s not enough to rent much of a place unless you get three or four roommates.

del Norte: Rock and a hard place.

Trowbridge: Tough to do.

Recommended Citation

Trowbridge, Glenn, interviewed by David Lee del Norte. April 19th, 2018. Hope Stories oral history project, New Mexico State University Library Archives and Special Collections.

Recording Information

Hope Stories 04 — 1h 36m duration. Recorded at CARE Complex, 200 Foremaster Lane in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Transcripts and Recordings

Listen, read, and request Hope Stories complete transcripts, sound recordings, and 2018 project research box at New Mexico State University Library and Special Collections.