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Rural Homelessness

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11-11-1999

## Interview with Janet Graddick

Anne Smetak

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### Recommended Citation

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RH-AS-I111399.A

Anne Smetak

Interview with Janet Graddick

her house....find out address

AS: This is Anne Smetak, it's November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999, I'm here with Janet Graddick.

JG: Hi Anne.

AS: Hi Janet, how are you?

JG: I'm fine, it's a beautiful day and the sun is shining.

AS: How long have you lived in the area?

JG: I've been in Gambier for 13 years. But I was raised here. So we came here in 1948, I was three years old, I have a twin brother. So I'm a faculty brat. My dad taught French and romance languages for 29 years at Kenyon. And he retired in 1987. And my mom speaks french also and she taught at the high school for ten years. Now imagine being a high school student and having your mother teach at the high school. Everybody gave me grief. It's just, they always put you in a different category of life, somehow. So it was not always easy. Then I also had an older sister and she's passed away since then.

AS: I'm sorry.

JG: So this is home. I went to high school here and I figured if I could go to college from Mt Vernon high, so could my son. So when we were up in the Cleveland Area, Cleveland Heights, I was working on my masters degree up there. We stayed two years after I got the degree and then I decided to move back down here and be closer to my parents. Before they needed my care. So I had eleven good years with them still very independent and having their own social life and doing very well. It's just the last two years that have been...they're both in their 80s and they're getting sicker. But this is, I claim Gambier as home town. I was born in Louiston, Maine. So I may have developed a little bit of an Ohio accent, but most people don't think I'm from here. There is a distinct accent and a distinct way of talking in rural Ohio and a use of language. And there's some grammatical...[cut for time]

AS: How long have you worked at the Human Services Department?

JG: I've worked at this Human Services for 13 yrs and I've worked in social work for 25 yrs. I've been in Columbus, the Akron area, summit county and then in Portage county where Kent State is, I worked for a couple of years in ... my ex-husband was going to graduate school at Kent State and then I spent 9 yrs in New Jersey. And I hope you're not from New Jersey Anne {No,

I'm not]. Good. there's not anything particularly wrong the state of New Jersey, it's just if that's where you were the most unhappy and you get divorced, well then you don't like New Jersey too well.

AS: What position to you hold?

JG: I'm the social service supervisor. I have four staff that I supervise, and those four staff have 6 programs, so this is going to start sounding like a bureaucracy where they always give you more work than you can get done! But I really liked....when I first started in the business I was with Child Abuse and Neglect and everyone knows that's about the most stressful area you can be in. And after 9 yrs of that, and part of that being in New Jersey, where the cases were really difficult, I thought to myself I think that if I go back and get a masters I'm going to want to be a supervisor. Little did I know that New Jersey's rules were a little harder in terms of the qualifications to be a supervisor that they were in Ohio. So anyway I came back home, got my masters at Case, come back to this department and they say, 'well, yes. We're really, really happy that you have a masters, but you wouldn't have had to, to be a supervisor here. Oh well. It's like insurance. Once you have it, you have it.

In the unit that I have, we're called the support services unit. So we're part of the Social Service division. And I have, I supervise these programs: Adult Protective Services, which investigates elder abuse 60+, the Child Care Program, adoption, foster care, the EMT program, which is a medicaid, it's called the enhanced medicaid transportation program so we help people who are on medicaid to get to the doctor's and Parent Education. So three of those services support the Children Services unit and three are adult, where the homeless come in, is that we are the only unit that will actually take in clients that walk in off the street, so they can be seen by a social worker that day, no matter what their problems are. Children services will certainly take a referral, they have an intake worker who will take a referral. The public assistance side, it has a new name now, they call it Ohio Works First, they really have so many people they have to schedule appointments. So they don't usually have emergency type people come in. They give them an application, say 'come back at your scheduled appointment time'.

That's how come we usually see the homeless. Because that's an emergent need and they need to see somebody right away. So it could be any one of the five of us, 'cause I take a day on intake too, we rotate the days that you have to take the referrals on the phone or see people who come in. So all five of, me and my staff, see homeless folks when they come in.

[looking at statistic sheets] Well, this doesn't show the statistics, this shows the statistics of all of these agencies that see homeless. But in our unit. Ours are a very small number of people compared to Interchurch, because we are only doing information and referral. So when a person comes in, we are going to take some brief information, we're not doing any major assessment, we're not calling people to verify their story. If you tell me that you're homeless, then I'm going to assume that you wouldn't bother to come in here and ask us for that help if you didn't have a problem and you weren't homeless. So from there we refer them to the various other programs.

AS: [stats sheet] So these are combined numbers from the different agencies? [Yes] Does this take into account overlap of individuals, say one person that has been to four agencies?

JG: The numbers that do not have estimated beside them are our best estimated to give you an unduplicated account of the number of people served, who said they were homeless. So when

you say, what are the number of homeless? There's really no one's who's going to be able to tell you that because there's no one out there counting the number of people who didn't come in and ask for help. So it's hard to judge if you've got more people who are out there homeless than there are in out statistics. But there are, the main agencies that see the most homeless are Interchurch and KnoHoCo, so their statistics are in there.

These are estimated because the number of agencies that see maybe a few people they haven't gotten around to reporting to us, and we kind of had to say, 'How many people, tell us at least how many you've had.' What we were doing was each agency is supposed to give the Emergency Needs Coalition, that's the committee that I chair, a report monthly. And then we could composite it all and say these are the numbers in their unduplicated counts because the Salvation Army was, we got permission from our directors to share client names, but only to be given to Lt. Betts at the Salvation Army so that there's no breach of confidentiality. And, our biggest place, KnoHoCo, couldn't get permission to do this, so we've been struggling with , how can we get this unduplicated count.

Because whenever we go to present numbers, if we write an article, if we go to the commissioners, the mayor, and we want to talk about the number of homeless people in Knox County, one, they don't think they exist, and two, they say, 'well, even if you are serving some of them, as you said, they're going from place to place so you don't have an unduplicated count'. It's just sort of a political way of saying, we don't see them so they aren't here.

And that is one of the differences about rural homelessness compared to urban; in Columbus you see people on the street, they have an Open Shelter...although just because someone's begging on the street for money or something, doesn't necessarily mean they're homeless. You don't really know.

However, in Knox County we have people come in and tell us that they're sleeping under the bridge, or in the warmer months been in a tent, or they're with family or relatives. But you don't usually see them. And once in a while when the police see somebody maybe on public square...I remember two winters ago there was a man sitting on the church steps where there was a grate where it was warm, and it was snowing that day, and when they stopped to talk to him about why he was there he said he was homeless. And the sheriff and the police department know to contact the Salvation Army or Interchurch, if they find someone who's homeless.

I think the reason the don't see them is because we're doing a pretty good job of getting people some temporary help when they need it. So that's probably why. But it's getting overwhelming now, because these numbers have jumped. If you look here [stats sheet], we're seeing a whole lot more folks, the other agencies are.

AS: What would you attribute that to?

JG: There have been a couple of plant closings in Mount Vernon, but I don't think that had much to do with it, because those people are skilled and working and probably able to find another job. The folks that we see that are homeless have some major problems at some point or other. There's a list I can give you, like alcohol/drug problems, mental health problems, domestic violence issues, but those are usually women and children. We see mostly single adults. And salvation army and Interchurch...actually, interchurch sees the most women with children. What's discouraging for us as service providers is that in the nine years that we've had the Emergency Need Coalition, that's all of these same agencies getting together once a month to talk about the problems and how can we relieve them, or what larger things can we do to help,

we always want to have a homeless shelter of some kind. But we realize that using that terminology frightens people, so we've been calling it different names, now you have to say transitional housing.

And really transitional housing is one step above just housing somebody, which is what a shelter is, it's a revolving door of people just coming in and out. If you have transitional housing, you have someone on staff who is assessing why is that person homeless, and what would it take for them not to be homeless next month or next year or what do they need to do. Go to the mental health center, or go to rehab for alcohol/drugs, go to public assistance and apply for some money so you have money to pay for some place. It amazes me that people will come in and expect us to be able to find them an apartment, but they have no income. So you have to go back to the basics. You've got to have some money, there's no free housing. So.

In terms of other things that might have caused the problems, I think our department has to some degree, not helped that for single adults. They're throwing all kinds of money with women and children, or a man if he has, families. They're throwing lots of money at families to keep them off public assistance and give them whatever they need so that children are not in poverty and hungry. But the single adults got cut off two years ago, and the state decided they were no longer going to provide general assistance to single adults. And when they did provide it, it was 150\$ a month or something outrageous. You couldn't find housing for that. You get some food stamps, but it's still better than nothing. You might be able to get a room, people were able to do that occasionally.

So, we're just really puzzled as to why, all of a sudden people don't think single adults need any help, when 25yrs ago they opened up the mental institutions and let half the people out. And they are in our communities now. And so are the mentally, the retarded folks, the people with disabilities, and they are probably attributing to that increase in homeless. It certainly doesn't help that we have no financial support for single adults. You can get disability if you're sick enough. But they make that hard too.

That's one of the things I was talking about yesterday, if you come into the department, and you want to apply for SS disability, we no longer run that program the SS dept runs that. But we will help people fill out the application, we have a person that does that. Well, they have some kind of strange policy almost that every time you put in an application, they deny it the first time. So some people don't have the eagle-strength to know, just keep gunning them until they get it right. And just keep giving them whatever paper is they say they need. So that's what our worker does. She goes and she says, 'ok, well alright, you got refused this time, but now they say you need this and this and this, and get this from a doctor. And there's somebody called a law judge in Columbus and she sometimes brings people over there and that law judge reviews to see whether the SS was right or wrong in refusing the claimant. She almost always wins those...but why make it so difficult? It's just amazing.

AS: The Emergency Needs Coalition, you said it's been around for nine years?

JG: Approximately nine years. It started actually, KnoHoCo, Barbara was the one who started the committee along with Red Cross and then invited all the other social service agencies and then somehow, when the one woman left Red Cross and then some other people came, it sort of became my job to keep it going. So that's what we're doing with that. And one of the things that we keep thinking about, is, if only we weren't all so busy with our own jobs, we could focus more on this as a group and maybe become incorporated, or maybe write a grant. But, because

we're not incorporated, we can't accept any money, we're just all individual agencies, so we have no way of accepting donations as a committee, or writing a grant. I would have to write the grant under the auspices of the department of human services. So, not having the time to do that most of the time. The ones that do have a grant in KnoHoCo. So Linda probably told you that she has the shelter money to put people up into motels. So we're still hoping one of these days we'll have a transitional housing program.

We got this close, because the salvation army bought two houses right next to their building. And we thought, 'all right, now we can really do it.' And then the upper echelon said, 'no, we want it to be a 3/4ths of the way rehab house for alcohol/drugs. So that means that they're 3/4ths of the way through their recovery. And they said that if you have somebody that's almost finished the program with alcohol and drugs, and you bring in homeless people who are at the beginning stages of alcoholism, that doesn't mix well. Yeah, well that idea went down the tubes. But we thought, oh boy this might be the year.

AS: What is the goal of the ENC?

JG: The primary goal is to have a coalition of people get together to discuss what the emergent needs are and to try and see if there's any way we can alleviate them. We focus on homeless, but we do say emergency needs in our mission statement, because, if tomorrow there was a flood or if tomorrow we found that there wasn't enough food, we would try to mobilize as a group of people to see that we got enough food or whatever it was. But we really have almost become the homeless committee. Because that's all...but we like to give ourselves that flexibility...But actually the other needs are being met, really. I mean Interchurch does such a wonderful job with their food pantry. They have great recruiting, and have a lot of luck with that. They get cans and money donations and everything.

AS: Have you noticed any rise in awareness of homelessness by the government?

JG: They do it in a different way. Instead of, at this level they talk about the housing shortage and HUD of course has thrown in quite a bit of money for revitalizing the housing stock. Which does alleviate some homelessness at a certain level, but not necessarily when the person is actually homeless. But one of the major problems, is here we are in this age of prosperity, but we have many more people who, even if they're in housing they're paying more than 50% of their income to their rent or their housing. So there's a lack of affordable housing. So if you talk to that group of people they're going to say the reason there's homeless is there's not enough housing, there's a shortage of reasonable housing for people in poverty is always number one. If you talk to us, we're going to be talking more about the actual visual problems that people have, because that's what we're seeing.

And the example I gave yesterday, I had a lady come in and she'd 59 yrs old and she had a cast on her arm and she just told us that she didn't have anywhere to stay and that she was rather vague about where she came from, what she'd been...moving around, she seemed rather transient. And we put her up in a motel for four nights and then she went around to each agency, and each agency put her up for one or two more nights as best we could. And she kept telling us she was going to find her exhusband who was going to send her money. And then it suddenly dawned on me, wait a minute, what's she's doing is not necessarily real logical. It may be her choice, that she doesn't want to stay put, but it's a real burden on everybody else because we

were all trying to get her to stay here. We had her solution. This is typical of Social workers. Ok, we'll get you on PA, we'll get you, she probably would have been eligible for disability at some point. Then we'll work on getting you some permanent housing, and Interchurch had a whole plan in mind, they'd even found her an apartment somewhere, but it wasn't in this community. And she refused to go. We had a homeless shelter I had arranged on Friday that she could go up to Mansfield, they have a women's shelter. They had an opening, we were going to get her transported up there, nope. She did not want to do that. So, Rhonda was practically in tears because she'd tried so hard to find a solution, and she's pretty new at doing this. I on the other hand said, look, as far as we know she's of right mind and she has the right...just because she's homeless doesn't mean she has to accept out definition of what the solution is. How do we know what's in her mind, where she's going and what she's doing? She'd certainly not telling us. There's often much more to the story.

So, two weeks go by, I haven't seen this lady. So I thought, well, ok she's gone and we helped her...and she pops up back at the agency again and she wants us to help her. Well, we have so little resources that we just can't pay for somebody month after month after month. And so, she'd been here for three weeks and I had to tell Tim who was in here interviewing her, 'Tim, this is going to be very hard, but we really have no more money, we cannot pay for any more motel rooms for her.' So you're going to have to tell her, if she's willing to go and apply for some assistance, so we can get her some money, we'll be happy to help her find some housing here. But that we can't keep paying for the motels. And he went out and told her that, and he was going to walk her right over to the other division and help her with that and she said, 'nope, no don't want to do that'. And she left. I think she's making a life choice. And even though you and I think that's scary, she knows the ins and outs pretty well.

Now she's an exception to the rule, because most of the time we're able to help somebody and get them a room for a couple of nights and then they find a friend, a relative, they get a job, they get their money together, and they're okay. But staying in a motel 2 or 3 nights in not enough. Most people need a couple months to pull their life together if they're at that point. And that is why we keep looking for some way to house people for a longer period of time.

AS: You mentioned that you were going to send the women up to harmony house in Mansfield, do you often give people the option of going to shelters outside the county?

JG: Always if we run out of money for motels, if they've been there. KnoHoCo will pay for up to 5 nights, Interchurch pays for 1 or 2, Salvation might pay for 1, we have no money to pay for motels that is allocated. When I said we pay for it, I may have to pay for that bill myself, I don't know whether the agency or the director will approve payment for that or not, because we don't have a special fund for it.

It was two weeks ago it was freezing cold on a Friday at 4 o'clock. I wasn't going to put her out, no matter what. We use the Harcourt Motel because it's only 35\$ a night. I sent her there, I'll have the bill sent here to me, and then I'll figure out how I can get that paid. But I tell all my staff not to do that. Don't ever do that, because they'll find out that you are willing to do that and they'll keep coming back and then you will be out an awful lot more money than you planned. I mean, I bought her lunch that day, I paid for her Mota with my money. And I would always tell my staff - don't start that. And sure enough, she came back. It's sad, it just catches you in that effecal bind. You don't know what to do. Sometimes though, I feel happy because I know that they really did have another resource they just didn't tell us about. I don't feel angry

about it. Because I don't think anyone would come to our agency, that's my theory, if they didn't really need some kind of help. Even if they aren't always telling you the truth of the matter.

And, we ought to go back just one step to the definition of homelessness. Because, that's another issue we have with the Commissioner's. They don't accept the McKinney act which was 1987. Well, we go by their definition, that if you do not have any permanent night-time dwelling, than you are homeless. That means, if you're going from relative to relative, from friend to friend, you are homeless, because you don't have a home of your own. Oh, the commissioners say, uh-uh, they aren't on the street, if they can go with blo-jo, they're not homeless. They have a roof over their head that night, that's not their idea of homelessness. Kind of a rough way...their vision of what it has to be. So I said, well, they will be soon, because people can only put up with that so long and most of the time, when they're staying with friends or relatives, those folks don't have much more money than they do.

Metropolitan housing, Susanne's going to love me for this, they contribute to the homeless situation, because they have a very strict rule as to how many people can be in an apartment or a house. That's part of their requirements, I know. So if you want to have company, you can have company for a few weeks, but no you can't have your brother move in with you if he's homeless. And that's tough. And so that's why I'm saying, 'hey, you're contributing, you're kicking him out.'

AS: Isn't the McKinney definition the federal accepted homeless definition?

JG: Well, of course it is. The commissioners are political animals. And how well educated they may be on a particular topic depends on us I suppose. That's why we wanted to get our statistics ready if we wanted to go to the commissioners. Right now we don't need to appeal to them for anything in particular. But at that time we were working on a grant that we needed to let them understand homeless was an appropriate thing to put in a grant. We do have homeless here, we're tired of hearing them say there are no homeless. They did stop that. And that particular commissioner who was saying that no longer says that, and he's the mayor of Mt Vernon now. So we did do some educating. I haven't heard anyone say that lately, so... But, it's a little uncomfortable when they do.

AS: It's interesting that you brought that up, as that's actually the focus of my paper. Blah blah blah...

JG: Well, and I think in terms of the differences maybe, which is a way to look at it, is that in Rural homelessness people don't see the homeless. If they were all sleeping on public square and we were tripping over them, how much do you want to bet the mayor would have a homeless shelter in no time. He would get people off the street to protect tourism and everything else they care about in Mt Vernon, or anywhere else. So, it is the fact that they're not that visible. And the fact that we are doing a good job of putting them up temporarily, so they're not seeing them there either.

One of the things I think is interesting is, although we do have the transient people, like this lady, I don't think she had any connection to Mt Vernon. But I'm gonna call my other people and say, what do you know about her. Because when they hop skip and jump around like that, they tell everybody a little bit different story. So it's kind of interesting when you hear,



well, what'd they tell you, so you get a better picture. But I don't think she knows too many people around here or has relatives in the area. But most everybody else does. Most of the people that come in, have relatives here and those relatives have helped as much as they can and they're done. And that's why they're on our doorstep. Or they don't have any friends left and they don't have friends because they have mental health problems, drug/alcohol, some of those issues that make them hard to get along with. So that probably makes it different.

And certainly, I guess our numbers are not as high as the urban areas, that's certainly true. Even when you look at the numbers on this, they're high for us maybe. But they're getting ready to do another census and so the numbers that I have for the population of Mt Vernon are quite old. They're saying 51,000 for the whole of Knox County and 15,000 for mount Vernon. But look at the growth. And you see all these buildings popping up and all this housing. I can't understand where all these people are coming from that are living on Youather Road, that road that goes back behind the hospital. All those condos and then there's a movie theater there and a holiday inn. Well I went in to look at those condominiums to see if that's anything my parents might want to look into, but now they've passed that stage. And I asked her, I said, who's coming to these places? Are people coming from Columbus, Cleveland to come down to live in these condos? She said no, not at all. These are mostly local folk. They've been on a farm or in a bigger house and they want just a smaller place to take care of, so they're moving into the condominiums.

The other thing people used to say about homeless. If you have a shelter for the homeless, than they're all going to come from Columbus and Cleveland. What are you talking about? Who in their right mind would purposely choose Mt. Vernon to come to stay in the homeless shelter? Yes, we do have some transients. But they transient right on through to somewhere else. They don't stay usually. Or they, we have had some people who say, oh yes, yes, we really want to relocate here, and then they don't and that's just people, they have their own ideas.

But so that's another piece of it. There's a fear that you're just going to attract all these homeless people. I don't believe that for a minute. I don't think that's going to happen. I do question the people who have, or the families that have children, and it's often they migrate from the South up. Who have made absolutely no plan for a job. They just heard that maybe there's more employment around here, it's a nice place to live. And they come out here and they stay with relatives for a few months and they maybe don't find a job that easily. And they don't have any money and they're at our doorstep. And I go, wow. See this has got to be a cultural difference. You and I would plan that. We'd probably have an interview. We'd probably have a job waiting for us before we moved. And so there are definitely folks who figure, well, we're not doing very well here anyway, don't have a job here, we might as well move up there and see if there's something we can find. That's a little different to me.

AS: I went to a meeting last night with, I can't remember his name, but he runs the Open Shelter in Columbus...

JG: Bill Faith?

AS: Yes.

[flip of tape]

He was discussing the fact that when he started the shelter he used to see people that used to be

employed and had fallen on hard times, whereas now, a lot of the people had never successfully held a job...

JG: That is very different isn't it.

AS: Do you see that at all in Knox County?

JG: Nope. The people we see are more likely to be 30-35 range. Once in a while we see somebody younger, I'm not sure what the reason for that would be. Also, I'd forgotten to mention yesterday that we do have probation officers who send people over to us from the jail. Who've just gotten out of jail. And I always thought they were supposed to have a place lined up before they got out of jail. And that's impossible for us. That's very hard for us to help that person find someplace to live and get set up. But we've had a few of those. And I think they ought to contact us earlier, the probation department and give us a chance to do some pre-planning for somebody. Instead of just, Hello, here we are, can you fix this major problem for me? Yes, would you like to go to the homeless shelter in Columbus? No.

That's a good point to, because if I had been there with Bill I would have said, we would love to send more people up to your shelter, but they won't come. That tells me that there is a local connection, when somebody really does not want to go out there. But I've also heard that it's kind of scary in the Columbus shelter. I've never seen it, but it is very big and it's kind of open and so people are really close together on cots maybe. And so anyone who has any knowledge of that who's lived rurally does not want to go up to the big city to the shelter, that's almost scary for them. Now harmony house in Mansfield I think would be fine. It's a small house with not that many people in it. I don't think it's run like that. But on the other hand, if they didn't have that in Columbus, then I suppose a lot of people would be sleeping under bridges. Even with the shelter I believe there is a population of homeless that is living outside up there, I'm not sure but. You know all the pictures we see with the barrels and fire and stuff.

AS: He was saying that he has to turn away 20-25 people a night.

JG: How could you do that? That must break his heart, being in the business and having to turn people away.

AS: They have a capacity of 119, they average 146 because he figures that housing inspectors won't come and check at night.

JG: He must be really...he's been in the business a long time. His name, since I've been here I've heard Bill Faith's name. So, he is very committed to the cause of helping this issue. So I feel that he's astute enough that he's working to open another shelter somewhere. Particularly when winter hits.

You know what I find interesting is that sometimes we see more homeless in the summer than we do in the winter. I don't quite get that. They'll come in because they know that winter's coming. They've been out say staying in a tent. We did have a family, I think they were in a trailer, yeah they were in a trailer on a farmer's property. And the farmer let them stay in the trailer because the man was helping out on the farm for a while. But the little girl wasn't in school and, what else did he say? He wanted them to have some other income, because he knew,

the farmer wasn't going to be able to support them, and they had moved up from the south and I think they went back south for the winter. And that was fine with them. They were a little bit transient even though they were a family.

AS: Do you typically see families?

JG: Our agency doesn't see families very often and I think that's because this community and people that might direct them would tell them to go to Interchurch or Salvation Army or get in touch with KnoHoCo because they have money to house you temporarily. All we're going to do is send you to those places if we can. However, I'm going to do that work for you, I'm going to call them and see what they can do and find out whether they'll pay for a night or not. I'm going to do some leg work to...not just send you over there without knowing if they can help. This last one I was telling you about, I did call Linda and asked her whether or not she could pay for another couple of nights for this lady but because of connections, she couldn't get back to me in time. So I'd already committed myself to the motel when Linda called back and said, no we've already paid for four or five nights, we can't pay for anymore. So it was like a gamble on my part. Because you get so...that lady was with me from 11 until 4, it took me all that time to get something arranged.

It's, even though we don't open a case on the homeless, we don't maintain records other than the referral sheet that has the basic information on it. They take a great deal of our time here. And we have all those other programs I told you about. So you try to do the best you can with it. But that's why we aren't in it any deeper than we are, because we need a full time worker. And if I had a full time worker to do that, then I'd have that person finding the permanent housing. Go out there, take a drive and find out where those apartments are that we could put somebody in. Be a housing realtor person for the homeless.

AS: You mentioned the need for either transitional housing or a shelter in Knox County. Would that be your main concern at this point? Or would it be to institute a different type of program.

JG: Well we'd certainly be willing to look at any other type of program that we think might alleviate the problem, but that, to me the concept of transitional housing, which means that you'd have a house where you could house five to ten people, and then if you have the issue of you can't put the single adult males with the women and children and how to you mix the population. So at any rate, the concept of having somebody whose only responsibility is for those folks who are in there. And they do the whole assessment and they make sure that they get their lives in order and they do the things that need to be done in order not to be homeless, is really a good concept. And, the fact that if you interview them, and they're not committed to making those changes, they have another choice. This is their choice. If they choose to remain transient, you're not going to force them in, but you're going to try to find those people who genuinely would like to settle down and get their lives together. We would be successful and be able to do that for them. So I still like that idea better than an open shelter or even a homeless shelter kind of concept. And that would be hard to...transitional housing wouldn't be that hard to sell to a community. Would you, if you lived here, would you like the house next door to be housing the homeless. If you knew that there was somebody on staff all the time, that they were responsible to make sure that the tenants there did not do anything to damage the community or the house or other people, you'd feel more comfortable with it. If you had a temporary shelter with people

coming in and out and in and out all the time, some of them might be drunk at the time, no you probably wouldn't want that next door. You've got to be fair to neighbors and take that into consideration. And most of the time it's fear. Once they see how things are working out and they see that the people are being responsible and there aren't any problems, but we can't promise that.

We had a lot of trouble with the trailer that we...did you hear about the trailer? [No, I haven't] Howard took the notebook that I made that had a list of all the things that Kenyon students have done over the last 8 or 9 years for homelessness each time they had it. And there's pictures and there's descriptions in there. So back, I think it was 1990, when the students raised \$2,000 on their homelessness week, and they camped out on the church lawn, they were in front of the church, and they served food and they had the food service money for the people that ate at the campsite rather than in there. It happened to be parents weekend and they solicited funding from the parents. [That's a great idea] It was! That's what raised probably most of the money, but in the collegian there were two or three articles from students who were quite irate about the fact that people were panhandling on center path for the parents when they were here at this expensive college, and you're asking them for more money. And there was all this, there was some comment about the wealth of the people who were doing the camp out. In other words, they were wealthy kids. Not everybody is a wealthy kid. I hate that terminology, they think everybody's got money just because they're at Kenyon. And that's not true of any college. But at any rate that was the criticism that, how could they know what homelessness was all about. Well, that wasn't the point. The point was simply that it's just like having a play, it was to dramatize this is what it is like to live outside, to be homeless, and get you thinking about that.

So anyway, we took that money, this committee and we actually purchased a trailer for \$2000 and we put it under KnoHoCo, because somebody had to own the trailer, it couldn't be our group. So KnoHoCo agreed they'd be the responsible agency. We put it in the trailer park. And that was hard. You should have heard, Oh no, you're not going to put a trailer in our trailer park and put the homeless in them. Same issues, right? The upscale trailer parks. So there's a small trailer park just up Sandusky road in Mount Vernon which was convenient. And we put it there, and the people were very nice, they worked with us on this. And said we could do this. Well, the theory was...it had two bedrooms, one on either end and then a room in the middle. So you could've put two single people in there, or two women with some children. But usually there were women and children there so you didn't end up putting single men in there. But what happened was, whatever agency placed that person in that trailer, that social worker was supposed to be responsible for making sure that they did what they needed to do, they didn't have parties, they didn't cause great problems, and they had a plan to move on. Did you look for a job this week, have you come in and applied for public assistance? Well, we were all too busy to do that. Because this is not our full-time job. So we'd get somebody in there and poor KnoHoCo, their coordinator would end up with a lot of problems. Because no one was really following through. So there were complaints from neighbors that they were partying, there were complaints about, they were letting other people stay in there. We went, huh? They found some other people to...that's kind of weird. Then of course they would leave the place trashed, and then it needed to be cleaned for the next person. So, although that wasn't every tenant that was in there, by any means, there were some people that were very responsible, got their act together, moved out. There were just enough trouble-makers to cause problems for us and finally we got kicked out of the trailer park. So we had to sell the trailer and that was...we realized the error of our ways. You just, you can't do it that way, you've got to have one coordinator, one person

who takes on the responsibility of assuring that things are done properly.  
So that was the end of that. It was a good idea. The trailer.

AS: I'm surprised I never heard about that. I heard all about the houses that Salvation Army bought.

JG: Well, this was, like I said a long time ago. That was 90, so at least nine years ago, and we had the trailer for maybe three years. And KnoHoCo thought it was a losing proposition because who was paying them for maintain...yes we got the money to buy the place, but then they had to write a grant and they had to use money from that grant to keep fixing this trailer that kept breaking down. One time Barb Flexter and I were over there, we did try, Barb and I were over there and Barbara got down on her hands and knees, she was looking under the trailer. Pretty soon she's crawling under the trailer. I said, what are you doing? And she said, well, I can see something here that's hanging, I want to see what this is. I said, you better come out from under that trailer. She was going to fix something. No, no, let's find somebody else to fix that. She had a lot of spunk.

AS: And where did she used to work?

JG: She worked for KnoHoCo for a long time. She was the one who started this whole group. She was before Linda. Was there anybody in between? Yes, there was another woman in between, whose name I can't remember but...the trouble with the program that she's dealing with, is she's responsible for three counties as I'm sure she told you. So she's hard to reach. She does her best, she has an answering machine, but that's what I'm saying. If I've got somebody who needs a hotel room at four o'clock on a Friday and Linda's in Holmes county, or somewhere else, we really were hoping that we could get one person from KnoHoCo. Since they have the shelter grant money to be here all the time, and help us more. But that hasn't worked out. So that's another thing that maybe we could work on.

It's unfortunate. And I don't think she has more than 5-10,000\$. It's a small grant really. But it at least allows them to pay for a week, rather than just one or two nights. And Mr. Amine, who runs the Harcourt motel is very, very cooperative. He's happy to house any homeless, and he bills agencies and gets his money and that's fine with him. But I mean, there's a lot of them that wouldn't let us do it. And we've had motels say, no, we don't want you to place homeless here. Even if we would pay the higher rate. So that is a problem. And Brookside was comparable to the Harcourt, in terms of price and everything. And Mr. Amine's brother owned that one. And he sold it, so now we only have the Harcourt. Now, I'm sure that at some point Mr. Amine's going to sell that place too, because they are smart enough businessmen, that as that area develops...they are putting water and sewer out on Harcourt road, which is three that goes up to Columbus. And once they do that and other businesses come in, they'll probably sell that one and then we'll really be up a creek in terms of placing homeless, won't have people living in cheap motels. I've heard from some of the folks that Mr Amine get's to be kind of nosey at times and they're uncomfortable staying there. He will go into their rooms, he will listen to their phone messages. This has just been reported, this is alleged! But I don't put it past him at all. He just might do that, I don't know. But that's certainly an invasion of privacy.

AS: How many people would you say, on average, end up staying at the Harcourt? Is there

perpetually someone homeless staying there?

JG: Yes, almost always. And I would say he always has two to three rooms full, from various different agencies. But, the weekend that I was having so much trouble finding a room for this woman was also because Kenyon was having parent's weekend and there wasn't a room anywhere. And he has this one room that she had been in, and he told her that if she was going to come down and get help from our department, he would hold that room for her. And that was very nice of him, because he didn't have to do that. He probably could have easily gotten somebody in there. And he did wait until 3 o'clock and called and confirmed and said, yes, not only do we want to pay for this day, but we want her to have it for the weekend. And that's only \$131, well I guess he gave us a rate of \$32 that night. So, you know you'd go into Columbus and pay \$130 for one night. So, we like him, we don't want him to leave. But, of course he has a business to run.

There's two other things that I didn't get to talk about much in the class because we ran out of time: but there's something called the CRA and the CRA is the community reinvestment act. Now the community reinvestment act is the federal government telling local banks that they have to reinvest money in their own communities. That they can't take all the money they make as profit for wherever they reinvest it, out and put it outside the community. That they need to be helping first-time home buyers, and others to get into housing in their own community. So, for a while we had this really interesting committee going. It's been...well I haven't seen them in about a year, but they had...the banks of Mt Vernon and even up here, were mandated to meet with Social Service people! And find out what the needs were and talk to us about housing needs and stuff. So, being banks we used to get to go down and have lunch or dinner, really not dinner, breakfast at Jody's, and the banker people would be there and the social workers would be there, we were all getting to know each other and talk and understand more about housing and stuff. And, Margaret Summers who works for KnoHoCo and her husband also do development. So they built about four homes in Apple Valley and those homes were going to be for first time home buyers and you had to qualify and you did have to be working. You couldn't be homeless at that point. And they put some families in those homes that might not otherwise have been able to afford housing. And that was all done with federal grant money. Well then, they started footsinging around with, I don't know who, maybe the federal government decided, well maybe we don't need to insist that banks do this anymore. So now it's back and forth and back and forth as to whether or not the CRA group will continue to help with this kind of situation. But that was fun, when that was going on.

And Bill, did Bill Faith talk at all about Cohio. I don't know what it stands for. Columbus, no Coalition of the Homeless, it's got to be something like that. They print a newspaper monthly that has a lot of information about what's going on at the federal level with and through HUD and I get that monthly and that keeps me abreast of what's going in the government, which is very helpful. But they're really concentrating on getting more affordable housing. They're not concentrating on what we're dealing with, which is just housing the homeless temporarily till they find someplace.

So, then there was, there's a lot of grant money that comes from the Ohio Department of Development. And it may still be HUD money, I'd have to look at that again. And that's called the Community Improvement Strategy for Housing, Housing Strategy Plan, the CHIP plan. She does CHIP plan, and that's talking about increasing the housing stock. That's the same issue, but yeah that would have to be HUD money. We formed a committee and this was six years ago that

they included Social Services Agencies. Before the commissioners just wrote the grant and they spent all the money on water and sewer improvements, which is okay, 'cause you've got to do that for housing to. But then they said, no you've got to get in there and talk to Social Service Folks and see what else is needed. So in that process we got to add a couple of other programs to their grant. And we did Housing Rehab, so that they would fix up old houses that people could rent. We wanted to do some assisting the landlords so that they'd keep their properties up, but that didn't work out to well. Then first-time home buyers and a couple of other programs like that, that they put in their grant. So that was another step in the right direction. It's just that nobody wants to deal with the grassroots problems of where to put people who are truly homeless and maybe unemployable.

AS: Has Knox County ever done any homesteading projects: where the city sells old properties to families or individual for a nominal fee if they agree to fix it up?

JG: No, the closest to that is Habitat for Humanity. But we don't have homesteading that I'm aware of. That might be an interesting project. But would they have the finances to fix the place up? It might be some times that might be good, it wouldn't be the homeless. And that is the problem, because they are at the very bottom of the food chain, as we say, in terms of resources and money and stuff.

AS: Do you have any idea if Knox County participated in the Enterprise Zones? I don't know if you're familiar with them, it was one of Clinton's proposals?

JG: I've heard him talk. But I don't think we have anything like that here that's sophisticated enough to be that...I bet it's only in larger areas. There's certainly plenty of money to build an apartment for seniors. And that is coming from the federal government or some other kind of special apartment complex for the disabled. But they never would identify it as for the homeless, that I've heard of anyway.

AS: Is there anything we haven't talked about that you think would be important for me to know?

JG: Well, I think we've done a pretty good job of covering the topic. I can't think of anything else that we haven't gone over at this point.

AS: Ok, well thank you very much.