

# The Two River Times

## News

### HABcore Needs Help

**By Ryan Fennell**

RED BANK - HABcore, a non-profit corporation that provides housing and support services to the homeless and unfortunate, is itself in need of support.

According to their mission statement HABcore is devoted to providing housing and supportive services in a family-like setting to low income persons or those who are homeless, disabled or unable to care for themselves, and to affording them lives of dignity and meaning.

The crumbling of the nation's economy and its uncertain future has changed the landscape for HABcore in recent years.

According to HABcore Executive Director Steve Heisman, government grants are changing, foundations have shut down or decreased their geographic reach, and others have simply decreased the amounts they are willing to donate.

"HABcore is asking that the state and municipalities begin to recognize that we are caring for people who, in many cases, were previously supported by the state at a cost in excess of \$100,000 per year, and (we) are preventing individuals from entering the costly hospital system," HABcore officials stated in a recent press release.

According to the release, 83 percent of HABcore's residents have previously spent time in the hospital system.

Heisman said that it costs over \$100,000 to house someone for a year in the state hospital system compared to \$12,000 per year at HABcore.

But efforts to expand their facilities have been hindered by limited funds.

"We could help so many more in need and save the taxpayers thousands of dollars if we had the financial support we need. There is no money out there to acquire existing facilities and rehabilitate them. We would like our local and state government to help us in this area so we may concentrate on client support and expanding our services."

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Courtesy Habcore



"It's been tough the past couple of years," Heisman said of the economy. "We don't know if that's going to change. We're trying to do what we can to make ends meet in the meantime."

In 2009, HABcore served 114 individuals. Ninety-nine percent of those individuals were people with disabilities.

Twenty-two percent of HABcore residents are working, volunteering, or attending school. This is considered a very high statistic among this segment of the population, according to HABcore.

In 2009, 77 percent of HABcore's departing residents graduated to a more independent setting or were reunited with family.

"(Services) are based on each individual and their needs as they're assessed by our staff when they come to us," Heisman said. "Some have to work on certain issues prior to worrying about the job. Some have already dealt with all that and are ready to seek employment."

"Some people have more pressing issues. Others come to us and either need to get their feet on the ground or are in a situation where they need training for certain skills," Heisman added.

According to Heisman the staff at HABcore help its residents fill out job applications, perform interview role-playing, and help with follow-up for employment.

"We do a lot of teaching in term of job search skills," Heisman said. "When someone demonstrates the ability to live on their own without any supervision, the goal is for them to graduate the boarding home program and move on to an independent living apartment."

Aside from dwindling donations from foundations and grants from the government, a major obstacle for HABcore is that it is often met with opposition when it attempts to expand or acquire additional facilities.

Opposition comes in the form of area residents opposed to the special needs or low-income population coming to their neighborhood as well as municipalities rezoning to prevent the possible development of multi-family homes.

"It's a huge obstacle," Heisman said. "It's been a huge problem over the years."

"Unfortunately, homelessness is a growing issue and people have to realize with the cost of living in this state there are people out there who need help," Heisman added. "It's unfortunate that there's not more of a sense of community to help those that are less fortunate than ourselves. Don't get me wrong. there are certainly people who continue to give. For those who do what they can, we are very appreciative."

For more information on Habcore and its mission, visit their Web site at [www.habcore.org](http://www.habcore.org).