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From Main News:

Homeless Court Scores Successes

Terence Lyons, Mirror Staff Writer

The Santa Monica Homeless Community Court scored a couple of notable successes in its second session held Friday, March 2, in the City Council chambers. Among the 13 cases handled by Superior Court Judge Bobbi Tillmon – up from seven cases at the February 2 inaugural session – were one defendant who was introduced to a homeless service provider because of the court’s existence and another whose case was terminated with the dismissal of charges after successful program completion.

The first case called on the afternoon of March 2 was that of an 89-year-old man who, unlike many of the defendants, had only one charge preferred against him – that being “camping on the bluffs,” which is to say: sleeping on the ocean side of the fence in Palisades Park. This man, unlike all of the other defendants present at both sessions, was not referred to the court by a service provider already working with the individual, but was selected by prosecution and defense lawyers from cases pending at the Airport Courthouse and then introduced, with his consent, to a service provider (in this case, St. Joseph Center) through the offices of the Homeless Community Court.

This marks a notable success because it is for cases such as this that the court was established, and this is the first occasion on which the court performed just the function for which it was meant.

The other real success story involved the second court appearance for a man referred by a service provider. He had entered the Samoshel shelter in August 2006 after completing a six-month program with CLARE Foundation, and was then referred to the Homeless Community Court to clear his record. He obtained permanent housing between his February and March appearances, and the court dismissed the two misdemeanor charges pending against him – for camping and “trash picking” (that being stealing from trash cans).

This marks the first “case closed” in the young history of the program.

Of the remaining 11 cases on the court’s calendar, only one defendant failed to appear (a bench warrant was issued and bail set at \$500), three were cases continued from the February session and seven were new cases. These last 10 cases (and that of the bluff camper) were all continued to the next session on April 13 to follow the defendants’

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