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One Night Count final tally shows decline in unsheltered veterans and chronically homeless

Homelessness decreased among unsheltered veterans and those who are chronically homeless, according to final 2015 One Night Count numbers released today by the Committee to End Homelessness in King County.

The final tally from the One Night Count in January shows a notable reduction in the number of homeless veterans and people with chronic homelessness. Compared to 2014, the number of veterans without shelter decreased by nearly 15 percent, and the number of chronically homeless people without shelter declined by over 30 percent.

“Homeless people need homes,” said Mark Putnam, Director of the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) in King County. “We’ve committed to housing every veteran by 2015 and every chronically homeless person by 2017. If we can continue to create new housing and engage more landlords to rent to formerly homeless households, we will meet our goals.”

The veteran and chronic homelessness reductions are the result of a combination of regional efforts over the past year that offered targeted housing, support services and other resources to assist these populations. New housing projects that opened in 2013 and 2014 offered units dedicated to people exiting chronic homelessness. Innovations like the One Home campaign launched in 2014 are beginning to show success in engaging landlords to rent to homeless individuals, including veterans. New funding from the Veterans Administration and local government has also made a difference.

Overall, the point-in-time count found a total of 10,047 people homeless on January 23, 2015, including 3,772 who were unsheltered and 6,275 who were living in shelter or temporary housing. Overall, there was an 8% increase over 2014, including a 21% increase in people who were unsheltered.

“The number of people living on Seattle and King County streets remains unacceptably high,” said Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, co-chair of the CEH Governing Board. “Thanks to local investments like the Seattle Housing Levy, we are making strides on addressing veteran homelessness and serving the chronically homeless. By increasing these resources, prioritizing our investments, and building on best practices, we can make a difference.”

Also new in 2014 was an effort to transition long-term shelter stayers to supportive housing, and the use of rapid re-housing funds to move homeless individuals into housing rather than shelter.
Continued efforts to prioritize the highest users of costly emergency services into “housing first” and linking that housing with supportive services to maintain stability have proven successful.

“The work we’ve done to help chronically homeless residents and homeless military veterans transition to safe, affordable housing is delivering positive results,” said King County Executive Dow Constantine. “We will work with our partners to apply this same targeted approach to address the specific needs of others who are homeless.”

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the White House set a goal of ending veteran homelessness by December 2015. Additional federal funding has been allocated for housing and King County’s Regional Veterans Initiative has improved coordination among agencies serving veterans.

“Our community’s continued commitment to serving chronically homeless populations has made a great difference in their lives,” said Bill Hallerman, Director of Catholic Housing Services. “Social service providers and the VA have come together to identify veterans in need of housing and have worked collaboratively to secure the right resources for each veteran.”

The Committee to End Homelessness is near completion on a new strategic plan to guide regional investments and collective efforts to address homelessness over the next four years. The overarching goal is to make homelessness in King County rare, brief, and a one-time occurrence. The new plan – developed in collaboration with county and local governments, state and federal partners, local business, faith communities, social service providers, advocates and persons who have experienced homelessness – builds on best and promising practices, is outcomes oriented, and will continue to coordinate funding from multiple sources to achieve regional goals. The plan will be completed by the end of June.

About the One Night Count: Each year, the Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness (www.homelessinfo.org) under contract with the CEH, conducts a One Night Count of those experiencing homelessness. The street count was conducted in the early morning of Jan. 23, 2015 by nearly 1,000 volunteers in cities and neighborhoods countywide. To complete the tally, data is collected the same night for sheltered individuals. In all, 79 emergency shelter programs and 115 transitional housing programs provided data. Information from both counts is combined to create a point-in-time total of homelessness in King County. The full results of the One Night Count are available on CEH’s website (www.cehkc.org).

For more information on the Committee to End Homelessness, contract Mark Putnam, Project Director at 206-263-9001.

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