

# Grassroots initiative brings hope to homeless, impoverished

By **Susie Steckner** - June 17, 2018



*TCC focuses on helping youth, senior citizens, the working poor, people with disabilities, the homeless and domestic violence survivors.*

*Photo courtesy city of Tempe*

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A ride to a doctor's appointment. A bag packed with nutritious food. A hot shower. An after-school activity.

Small actions, big impact – all supported by the Tempe Community Council.

What began in 1972 as a grassroots effort to tackle human service issues in Tempe has grown into a vital operation that plays a critical role in addressing immediate and long-term needs throughout the city.

This year alone, Tempe Community Council (TCC) is administering more than \$1.2 million in human services funding to 47 nonprofit organizations that serve Tempe residents.

"There are extensive needs in our community," said Elizabeth Cling, TCC's board president.

"Almost 22 percent of residents live below the poverty line," she said. "Whether it's an after-school program, a shelter for homeless youth and families, or assistance for homebound seniors, these are some of the critical services that receive funding from TCC."

## **Easy to give back**

As human service needs continue to grow in the city, a new initiative – Together Tempe – aims to support even more programs to help individuals and families.

Together Tempe is building on the generosity of residents who, for two decades, have helped people in need by donating \$1 a month through their water bills.

The original program, "Project H2O," initially used homeowner donations to pay others' past due water bills. Then the program evolved, becoming "Help to Others," with a mission to support human service needs instead. TCC, in partnership with the city, became the program administrator.

In the past 20 years, those two programs have generated more than \$1.1 million in donations. But awareness and donations have dropped.

Together Tempe seeks to re-engage homeowners and reach people in multi-family housing and business owners. If all 42,000 utility bill recipients donated \$1 per month, the program could raise \$504,000 annually to support human service needs. Every dollar goes to direct services.

Here's how you can support Together Tempe:

- Donate at [www.togethertempe.org](http://www.togethertempe.org). Give throughout the year or make a one-time gift.
- Add \$1 to the Together Tempe Voluntary Donation line on your utility bill.
- Not all bills include the donation line but the city's customer service representatives can assist with donations, and can also increase the amount you wish to give each month beyond \$1. Call 480-350-8361 for assistance.

### Changing lives across the city

TCC focuses on six target populations: youth, seniors, the working poor, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, and domestic violence victims. The impact of Tempe's human services funding is easy to see in the faces of the people receiving help every day.

When they spot each other, Elsie Mulligan and Kay Slaven exchange smiles. Slaven volunteers three times a week with Tempe Neighbors Helping Neighbors (TNHN), which matches volunteers with seniors in the community who need transportation, basic home and yard maintenance, and more.

"I don't have a car anymore," Mulligan said. "So it's just nice to have someone available and reliable."

Across town, kids at the Ladmo branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the East Valley fill up on computer time, art activities, sports, and snacks in a safe and welcoming place after school.

"The club is a window of opportunity," said Jevin D. Hodge, a former staff member who grew his leadership skills at the branch. "It's nourishment for the mind, body and soul."

At 47, Timothy Mindrup is thankful for new opportunities.

The road has been long from well-paid security consultant to drug and alcohol addict to lost soul sleeping in the park. Through the Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP), he found shelter, regular meals and a mobile trailer where he could shower and do his laundry.

Operated by Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA), I-HELP provides immediate assistance and resources to regain self-sufficiency. Now employed as a transportation specialist, Mindrup is grateful for I-HELP.

"It was literally a ray of hope," he said.

*To learn more about Tempe Community Council, visit [www.tempecommunitycouncil.org](http://www.tempecommunitycouncil.org).*

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