

## The ECH Justa Center

1001 West Jefferson ♦ Phoenix AZ 85007 ♦ (602) 254 6524

*Transforming Lives*



*Harry was living on the streets when he found the Justa Center. Justa staff took him to the hospital, and worked with the social services there to get him into an assisted living facility. Harry is now eating regular meals, engaging in physical therapy, and is safe and cared for.*

Justa Center, operating under the auspices of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy for the Homeless, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, serves as a daytime refuge for homeless senior citizens who are adversely affected by physical and/or mental disabilities, substance abuse, and/or economic dislocation, and desperately need temporary assistance to sustain and hopefully transform life.

Justa was the name given by the early Church Fathers to the woman identified in Matthew 15: 21-28 who sought healing from Jesus for her daughter and, because of the persuasiveness of her faith, her daughter was healed the very same day. Faith is a major ingredient of the Justa effort, refusing to give up on persons who still have enough faith in themselves and others to make a new life.

The Center operates from leased facilities at 10th Avenue and Jefferson, in a neighborhood comprised of a variety of facilities and services attempting to meet the basic needs of the poor, homeless and disenfranchised. Currently it has a paid staff of four, led by the Rev. Scott Ritchey, a United Methodist clergyman. It has a present annual operating budget of \$240,000 and is wholly supported by charitable contributions. Justa receives no Federal, state or other governmental funds.

Justa's sole mission is to help transform lives by assisting (1) those persons who make a personal commitment to alter their destructive lifestyles (alcohol/drug abuse, tendencies toward violence and disregard for others' rights and property) and (2) those who have suffered from economic hardship and/or physical and mental disabilities. Justa does this by providing on site eating, bathing and laundry facilities, as well as referrals for housing sources, medical assistance, employment services and legal documentation. Equally important, the staff, together with qualified volunteers, provide counseling and a "friendly face" for its constituency, endeavoring to confirm their "personhood" and instill a positive mind-set.

*John had severe diabetes, which manifested itself noticeably in his deteriorating bare feet. His main barrier to ending his homelessness was his lack of identification. Justa staff took him to the DMV to get his ID, which got him access to his savings account. Staff was then able to him find an appropriate apartment, and he is no longer on the streets.*





*Justa assisted Betsy with medical care, offered her a safe place to stay during the day, helped her obtain Section 8 Housing, and moved her into her own apartment. Betsy remains in touch with ECH Justa Center, & keeps them apprised of her situation & ongoing needs.*

The Center presently serves about 100 individuals per day, with an average turnover rate of about 5%. Included in that turnover are about 85% who are enabled to achieve some level of normalcy, but the remainder are either so mentally or physically disabled, or unwilling or incapable of committing to a changed lifestyle that the Justa staff must find other, albeit limited alternative resources for them; in other words, Justa is not a drop-in center but a resource center for those willing to alter their lifestyle.

Justa relies upon volunteers, especially nurses, social workers, recreational therapists and those who prepare and deliver food for morning and noontime meals, and welcomes donations of toiletries, paper products, adult clothing and books and games. In the absence of any endowments, cash donations are necessary to meet everyday operating expenses such as rent, insurance, utilities and staff compensation. In addition, there is a great need for those compassionate individuals who can spend time with the homeless to listen to their stories and attempt to help them find re-affirmation as a child of God. In this connection, Reverend Ritchey conducts church services on Sunday mornings and directs opportunities for Bible study, morning prayer and faith sharing. Accordingly, the Justa effort is designed to meet not only the material needs, but also the spiritual and emotional needs of those who are at the bottom of society's ladder.

Justa, under the direction and supervision of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy for the Homeless, is attempting to establish more nearly permanent funding so that staff can devote the vast majority of its time and efforts to ministry. Justa seeks financial aid and in-kind assistance from Phoenix area churches, public and private corporations, and individuals. To this end, a network of concerned citizens is being developed to carry the Justa story to all parts of the community. Volunteers for this effort will be warmly received.

For more information on how you can get involved with the ECH Justa Center, Please contact Reverend Scott Ritchey at (602) 254-6524 or saritchey@hotmail.com.



*When Harry came to Justa he was an unemployed, homeless barber. Justa helped him secure a job in his trade, which gave him a stable income and allowed him to find his own apartment. He is no longer on the streets.*