

• **MEMORANDUM** •

DATE: April 18, 2014

TO: Task Force on Heroin Prevention

FROM: Eric J. Levitt, Simi Valley City Manager

SUBJECT: Agenda Item X. Discussion of "A Way Out: A Simi Valley Comprehensive Proposal Plan to Give Our Young Adults a Better Path to Choose"

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Task Force review and discuss "A Way Out: A Simi Valley Comprehensive Proposal Plan to Give Our Young Adults a Better Path to Choose."

OVERVIEW

The attached proposal was created by Kate Bennett, a community member, who will present it to the members of the Task Force for the Task Force's review and discussion.

SUMMARY

The attached proposal was submitted by Kate Bennett, a community member. It is recommended that the Task Force receive her presentation, review, and discuss the proposal.

A WAY OUT

A Simi Valley Comprehensive Proposal Plan to Give our Young Adults A Better Path to Choose

OVERVIEW

As a longtime resident of Simi Valley, I am pleased to submit this proposal to you in the hopes of making some very pragmatic efforts to change the lives of at risk teens and young adults in our community. Together, we all can achieve the goals lined out in this proposal. We can equip our city and its youth to lead productive lives. The task seems huge and it is. There have been so many organizations spring up from the devastation that our city has been through. Together, if we want to make real, long lasting changes in the lives of these youth and young adults, we must all come together. Proposed below are detailed ideas for solutions.

The Objective

- Need #1: A place for students to live who are residing with parents who are using drugs or are struggling with alcoholism. Students in our town are selling heroin or meth or other drugs because their parents have trained them to escape through drugs and alcohol. Some of these kids have great parents but have stepped out into an exploratory mission and believed they were invincible. They need a place to live and learn about living free from escaping with substance.
- Need #2: A network of community mothers and fathers who are willing to be called at all hours of the night for any of these kids to get help. Relationships with positive role models who are not their parents.
- Need #3: A collaboration of every single organization in Simi Valley to meet monthly and discuss progress and failure. (Incorporate teens who have overcome addiction and teens who can help us understand what they are missing and why their peers are using, in their opinion.

The Solution

- Recommendation #1: To purchase an area of land and build a house for these kids to learn how to live productive lifestyles. The home would be a sober living home (but not called a sober living center or home) where those housed would be given opportunities to learn coping skills, simple things like gardening, art through painting, drawing or photography, cooking, laundry, education and career planning. For those willing and interested a church affiliation and counseling. Community professionals would volunteer to teach or help with dental issues and grooming as well as medical checkups and drug testing. Police officers could dress in plain clothes and provide day meetings on how the community actually does care for them and wants to help them succeed and talk openly about the personal affect drug deaths and accidents have had on the police officers themselves. Basically, we as a community would go to an extreme to provide a **haven** to give these teens a way out of the life they've grown up in or have learned to cope in. In order to start at this home, our hospital would need to have a floor available for detoxing in the case where the person needs to get clean first. Or they could be sent somewhere else and then return to live in the house.
- Recommendation #2: Build a network of at least 20 people who are willing to be called at any time for help. People who are seeking to identify teens at risk through teachers or work places who call to inform of a student in need of such a relationship. We gently pursue them and build relationships with them. We pour our time into them and sometimes our money. We help them find jobs and don't give up on them because they become our responsibility.

- Recommendation #3: Every organization meets together in one place each month to discuss its progress, what it's identifying and how we can work together for one common mission over the next month. From the task force to NOM to church leaders to Youth Council to A Way Out, to our police department to hand selected community youth and teachers. We start talking to the kids who look the part and don't shy away from open talks with them for the purpose of asking them how we can help them. While using wisdom with who we choose, we arrange a meeting for some of them to teach us what THEY are facing out there. We need to hear from them more. That will require the trust built from the relationships of teachers and the network mentioned above.
- Our Proposal

It has been a great challenge for a city once hailed as the "Safest City in America" to now be featured on Dr. Phil for our heroin problem, even though he mentioned we are leading the country in the fight. Many organizations have sprung up because our community's heart has been broken for our young. To be able to tackle the problem with substantial "out of the box" thinking with regard to pouring money into a living center to reform and assist these young with a way out of the mess they or their families are living in, to have a network of people building relationships and seeking out those who need help and gently pursuing them, to collaborate all efforts and to understand from those who are or have been affected how we can better help on an ongoing basis are all ways in which we can provide pragmatic and extreme measures to help and to fight that which has set out to destroy our community.

Next Step

- Elaborate on each recommendation if there is an interest
- Meet with the task force
- Move forward with execution of each recommendation

Execution Strategy

Our execution strategy can be created once there is approval.

Resources

This will be the list of all the people and organizations working to help our community with the issues of drug and alcohol and how they relate to our children.

EXPECTED RESULTS

We expect our proposed solutions to provide significant results which can be outlined after the initial consideration.

PRICING

The cost of this program will be addressed upon approval.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kate Bennett
Community Youth Leader/Concerned Citizen/College Student