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Loveland Connect set to aid the homeless

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Readability: >12 grade level (Lexile: 1340L)

Author: Shelley Widhalm Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

If you go

What: Loveland Connect.

When: 8 a.m.-noon Friday, Oct. 24.

Where: Truscott Elementary School, 211 W. Sixth St.

To volunteer: Contact Alison Hade at 962-2517, or go to the House of Neighborly Service's website at honservice.org.

The volunteers who help out at the annual Loveland Connect get a firsthand glimpse of the personal stories surrounding homelessness, while those who are homeless feel like somebody cares.

At the third annual Loveland Connect Friday, Oct. 24, community volunteers will be matched one-on-one with a participant, a Loveland area resident who is homeless or near homeless, to help them navigate dozens of government, nonprofit and business services. So far 90 volunteers have signed up, but at least 160 are needed.

The volunteers and participants will walk the booths set up in the gymnasium at Truscott Elementary School during the one-day, one-stop shop sponsored by the city of Loveland and United Way of Larimer County.

"Volunteers have said it's one of the best experiences they've ever had. It helped them understand homelessness and how someone can become homeless," said Alison Hade, administrator of the city of Loveland's Community Partnership Office. "They understand some of the circumstances in somebody's life. Medical is a big one, or bankruptcy. A few years ago, it was loss of a job and foreclosure."

Last year, there were more volunteers than participants, with 175 volunteers to 170 participants, though some of the volunteers worked with more than one participant.

"A lot of the participants noticed how many volunteers were waiting to be paired up with participants, and they couldn't believe all of these community members were standing around waiting to help them," Hade said.

At this year's event, the volunteer-participant teams will be able to get two free meals of breakfast and lunch and visit nearly 40

booths offering information and services in the areas of food, housing, employment, education, legal services, medical services and community resources. They will have access to medical screenings, haircuts and bike repairs and receive bus passes, used books, cellular phones, pet food, toiletry packages, coats and homeless gear.

The services and offerings will come from places like the House of Neighborly Service, 137 Connection, Alternatives to Violence, Angel House, Neighbor to Neighbor, Project Self-Sufficiency, the Loveland Housing Authority, the Disabled Resource Center, Loveland's Community Kitchen, the Food Bank for Larimer County and the Center for Adult Learning Loveland. There will be a few new agencies, such as Goodwill, Habitat for Humanity and Rocky Mountain Human Services-Veteran Support.

Hair Dynamics Education Center will provide the free haircuts, something the owners, Dale and Tina Matuska, have done since the first year of Loveland Connect.

"We connect with so many people at once," said Denise Norton, director of Hair Dynamics. "We're always the busiest booth there. We actually have people standing in line after we shut down."

Hade is hoping 200 participants will attend the event this year.

"We've been working on getting the word out to people who aren't homeless but are living on the fringe of homelessness," Hade said. "Our hope is that a lot more people will attend."

Contact Reporter-Herald Staff Writer Shelley Widhalm at 970-669-5050 or swidhalm@reporter-herald.com. Follow her at twitter.com/ShelleyWidhalm.

City of Loveland's count of homeless residents

The city of Loveland's Community Partnership Office counts the number of homeless living in Loveland in three main ways.

The city conducts a point-in-time, one-day count every January, a point-over-time count every two years from November to March and a count of the number of participants attending Loveland Connect, a one-day, one-stop shop of programs and services in the fall geared toward the homeless and near homeless. The first two counts are required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Last year, 170 people attended Loveland Connect to learn about various government agencies, nonprofits and businesses that offer information and services in the areas of food, housing, employment, education, legal services, medical services and community resources.

According to the point-in-time count in January 2014 of sheltered and unsheltered homeless residents, 36 people stayed in shelters, compared with 45 in 2013. Another 41 people were found to be sleeping in tents, cars and other places not meant for human habitation,

compared with 59 in 2013.

Of the 30 people staying at the 137 Connection shelter of rotating churches November to March that were counted in January 2013, six were housed a year later and another three since then.

The point-over-time count in January 2013 identified 685 homeless in Loveland and another 517 people on the verge of homelessness.

The next point-over-time count will be conducted in January 2015, along with the regular point-in-time count.

To do the counts, the Community Partnership Office gathers data from several agencies that serve or work with the homeless, including House of Neighborly Service, Angel House, Alternatives to Violence, Crossroads Safehouse, Catholic Charities, the Murphy Center, the Mission and Thompson School District.

Section: News

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