

Mesilla Valley Community of Hope Las Cruces, NM

Camp Hope
Presented by Nicole Martinez



Community of Hope has been providing services for people experiencing homelessness in Doña Ana County, NM since 1998.



MVCH

- ◉ Day Shelter operations (laundry, lockers, bathrooms, clothing, mail, internet, phone)
- ◉ HUD funding (Housing/Supportive Services/Coordinated Entry)
- ◉ Several City and State housing and services grants; Veteran funding
- ◉ Income programs

CAMP HOPE



- Camp Hope began in November 2011 as a response to a lack of housing vouchers/shelter and homeless people sleeping on the campus of Community of Hope owned by the City of Las Cruces;
- MVCH has weekly “Great Conversations” with people experiencing homelessness; this is a way to actively engage the residents in the process (trauma-informed care);
- MVCH received municipal support to rezone the property to allow a tent city and camping on City property;
- The zoning designation is now a Planned Unit Development (PUD).
- MVCH had to meet 16 zoning designations to allow for camping

How did we get City support?

- 3 leaders experiencing homelessness talked to City Council about a tent city;
- We made up “agreements” and policies and procedures with camp residents
- We met with emergency responders (fire dept, law enforcement)

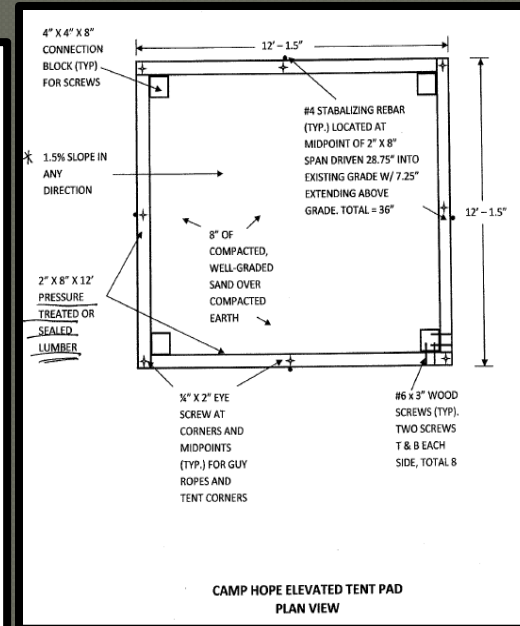


Surrounding Businesses

- We met with surrounding business partners;
- We showed that it was better to have people sleeping on our property than theirs
- Camp residents regulated each other: Neighborhood watch, incident reports, doing rounds, check in with paid security

Camp Hope Beginnings

- Set up a security team comprised of capable Camp residents;
- Camp is capped at 50 persons;
- The City of Las Cruces gave a one-time start-up boost of \$10,000 to help MVCH buy tents and sleeping bags and pay for porta-potties;
- Partnered with local clubs and businesses to bring camp to code;
- Used Bureau of Reclamation Best Practices for camping



Camp Hope Resident Management

- ◉ A Camp Hope Manager is elected by Camp residents and approved by MVCH staff.
- ◉ Walkie Talkies at Camp office and with MVCH staff
- ◉ Camp Manager signs a Memorandum of Understanding of responsibilities

Camp Hope Staffing by MVCH

- With federal and state funding, a certain amount of staff time can be paid to work with people at the camp (Coordinated Entry, getting them into housing);
- MVCH has one F/T staff person designated to the camp—she is a person with lived experience;
- Interns from the Social Work and Public Health Department.



Camp Hope Operations

- ◉ Residents must register for the camp
- ◉ We do not have a waitlist
- ◉ Low barrier entry, Harm reduction model
- ◉ Residents are encouraged to do 6 hours of service weekly (guard shack duty, landscaping, bathroom cleanup, sorting donations)
- ◉ Keep an up-to-date Camp Roster-shared with staff on Google Drive

Average Number of People and Length of Stay

- Last FY: over 11,014 hours volunteered by Camp residents (this can be used as funding leverage!)
- Ave length of stay (July 2016-Dec 2019): 59 days
- 2019-20: 234 persons served at Camp Hope

Funding for Camp Hope

- Fundraisers (ours is Tents to Rents: tentstorents.org)



- HUD Coordinated Entry and Housing Programs/Supportive Services
- Social Security Disability SOAR staff
- VA funding (Supportive Services for Veteran Families)
- State Legislative funding (Capital Outlay)

Unintended Consequences

- Camp resident camaraderie
- Rise in donations
- Visibility of homeless issues
- Church, school & service projects
- Project Dignity: outdoor kitchen, bathroom/showers

Camp residents emptying trash can



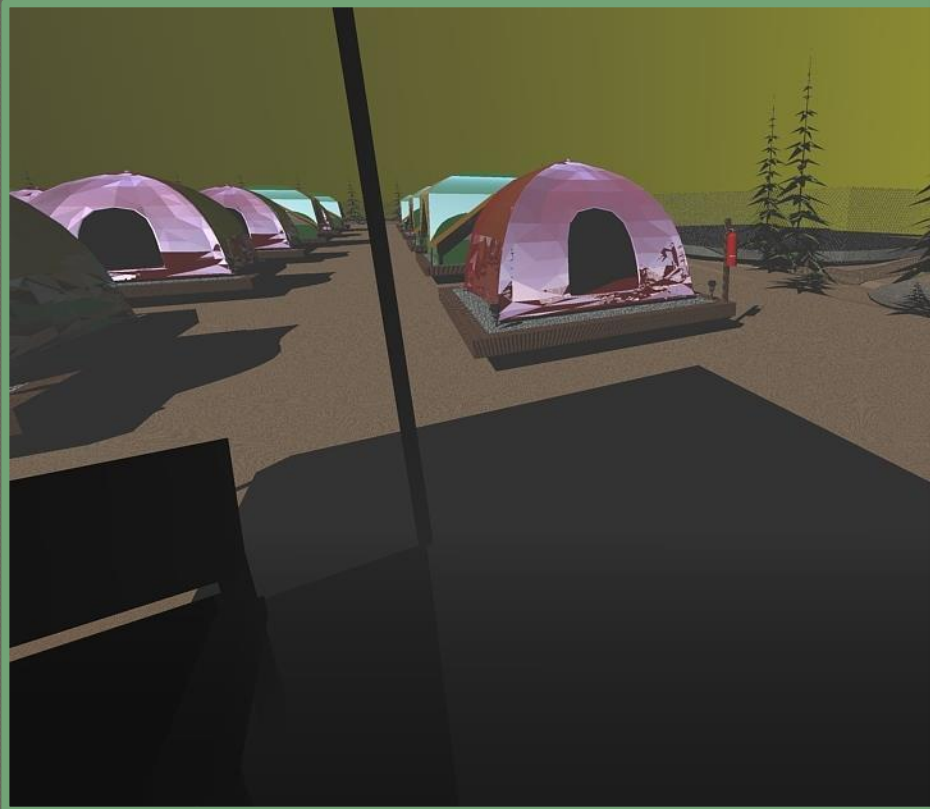
City Councilor launches campaign at Camp Hope



Continue instilling the “Spirit of the Camp!”

What We Did Right

- ⦿ Ask permission first
- ⦿ Formed a safety team and appointed/elected camp management
- ⦿ Provided infrastructure
- ⦿ Provided **supportive services** and **connections to housing**: housing can be healing (trauma-informed model)
- ⦿ Have regular meetings at the camp with residents



Landscape Plan For Camp Hope

Las Cruces, NM

PRODUCED BY AN AUTODESK EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

PLANT LEGEND



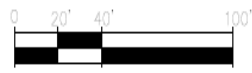
LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED LANDSCAPE AREA
 LOT SIZE MINUS "BUILDING" AREA 23,078 SR
 23,078 SF X 15% = 3,461 SF

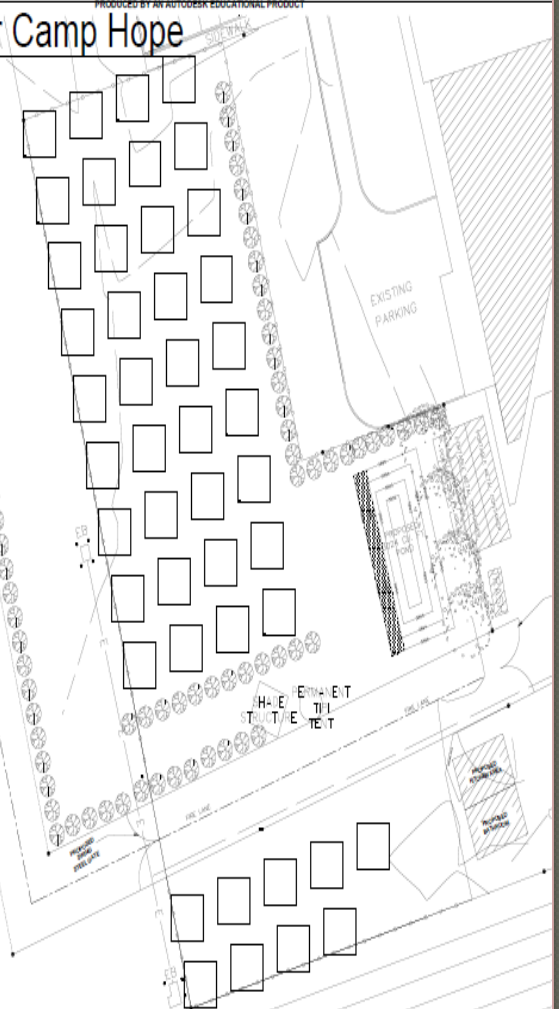
PROVIDED LANDSCAPE AREA:
 5,000 SF

REQUIRED PLANTS:
 TREES: 4 EA
 SHRUBS: 70 EA
 GROUND COVER: 350 SF

PROVIDE PLANTS:
 TREES: 4 EA
 SHRUBS: 70 EA
 GROUND COVER: 350 SF



SCALE: 1" = 20'



PRODUCED BY AN AUTODESK EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

Tent Pad Site Structures



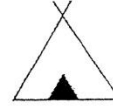
Camp Hope Agreements

A CAMP HOPE AGREEMENTS 2019 A

1. No use, sale, trade or purchase of alcohol or drugs (of any kind)
2. No intoxicated or disruptive behavior
3. No threatening, violent, intimidating or aggressive behavior or language
4. No firearms or illegal weapons allowed on campgrounds or MVCH property
5. No abusive language or discriminatory speech
6. No vandalism including graffiti or urinating or defecating on premises
7. No stealing or destruction of others' personal property, or property designated as belonging to Camp Hope or MVCH.
8. No open fires, to include camping stoves anywhere on the campgrounds or MVCH campus. Grilling is allowed in the designated camp grill area. The homo may be used for cooking but must first be approved by MVCH staff.
9. Visiting minors must be accompanied and supervised by an adult and are not allowed overnight. MVCH staff can assist unaccompanied youth and parents who have children to find emergency shelter.
10. Limited guests (2 per resident) are allowed during the hours of 7 am and 6 pm if they follow the rules. No overnight guests. You are responsible for the actions of your guests. ALL guests are required to sign in, and if hosting a guest you MUST meet them at the guard shack. No unattended visitors in or around Camp Hope or the garden area.
11. No guests except direct family members on the weekend.
12. Overnight stays are limited to registered campers.
13. No one with open warrants is allowed at Camp Hope.
14. No loitering is permitted in front of or around any of the MVCH Alliance Agencies when businesses are closed. Between the hours of 6 pm and 6 am, and on weekends and holidays, Camp Hope is the only area open to people on campus (anyone on campus must be a resident or visiting a resident of Camp Hope).
15. Campers, whether in tents or approved vehicles, may not connect to campus electricity or water. Campers may not use extension cords or hoses. Requests for special needs may be granted in writing by the MVCH Camp Coordinator.
16. No smoking is allowed in tents. Cigarettes should be extinguished in designated containers and butts put in proper containers.
17. No littering.
18. Keep your tent area tidy. Belongings must be confined to inside the tent pad space. Help keep the camp clean.
19. Camp Hope is *transitional* housing. If you are not actively looking for employment, performing six hours of service weekly, or applying for housing, you cannot stay in the camp.
20. If you will be gone from camp for longer than 3 days you must communicate with camp manager or camp coordinator about circumstances. Camp Hope is not intended to be a secondary residence. Campers are not allowed to repeatedly stay elsewhere and return to camp intermittently. There are exceptions such as staying at the Gospel Rescue Mission during nights of extremely cold weather.
21. All residents must perform and record 6 hours of mandatory service in camp a week.
22. Every Tuesday at 10:00 AM the Camp hosts "The Great Conversation". The conversation allows campers, staff, and community members to address our differences and to recognize how much we all have in common. The first Tuesday of every month is a mandatory camp meeting, and the first two meetings after your intake are also mandatory.
23. Campers will stay in the defined campground. A few spaces are available on the Camp parking area for vehicles to be used by camp residents. Vehicles must be registered and given permission to be on the Camp Hope premises. Their owners must follow all Camp Hope rules.
24. No unregistered or inoperable vehicles are allowed on the campus at any time.
25. Campers are responsible for cleaning up their tent before they move out of Camp. Residents who leave an untidy tent space will not be allowed back in camp. They will also be added to the MVCH banned list for littering (The number of months they are banned depends on the number of prior offenses by the resident). If items left behind are not removed within 3 days, they will be discarded as MVCH is not responsible for storing camp resident's property.
26. Donations may not be sold to anyone, for any amount. Anyone found breaking this agreement will be asked to vacate immediately.
27. When leaving Camp Hope, you may only leave with one reasonable truckload of items. This is to prevent hoarding and excess usage of camp resources.
28. Campers who have complaints must follow the Grievance procedure.
29. All dogs and pets coming in to Camp must be up to date on shots and be spayed or neutered. If residents need help with either they will be referred to agencies that may assist them. All dogs must be on a leash at all times as this is City of Las Cruces property.
30. Sex offenders must be registered with the LCPD/Sheriff Dept. Schools within one mile must be notified. This is the responsibility of the offender
31. No drugs except as prescribed and taken as prescribed.
32. All residents must be fully clothed in common areas.
33. Camp quiet hours are 10:00 p.m to 8:00 a.m.
34. Mandatory Camp Clean up Fridays 9-10 a.m.
35. MVCH has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality, respect and privacy for all residents at the Camp. We ask that clients not utilize social media in regards to Camp Hope concerns. Before engaging in Camp Hope, MVCH and/or donations-related social media, residents must obtain the permission of the Camp Hope Outreach Coordinator.

There is ZERO tolerance for criminal behavior including alcohol and drug use, weapons violations, stealing, vandalism, assault, battery, etc. Offenses will be reported to MVCH staff and appropriate authorities. Criminal behavior will be reported to and dealt with by the Las Cruces Police Department.

Registration Template



Camp Hope Registration Form:

Full Name/Nickname:

Date of intake:

D.O.B/Age:

Date of entry:

Race/language:

Date Vacated:

Gender:

Veteran:

Health concerns:

Vehicle:

Pets:

Resident has read rules:

Staff Signature:

ST^TUS:

Tent #:

Emergency Contact:

I hereby acknowledge that MVCH works closely with all branches of Law Enforcement. Camp Hope will not shelter residents absconding from the law and will assist law enforcement officials with vacating residents with open warrants.

SIGN:

Employment: periodic - p/t - f/t - day labor Received:

Income: Disability - Gen. Asst. - SSI/SSDI - SNAP - Retirement - Veteran Received:

Basic Needs: ID - Birth Certificate - Social Security Card

Seeking Housing: Yes_ No_ Housing Received:

Education: GED - college-vocational

"It was the first place I felt human, that I could move through homelessness."
Matt Mercer, 41, formerly a homeless resident of Camp Hope.



IVAN PIERRE ACURIOE FOR NY

er, who has been homeless for four years, sits outside a tent at Camp Hope in Las Cruces, N.M. About 50 residents have lived in the encampment since the city altered its z

In Tent City, a Glimmer of Hope

By RICK ROJAS

LAS CRUCES, N.M. — On a dusty lot in a rough stretch of this city, homeless people have pitched dozens of tents, some nearly empty and others so packed with possessions that their residents are practically entombed inside. There is no electricity, and the unrelenting winds batter the tents so badly that duct tape, used for repairs, is coveted like gold.

In other places, makeshift shelters like this one have been discouraged, if not destroyed. In December, a large encampment in San Jose, Calif., known as the Jungle was cleared because of health and safety concerns. In Detroit, officials were keeping cautious watch on a camp that had recently sprung up near downtown.

But the nearly 50 homeless people living

Camp for Homeless in Las Cruces, N.M., Becomes a Hub for Social Services

in the tent city here are welcome to stay. Local officials allowed the camp to be set up on city-owned property, making an exception to zoning rules that ban sleeping overnight. With a \$45,000 earmark from the state Legislature, the camp is adding landscaping and a new fence.

City officials say the camp has been a transformative force, bringing the homeless closer to social services and the prospect of permanent homes, while helping to clean up an area that had been plagued by

drugs and violence.

"We were able to look beyond what the codes and ordinances say to see what needs to happen here," said Gill Sorg, a city councilor.

The camp started as a temporary shelter in 2011, meant to last through the winter. It now has elevated plots for 50 tents and a guard house, surrounded by a wire fence. Called Camp Hope, the tent city has a few portable toilets — not nearly enough, residents say — but restrooms and showers

are just a stroll away, to where several charities have set up a strip mall of social services, including a medical clinic and soup kitchen. There, social workers try to connect camp residents with government aid and low-income housing programs.

Nicole Martinez, the executive director of the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope, a nonprofit that oversees the camp, said she had initially been critical of the effort. Her job was to put people into housing; instead her organization was putting them in tents.

"It just felt backward," she said.

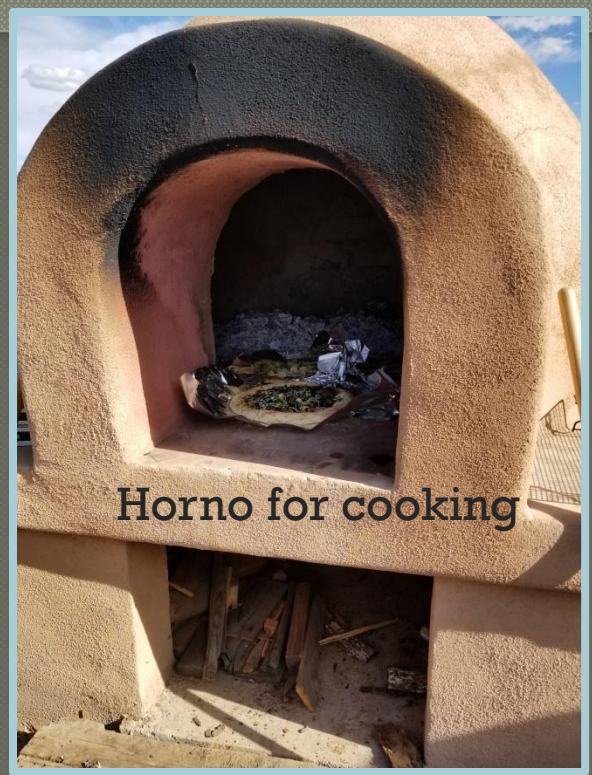
She soon changed her mind. "I started to see it brought people to housing," Ms. Martinez said. "They started to trust us. They're not just coming to take a shower or get their mail. They see us as

Continued on Page A12

Camp Garden



Horno for cooking



Project Dignity, installing
bathrooms/kitchen at Camp
Hope



Consulting with engineers on
Camp outlay



Nicole Martinez, MA, LMSW

hope@zianet.com

(575)523-2219x114

mvcommunityofhope.org

Like us on Facebook!