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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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To the Editor:

On behalf of the Malibu Task Force on Homelessness (MTFH), we heartily thank our Mayor and Council for approving the grant request made by our partner, OPCC, a highly-respected social service agency with over 50 years of experience and success.

This much-appreciated \$38,000 grant from the City of Malibu, combined with generous gifts from other major donors, will enable OPCC to provide, for one year, two full-time outreach workers to engage with homeless individuals in Malibu, and link them with OPCC's comprehensive, integrated system of care. OPCC will focus on helping homeless individuals find permanent housing, while also connecting our most vulnerable neighbors with needed services in areas such as mental health, substance addiction, physical health, and more.

The crisis of homelessness is growing, and our small town is not immune. Based on its 2016 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) estimated that there are 46,874 individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. Homeless individuals who were "unsheltered" in this year's count numbered 34,701 -- an 11.8% increase over last year. Locally, LAHSA's 2016 estimate of Malibu's homeless population was 161 individuals, all of whom were classified as "unsheltered."

(more)

from Jay Scott and Pamela Conley Ulich

Although the efforts of OPCC and the Malibu Task Force on Homelessness will not eliminate homelessness in our community, we are hopeful that this initiative, coupled with a townwide emphasis on public safety, will produce meaningful results by reducing the number of people living on our streets, beaches, and hillsides.

The threats to safety that Malibu's homeless men and women face every day are numerous, but the risks to safety are not theirs alone. The safety of *everyone* in Malibu is at risk when a shivering homeless individual lights a fire in a canyon encampment, when a person without needed medication becomes aggressive, when someone without access to addiction treatment gets behind the wheel on the PCH.

We applaud the City's recognition of the importance of addressing these risks, while at the same time working to help our homeless neighbors find housing and needed services. We hope that once OPCC services begin this summer, this initiative will demonstrate its worth, and that the City will consider funding this program in the future as part of its Annual Budget for Public Safety.

Over the coming year, the Malibu Task Force on Homelessness will keep City officials and residents updated on the results of OPCC's work in Malibu. For now, we again express our heartfelt thanks to the Mayor and Council for the City's generous support of our efforts.

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