

Saying 'Yes' to Ending Homelessness

■ Second Annual Project YIMBY Day Helps Connect People With Services

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

Hundreds of homeless people connected Wednesday with the services they need during the 2nd annual "Project YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard) Homeless Connect Day" held at People Assisting The Homeless (PATH), a non-profit social service provider located off Beverly Boulevard in Hollywood.

Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti and



photo by Edwin Folven

West Hollywood City Councilman John Duran (left) joined Andrew Leeka, CEO of Good Samaritan Hospital, Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti and John Joel Roberts, CEO of PATH, during the presentation of a check from Good Samaritan to help stop the dumping of homeless people on Skid Row.

West Hollywood City Councilman John Duran

helped launch the event, at which PATH officials announced they have formed a partnership to prevent the dumping of patients on Skid Row after they are released from hospital care. Good Samaritan Hospital president and CEO Andrew Leeka presented a \$24,000 check to PATH CEO John Joel Roberts that will be used to fund a program where homeless patients will be taken to the agency's

See PATH page 26

INSIDE

■ Weekend Weather

A cooling trend comes to the area through Saturday. Chance of rain on Sunday.

■ Walk of Fame

Stars bring celebrities closer to the fans. See Page 8

PATH

From page 1

housing facility upon their release.

Roberts said the 2nd annual Project YIMBY Day was made possible through its partnerships with city and county government, as well as private entities such as Good Samaritan. The event is part of a national "Homeless Connect Day", where agencies all over the country held an "open house" for the homeless. He added that the goal is to give homeless people and others a chance to familiarize themselves with the center, which is designed as a one-stop-shop for people to receive the many services they need but cannot afford.

"The goal is to try to assist as many people as we can, and to connect them with the services that we offer. But the larger goal is to get people the services they need so they can end their homelessness," Roberts said. "We offer services every day of the year, but we wanted to highlight them at least once a year."

Hundreds of volunteers descended upon the PATH headquarters for Project YIMBY, staffing tables and helping to guide people who were looking for assistance. The services offered included everything from clothing giveaways and food, to health care and personal grooming. Opened in 2002, PATH's regional headquarters also offers a 98-bed shelter, legal counseling and a community courthouse, mental health and



photo by Edwin Folven

Vickie Henderson, manager of the Personal Care Center at PATH, shows pictures of some of the people she has helped to Andrew Leeka, president and CEO of Good Samaritan Hospital. Leeka and others toured the facility during Project YIMBY Connect Day, which was held on Wednesday.

spiritual counseling, and a job placement center.

Garcetti said the Project YIMBY Day is important on many levels, not only because it provides services to those who need it most, but also because it ignites a spirit of giving in the volunteers, and sets an example for the community that small steps can yield big results.

"We can end homelessness, but it requires all of us to say that we can each do something big to affect change," Garcetti said. "Across the country, communities are making big

changes. Neighbors are saying, I'm not going to let you fall down. It's my problem, it's the community's problem. People are turning around the politics of YIMBYism, and saying 'Yes In My Backyard.'"

Flora Gil Krisiloff, deputy to Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, said the supervisor is working to combat the problem of homelessness on a regional scale. She said this week, the Board of Supervisors approved a \$1.5 million pilot program to assist the homeless with vouchers they can use for

housing, and has dedicated more than \$100 million to solving the problem in the long term.

"Zev is a longtime advocate for solving the homeless issue, and really pushed the county to approve a hundred million dollars of new money to help solve it," Krisiloff said. "It is very important to him to have these kinds of days throughout the region."

Vickie Henderson, manager of PATH's Personal Care Center, said she was formerly homeless until receiving help from PATH. She now gives an average of 17 haircuts each day, and provides trims and facials for clients of the PATH Care Center. She said it gives people a tremendous boost to be clean and groomed, and helps them build the self-confidence necessary to take steps towards improving their lives. The walls of her little barber shop and salon at PATH is lined with photos of the people she has transformed through her work.

"I had a guy tell me he wanted to die, but now he knew he was going to make it," Henderson said. "It's something I hear on a daily basis and it's just beautiful."

Leeka, who toured the facilities Wednesday, said he knew he needed to get involved when he originally met Roberts and came to PATH to see for himself the good work that was being provided. He added that the recent controversy over hospital patients being dumped on Skid Row inspired him to go to Good Samaritan's Board of Directors to ask for the money to assist PATH.

"We are fortunate to have a

very innovative partnership, and it's only growing," Leeka said. "The first time I came here, I said to myself, there is something here. I was just taken aback by the good work. It got a hold of me and I knew there was something I needed to do."

Duran added that West Hollywood has long been a partner with PATH, and added that he participated to show the city's dedication to continuing its help. West Hollywood has experienced an increase in the numbers of homeless people in the city lately, he added, and officials are looking at ways to get more of them to access the services that are available.

"We are having an increase in the homeless problem in West Hollywood. As the LAPD slowly moves them out of Skid Row, a lot of them are moving into West Hollywood and towards Santa Monica," Duran said. "It's a multi-pronged approach. For the drug addict, we can help them through PATH. For seniors and children who end up homeless, we can do something there too. It's the mentally ill that present the most difficult problem, because they don't want the help and it's difficult to get them to accept the services. In West Hollywood, we take it on a case-by-case basis."

Roberts said PATH, which was founded in 1984, will continue to provide its services well into the future, but added that Project YIMBY is the one event that shows the public the need for support. He said that people can come to PATH's regional Center at 340 N. Madison Ave., or can learn of ways to help at the website, www.epath.org.