

Project Homeless Connect, point-in-time count Jan. 25

By John Mulcahy **Daily Telegram** Posted Jan 13, 2012 @ 04:20 PM

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Amy Clough and Jackie Morgan from the Community Action Agency talk with a family during the 2009 Project Homeless Connect in Adrian. The annual event is an effort to link homeless people with immediate services and take a point-in-time count of the homeless and near homeless.

Project Homeless Connect, an annual effort to link homeless people with immediate services, will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jan. 25 in the River Raisin Room at the Lenawee County Human Services Building, 1040 S. Winter St., Adrian. In addition, a point-in-time count of homeless and near homeless people in the county also will take place Jan. 25. At Project Homeless Connect, homeless people or those in housing crisis can meet with representatives of agencies providing health services, job training and employment information, education, guidance with applications for assistance and more. Lenawee Continuum of Care sponsors the event.

A free, hot meal will be provided to anyone who attends, said Gay Cundiff, a case manager at the Catherine Cobb Domestic Violence Shelter in Adrian and one of the people organizing the event. A free blanket, personal care items, blood pressure and diabetes screening and free flu shots also will be available, Cundiff said. Everyone who attends will receive a free raffle ticket for a chance to win one of two bicycles being donated by Re-Bicycle Lenawee, she said. Last year, 25 agencies participated in the event, which took place at Citizen's Gas Fuel Co., Cundiff said. "We expect at least that many this year," she said. There is no fee of any kind for the event or services, Cundiff said.

People can get a free ride to the event through Adrian's Dial-A-Ride service or Lenawee Transportation by telling the driver where they are going. Homeless people with children in a Lenawee County public school can call their homeless education liaison and receive a gas card, said Beth McCullough, homeless education liaison for Adrian Public Schools. Last year, 136 people came to Project Homeless Connect seeking help, said Khristine Henson-Jones, executive director of the Lenawee Emergency and Affordable Housing Corp. and co-chairperson of Lenawee Continuum of Care.

Henson-Jones said the point-in-time count will take place this year even though it is required only every two years by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for communities to be able to receive federal grants to help the homeless. Last year's count found 491 homeless or near homeless people in the county. Of those, 166 met the federal government definition of homeless, which does not include, for instance, people staying with family or friends because they have no place else to go.

Besides counting the people who come to Project Homeless Connect, the point-in-time count relies on other agencies and schools to count homeless people. Last year, 10 agencies plus Adrian Public Schools and five other schools responded with data, Henson-Jones said. Homeless or near homeless people are asked to fill out a questionnaire on the day of the count. Continuum of Care chose to do the count even though it is not required this year because the organization wants the best possible data when seeking state or federal money, Henson-Jones said.

A yearly count showed 634 people homeless in Lenawee County at some time during 2010, the last year for which data is available, Henson-Jones said. That count is compiled throughout the year from people who seek help at local agencies, so it may miss homeless people who do not seek help, she said.

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