

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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SEARCH IS ON FOR HOMELESS CENSUS GUIDES

by Wanda Sue Parrott

WHEN THE FORTHCOMING 2015 Homeless Census and Survey was announced by Glorietta Rowland at the Nov. 19 gathering of Friends of Homeless Women at St. Mary's by the Sea Episcopal Church, a lively discussion followed.

"If the homeless have no home addresses, how can they be found and counted?"

Glorietta, who spent seven years as director of the Coalition of Homeless Service Providers, said, "We need people who are aware of where such locations are to help us put together guide maps."

"What people? Cops? Local residents?"

"Homeless or formerly homeless people familiar to and with the homeless community." Glorietta said.

"But Pacific Grove has no homeless problem," a visitor said.

A snort was followed by laughter. "Who says there ain't no homeless living here?"

"Well, if they're here, where are they?"

Other women joined in. "Remember the family living in a vehicle last year. They stayed in a church parking lot. The mother died of cancer."

"PG isn't like Monterey, where you see homeless people openly milling around Trader Joe's parking lot and on bus benches, and panhandlers like those in Seaside and Sand City. How would you count homeless people in PG?"

"I live across from George Washington Park. They like wooded areas."

"I've heard people own homes in Pebble Beach and Carmel but can't afford food or furniture."

"I remember a polite elderly woman who slept with her dog during lunchtime by the door of Sally Griffin Meals on Wheels. She always refused help. I haven't seen her lately."

"She was taken away by ambulance. I don't know her name or if they took the dog."

"There was the lady who lived in her Mercedes Benz. . ."

“It was all she had left after her husband died.”

“Since homeless people can be nameless, invisible and transient, how are they counted—and why?”

Glorietta Rowland is now Management Analyst II, County of Monterey, Dept. of Social Services. She is assigned to the Community Action Partnership and is a member of Friends of Homeless Women. She said, “The federal rule is: *If you cannot see them, you cannot count them.*” Funding for necessary services 2015-2016 will be determined by how many homeless are counted in Monterey County.

The bi-annual Homeless Census and Report is a head count, not an attempt to get anyone’s financial information, test them for drugs, or determine if they are here legally.

During the early morning hours of Wed., Jan. 28, 2015, teams will spread out across Monterey County to conduct what is essentially a peaceful people hunt by a posse of volunteers armed with data-taking devices used to count the visibly observed homeless and attempt to determine gender and general age.

Will they be paid like U.S. Census Bureau employees are compensated? No, said Glorietta, although those who are pre-selected as homeless guides will be paid \$10 per hour. Homeless or formerly homeless individuals interested in working on this project should call the coalition.

Glorietta explained, “People will be visibly observed from a distance, not interviewed, to get an accurate count. A survey conducted by peers and service providers to determine age and specific needs will follow two weeks later.”

The 2013 Homeless Census and Survey reported about 2,590 homeless people in Monterey County; 1,244 lived on the Monterey Peninsula and 300 to 350 were women.

According to the 2013 figures, 79 percent of the homeless in Monterey County grew up here, lived here, worked here, and became homeless for these reasons: 41 percent, loss of home; 26 percent, loss of job/income; 14 percent, because of divorce, health problems or family crises.

Twenty-eight percent were women, for whom fewer services are available.

Guesstimates place the actual number of homeless in Monterey County closer to 6,000.

Guide maps are now being designed to help the census teams find potential sites where the homeless live on Jan. 28, 2015.

For details, contact The Coalition of Homeless Services Providers at 831-883-3080.

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