

Homeless people start new organization

Thirty-five homeless people living at the Brother Francis Shelter in Anchorage have started a grassroots self-help project, according to community organizer Sharon Reed, who made the announcement recently.

The nonprofit organization called ASH — Alaskan Self-Help — has a mission for economic independence outlined in a community action proposal.

"Their logo," Reed said, "is the

Alaskan Self-Help

phoenix, the legendary bird, which according to myth, burned itself to ashes on a pyre and lived to fly again."

Reed also said the homeless people are tired of being dependent on others.

"They want to help themselves and have an active voice in the community. They've got a lot of ideas how to do that, too," she said.

Future plans for the group include speaking arrangements for meeting with the Downtown Anchorage Association, the Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations. ASH also announced that New York Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Norman Siegel has made a commitment to come to Anchorage to assist the group with public education regarding the characteristics of homelessness.