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## Pascoe hoping to drive Colorado homeless issue home

By Colleen O'Connor  
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/26/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 09/26/2009 01:58:51 AM MDT

In his first 10 days of self-imposed homelessness, Senior Support Services chief executive Ted Pascoe has worried about being arrested, has gotten sick and has been called a cheater for sleeping in a tent.

He has been wakened at 5:30 a.m. by sprinklers, and he's worried that darting in and out of bushes searching for campsites may attract the kind of attention he doesn't need.

He's also concerned that if his strike to protest a \$75,000 cut to his nonprofit agency's budget isn't successful, homeless seniors will lose housing and government benefits for good.

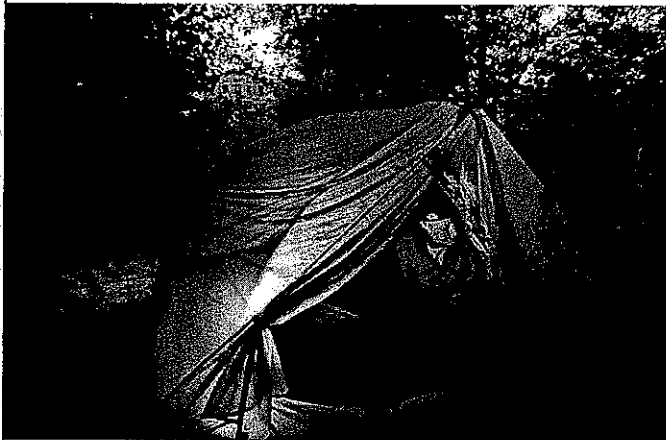
"They are the poorest of the poor," he said of his clients.

Funding for agencies providing services to homeless seniors has been cut citywide.

"The impact of the cuts for Senior Support Services is actually a very small piece of the safety net that's being shredded by the state," said John Parvensky, director of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

The sagging economy has chipped away at many agencies, including Stout Street Clinic, that provide services to homeless seniors. The clinic, which last year served 810 homeless people over age 60, saw the state slash \$2.5 million from its budget recently.

Pascoe, 46, began plotting his protest after the Denver Regional Council of Governments, which



Ted Pascoe, chief executive for Senior Support Services, begins to pack up his camp Wednesday morning during his first week protesting a recent \$75,000 cut to his nonprofit agency's budget. Senior Support Services helps homeless seniors. (Matt McClain, Special to The Denver Post)

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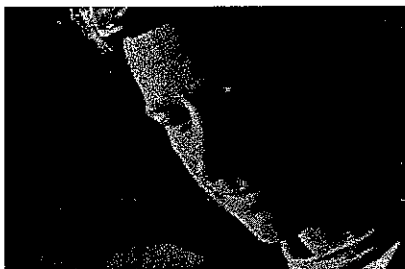
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has funded SSS for 25 years, denied the \$75,000 grant request in the wake of its own revenue losses.

DRCOG said it received nearly \$12 million in requests this year — and had only about \$8 million to disburse. Few proposals were funded in full, and 19 proposals were not funded at all.

"Several organizations providing valuable services to older adults in our region could not be funded," wrote Jayla Sanchez-Warren, director of DRCOG's Area Agency on Aging, in a five-page letter to Pascoe rejecting his appeal. "There are waiting lists in several service areas and many older people in need."

The lost grant represents 15 percent of SSS's



Ted Pascoe. (Matt McClain, Special to The Denver Post)

\$500,000 budget. Pascoe might be able to raise \$75,000 once, but he's concerned about what will happen next year and the year after.

Pascoe's protest began Sept. 17. Along the way, he has marshaled supporters, including members

of the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, who slept on the street with him Friday night.

On the fourth day of his protest, Pascoe rode his bike to a meeting with Sen. Michael Bennet. It was about another matter, but Pascoe mentioned his action. Bennet agreed to make a few phone calls, Pascoe said.

He also met with Jamie Van Leeuwen, executive director of Denver's Road Home, to request a meeting with Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper.

"Given the concerns Ted is expressing, we've really been digging in and figuring out how to support (Senior Support Services) as much as possible," Van Leeuwen said.

Senior Support Services, started in 1976, is devoted to the needs of homeless and indigent seniors.

Last year, it aided 1,355 people with direct utility payments, bus tokens, and rides to medical appointments, government offices and grocery stores. The agency helps some people find jobs and, last year, served nearly 63,000 meals.

Pascoe argues that because DRCOG receives federal funds from the Older Americans Act — which Congress allocates for the specific purpose of serving those seniors with the greatest needs — it should distribute part of those funds to SSS. Eighty-seven percent of its clients live below the federal poverty threshold; 70 percent suffer from mental illness.

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Pascoe, son of former state Sen. Pat Pascoe, is no stranger to political theater.

After the Columbine tragedy, he recruited two teenagers to buy two TEC-9 pistols — similar to the weapons used to kill 13 people at the high school in 1999 — at a local gun show.


The stunt made the news, attracted the attention of politicians and then-Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter, and, Pascoe said, "helped close the gun-show loophole in Colorado."

Parvensky said it may take a little drama to draw attention to the issues homeless-service providers face as the effects of the recession trickle through the system.

"Things are going to get a lot worse out there," he said. "We need more people like Ted to rise up and shine a light, not only on cuts to senior programs, but cuts to the safety net in general."

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