

# County counts homeless

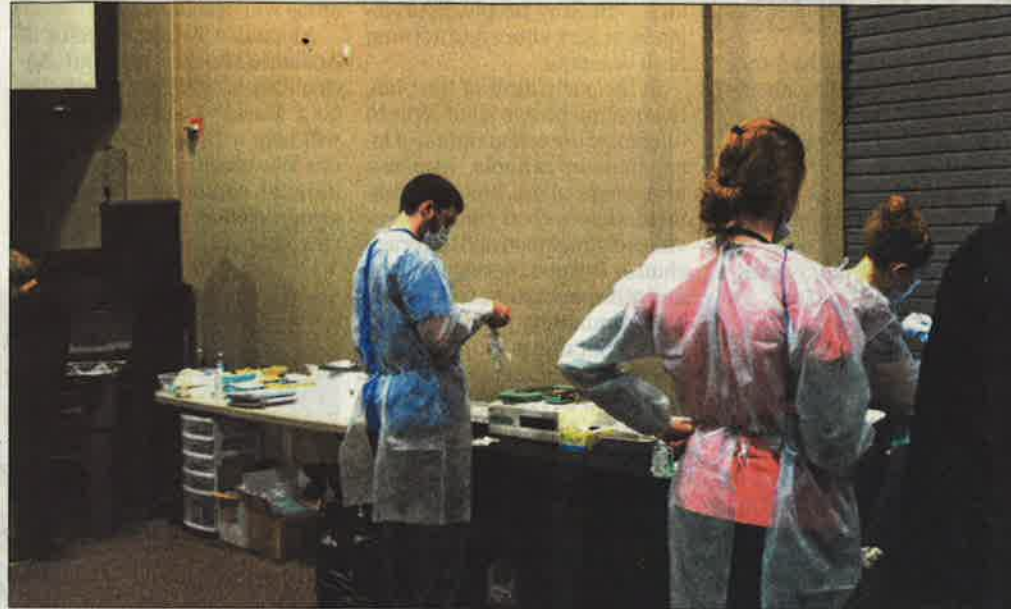
*Forest Grove Elks, Hillsboro church connect folks living outside with aid*

By STEPHANIE HAUGEN  
The News-Times

Washington County homeless residents had several chances this past week to get a hot meal, stock up on warm clothing, look into housing options — and be recognized.

As part of the Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless Count organized by the Washington County Community Action team, local organizations opened their doors to the homeless, offering free food and services while they tried to get an accurate count of the county's homeless population.

The 2013 count revealed there were more than 1,100 homeless people living in Washington County based on the state's definition of homelessness, whose meaning has expanded to include those staying with other people due to loss of housing, economic hardship or personal



NEWS-TIMES PHOTO: STEPHANIE HAUGEN

Pacific University students enrolled in the dental hygiene program helped homeless patients last Friday at Homeless Connect at Sunrise Church in Hillsboro.

safety. The number for this year wasn't available by press time.

Forest Grove Elks Lodge volunteers welcomed more than 30 homeless people inside for biscuits and gravy in the morning and hot soup later in the day Monday, Jan. 27. About a dozen

of the attendees live outside, about half are veterans.

Aside from the main PIT event last Friday, Jan. 24 at Sunrise Church in Hillsboro — which brought in more than 360 homeless residents and offered medical services through Pacific Uni-

versity and a variety of other resources — the Forest Grove Elks drew more homeless folks than other smaller venues, which included the Hillsboro VFW and the Banks American Legion.

David and Michael Lamb, brothers who grew up in the For-

est Grove area, were two of those people. After their work in the restaurant industry dried up, they became homeless. Now they live in a camp off B Street.

They came to the Elks Lodge for a hot meal, socks and gloves, and while they were there they chatted with a representative from Washington County about housing options.

The Lambs aren't veterans, but "we served anyone who walked in," said Betty Pomeroy, an Elks member and Washington County volunteer.

The local Elks started a new free hot meal program in November, which is open from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, funded by a grant from the national Elks association.

"We felt there was a need," Pomeroy said. "No veteran should be homeless or have people look down on them."

Along with Pomeroy, many other volunteers stepped up Monday, including Forest Grove City Councilor Ron Thompson. Warren Meyer remembered when his family's Portland house burned down when he was a kid and he lived in a tent for a year with his parents and six siblings.

Ride Connection drivers picked up those who needed a ride to the Elks Lodge on Pacific

Avenue and Hillsboro dentist Mary Parent donated dental hygiene products to be handed out.

"We wanted to get together as many organizations as possible to be as effective as possible," said Jessie Adams of Community Action, who added that each year the count gets a little more accurate and adds more services. Adams helped homeless veter-

ans get screened for any benefits for which they might qualify.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development — the federal agency that oversees home ownership, low-income housing assistance, aid for distressed neighborhoods and homelessness — requires the homeless count to take place in

January.

"The numbers we come up with determine the federal money HUD gives out," Pomeroy said. "But most of our homeless population goes south for the winter."

Washington County recently received a grant for more than \$40,000 from the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to help with outreach.

"I just want people in Forest Grove to understand that they do have a homelessness problem," said Michael Lamb, fiddling with a hole in his glove.

**"No veteran should be homeless or have people look down on them."**

— Betty Pomeroy,  
Forest Grove Elks