

Homeless-count volunteers still needed

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GREENSBORO — Once a year volunteers comb Guilford County, looking for homeless people living in tents, on street corners and in wooded areas.

Organizers say they still need about 20 people to help during Wednesday's annual "Point-in-Time Count" of the homeless in Greensboro and the county. High Point also needs a few more volunteers, officials there said.

A final training Tuesday is scheduled for anyone interested in helping with the Greensboro survey, said Kathy Vohs, AmeriCorps program director for the Partnership to End Homelessness.

"It's mostly just to familiarize them with what the point of it is," said Vohs, whose organization oversees part of the count in Greensboro.

The training, which typically lasts about an hour and 15 minutes, also goes over best practices on how to conduct the survey and offers volunteers a chance to give a practice survey.

Anyone interested in helping in High Point can set up an appointment to get background and training there, said Steve Key, executive director of Open Door Ministries.

The survey takes a few minutes to fill out, with volunteers noting information such as age and gender, where a person slept the night before and what services they have received. Volunteers go out in teams, most accompanied by a law enforcement official.

Teams will visit areas where the homeless receive services, such as Greensboro Urban Ministry and various places that serve free meals. They'll also go to wooded areas where the homeless often set up camp and street corners where they panhandle, Vohs said.

Deputies will help teams this year look for abandoned homes in the county where the homeless may be squatting, she said.

The count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to get funding for programs. Locally, it provides a picture of the status of services and the needs, Vohs said.

Last year's count found 1,052 people who were homeless in Guilford County. The year before, there were 981.

The count is a snapshot of the situation, not a full picture of what is happening here, Vohs said. And with the economy still in turmoil, the situation isn't getting better anytime soon, she said.

"As long as there's no new jobs coming to the area, none of this is going to improve," Vohs said.

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Want to help?

Volunteers will comb the county Wednesday to count the homeless. Officials conducting the annual survey say they still need help.

- Greensboro: Volunteers must go through brief training. The last session is 5 p.m. Tuesday, the Servant Center library, 1312 Lexington Ave., Greensboro.
- High Point: Call 885-0191 to set up an appointment before Wednesday's count.