La Mesa clergy uniting in social service effort

BY KAREN PEARLMAN
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LA MESA — Local clergy say they are committed to helping La Mesa deal with many of the social challenges facing the city.

Homelessness, the needs of senior citizens and youths, and different ways to feed the hungry were some of the issues touched on by the 24 church representatives who answered Mayor Art Madrid’s request to meet at the La Mesa Community Center for a lunchtime round-table last week.

Because there are no synagogues, mosques or temples in La Mesa, only Christian clergy members were present.

Another session was set for March 17.

“As long as we work collectively with each other, we can all be a part of the solution,” said Pastor Bob Lenz of Skyline Wesleyan Church. “I’m confident that the commitment will be a long-term thing. We’re only as good as our word, but I felt pretty good that we will all continue to bring something to the table.”

Lenz said that Madrid met with Skyline Church members a few weeks before the meeting to help distribute food, blankets and clothing to the needy in the area.

“We set an example by our leadership, and I remember thinking, ‘Isn’t this cool? The mayor of La Mesa reaching out this way,’” Lenz said.

While the leaders were serious about working together to help the city and its constituents, the meeting had an informal vibe.

When each clergy member introduced himself — or herself, in the case of four women present — Bishop Lane Smith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said, “I just want you to know that I had nothing to do with the outcome of that game,” referring to BYU having beaten the San Diego State men’s basketball team the night before the meeting.

Most of the group, including Madrid, erupted in laughter.

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