

Security 101 Gift of Security helps tackle the homelessness crisis.

A recipient of the Gift of Security program, Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida created an even safer sanctuary for those most vulnerable.



Organization:
Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida

Location:
Orlando, Florida, USA

Industry segment:
Nonprofit Social Services

Application:
Safety and security

Axis partner:
Security 101

Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida has been providing crucial shelter, nutritious meals and social services to homeless men, women and children in the Orlando community since 1987. To help residents reestablish self-sufficiency and transition to permanent housing, the Coalition also provides one-on-one case management and referrals to community resources.

Nearly 500 men, women and children reside on campus at any given time, filling the 250 bed Men's Service Center, 240 bed Center for Women and Families, and nine family apartments to capacity. Through community initiatives, the Coalition also serves more than 100 unsheltered homeless individuals each day. During the 2017/18 fiscal year, the Coalition placed 1,127 individuals in permanent housing.

Because the campus is situated in the heart of downtown Orlando, creating a safe and secure environment has always been a challenge.

"We have a fairly open campus and a lot of foot traffic," said John Hearn, CEO of Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida. "That's necessitated hiring security guards to patrol the property 24/7, but they can't be everywhere at once."

When the nomination for the Security 101 Gift of Security program arose in 2016, the Coalition rallied the community to vote for the nonprofit as the most deserving recipient. "Having video cameras would give us the ability to monitor the entire campus without being intrusive," said Hearn. "The safety and protection of our clients, staff, and visitors is our top priority."

Creating a positive living environment

In contrast to the hazards of living on the street, the Gift of Security helps the Coalition maintain a safe and healthy environment for residents trying to recover from the trauma of homelessness.

“Our objective has always been to provide a safe and secure environment for those who have been living on the street and subjected to all sorts of dangers and indignities. The AXIS Companion video surveillance system has been a great tool for helping us make that happen.”

John Hearn, CEO of Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida.

Nearly two dozen Security 101 Orlando employees donated their time to install eight HDTV-resolution AXIS Companion Eye LVE Network Cameras, an eight-channel AXIS Companion Recorder for archiving the video and AXIS Companion video management software downloaded on security staff desktops and smartphones. Working with the Coalition's IT and security staff, they strategically placed the Axis cameras to provide maximum surveillance coverage.

“The day-to-day value of the cameras is enormous,” said Josh Miller, Senior Director of Program Operations at Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida. “Whenever we get an incident report – it could be an unauthorized person coming onto the property, someone claiming a possession was stolen, or an angry resident destroying property – I check the corresponding time-stamped video to figure out what really happened.”

John Hearn asserted that having irrefutable video evidence saves everyone countless hours embroiled in he-said-she-said investigations

Providing quicker conflict resolution

With the Axis camera system in place conflict resolution has been swift. Josh Miller told of an instance where a resident alleged that a staff member was denying them their medication. Upon reviewing the video, Miller saw that the resident had actually refused the medication when offered so the staff member locked it back up in the narcotics cabinet. The Axis cameras also helped Miller identify an individual who stole a cell-phone off an employee's cleaning cart. This left the thief no room for deniability, enabling security to recover the purloined property and return it to its rightful owner.

Improving collaborative responses

In one instance, someone reported that one of the residents had threatened to take their own life. This set off a BOLO (be on the lookout) alert to the security guards at the gate and the Orlando Police Department (OPD).

The cameras captured an image of the individual sneaking off-property just minutes before the alert. Miller froze a snapshot of the person and in seconds emailed it to the security guards and OPD. Security eventually spotted the individual returning on his own and case management arranged for health services counseling to help the resident cope.

In another episode, the cameras caught a trespasser entering the grounds. Miller passed a video snapshot of the intruder around the case management team to see who might recognize the person. One case manager knew his name. Shortly after, the cameras caught this person attempting to trespass again. In less than a minute, Miller sent OPD a video of the incident and a name. In a reciprocal move, OPD sometimes sends the Coalition a photo of a person of interest and asks the Coalition to review their video and let OPD know if they've seen that person come on property.

When asked if the video ever held any surprises, Miller replied, “Every time I log onto the system I find things I didn't know were happening. Some are real concerns and others are just the typical busyness of a place housing 500 people. But it's always good to be aware of what's occurring on our campus.”

More than a surveillance tool

Since the system was installed, the Coalition has recorded numerous interactions between staff and residents. “We've saved some of those recordings for staff training in crisis management and de-escalation,” said Miller. “Showing staff how people react in real-life situations can be a great teaching tool.”

As far as the future goes, John Hearn hopes to blanket the campus with many more Axis cameras to help him keep this vulnerable population safe and secure while they get back on their feet.



**Nominate a deserving nonprofit for the upcoming Gift of Security program at www.security101.com/gift-of-security
See how AXIS Companion solutions are supporting other small organizations at www.axiscompanion.com**