

A PLACE TO CALL HOME



In 2009, the homeless population of Lubbock was left with nowhere to go and struggled to find a place to sleep when the city made it illegal for them to stay in the park where they had made their own, small community. They soon found a home though, through the creative efforts of a local organization led by a Texas Tech graduate and his true passion for community service.

At the time of the relocation in 2009, Frank Morrison, a West Texas native, had served as a city council member and was the president of Link Ministries, a local non-church affiliated ministry. Morrison said as soon as he heard about the situation, him and his team sprang into action.

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With the help of the team at Link Ministries, Morrison found some land off 13th Street and Avenue A where he built what is now referred to as Tent City. Unlike most homeless shelters in the area, Morrison and his board members had a vision of creating a community atmosphere that focused on helping the homeless get back on their feet and into the mainstream business world.

According to the South Plains Homeless Consortium, Inc., it is estimated that the number of homeless people in the area remains at around 350 people. Although he would not be able to help every single person, it was important that Morrison try to help as many as he possibly could.

Morrison said it was his passion for community service and helping others that led him to be involved in heading-up Tent City.

“When people live close together there needs to be coordination of activities and services for effective and harmonious existence,” Morrison said. “Government provides services to ensure the health and safety of the citizens and every citizen has the responsibility to participate.”

Les Burrus, the executive director of Link Ministries, said if it was not for Morrison and his desire to constantly do well for other people, Tent City would not have been able to grow to where it is today.

“Frank has a huge heart,” Burrus said. “You can definitely see it in everything he does.”

When Tent City began, there were only a few pop-up tents scattered across the land designated for the community. After many windy, Lubbock nights though, the small tents on the land would consistently collapse, leaving the occupants completely without their shelters.

Through generous community donations, Link Ministries was able to purchase 55 army surplus tents to serve as homes for those seeking shelter. Each tent is made of a dark green canvas and is modestly sized with a cot for sleeping. There are single tents, as well as double tents for those with spouses.

The tents are also equipped with lighting inside that is powered by a solar panel outside the tent. The lights inside the tents were donated and installed by students in the Tech Energy Commerce Department are essential in helping the residents see at night, as well as in helping them feel secure and more at ease during the dark hours.

Although the tents are individually occupied, you can feel a strong sense of community as you enter through the gates. Many residents can be seen throughout the day sitting at a table outside the main office as they chat and fellowship with one another.

Inside the main office, residents have access to around 20 warm meals a week, as well as showers and restrooms. The office also provides essentials for the residents such as sleeping bags, towels, hygiene kits, and clothes.

Morrison said the essentials provided to the residents would not be possible if it was not for donations provided by members of the Lubbock

community. Many items that are regularly donated and in constant need by the shelter include coffee, creamer, sleeping bags, meats, towels, razors, and toothpaste.

Morrison said in addition to providing residents with everyday essentials and shelter, Tent City also

aides its residents when it comes to finding jobs and moving back into the regular world.

Although Tent City has only been active for a few years, Morrison said he is already looking toward the future and how he can continue to serve those in need of shelter and guidance. He said he has recently purchased

an apartment building that he plans to renovate to use as housing for those ready to leave Tent City.

Morrison said there are also plans in the near future to renovate a cotton gin located on Tent City’s property. He says the building will be used to help house the chronic homeless population and others in need, like single women with children. This future expansion would not have been possible without the assistance of Urban Tech (a department of the Texas Tech College of Architecture).

Tent City and its future sister complex are a part of High Cotton, which is a larger ministry that includes the homeless shelters as well as a skate park and a sports park that offer recreational activities such as basketball and even boxing for the at-risk youth of Lubbock.

Morrison said although he is comfortable and happy where he is with his success with Tent City, it did not come without hardship. With every success he had, he said he usually experienced a failure as well. He said he hopes he can show those he helps through Tent City that although you may experience hardships, you can always move forward.

“You can’t be afraid of failure,” Morrison said. “Real failure is the lack of getting up and trying.”



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