



## Dr. Drew and Mayor Steinberg provide leadership on homelessness

BY JEFF VONKAENEL / [jeffv@newsreview.com](mailto:jeffv@newsreview.com)

### I have lived in Sacramento for 31 years.

And over the last three decades, I have attended almost every annual State of Downtown breakfast, like the one held Jan. 21. But this one was special.

Usually, these events consist of presentations about how well the community is doing—new buildings rising, new businesses coming in, videos with snazzy soundtracks of happy energetic people enjoying many wonderful features of the city. It is often a bit much. People pat themselves on the back so hard that I worry about dislocated shoulders.

At this year's event, with 1,000 community leaders attending, there was much to celebrate, including the planned new soccer stadium, the railyard expansion, billions of dollars in investments and all the new construction downtown. But this year's event had something more.

The Downtown Sacramento Partnership, under the leadership of Michael Ault, took the opportunity to bring attention to our homelessness problem. The keynote speaker was radio personality Dr. Drew, also known as physician Drew Pinsky, who has worked in psychiatric hospitals more than 30 years. He is on a mission to address the carnage on the streets, where thousands are dying because of a lack of treatment and housing.

It was a remarkable presentation, one hard to describe. Pinsky was part Old Testament prophet with the power of commitment and the force of righteousness, and part medical doctor with a deep understanding of the problems of addiction and the public health concerns of having so many homeless on our streets.

Dr. Drew asked what body count was necessary before we address the problem. He described the academic history of mental health over the last 50 years. And

then he talked about a future that includes typhoid, tuberculosis and the possibility of bubonic plague. This possibility could become reality, particularly in Los Angeles County, which has 60,000 people without toilet facilities and an increasing rat population.

Dr. Drew supports legislation that changes the definition of "gravely disabled," giving law enforcement and others more power to get people into treatment. He was like a John the Baptist who had attended medical school.

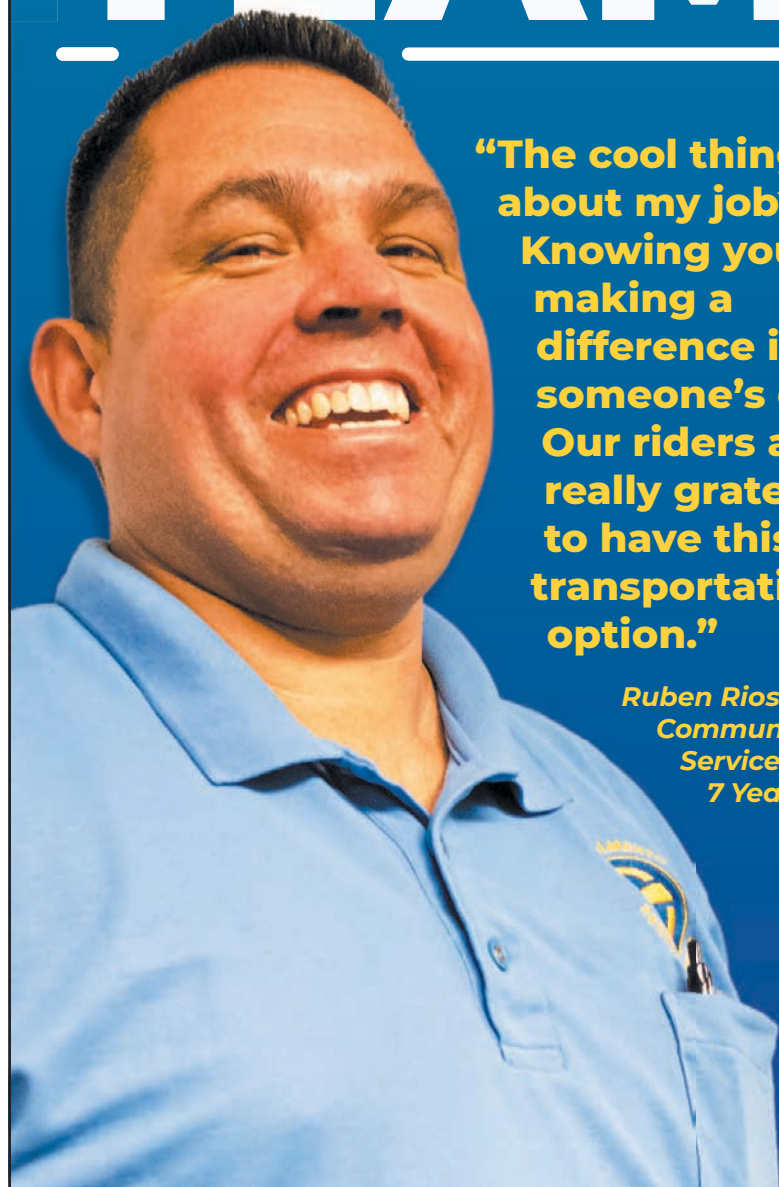
Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg spoke about his efforts as mayor and as head of the California Commission on Homelessness and Supportive Housing. In Sacramento, Steinberg has a three-pronged approach to the homelessness issue: First, lower the cost of new housing with innovations including manufactured housing; second, create a 100-bed center that focuses on meth treatment; and third, develop a large Sacramento facility similar to the 23-acre Haven for Hope in San Antonio that serves nearly 1,000 people each night and has helped to reduce San Antonio's downtown homeless count by 80% since it opened in 2010.

For California, Steinberg is proposing that the Legislature draft a constitutional amendment to create a legally enforceable mandate to reduce the number of homeless. The mandate, which would need to be approved by voters on the 2020 November ballot, would allow the state to sue cities, counties and the state itself, if the number of people living in encampment is not declining.

I am proud that our city is making a commitment to help those in need of our help. Dr. Drew and Mayor Steinberg provided a road map for us. Now it is time to take action. □

Jeff vonKaenel is the president, CEO and majority owner of the News & Review.

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