

# Former business leader makes homelessness his business

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Intelligencer Journal  
Lancaster New Era  
Oct 17, 2009 09:42 EST  
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By BERNARD HARRIS, Staff Writer

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Tom Clingan is leading the fight against homelessness.

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In fact, there are many families among the homeless population, Clingan said. And often they are families with children, said Susan Eckert, United Way president.

Of the 738 people counted in shelters or on the streets on a single night in January, 180 of them were children, Eckert said.

The beds for women and families at the Water Street mission are full. The family rooms are full at the YWCA, Glass House and Transitional Living Center, Clingan said.

Getting those people into permanent housing is the key to ending homelessness, Clingan said.

Unlike past years, the county is in a better position to respond to the needs of people who are homeless or facing homelessness.

Clingan is partly responsible for that.

A former Armstrong World Industries executive, Clingan came to the United Way and began drafting organizational charts and forming committees.

Three teams are now discussing what should be done. One of those is keeping track of when emergency shelters are nearing capacity. Another is focused on families. The third is a steering committee for the winter shelter program hosted by several city houses of worship.

Clingan's experiences in training, sales and working in a corporate culture help him in his role, Eckert said. Clingan knows how to use resources to streamline systems and get the best results, she said.

"It makes good business sense, and it also makes good human sense," she said.

Clingan got his start working with the homeless as a volunteer. He has been a volunteer at Water Street for many years. He would often serve Saturday morning breakfasts.

As he was winding down his business career, Clingan said he felt called to work where he felt God was working and he got progressively more involved in the shelters.

"In the business world, you focus on success, and in your second career you focus on significance," Clingan said, referring to a quote he has heard several times.

"For me, that resonated."

With the season's first frost this week and the possibility of an early season snow, probably no one is watching the doorway as closely as operators of area homeless shelters.

Typically, the first days of cold weather convince the homeless, who have been staying outside during the warmer months, to head indoors.

With the nation in an economic recession and joblessness at a quarter-century high, this year has not been typical.

The shelters are nearly full already.

On Thursday night, with a steady rain and temperatures in the 30s, the county's largest shelter, Water Street Rescue Mission — with a capacity for more than 300 — had only four emergency shelter beds available.

Once those are full, the mission will allow people to sleep on benches in the lobby, said Maria Schaszberger, Water Street's spokeswoman.

Tom Clingan is hoping it won't come to that.

And, if things go as planned, it won't.

"The goal is to (never) have anyone move into the shelter system," said Clingan, director of homelessness and affordable housing for United Way of Lancaster County.

Last week, the United Way's LINC, or Lancaster Information Center, began screening callers seeking assistance for a new homelessness prevention program.

The program, backed by nearly \$2.5 million in federal and state stimulus funds, seeks to keep people who are facing eviction in their homes and to get people who recently were evicted into housing.

LINC has fielded 453 calls, and 143 of the callers might be eligible for the program. One family already has received assistance.

The effort follows the release last year of the county's 10-year plan to end homelessness by emphasizing permanent housing.

Still, Clingan, 58, acknowledges the local shelters could be overwhelmed. Or, they might not be. They won't know until tomorrow, or the next day, or next month.

It has always been difficult to get an accurate picture of the homeless population here.

The popular perception of the chronically homeless — a man living on the street — accounts for only about 10 percent of homeless people. The overwhelming majority are temporarily homeless. A job loss or a health issue might have pushed them over the financial edge. Some might stay with family or friends and never enter a shelter.

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It convinced Clingan to approach a friend and former co-worker, Lenny Walton, and ask how he could get more involved.

The question to Walton, the United Way's first homelessness director, came as Walton was looking to step out of that role. Eckert said they kept the job open for three or four months as Walton eased out of the position and Clingan completed 35 years at Armstrong.

Clingan and his wife, Barbara, a speech therapist with Intermediate Unit 13, live in East Hempfield Township. They have two adult children.

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#### QUOTE (citydweller @ Oct 19 2009, 08:00 PM)

You need to become better informed. UW get's the lion's share of donations in this county because they specialize in generating PR for themselves, and because they hold money over other org's heads to continue doing so ("shut the F up or we cut you off"). Very few people in the non-profit sector would say this candidly, for the reasons outlined above, but it is a sad truth about how they operate and maintain their highest-of-profiles as "teh leader".

This article is merely a case in point. And yet another example of Lancaster's "club system", where if you aren't in "the club", by their rules, you're out in the cold.

From the article:

From The Truth: These "teams" have been in place since 2008, and are all operated under the auspices of the Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness, which is an "inter-agency" org that *includes* UW, among a dozen other orgs and the County Commissioners. UW has a seat at the table and nothing more, and Mr. Clingan neither initiated these teams nor runs them.

UW's sole role as a "starter" was to publish a report in October 2008 that got the ball rolling. Since that time dozens of orgs have made the ball keep rolling, with UW being a mere player with the same status as all other players. Yet they continually spin their PR to make it look like they are doing everything and own the whole deal.

If you knew some key people in the non-profit sector that works primarily to service the under-served, *and* they were willing to speak candidly with you, you would not hear many good things about UW. A look at their Federal Form 990 would also give most people some pause when thinking about where their money really goes when they donate to "charity X" through UW. (Think: "administrative fees") Not to mention the sheer vulgarity of paying their president \$134,000 in base salary "in these troubled economic times", while strong-arming the County to pay the \$40k salary of the actual "official homelessness advisor" to the program, who *isn't* Mr. Clingan and *doesn't* work out of UW's offices. She must be banging her head against the wall right about now.

But hey, keep your Happy Hat and rose-colored glasses on, and keep on thinking that UW is the solution to homelessness in Lancaster County. And meanwhile a couple dozen *committed* orgs and their hundreds of volunteers will go on *doing the actual work*, with no glowing articles to credit them.

If I "knew some key people"?

You make a poor assumption about me! We should grab a beer sometime and I'll fill you in on my background. I happen to know more "key" people and have been more involved with charity work in ten years compared to most peoples lifetimes!

I never said they were the "solution to homelessness" just the fact that without all their funding of numerous organizations in the county we would be in sad shape.

I do question your "key" players claims though and will ask my own questions when I get the chance. I really don't think the UW would attach their name to an org. that they weren't fairly heavily involved in. I would be more inclined to believe that those you spoke with are disgruntled for some reason against the UW(maybe they were turned down for some request) and are mud slinging?

That couldn't be the case though could it? There is no competition between charities is there? After all, at the end of the day they are all for a good cause right?

FDR06-10

The facts are the facts, and they don't change because LNP is willing to print UW's fund-hungry spin.

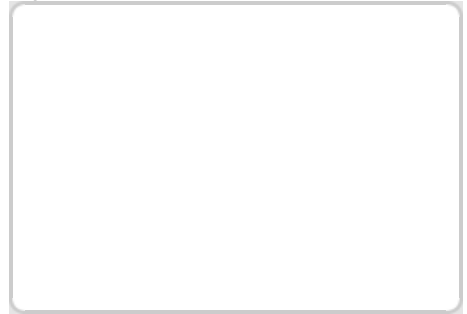
The article clearly implies that UW and Mr. Clingan both invented and manage programs and committees that have nothing to do with them whatsoever other than by passing association, and even then late in the game.

The Lancaster County Council of Churches ([www.lccouncilofchurches.org](http://www.lccouncilofchurches.org)) started the winter overflow shelter program in 2005, in conjunction with Water Street and Crispus Attuks. UW was not involved and played no role. They do not "steer" the program today, nor do they play any role in it's management.

In October 2008 UW loudly shilled a "10 year plan to end homelessness", all but held a parade over their

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"discovery" that we had a homeless problem, coerced the County Commissioners to fund a "homeless advisor" that UW would hire, and started using the report and the commissioners as a fundraising tool. They continue to do this today, despite the fact that every major program and initiative in the county addressing homelessness on the street was started and operates today independent of UW, in some cases decades before UW wanted to jump on the bandwagon.

Meanwhile, when people have to sort through fundraising letters from the Council of Churches, Inter-agency Council on Homelessness, Community Homeless Outreach Center, Lancaster County Council to End Homelessness, and UW, too many people will remember this mis-informed article and think "*Well this guy at UW manages all of that, so I should send my money to UW*".

And UW will dole that money out as it sees fit, take the credit for the hard work and dedication of others, and collect \$125,000.00 in "processing fees".

And yeah, I do have a problem with that.

citydweller

**QUOTE (citydweller @ Oct 20 2009, 01:52 PM)**

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In October **2008** UW loudly shilled a "10 year plan to end homelessness", all but held a parade over their "discovery" that we had a homeless problem, coerced the County Commissioners to fund a "homeless advisor" that UW would hire, and started using the report and the commissioners as a fundraising tool. They continue to do this today, despite the fact that every major program and initiative in the county addressing homelessness on the street was started and operates today independent of UW, in some cases decades before UW wanted to jump on the bandwagon.

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You have a problem with people getting paid to do a fulltime job? I guess you have a problem with Hospice employees being paid as well. Afterall it costs millions to operate that place and it is a charity.

I've been involved when they "dole" out that money in the past and if you'd like to figure it out I'm sure they'll be glad to take you. There is nothing easy about allotting millions of dollars between a bunch of worthy charitable organizations and a few that I'd deem unworthy but it has to be done. Many would get nothing without the UW.

You fail to recognize like a business, even a charity must spend millions to make money for their causes. Imagine UDS without the UW. They'd have much less to work with!

While I don't agree with all of their funded organizations, the UW is a worthy and well run organization in itself at least here in Lancaster. If you want to see some UW abuse go check out some big city UW groups.

FDR06-10

**QUOTE (FDR06-10 @ Oct 20 2009, 01:25 PM)**

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You still fail to address the fact that UW used a media opportunity to take credit for programs with *which they aren't even associated*.

That's no small thing there, ya know. Some of us call it *lying*.

I ran into the executive director of one of the orgs (a fairly big one) that *did* help start the winter shelter program this afternoon on the street. They high-fived me for calling out UW, and related a host of instances when UW has done this before, always to steer donations their way.

And frankly, I don't give a rat's sphincter what "other big city" UW's do, or don't do. They aren't UW of Lancaster County, and they aren't pretending to be leaders and managers of programs they've never had anything to do with, and that I've worked in for five years.

citydweller

**QUOTE (FDR06-10 @ Oct 19 2009, 01:08 PM)**

So you feel the UW isn't a worthwhile cause? Wonder what would happen if all the money the UW provides to charities in Lancaster was not available?

You may not agree with all of the programs the UW funds(nor do I), they are by far the leader in this community for charitable giving and a major resource for thousands to turn to.

Every year I get a "voluntary deduction" form in my mailbox at work from the United Way. Every year, it goes right into the shredder.

I remember when it used to be mandatory to go to UW meetings. A couple years ago my boss threatened to involuntarily assign someone to be the chair for our dept's UW "giving committee," because no one would do it voluntarily.

These people get their money by strong-arming and bullying, then spend most of the \$\$ on over head. I'll give my charitable contributions directly. That way I know my money is going where I want it to go, not where the UW designates it.

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