

Redlands Daily Facts

LOCAL NEWS

Inland leaders focus on homelessness as annual Point-in-Time Count approaches



A group look for homeless people living in a flood control channel under Van Buren Blvd. during the annual Point-In-Time Homeless Count and survey in Jurupa Valley on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2018. (Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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The gradual eviction of more than 500 homeless people from the Santa Ana River Trail in Orange County has Inland Empire leaders discussing their potential migration inland.

Orange County Sheriff's Department deputies on Monday started clearing out the county's largest homeless encampment, a three-mile stretch of the river trail near Angel Stadium in Anaheim. Orange County Public Works is to clean up what observers have called Skid River.

Many living there have said they have no place to go.

Could some relocate inland, or even to San Bernardino? At least one local homeless advocate thinks a 50-mile commute east is unlikely.

“Our city is very under-resourced, and it’s not the most friendly to homeless people,” said Kim Carter, founder and executive director of Time for Change Foundation, a nonprofit serving Inland Empire homeless families. “I don’t see (a migration inland) being an issue.”

San Bernardino County had 1,866 homeless individuals at this time last year, according to an annual survey of the region’s homeless population on a given day, known as the Point-In-Time Count.

This year’s Point-In-Time Count is scheduled for 6 to 10 a.m. Thursday across San Bernardino County.

Aimara Freeman, a San Bernardino County behavioral health spokeswoman, said 24 cities and unincorporated areas within the county will be canvassed. Volunteers will convene in Fontana, Upland, San Bernardino, Victorville and Redlands.

They will include focused outreach for unaccompanied homeless women, Freeman said. More than 280 such women were counted last year.

The annual snapshot seeks to promote government and private grant funding to help combat and prevent homelessness. A preliminary report typically is available in March.

In Upland, Eric Gavin is optimistic this year’s count will be below 100. The point-in-time count in 2017 was 127, which was down from 163 the previous year, said Gavin, who oversees the Community Restoration Team.

A total of 32 volunteers, which include council members Janice Elliott, Carol Timm and Sid Robinson, will conduct the Upland count from 5 to 10 a.m. Thursday. Field representatives from San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford’s office are also expected to assist, he said.

The count is important, as Gavin noted, because “homelessness is still happening, it’s happening every day.”

Gavin also tracks his own numbers. In 2017, the restoration team was able to get 55 homeless persons housed. Of those, five reverted back to homelessness, he said. The team was able to find housing for 19 of those 55 individuals through the use of \$12,000 in private donations, Gavin said.

“We had this guy who we sent back to Idaho to live with his daughter after being homeless for 17 years,” he said.

The man calls Gavin periodically to give him updates, such as to tell him he’s drug-free, and, as of Monday, that he had a job.

Gavin said there has been skepticism and criticism from residents – about making progress – because some of the more visible or recognizable homeless individuals are still on the streets.

As for the new year, the restoration team is exploring the idea of a campaign to reduce blight. Upland City Manager Bill Manis is working with Gavin to develop the appropriate multi-agency response to each issue.

“I thought if we reduced the homeless population then we’d see a natural decrease in blight. That didn’t materialize,” Gavin acknowledged.

For information about the Point-in-Time Count: www.sbcounty.gov/sbchp or call 909-388-4925.