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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

East County Transitional Living Center hosts panel discussion on homelessness with regional HUD and HHS directors and San Diego County nonprofit leaders

Invited officials call for broad partnership involving faith-based organizations, nonprofits and strategic government funding

EL CAJON, Calif. — San Diego homelessness is a complicated problem with many threads — mental health, drug addiction, poverty, scant affordable homes.

Leaders from San Diego County providers of mental health, addiction and homelessness services met with regional Housing and Urban Development and Health and Human Services directors Feb. 25 and concluded that the best approach to solving the problem is inviting faith-based groups to join a broad collaborative push.

The group said collective groundwork could help elected officials better understand San Diego homelessness' scope and better fund programs to resolve it.

The event ran at the 1527 East Main St., campus of the center, a nonprofit organization providing shelter, job training and a faith-based recovery program to help people transition out of homelessness. The center's chief executive officer, Julie Hayden led the panel discussion, which featured William Spencer, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Pacific Region director, Victoria Seaman, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Region 8 director and a representative from state Sen. Brian Jones, R-San Diego's office.

Hayden, who holds a doctorate in psychology, a master's degree in counseling psychology; and a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies, said she was heartened to see the leaders together.

"We have amazing resources in San Diego, some of the best of any county, any state," she said during a pause in the discussion. "What we need is a system to allow for collaboration and a vision that we all agree on and work together. We're going to get them off the streets, and we're going to get them into living their best life, and we're going to do that through all working together."

The Regional Task Force on Homelessness, a San Diego nonprofit, estimates that 9,905 people in San Diego County are homeless and the number of people and families living in their cars increased 7% from 2024 to 2025.

An independent 2025 analysis by the San Diego Taxpayers Association showed that faith-based East County Transitional Living Center is highly effective among San Diego County programs.

“We have completed our review and analysis of 2024. In 2023 your program was outstanding, earning our “Open and Honest” label. ECTLC did even better in 2024! We are most happy to again issue you our highest title of “Open and Honest.” Based on our review, you get strong results for the dollars invested, providing great value to your clients, your donors, and the community,” said San Diego Taxpayer’s Association President & Chairman of the Board Mike McLaughlin in a recent letter to ECTLC.

Based on the San Diego Taxpayers Association study analysis, in 2024 ECTLC spent \$790 per person exiting to permanent housing and had 96% of its graduates remaining stably housed in the period of Nov. 1, 2024 to Oct. 31, 2025.

Also, the study said, the center’s participants, on average, received 294,064 collective hours of job training and 365,000 meals.

Jhon Londono, the East County Transitional Living Center’s programs director, said he hoped the groups at the talk will collectively use on-the-ground intelligence from counselors, clinical workers and emergency and transitional shelters to show elected officials where to best direct money.

“They are telling us what the truth is, what they're actually dealing with, how to solve this problem,” he said. “(They know) the best business practices that are producing the best results, what works, basically what doesn't.”

The East County Transitional Living Center features 340 beds onsite and 200 beds offsite, is its region’s only permanent shelter for homeless people. The center’s programs aim to help its clients stabilize, heal, work, grow and lead. The center’s programs include emergency housing; faith-based program ministry and family restoration; employment training; youth services and education management and vegetation management.

Spencer said involving faith-based groups, which themselves get federal funding, can enhance nonprofits’ collective efforts.

“Faith-based organizations really have great outcomes,” he said. “One of the things that we need to do is figure out how we can get money directly to these organizations to help them, without all the bureaucracy and without all the barriers.”

Expanding on Spencer’s comments, Hayden reiterated her call for broad partnership.

“We need private organizations. We need publicly funded organizations all to come together. We need all the resources to start working and joining forces to make a dent and actually have an impact that we want out of San Diego,” she said. “So, come see me ... learn what we're doing. Join forces with us.”

GUEST PANELISTS

Drew Moser: Lucky Duck Foundation

Pastor Rolland Slade: Meridian Baptist Church

Paul Armstrong: San Diego Rescue Mission

Brian Wilson: San Diego Rescue Mission

Hannah Gailey: Green Oak Ranch Ministries Inc.

Clay Cunningham: Green Oak Ranch Ministries Inc.

Bob Kamensky: Feeding San Diego
Laura Chez: We See You San Diego
Keith Cofield: We See You San Diego
Brian Caster: Caster Properties
Gaurav Mishra: Gaurav Mishra MD Inc.
Dilkhwaz Ahmed: License to Freedom
Oscar Medina: Serene Health
Irenda Rios: New Vision Counseling
Kenneth Weekes: East County Transitional Living Center
Jhon Landon: East County Transitional Living Center
Dr. Rosolyn Harper: Genesis Recovery
Arturo Alemany: Alemany & Associates

ABOUT DR. JULIE HAYDEN

Julie Hayden is the CEO of East County Transitional Living Center (ECTLC) and a leader in developing integrated solutions to homelessness, addiction, and mental health recovery. With decades of experience working directly with individuals in crisis, she has pioneered a treatment-first, work-therapy model that combines compassion with accountability to help individuals move from stabilization to self-sufficiency.

Dr. Hayden also oversees Rhombus, Genesis Recovery and New Vision Counseling Center to create a fully integrated continuum of care addressing substance use disorders, trauma, and long-term mental health needs.

She is a co-architect with her husband Dr. Ray Hayden of the Rhombus Model — a systems-based operating framework that aligns operations, finance, workforce development, and human transformation into one accountable structure. Under her leadership, ECTLC has demonstrated measurable outcomes and cost efficiencies that position the model for regional and national replication.

Dr. Hayden's work focuses not only on helping individuals recover, but on reforming the way communities structure and fund recovery systems — ensuring that compassion is paired with measurable progress and sustainable economics.

ABOUT EAST COUNTY TRANSITIONAL LIVING CENTER

East County Transitional Living Center is a nonprofit organization focused on ending homelessness in San Diego County. Our core programs include emergency housing, a one-year ministry-based recovery program, family restoration and workforce training.

What sets East County Transitional Living Center apart is our loving and holistic process. For more information, visit www.ectlc.org.

For media inquiries or to RSVP, please contact Susan Somers, managing member, FM Marketing LLC, at susan@fmmpr.com or 619-990-4414.