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Loveland's homeless count not conclusive

Daily Reporter-Herald, The (Loveland, CO)-March 8, 2014
Readability: 9-12 grade level (Lexile: 1120L)
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On the surface, it looks like homelessness is on the decline based on an annual point-in-time count of Loveland's homeless population.

During a single night at the end of January, 36 people stayed in two shelters, nine fewer than in 2013. Another 41 were found sleeping in tents, cars and other places not meant for human habitation, compared with 59 in 2013.

The count found a total of 78 homeless in 2014 and 104 in 2013.

"It's hard to say how accurate the count is," said Alison Hade, administrator of the Community Partnership Office of the city of Loveland. "An unsheltered count was not required this year. We conducted an unsheltered count, but we ran out of time."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires an annual point-in-time count to measure the scope of homelessness in the nation's cities and counties. HUD rotates a full count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations with a sheltered count every other year.

Nationwide, the count shows a continued decline in homelessness since 2010, 16 percent among the long-term or chronic homeless and 24 percent among veterans, based on HUD's 2014 count.

Next year, the Community Partnership Office will be able to look for local trends among the counts for 2015 and 2013, the first year Loveland conducted the count.

The 2014 count included people staying in shelters and living in transitional housing. Here are a few of the details from the count:

- In 2014, one family was staying in the Angel House program for homeless families, which includes sleeping in a church at night. Four were in the program last year. Hade noted that the Angel House is full almost all the time.

- The House of Neighborly Service housed six people in a motel during the 2013 count and zero during the 2014 count. Hade said the nonprofit wasn't issuing any fewer vouchers but did not give any out that night.

- Fourteen families (16 adults and 34 children) are staying in two-year transitional housing, the same number as 2013 (16 adults and 36 children).

"The program at 137 (Homeless Connection) was full, but the program at Angel House was not, so that made a big difference," Hade said. "We found fewer people sleeping outside, but it's always difficult to find people sleeping outside."

The Community Partnership Office conducted the one-day count 4:30-10:30 p.m. and at community services during breakfast and lunch the next day.

"The sheltered count was also lower, and we don't necessarily have a reason why," Hade said. "Could it be because homelessness is on the decline? Maybe, maybe not."

The 2014 count included tracking the state of people counted in 2013. Of those counted last year, 18 people are currently housed, 14 moved away and 52 are no longer seeking services. Eighteen of the remaining 20 were counted in 2014, including eight staying in a shelter, 10 sleeping in tents or cars, and two in rehabilitation programs.

Of the 14 families living in transitional housing, nine left the program to move into permanent housing, one left without explanation and three still are participating. In the last family, one of the adults

died and the children were placed with a family member.

"Our service providers are doing everything they can to get people housed," Hade said. "We have programs that can work, but it really is based on the participation of the client."

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