

MILLIE LOWERY  
Interviewed by John Kulli  
in her office at 627 South San Julian Street  
Los Angeles, CA on  
September 14, 1999

On 9/14/99, Mollie Lowery was interviewed by John Kulli, a long-time member of her board, about the aims and program of this organization, which she had founded. The interview was conducted in her office, 627 South San Julian Street, Los Angeles. The material that follows is in three parts: PART A, following the interviewer's initial questions, is a statement of the organization and program that was prepared by Ms. Lowery. PART B is a record of the content of a community meeting in which Kulli and Lowery discussed the services provided to the homeless and mentally ill men and women of Skid Row in Los Angeles. In PART C, Mr. Kulli offers personal comments summarizing his interview with Lowery.

For Mr. Kulli's role as a volunteer in a variety of community activities, including LAMP, see his recorded oral-history interview on file with CSWA.

**PART A**

KULLI: Millie, how did you come to establish LAMP?

LOWERY: In most states, we reneged on our promise to provide community-based program support to persons de-institutionalized from psychiatric hospitals. Now many people are blaming those with mental illness for their failure to thrive and have begun creating new laws and methods for re-institutionalization. This chapter describes a community-based program that is demonstrably effective. It is a testimony to what can work, and involves the full participation of homeless people diagnosed with mental illness.

KULLI: As chief executive officer, you have created in LAMP a model for community-based support services. Will you tell our readers the story of LAMP?

LOWERY: Many people have asked me to tell the story of LAMP, how we got started, what some of the struggles have been along the way, and how we have collectively managed to

become a creative, effective model for serving the needs of homeless individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness. When people ask how to duplicate LAMP in their own cities, they are most often looking for short order recipes that can be microwaved rather than baked in a slow oven. It takes time to build community! The essence of LAMP is community and process—a dynamic, inclusive, responsive process. What we have done can be duplicated—with vision, time, and commitment.

KULLI: Will you describe the LAMP programs and their development?

LOWERY: In June, 1985, we opened the doors of our LAMP Drop-In-Center. We founded LAMP on the following principles: service would be completely voluntary and accessible; agency growth and administration would be driven by the needs of the people served; staff would represent the diversity of the population served and therefore include people diagnosed with mental illness; “guests” (program participants) would have the opportunity to work for and with the agency as it grew; we would be a life-long, non-linear service network providing a continuum of support; and we would grow into a community working towards constructive, individual, collective and systemic change.

Located in the heart of Skid Row, LAMP Drop-In-Center is open seven days/week and meets basic survival needs for food, clothing, hot showers and toilets. We also provide health screening, a mailing address, services as “payee” for social security benefits; and advocacy services for housing, entitlements, and legal problems. LAMP is a safe place—a clean, caring, reliable, respectful home-base. Our focus is on bringing people in off the streets, building trust, and establishing a healthy, accepting, dependable community of staff and guests.

Within our first four months of operation, we were seeing 80+ people each day—people

diagnosed with schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder; people who had been avoiding contact with any traditional programs or services and who had, up to that point, found barely surviving on the streets the only tolerable alternative. They came to LAMP because we provide them with the space, time, and resources to determine for themselves what their needs are and when and how to meet those needs.

In our first year of operation, we forged an effective relationship with the County Skid Row Mental Health Clinic, two blocks away from LAMP. As our guests' basic survival needs were met, and they built friendships at LAMP and an increased sense of self-worth, they could consider their longer-range physical and mental health needs and pursue them. They could set some priorities and had the self-confidence to explore and choose an acceptable level of psychiatric "treatment." The County Clinic continued modifying its structure to accommodate street people, allowing drop-in clients, discussing medications/dosages with their patients, and doing some street and downtown hotel outreach. They became a more effective resource and the partnership between LAMP and Skid Row Mental Health has made more comprehensive care possible, accessible, and affordable.

Meanwhile, back at LAMP Drop-In-Center, as our population grew, an overnight encampment took root in front of the building. Up to twenty LAMP guests were sleeping next to LAMP rather than in the local mission beds. Guests insisted that it was safer and friendlier to sleep on LAMP's parking lot and sidewalk. In response, in March, 1987, we began providing crisis shelter services, housing 18 guests each night in our Drop-In-Center building. In the tradition already established by the LAMP Drop-In-Center, there was no time limit set for shelter stay. People were welcome to stay as long as they met our criteria and followed some basic

rules. The rules at LAMP were simple and straightforward—no violence, no threats of violence, and come in reasonably sober.

During our first two years of operation, we pushed sobriety and banned the obvious addicts. It became clear that 50 - 60% of the guests had, in addition to their mental illness, serious problems with drugs and alcohol. We had to take their unmet needs seriously. Our first attempt to actually confront the drug abuse problems among guests was to try to utilize existing drug recovery/treatment programs through referral. The two-month waiting periods, requiring daily phone contacts, and limited beds for each category of drug or alcohol dependence were standard frustrations. The greatest barrier was the traditional program ban against use of any psychotropic medications. As we attempted to refer our guests, it became more apparent that the drug treatment programs were not accessible to our “dual-diagnosed” guests. We began working on our own in-house drug recovery.

Our staff took several months to educate ourselves, work with outside trainers, and change old attitudes that interfered with our ability to work effectively with addicted persons. Our “dual-diagnosed” guests were difficult to work with. (Most of our staff felt guests should just sober up and quit being obnoxious). LAMP gradually hired some recovering staff, including previous LAMP guests. Drug recovery became a special focus integrated into all our programs. (Added funding to support the drug recovery component came from County Mental Health).

As our LAMP community evolved, continuing to include new people, different needs merged. Guests wanted more program options and resources to continue their growth. Most of them identified employment as a natural next step, especially when they saw some of their

friends become LAMP staff. In response to these rising expectations, we discussed plans for developing a transitional residence and some type of small, income-generating business.

Because LAMP now had a proven track record, in 1987, we were approached by a few community leaders who had been meeting with city and county officials concerning the use of a city warehouse/garage in Skid Row and \$1,000,000 in County monies, which were earmarked for the homeless. They asked if LAMP could use the site and the funds. The answer was a resounding “yes!” and LAMP Village Transitional Residence and our small businesses were in the making.

After one full year of delays due to the local business people’s opposition to our zoning variance, in late 1988, we were able to begin construction on the 30,000 square foot brick warehouse. Under the one roof, LAMP Village would house: a 48-bed transitional residence with a full program of life-skills workshops, performance/visual art and writing classes, drug recovery, case management and advocacy services, and four businesses providing jobs for LAMP guests and some basic community amenities in the Skid Row area - a commercial linen service, a Laundromat, a mini-market, and public showers and toilets.

By 1988-1989, the LAMP community was demonstrating some additional successes. Our staff of fifteen included a cook and two staff/advocates who were “graduates” of LAMP. This had been a goal, but achieving it took sustained, focused effort. Staff with university education and degrees had to wrestle with their own biases because life-experience was valued equally to traditional education. Our guest “graduates” had to make the complex, sometimes agonizing transition from being LAMP guests to being full-time paid staff. Usually this involved a change in residence, letting go of some less stale friends and social connections, and

earning a salary instead of collecting Social Security and Medi-Cal benefits. This transition took time, trial and error, and genuine support from other LAMP staff. One necessity most difficult to obtain was health coverage that could accommodate reasonable psychiatric care. To augment services not paid for by insurance, LAMP built an expanded “in-house support system,” allowing for flexible shift scheduling and providing a counselor (at no cost to staff) to do group and individual counseling.

In response to Skid Row need and increasing numbers of women showing up on our doorstep, LAMP began serving women as well as men, and LAMP was reducing the need for hospitalizations. Whereas, in the first two years, at least a dozen LAMP guests were hospitalized one or more times; by 1989, only three guests became so dysfunctional that they needed acute hospitalization. The consistency and reliability of the LAMP community gives our guests an anchor to hold as they cycle through mental illness. Our guests began relying more and more on each other for help, as friends and family.

During the early stages of the Village development, we experimented with permanent housing. Believing that LAMP guests would want to move out of the area and off Skid Row, we quietly leased a small apartment building in Santa Monica and began moving guests in. A staff person lived in one of the units, mostly to provide support. The distance between LAMP Drop-In-Center/Shelter and the apartments was 15 miles. In Los Angeles, that translates to a one-hour bus ride. For eighteen months, the housing experiment stumbled along, half full most of the time. Only one guest actually acclimated successfully to the new setting. Everyone else returned to LAMP on Skid Row. Guests said repeatedly, “The apartments were just too far from home.” They felt alienated and isolated away from their friends and family at LAMP. This

experience was crucial because it determined the direction of LAMP's future development. Rather than relate to Skid Row as an undesirable, temporary situation to escape from, we would turn our energies to investing in and improving the area in an effort to make it a better, more decent, liveable residential neighborhood.

In the Spring of 1990, representatives of the Community Redevelopment Agency offered LAMP a 52-unit SRO building located in Skid Row. The building was in the midst of major renovation when the former owner/agency ceased operating and abandoned the project. It is within walking distance from LAMP Drop-In-Center/Shelter and LAMP Village. We took the CRA offer, and in June, 1990, LAMP began construction on our new permanent housing - LAMP Lodge. In the same month, Lamp Village went into operation.

Our LAMP Village building is one city block long and 200 feet wide, with 30-foot ceilings, and lots of natural light and space. It houses two distinct operations: a transitional residence and four small businesses.

The residential program is goal-oriented, focused on development of the "whole" person and on preparing individuals for more independent living. In the beginning, the emphasis was on in-house group work and classes. We gradually modified this and have tailored our services more to the guests' individual needs and goals. We also utilize some resources outside of the Village - the YMCA, Skid Row Mental Health Socialization, and AA/NA meetings. Our on-site performing/visual/writing arts classes have been highly successful in bringing out the creative, emotional, and artistic side of our guests. "Operation Hammer," a performance troupe, has done shows developed from their own material, at Equity-waver theaters in the city. LAMP guests who have moved into the Village and committed themselves to participating in the full program

for several months have made significant life changes through the process. Their mental illness remains, but does not dominate or drive their day-to-day choices. Self-confidence and reliance have replaced self-hate and independence. They look to the months ahead, not just to tomorrow - with home and plans. For many of the guests, a significant factor in this change has been the opportunity for employment in the Village businesses.

One half of the LAMP Village facility houses four small businesses, three of which went into operation in the Fall of 1990, subsidized by a five-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The combination of businesses is designed to provide a variety of job experiences and levels of responsibility and skill. In addition, they are an investment in, contribution to, and resource for the residents of Skid Row.

The Village Linen Service contracts with non-profit hotels, shelters, and recovery home operators. The service cleans and delivers linens, towels, and blankets at commercially competitive prices, promising quality work professionally delivered, and a role in employing people who have been homeless and are diagnosed with mental illness. As of Summer, 1991, the Village Linen Service was part-time employing 15 LAMP guests, and had 60% of the contracts needed to break even, financially. By 1999, it has increased to 26 guests.

Our LAMP Village Laundromat is the only self-service, coin-op laundry in the 40 square blocks called Skid Row. Since our opening, we have been operating at maximum capacity. Plans are underway to begin a “fluff and fold” operation to generate additional income and to utilize more guest/employees.

The Village Public Toilets and Showers, known fondly as the Village “PITS,” make a real contribution to the quality of life for Skid Row inhabitants. Hot showers with towels and



soap cost 25 cents for five minutes; use of the toilets is free. Staffing these facilities requires the employment of up to three guest/employees whose duties include supervision, dispensing towels, and maintenance. There are no other public bathrooms or showers available on Skid Row.

Our fourth business, still in the planning stage, is the Village Market - a clean, honest, reasonably-priced source of daily necessities, food items, toiletries, and paper products. It will be an alternative to the existing numerous liquor stores which sell cheap, fortified wines, crack paraphernalia, and over-priced food items.

Our guest/employees in the Village Businesses work part-time, earning minimum wage, and continue to draw Social Security benefits. One of our goals is to eventually move more people into full-time work, increased pay, and off SSI. In order to achieve this, the businesses themselves must mature, and the guest/employees need to feel confident that the jobs are there and that they, individually, have the capacity to sustain employment. To that end, all guest-employees participate in a weekly support group with a counselor. The guest/employees are paid for this time. They also have the option of doing individual sessions with the counselor on their own time. Most guest/employees look forward to the group, and many request individual time.

In July of 1991, our LAMP Lodge construction was completed and the units were ready for occupancy. LAMP now has fifty apartments - permanent, affordable, and fully furnished, with a private bathroom and kitchen in each one. Within five blocks of LAMP Day Center and LAMP Village, the LAMP Lodge completes a continuum of housing and support services. In the now well-established tradition of LAMP, two "graduates" of our guest population were hired into full-time positions at the Lodge: the live-in manager and the maintenance person. A few

guest/tenants are part-time employed as desk clerks. After the first 15 people moved in, a Tenant/Council was established, allowing tenants to increase their direct participation in decisions and policy-making at the Lodge.

We have no cures for schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder. Most survivors of these chronic illnesses experience their first symptoms as teenagers or young adults. Many will live their entire lives struggling and coping with them. With or without medication, they will experience acute cycles. LAMP programs are developed on the assumption that our guests need life-long support and treatment. Our service and housing components are non-linear in that guests can utilize whatever services or level of housing they need or can function in now, and repeatedly. Guests do not need to move from A to B to C. They do not fail or graduate from the LAMP community. They grow, learn, and change. And, yes, they question and refuse medications periodically, experiment with drugs and sex, travel impulsively in hopes their schizophrenic symptoms will change with the new environment, and spend all of their SSI money on a junk car that gets impounded the first day. And LAMP is still there, to grow in, to fall apart in, to come back to, to stay at - no time limit on healing. Because the LAMP community is there through it all, they have a secure, safe place and constructive relationship so they can continue learning from these experiences. There is nothing unique in this concept. This is how we all learn and have the support to change our lives.

KULLI: What happens after the person is taken into LAMP?

LOWERY: Once a person is screened into LAMP, s/he is a part of the life-long community. It has taken time and focused effort to build an inclusive, strong community among guests and staff.

We want a community that thrives in and respects its diversity of race, ethnicity, class, sexual

orientation/preference, level of education, and life experience. From our beginnings, the LAMP staff has been representative of the guest population with regard to race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Within 18 months of operation, we were able to bring guests onto the staff. As of 1991, 38% of the 45 LAMP staff are former or current guests. This staff integration and the growth of LAMP services, has resulted in a solid, resourceful community that provides for growth and change. This community is a process for us - a constant challenge to our attitudes concerning power, ownership, and control, and a struggle against the internalized, societally reinforced assumption that people with mental illness are “in-valids,” not ready, unwilling and/or unable to control their own lives.

We work for change - constructive, individual, collective and systemic change. We are not invested in assisting people to better adjust to a defined status quo. We want our guests to discover their own purpose, to be active in creating their individual destinies. As LAMP community, we work together to be a part of the solution to societal and systemic problems.

KULLI: Is participation in LAMP’s program always voluntary?

LOWERY: Every element of LAMP’s programs is completely voluntary. People choose from the range of services, what they are ready for and when. This includes use of psychotropic medications, level of housing, and participation in drug recovery. The staff, and the larger LAMP community, are there to facilitate constructive decisions and change. Every day, we prove that if people diagnosed with serious mental illness are provided with safe, accessible, respectful services, they will use them. Most of our guests have avoided systems of care because they have been coerced into treatment. Like most people, they want to understand and have some control over their own treatment. They have legitimate questions and concerns about the medications.

We find that if we take the time to give them the information, good and bad, many of them do choose the medications rather than no treatment at all.

LAMP feels safe because our community acts as its own security system. We work together to maintain a non-violent environment. For those who first come to LAMP, this can be difficult. Their life on the streets has required aggression to survive. They learn quickly that at LAMP this violence is unacceptable and unnecessary. Their survival needs are provided for without having to yell, bang on doors, “act crazy,” or wait for hours. Their time and needs are respected and responded to with consistency and dignity. Staff are pivotal in providing a sense of safety. As staff, we must have our own issues of control and aggression worked out. We have to know when it is important to limit a guest’s actions or discipline a guest, and when it is better to back away to avoid exacerbating violence. The LAMP rules are few and basic, easy to remember, and clear: no violence, including destruction or theft of property; no threats of violence; come in reasonably sober.

LAMP is accessible - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Our buildings have ample space for the numbers of people we serve. We all participate in keeping the buildings in good repair and clean. We minimize the numbers of areas or rooms that must be locked and off-limits to certain people. Our buildings are designed to use lots of natural light. We decorate with guest and staff art. As community, we work at building tolerance and respect for each other. It matters that people feel safe and free to express constructive anger, joy, excitement, and creativity.

So many of our guests, as people with mental illness, have learned that such expressions are wrong. They fear they are losing control.

KULLI: How do your guests regard their illness?

LOWERY: At LAMP, we make every effort to talk about mental illness with the same frequency, intensity, and casualness as sex, drugs, news, food, money, movies, and politics. For those people in our LAMP community who must live with it all their lives, half the battle is accepting mental illness as part of themselves and not some alien experience to be dreaded and struggled against.

We talk about drugs a lot because many people in the LAMP community use them, prescribed or not. Society sees some of the drugs as good and important to take (psychotropic medication), and some as immoral and bad for everyone (heroin, cocaine, etc.). Regardless of our own individual beliefs and values, many persons with mental illness are going to question and challenge the assumptions that one drug is better than another for making them feel better. The fact is, most of the “dual diagnosed” individuals that LAMP works with take “crack” initially because it feels better than prolixin or haldol. If we accept this as a reality, acknowledge the benefits and negatives of both prescribed drugs and street drugs, consider the greater availability/accessibility of street drugs over prescribed medications, and provide a life-long, strong, supportive community, and individual stands a much better change of choosing and living sobriety.

We employ LAMP guests because we see work as an important opportunity for individuals to grow, build confidence in themselves, and take pride in their lives. We employ LAMP guests because there is a lot of work to be done, and some of them can do it better than anyone else. Finally, we employ guests because it is a definitive way to build an inclusive community of people, invested in their own individual life goals, as well as the collective goals of the LAMP community.

It works because we have created a diversity of real jobs; built in a consistent, supportive work environment; we pay them fairly and protect their rights as employees through personnel policies; and there are opportunities for advancement. (Former and current LAMP guests are in positions that earn anywhere from (1994 figures) \$4.25/hour to \$28,000/year plus benefits). The weekly support group provides a sounding board and a place to discuss personal and work-related problems. Every payday, another group forms to discuss the stresses and decisions about the use of the hard-earned money. The group usually focuses on the need for everyone to come to work the next day regardless of whether s/he partied all night.

KULLI: What part does your staff play in the agency's structure?

LOWERY: In order to effectively implement the goals and philosophy of the LAMP programs, we have worked hard to maintain an administrative structure that can provide the flexibility, accountability, and leadership necessary. It allows for maximum participation of all staff in direct service and minimizes the differentiation between administrative and line staff and guests. Shared decision-making is built in. All staff (bookkeeper, janitor, cook, program directors, etc.) Are involved in trainings and with program evaluation and planning. Interpersonal communication is encouraged and used more than dependence on written memos and procedures. All staff are informed about agency funding and its sources. We make conscious decisions about what monies to accept or reject based on our collective understanding of LAMP's goals and purpose. How we work together as staff must be a model for and encourage the building of community.

All of what we have done is possible in any and every neighborhood. The key ingredients are vision, respect, common-sense, passion, clarity of goals, understanding, and commitment;

some savvy about how to raise money; fearlessness in the face of prejudice and ignorance, time, patience, and the courage to learn and change with experience. These are the elements of long-term solutions. We can make the time, generate the will and create the resources. The health, growth, and quality of people's lives, of our communities, depend on our collective good use of them.

## **PART B**

Mollie Lowery, the primary founder of LAMP, showed the interviewer photos of some of the "guests" of the center so that he could better understand the people whom LAMP serves. She also read some excerpts of their poetry and their letters so he could learn of their life circumstances. Visually, he saw men and women who were clean, fairly well groomed and with a happy countenance. Emotionally, he felt the pain of their personal life circumstances as he heard their writing. LAMP guest members know that they have come down a hard trail, done "dumpster diving for food," slept under bridges, have been harassed by police and the public. Mollie told him some of her success stories. Her LAMP "guests" have been the unwashed, the neglected, the street survivors of mental illness.

This remarkable woman holds a degree in Psychology and a Masters in Rehabilitation Therapy from USC. She has been doing this work for her entire career. It was in the 1970s, while working in social services at Ocean Park Community Center, that Mollie came to realize she wanted to focus on this neglected population (it was in this era that the State hospitals were closing and discharging their mentally ill patients to the streets).

Mollie reported the following: "What I am about to describe as LAMP is set up and geared

for people who are homeless. We are not the answer for all people who have a mental illness. I thing that we have been outrageously successful with a very difficult population of people. Many people would say there is nothing we can do for these folks. We find at LAMP by providing a safe, really respectful and totally voluntary program and this alternative approach for these folks, that they will come in. Not only will they come in, but they will begin to rebuild their lives with some semblance of stability. They then will engage in constructive activity and be sociable. They begin to take control their own lives once again.

We accomplish this through a bunch of different ways. In 1985 we started out simply as a crisis drop-in center in a storefront on San Julian Street in Skid Row. At that time we didn't have the knowledge or the Chutzpah of what they wanted except a safe place to come into. In the Skid Row area, there were other places to go - several missions or flop-house hotels. We did know that the people who came to our day center did not want to sleep on the streets. We provided a place to get a meal, a place to sleep and basic survival skills. This turned out to be a bridge to the safe place where we could finally reach them. Then we could begin to talk to these folks about the other life circumstances that they were dealing with and coping with in the best way that they knew how.

So, that is what we did, and after four months of operating this little drop-in center, we found that we had 80 people coming in every day. At first we had no structure, for we were just fixing meals as fast as we could, offering showers, handing out towels and clean clothes. Since we had only three staff, we desperately needed more help and so we turned to those who were on the receiving end of services, and they came to be part of our work team. This made these formerly homeless people feel very important to be on the team. It was great then, and it has felt



great ever since. These folks helped us to build a community which is something we all need.

As we look at our own lives, we realize that we all want to have a place to go to. We want to connect - to have people and things around us that matter to us.

So we decided that we would make a community in this horrible section of the City of the Angels called Skid Row. A little geography here: the area is 40 square blocks bounded by Central, Los Angeles Street, Third and Seventh. The city has officially designated this area as Skid Row and on any given day, ten thousand men, women and children live or exist here.

This is how we set out to build a community within Skin Row:

- A) Since we were a family with this community, we decided that we had to have those resources that a family requires such as housing and a support system of education to help people further their lives.
- B) The drop-in center went to a 24-hour-a-day, 7 days a week operation, fully staffed. This is a no-nonsense operation - clean and neat. This Center/Crisis Shelter has been used as a model, nationally, for providing a high tolerance, extremely accessible, safe haven for the most program resistant, chronically mentally ill street people. It acts as the entry point and the place where individuals can return or regroup when they relapse (mentally, physically, and/or chemically).
- C) The LAMP Village Transition program (established in 1991) and permanent Housing through LAMP Lodge (opened in 1991) provide the continuum of residential stability and support. As in well functioning families, once a person has been screened into the LAMP community, she or he can be a life-long member.
- D) There are still other service provided and these include: a drug and alcohol recovery

program at each of its sites, with a special focus on persons multi-diagnosed with mental illness, addiction, and HIV/AIDS. The recovery program is highly individualized.

- E) Business to support the services include a linen service (2700 units served on Skid Row) a coin-operated Laundromat and commercial showers (a 10-minute warm shower costs 40 cents).
- F) A 50-room, single occupancy apartment house is managed by LAMP community , renting apartments for a nominal \$240 a month.

It is a firm philosophy of LAMP that people in crisis from either mental illness of drug addiction should not have to lose their housing. No one is a bad person.

I believe that the model of LAMP is what we need in many other places in our communities. It was Frank Rice, a Vice President of Bullocks Department Store, who persuaded Bullocks to give the seed money of \$50,000 a year for five years which enabled LAMP to begin. Now big corporations endow it. More help is still needed.

PART C: Interviewer's comments.

KULLI: LAMP and founder, Mollie Lowery are unique. Mollie was parochial-school educated, a graduate of USC who, after she tried Medical School for one year, found she wanted to help people on a social work basis.

**LAMP.** Mentally sick people, living on Skid Row streets of Los Angeles, have one or more (even all) of the following problems:

1. Diagnosed mental illness
2. Substance abuse problem
3. AIDS/HIV illness and/or

4. Jail/prison (felon) record.

In addition, almost all have no effective family support.

**The LAMP guest.** Most street people (mentally ill or not) like the freedom of the streets and most trust no one or an agency

**At the LAMP Day Center.** A trained staff member goes out on the streets and wins the confidence of a Skid Row person by this means in more or less the following order:

1. “Would you like a cup of coffee?”
2. “Or a meal?”
3. “Would you like new underwear and socks? And a shower?”
4. “Would you like to lie down on one of the bunks?”
5. “Do you get SSI? Would you like to qualify?”
6. “Would you like a box number address so you can qualify for SSI? We can help you with the forms and get you financial help.”

After general relief or SSI (Supplemental Social Income) checks arrive:

7. “Would you like us to bank your check and let you withdraw at any time? (Over 100 guests have accounts, totaling over \$100,000).

Freedom remains and self esteem begins to develop in these new guests.

But LAMP, at the present, only reaches about 600 of the 10,000 on Skid Row streets.

And how many unserved are mentally ill and eligible for LAMP support? Fifty percent?

LAMP provides a continuum of care for mentally ill street people who enter the Drop-In Center. Many pass to the Village and some go on to the Lodge to become long-time residents.

