

One-day Count of Homeless in Tri-County Area is 1344

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Results of the Tri-County Homeless Count Conducted January 26, 2006 are Released

One snowy January night in Central Oregon, over 17 service providers and more than 50 volunteers conducted a 24 hour, "point in time" count of the homeless population of Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook Counties. This activity, carried out nationwide on the same day, provided a snapshot of Central Oregon's homeless: who they are, how many there are, what has caused their homelessness, and what services they are receiving.

The count included homeless who were both "sheltered" and "unsheltered." A sheltered homeless person in our area resides in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing. An unsheltered homeless person in our area is temporarily living with family or friends or resides in a place not meant for human habitation, i.e. a vehicle, out of doors, in parks, in abandoned buildings, in garages, etc. This year, with the help of numerous volunteers, we were able to count the unsheltered homeless for the first time.

While this was by no means a comprehensive count, it provides valuable information to those serving the homeless, helps to educate the public about the growing issue of homelessness in our region, and helps direct public policy planning and development.

The Homeless Leadership Council headed up the one day count, with participation by the following organizations and agencies: Bend High Head Start, Bethlehem Inn, Cascade Youth and Family, Central Oregon Veterans Outreach, City of Bend Police Department, COBRA, COCAAN, Deschutes County Mental Health, Deschutes County Parole and Probation, Department of Human Services, Family Access Network (FAN) Advocates, Family Kitchen, Grandma's House, LaPine Community Helping Hands, MountainStar Family Relief Nursery, Ochoco Clinic, Redmond Community Action Team, Saint Vincent DePaul, Salvation Army, Sisters Kiwanis, and Willow Creek House for Women. Over 50 community volunteers helped with the count, including many from the Central Oregon Veterans Outreach and Central Oregon Interfaith Action for Justice.

Results of the 2006 Count:

• 1344 homeless individuals

• 727 adults

• 617 children under 18 - 40% of the total homeless population

• Age 0-5 (154)

• Age 6-11 (247)

• Age 12-17 (167)

• 49 children of unknown age

Where were these people if they didn't have a home?

• 35% - Staying w/ friends or family

â-° 27% - Staying in a shelter (emergency, transitional, affordable housing)

â-° 9% - Camping

â-° 8% - Unknown/unreported

â-° 7% - Motel/Hotel

â-° 7% - Other arrangements

â-° 4% - Car

â-° 2% - Street

â-° 1% - Squatting

What caused their homelessness?

These causes were self-declared by survey respondents, with a majority reporting multiple presenting issues.

° 43% - Couldn't afford rent

° 25% - Unemployed

° 14% - Kicked Out

° 14% - Other

° 12% - Evicted

° 11% - Domestic Violence

â-° 11% - Drug/Alcohol (self)

â-° 10% - By Choice

â-° 9% - Credit

â-° 8% - Unknown

â-° 8% - Drug/Alcohol (in home)

â-° 7% - Poor rental history

â-° 7% - Medical

â-° 6% - Criminal History

â-° 5% - Mental Illness

â-° 3% - Property Sold

â-° 2% - Pregnancy

â-° 2% - Child Abuse

â-° 1% - Runaway

Trends that emerged in the tri-county regionâ€¦

The majority of our homeless are families with children.

â-° 75% of both the sheltered and unsheltered individuals were in families with kids.

â-° 40% of the homeless were children.

The primary reason folks were homeless was economic hardship.

° Of the 625 homeless households surveyed, 44% reported they were homeless because they couldn't afford rent

° Only 26% of homeless households reported they were actually unemployed

The need for emergency and transitional housing is much greater than the current supply.

° Only 365 of the 1,344 people counted (27%) were actually provided some form of shelter by a provider.

° The remaining 975 (73%) were doubled up with family or friends, living outdoors or in cars, staying in motel rooms, etc.

° Currently there are only 195 emergency beds and 145 transitional housing beds available in the region.*
This represents a significant shortfall.

* Continuum of Care Application 2006

Where do we go from here?

In keeping with the Federal Government's agenda to end homelessness within ten years, the tri-county region is about to launch the development of its own ten year plan to end homelessness. The planning process will include local jurisdictions, housing and service providers, members of the Homeless Leadership Council and homeless/formerly homeless individuals. Once a region-wide plan is developed and adopted, it will be implemented as prioritized and as resources are made available.

This summer, the Homeless Leadership Council will conduct a second 24-hour homeless count on July 27-28. If you or your organization is interested in participating, please contact Homeless Leadership Council member Woody Medeiros of Grandma's House at grandma@bendcable.com or (541) 383-3515. Training will be provided to all volunteers.

A snapshot of our homeless neighbors

Prineville, Oregon - A homeless family of three lived in their car for two months before moving in with extended family. Within two months, they found themselves living in their car once again. Eventually this family was able to get into a supportive housing program. The father got a job and the mother was able care for her son at home. This couple attended financial fitness classes and worked on cleaning up their credit issues. Today, both parents are working and leasing a home they intend to purchase.

Madras, Oregon - A single mother and two children fleeing a domestic violence situation in another state relocated to Portland with enough money for a one night stay in a motel. An airport employee kindly paid the family's bus fare to Madras. She was referred to a COCAAN's outreach office, where staff provided her and the children with emergency shelter in a motel room until they could enter an emergency homeless shelter in Bend. Within one month, this family was accepted into a transitional housing program. While in the transitional housing program the mother completed parenting and financial fitness classes and earned her GED. She is now employed and she and her children are living safely in permanent supportive housing.

Redmond, Oregon - A single mother and her 2-year-old son relocated to Central Oregon to live in a mobile home. When this housing situation did not work out, she ended up at a local family shelter. Though she had temporary employment, she did not earn enough to secure private market housing. At the shelter, she continued to work departing each morning at 6:30 so she could take her son to childcare and arrive on time at work. She applied for employment that would utilize her considerable secretarial and accounting skills. After several months, she received a housing voucher and found a duplex for herself and her child. Within days of her approval for housing, she secured a position with a realty company that included an hourly wage she could live on and benefits.

LaPine, Oregon - Two females lived in their station wagon for three years. One female was going blind and needed daily help, the second female became her caregiver. These women had little money, no medical insurance and didn't qualify for state help. With the full loss of her eyesight, the blind woman now receives state assistance which they use to live in an RV with running water, heat and an indoor bathroom.

Bend, Oregon - A twelve year old boy grew up in a home with domestic violence and heavy drug use. As he grew up and began to experiment with drugs himself, the battles between he and his step father escalated. The boy was eventually kicked out of his home, began to "couch surf" with friends, got deeper into drugs, and dropped out of school. At rock bottom, he learned about a local program for homeless youth. He entered and was immediately provided with shelter and critical mental health services. Ten months into the program, he had earned his GED, maintained steady employment and transitioned on to apartment living with friends.

Bend, Oregon - A family of five arrived at a local homeless shelter. In the recent past, both parents had worked and been able to support themselves and their three daughters. Through a series of health crisis and hospitalizations, both parents lost their employment. Eventually, they had no money for rent or utilities. With no family to help, they were forced to live in their car. The emergency shelter provided this family with food, a safe and secure place to live, and helped them to stabilize. Within one month the family moved from the shelter to an emergency family apartment. By the next month, both parents had secured employment and the family had been accepted into a permanent supportive housing complex.

Bend, Oregon - A Veteran was living in a rundown homeless camp in the woods just off the highway. He was called "Dog Man" because he used no name, but was inseparable from his canine companion. He had a big heart, sharing what little he had with the other homeless. COVO volunteers reached out to befriend him but could never quite penetrate the armor of being homeless and unwanted.

Bend, Oregon - A 16 year-old girl arrived at a local program for pregnant teens; she was 16, pregnant, and had been living in the back of a van. Today she is married, a college graduate and her daughter recently turned 6. This program, she says, gave her back her dreams.

Bend, Oregon - A mother and her four daughters were accepted into a transitional housing program after six months living in local emergency shelters. All four school age girls were failing in school and their mother had a life threatening health problem. This family spent two years in the program. During this time, the girls were able to bring their academic skills up and the mother was able to maintain stable employment and manage her health issues. They are now living in independent, stable housing.

Bend, Oregon - A Veteran was standing on the corner in the snow with a backpack and a cardboard sign that read "Vietnam Veteran Needs Help." He used to be an electrician in the warm sunny state of Florida, with a family and wife, friends, a nice house, a good life. With the sudden and tragic death of his wife, he turned to alcohol. He now lives in a tent in Deschutes County.