

Remarks of Mayor Paul Fraim
Regional Conference on Ending Homelessness
March 16, 2010
8:30 a.m.
Virginia Wesleyan College

Thank you and good morning.

It's an honor to be with you at this Regional Conference on Ending Homelessness.

The timing of the conference is most appropriate. It was almost five years ago when the communities of South Hampton Roads joined forces to establish the task force to end homelessness. It was a significant decision.

The task force represents a clear realization that the problem of homelessness is not confined to a singular political jurisdiction nor is it defined by a particular group of people.

During the past 5 years, the task force has launched a number of major initiatives on the journey toward ending homelessness.

For example: The nation's first regional supportive housing residence for homeless adults, Gosnold Apartments, opened in Norfolk.

A second SRO – Cloverleaf Apartments – is now open in Virginia Beach, and a third SRO is set to open in Portsmouth late next year.

A comprehensive needs assessment plan is now complete.

That plan will serve as a blueprint to guide the region toward the goal of ending homelessness.

The details of the plan will be outlined later today by Susan Wagner and I'm sure each of you is eager to hear the results of the planning process.

Each of our cities has developed programs to create affordable housing opportunities for single homeless adults and families.

In Norfolk, for example, the city has established a central intake for homeless families and a Housing First program for single adults with mental illnesses.

It's a well known fact that for hundreds of years, the faith community has shouldered the burden of tending to the homeless and poor families

It just made sense to those of us in Norfolk to reach out to our churches and synagogues, and I'm proud to report that the faith community responded with great passion and vigor.

We launched our Faith Partnership with a mentoring program for families and, next week, our faith partners and the Office to End Homelessness are scheduled to engage in a resource and planning forum.

We're hopeful that a magnanimous gesture by the Dragas family will set the tone for additional support from the private sector.

The Dragas gift has provided homes and comprehensive services to our most vulnerable families and their children.

As all of you are painfully aware, the nation is still in the grips of a devastating economy, and state and local governments have responded by slashing budgets and reducing or even eliminating essential programs and services.

Simply stated ... that means all of you are going to be forced to do more with less.

I'm confident, however, that each of you possesses the compassion and commitment to persevere.

If you didn't believe deeply in the goodness of man and the inherent ability to help those who cannot help themselves, you wouldn't be sitting here today.

As you participate in today's conference, please remember that you have the power to give the homeless the one thing that money can't buy.

It's called ... hope.

It's the one thing that so many of these people desperately cling to as they dream of one day leaving the shadows of our cities.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is our ultimate goal – our commitment.

After all, everyone deserves a place to call home.

Thank you for allowing me to be here today. Best wishes and God bless you.