



Free Clinic Gives Helping Hand up to Those in Need

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Photo Courtesy of: TFCF

Time for Change Foundation's Dwayne Robinson, an alcohol and drug counselor/compliance officer with the foundation, and Chaplain Dov Cohen were more than happy to help those in need.



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For hundreds of San Bernardino residents, last Saturday was a step in a life-changing direction. The Way World Outreach Downtown Mission in San Bernardino was the host to Time for Change Foundation's (TFCF) Free Prop. 47 Felony Reduction Clinic held July 25. Time for Change Foundation members and volunteers worked throughout the day to help hundreds of people in need of assistance have their felonies reduced to misdemeanors at the one-day event, the culmination of nearly two months of outreach efforts by the TFCF.

More than 200 petitions were completed that day, explained TFCF spokeswoman Nicole Wolfe, who explained that the goal of the free clinic was to "reduce barriers to employment and housing while strengthening families in the Inland Empire." It also helped people who are "starting over" receive vital public assistance services they need to get back on the right track, she said, which is not possible with felony convictions.

"[San Bernardino] County has some of the highest numbers of homeless in the land," said Wolfe. "Trying to find an apartment - some won't rent to people with felony convictions, and when you go looking for a job, despite the explanation, they might still deny employment for someone with a felony conviction."

Prop. 47, passed on the November 2014 ballot, reduced the penalties for certain low-level crimes classified as "nonserious and nonviolent property and drug crimes" from a felony to a misdemeanor. These include simple drug possession, petty theft under \$950, shoplifting under \$950, forging or writing a bad check under \$950 or receipt of stolen property under \$950.

The Time for Change Foundation helped those with low-level felony charges reduce them to misdemeanors.

"We were retroactively changing the charges," said Wolfe, "since now these crimes are considered misdemeanors, and we were bringing them in line with what they are today. These are not violent felons or sexual offenders. These are people, usually low-income, who have stolen diapers or were caught in their addiction and were found to be in simple drug possession, but not selling. These are people who turned to simple crimes."

The goal was to get those who needed assistance back on their feet or on the right track.

One man who participated in the clinic last Saturday was waiting with his two children for his wife to finish with the attorneys. "We both got our felonies reduced today. I can get a better job, make more money and buy our first house," he said.

Over 33 volunteers came together last weekend to help the community, including teams from the San Bernardino and Rancho Cucamonga Public Defender's offices; Attorney Allison Bracy of Ivie, McNeill & Wyatt; Attorney Claudia Lopez of IELLU; Renea Wickman, a political activist and community organizer; Donna Ferracone, a member of the San Bernardino Community College District Board of Trustees and a TFCF advisory council member; Roxanne Williams, a candidate for the San Bernardino City Council's 6th Ward; Chaplain Dov Cohen; University of Redlands students Emma Wade and Jewel Patterson; and all TFCF staff and clients.

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health also brought their 40-foot van to provide health screenings while Budget Mobile was on hand with free phones. Lunch was provided by TFCF and prepared by The Way World Outreach volunteer food team. Computers for the event were provided by Tracey Holcomb from SGDIG.

The event was a part of Creating Healthy Alternatives Mobilizing Prop. 47 (CHAMP47), an initiative of TFCF created to implement Proposition 47 and The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, also approved by voters last November.

"The CHAMP47 campaign will help to improve health and safety of our community which has been devastated by mass incarceration. It will also help rebuild families by removing underlying barriers to employment, access to health care and education in San Bernardino," said Wolfe.

"This was the hand up they needed to get back on track. That's what it's doing," she said of the clinic. "It's self evident."

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