

PARTNERS ENDING HOMELESSNESS



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Communities that successfully address homelessness have strong leadership at many levels: having the mayors of both cities feel this issue is important enough to call this press conference tells me that we have the top leadership in place to truly help individuals and families that are experiencing homelessness.

The "Point in Time Count" results are a snapshot of homelessness on "any given day". They are an estimate based on a 1-day sample size. Conducting a census of people who are experiencing homelessness is difficult to pin down to a specific number. Big swings in numbers or trends over years are more important than what is going on "on any given day". But it is necessary. It is necessary because it gets to the answer of one critical question- what is really going on out there? Without the information the Point In Time Count provides we would not be able to answer that question and all the follow up questions. We need data to hold ourselves accountable for the entire system of care, identify what is working well, what is not, what is missing, and what needs to be done in the future.

The Count was conducted on an unseasonably warm January 25th in Greensboro and High Point. I would like to thank Debbie Bailey, PEH Data Analyst for leading this project- she slept really well on the 26th I guarantee you. There were 30 shelters that conducted the "sheltered count" in High Point and Greensboro. In High Point Raymond Payne of Open Door Ministries and Dan Hodgson of Home 2 Home ministries led the "unsheltered count". I want to thank those gentlemen for leading their team of volunteers. In Greensboro I would like to thank Kathy Vohs and the AmeriCorps Partnership to End Homelessness, Sgt. Charles Blaylock and the rest of the community resource officers with the Greensboro Police Department, Street Watch and Melissa Byrd, the outreach team from Faith Wesleyan church and the many other volunteers I am not able to mention.

The Point In Time Count results tell us there are:

- 1,005 total persons experiencing homelessness on "any given day"- relatively unchanged from previous years
- 81 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness- a 61% drop from our baseline year (2007)
- 104 Veterans are homeless on any given day- 28% increase from last year
- 432 persons experiencing a disabling condition (MH or Addiction)- a 49% increase from last year

A note about the chronic homeless number- I believe this number is low. We were just not able to find them on this day. The Federal government allows us to count unsheltered individuals for up to two weeks after the Point In Time Day. Beginning next year we will take advantage of this opportunity.

In addition to these numbers I also want to briefly discuss the information compiled by Guilford County Schools- I would like to thank Susan Eubanks the Guilford County Schools Supervisor of

Homeless and Transitional Services for her efforts throughout the year working with students who are suffering with issues of homelessness. During the current academic year:

- 158 Students are staying in a shelter
- 99 are living in a hotel/motel or someplace not meant for human habitation
- 1552 students are staying doubled up with a friend or family member because their family cannot afford housing

I would personally like to thank Superintendent Mo Green and the GCS board of education for adapting to the increase in homeless school children by creating a full time staff member dedicated to this issue.

Finally I want to discuss the Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. In 2006 the varying levels of community leadership I mentioned earlier came together and created a vision for a Guilford County that ended chronic homelessness. Since that vision was launched and we began the Point In Time Count, the chronic homeless population has been reduced by 50-60% "on any given day". Additionally, although this is not the most precise way to measure the plan due to the nature of the goals and action steps, 40% of the Ten Year Plan has been completed. Additional Highlights include:

- The creation of the Interactive Resource Center in Greensboro- which since it opened its doors on January 2009 has assisted 4,154 unduplicated individuals.
- A goal to obtain 200 new housing units by 2016 is ahead of schedule- the Continuum of Care thus far has obtained 175 units that now house previously homeless people.
- Being proactive with HUD's legislative directives by creating a designated lead agency for the Continuum of Care by merging the Homeless Prevention Coalition of Guilford County and the Ten Year Plan Initiative of the United Way of Greater Greensboro and the United Way of Greater High Point into a 501 c 3 called Partners Ending Homelessness.

Although 40% of the plan is accomplished, a majority of those tasks were completed, then stopped. Along the way the federal government has changed and grown the target of Ten Year Plans nationally. It has grown from just the chronically homeless - those who have been continuously homeless for longer than one year and have a disabling condition- to include families, youth, and veterans. The federal government established the HEARTH Act, which expanded the definition of homelessness and emphasized the cost savings of preventing homelessness in the first place. Suddenly what started as a narrow target has been left behind by changing needs of the community, changing leadership within the community, the economy, federal requirements, and the natural growth process of the communities' response to homelessness.

Now is the time to slowdown, take a long look around and regroup. To that end, 2012 is going to be a time of laying the solid foundation needed to have a lasting impact in this community- to help those individuals and families that are struggling with the despair and hopelessness that is homelessness.

Our Board is excited to embark on a strategic planning process that will work to update the ten year plan and nurture the system of care based on what works in Guilford county- not reacting to external pressures or changing governmental mandates. We are also developing other long-

term practices that will strengthen the collaborations that have been built these last few years. It will also foster new relationships that last for years to come. We will announce the results of this work at our annual meeting later this fall.

Finally I want to make this really clear- I am not reducing or eliminating homelessness in Guilford County. Partners Ending Homelessness is not doing it alone, either. It's going to take leadership, and work at all levels- from mayors to neighbors - to make it happen. In short, it is going to take Partners.

Everyone must play his or her role- whether great or small.

It can happen if we have the collective will to do so.

Thank you for your time.