

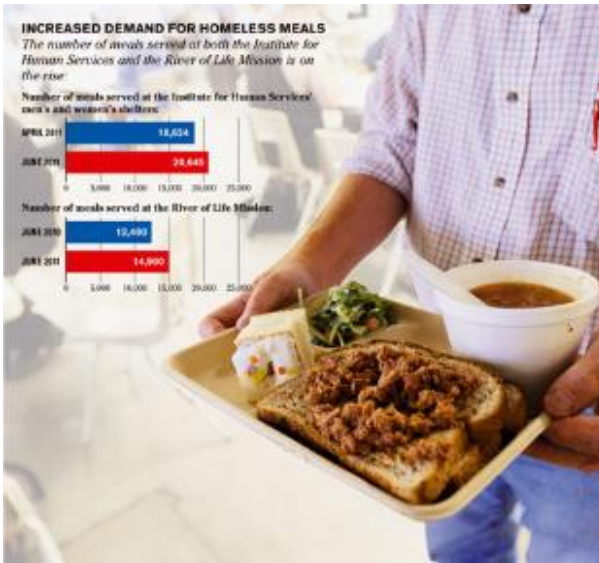


# Homeless shelters feeding meals to more folks

the number of meals served at IHS' women's shelter saw a similar increase, 5,599 in June compared with 4,972 in April, Mitchell said.

By Dan Nakaso

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Source: Institute for Human Services, River of Life Mission  
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Hawaii's largest emergency homeless shelter has seen increased demand for meals since Gov. Neil Abercrombie urged groups and individuals in May to stop providing food in parks, beaches and streets and instead encourage homeless people to find food — and social services — at shelters.

"In the long run, food alone doesn't change much for a person that's homeless," Connie Mitchell, executive director of the Institute for Human Services, said Tuesday.

The number of meals served at IHS' men's shelter jumped to 15,045 in June from 13,652 in April. And

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## GOVERNOR'S PLAN ON HOMELESSNESS

*In May, Gov. Neil Abercrombie unveiled nine steps in the state's 90-Day Plan on Homelessness:*

- » Identify and assess for immediate help people who are chronically homeless in Waikiki and the city's urban core.
- » Support the chronically homeless and chronically mentally ill who need mental health treatment.
- » Identify available substance abuse treatment services and gaps in services to maximize access for the chronically homeless.
- » Identify and provide outreach as early as possible in places where homeless people are established or increasing in number.
- » Coordinate community efforts to maintain clean public areas.
- » Ensure that existing shelters are maximized for capacity and service.
- » Provide information about sound relocation and financial planning, including Hawaii's high cost of living, to individuals and families outside of the state who inquire about the availability of services.
- » Establish the state Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- » Educate the public about the most effective means to eliminate homelessness.

In June, 22 people also attended an orientation to volunteer at IHS. "That's the largest number of people we've had in five years," IHS spokeswoman Kate

Record said.

The nearby River of Life Mission in Chinatown has seen a similar increased demand for food.

In May, River of Life Mission served 14,100 meals, compared with 11,700 in May 2010. In June the organization served 14,900 meals compared with 12,400 in June 2010, said the Rev. Bob Marchant.

Abercrombie's idea, which is part of his 90-day homeless plan, is to steer homeless people to shelters where they can get medical, mental health and housing assistance — along with food.

But Marchant believes the increased demand for food at IHS and his River of Life Mission has little to do with Abercrombie's idea.

"I really don't think it's because of any policy," Marchant said. "I just think there's more (homeless) people."

Whatever the reason, Mitchell hopes IHS can continue receiving food donations to keep up with demand.

"Our meal program manager is worried," Mitchell said. "I'm a little concerned, but confident."

The idea to stop feeding homeless people close to where they sleep continues to be the most contentious of Abercrombie's nine-point, 90-day plan. It began in May and ends on Aug. 17, barely three months before November's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Waikiki, which will draw 20,000 attendees and the leaders of 21 APEC member nations, including President Barack Obama.

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Groups that serve meals to homeless people "are conflicted about what to do when so many people are hungry," Marchant said. "A lot of those people aren't going to come to a shelter to eat. So a lot of people feel that if people are hungry, they're going to provide food for them. I have mixed feelings. It's not an easy problem to solve."

Ben Hanan, 45, lives in a tent along Beretania Street and relies on the meals he receives at IHS, River of Life Mission and from various groups that serve meals across Beretania Street at Aala Park.

Drivers also pull up alongside the row of tents that line Beretania Street and deliver bags full of food, such as fast-food hamburgers, Hanan said.

"We all appreciate it," Hanan said. "To put the kibosh on that kind of generosity is stupid."

Roxanne Paxton, 52, prepared to dig into a plate full of sloppy joes, spinach salad, vegetable soup and cake at IHS on Tuesday and said Abercrombie's idea "isn't right."

"A lot of people can't make it to a shelter," she said. "Most of them just won't come."

The Rev. Sadrian "Brother Sage" Chee of Church of Living Ohana, Family of the Living God, represents the third generation in his family to feed low-income, senior citizens and homeless people in Aala Park and originally resisted Abercrombie's call to stop providing meals.

He has since agreed to stop serving meals on July 29 and instead will partner with IHS to provide food and assistance at the shelter, Mitchell said.

Sage did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment on Tuesday.

But Bob Erb, chief executive officer of Kingdom of Heaven Ministries, will keep on feeding breakfast and dinner seven days a week to 100 or so homeless people in Waikiki.

"The Bible tells me to feed the hungry, to feed the poor, and that's what I'm going to do," Erb said. "Come Judgment Day, the King is going to say, 'Those of you that fed me, those of you that gave me drink, those of you that gave me clothing and shelter are the ones coming to the kingdom of heaven.' All of the world's religions — from Buddhism to Islam to Hinduism — all say to take care of the poor. I guess Gov. Neil Abercrombie doesn't believe that."

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