



FEATURED NEWS

Monday, January 23, 2012

Roanoke City annual homeless count – a place to call home



The team of volunteers

Forty dedicated volunteers assembled at Green Memorial Methodist Church Sunday afternoon for a two-hour training session preparing them to hit the streets Monday morning. Some of the six teams started as early as 4:00 a.m. with a cup of Starbucks coffee and a donut.

The annual Point In Time (PIT) count of the homeless is being conducted this week. The PIT count obtains baseline demographic information about the homeless population in Virginia explained Karen Michalski-Karney with the Blue Ridge Independent Living Center.

They are canvassing Roanoke's streets and shelters taking with them a Vulnerability Index survey for the first time this year. Each client they encounter is asked 27 survey questions. They were told to expect not only men but also women with children and entire families explained Carol Tuning with Roanoke City Human Services.

This is the first year for the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness project, "1000 Homes for 1000 Virginians." It is an effort to find and place the most vulnerable, medically at risk, long-term homeless individuals into permanent households across the area.

"A lot of people don't know what to do [with them]," said Tuning.

The City of Roanoke has partnered with local agencies including Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, Trust House, Council of Community Services, Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare, the VA Medical Center and Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

The Vulnerability Index survey goes further then the annual PIT count by prioritizing those individuals that have been homeless the longest and are the most vulnerable. They are starting to create a by-name registry of those living on the streets and in shelters.

The volunteers are canvassing the Rescue Mission, RAM House, Turning Point, parks, the library and Roanoke City and County jails among other locations. The abandoned Ukrops building has multiple areas where the homeless call home. The open underground parking area is a favorite spot to camp.



Tuning demonstrates air horn

Each team has a site coordinator armed with a backpack. Besides flashlights, maps and clipboards they have McDonald coupons for the hungry, condoms and an air horn. To ensure volunteer safety unmarked patrol cars are in the area. One blast of the air horn brings an officer to any out-of-hand situation.

At Sunday's training session Tuning was urged to demonstrate what looked like an innocuous small toy-like horn. They soon heard an ear piercing blast that could have awoken the dead.

The survey is completely confidential. A consent form is read to the client. If there is residence to the survey then volunteers were instructed not to push it. They can slightly jostle someone sleeping but if not awakened then they should be left alone.

Judy Lash with the Jefferson College of Health Sciences went over the survey that determines the

Vulnerability Index. Many of the volunteers for the week come from the college. The survey asks for the client's name, date of birth (month/year), social security number and they take a picture. Medical related questions are listed to circle. The list includes HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. They are determining if the individual is a military veteran, homeless due to domestic violence or is mentally impaired.

Tuning told volunteers if they are asked what the survey is for tell them "we're here to count the number so we can help to get additional resources into the community." They are asked where they first became homeless. "City council always wants to know that," she said. Other questions include where they slept, had they been denied shelter, how do they make money, level of education, looking for work, how they get around, where they go for medical treatment and if there is a child they will be asked if they are in school.

There is a comments section – Tuning said, "some don't want to talk and others will not only talk but you can expect to hear some cuss words too."



Valerie Garner
ValerieInRke

ValerieInRke @ruthings Me too - too much to cover on Mondays lately. #journchat
14 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

ValerieInRke A4: Don't like Twitter's new censorship policy - but it is a business decision to expand into restrictive countries. #journchat
14 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

ValerieInRke @MuslimNewMedia @znmeb Soon after I said that I pictured a stream of talking points one after another :) #journchat
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ValerieInRke A3: Definitely twitter - they'd have to answer in 140 characters instead of talking point rhetoric. #journchat
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Roanoke Metro News

An Evening at the Roanoke Regional writers Conference

Teacher-writer Cathy Hankla addresses at attentive crowd at the opening session. Roanoke writer Roland Lazenby (who has 60 books) gives the keynote. Sarah Beth and Rob Jones talk to writer Neil Sagebi...

Photo(s) of the Day: Writers Conference in Detail

New York-based literary agent Nat Sobel drew a big crowd for his morning presentation. Mollie Cox Bryan has a brand new novel. Tech's Matthew Vollmer was too sick to teach, but taught anyway. Tough gu...

Already, King Kong controversy?

With permission, I am posting (and paraphrasing) a note I received via email this morning from reader Carolyn Coles, who is not a fan of Mark Cline's King Kong climbing the Taubman Museum of Art. With...

Roanoke Metro

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The accumulated data will help the city learn not only the number of homeless but how, when and where they became homeless. The data will guide the city in an effort to reduce chronic homelessness in the Roanoke Valley.

A summary of survey findings will be presented to Roanoke City council in March and made available to the public on the Roanoke City and Community Services websites.

The campaign is a ten-year plan called "A Place to Call Home, Ending Homelessness 10 at a time." These words are emblazoned on volunteers dark green T-shirts. Roanoke is one of nine communities in the Commonwealth to adopt this strategy to house the most medically vulnerable by 2013.



Tuning demonstrates air horn



The team of volunteers



Under the bridge home to homeless



Carol Tuning lists contents of backpack



Map where teams will go



Carol Tuning with parking sign



Rescue Mission Team



Homeless in doorway

Categories: [Community](#), [Local Events](#)

Tags: [environment](#), [health](#), [study](#)

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Comments (2)

Val

January 23rd, 2012 at 4:34 AM

What a contrast between this and the Taubman Souper – that's all I have to say about that.

BJ

January 23rd, 2012 at 11:49 AM

I often think about what the city could have been done with the large amounts of money donated to keep the museum afloat if that same amount had been donated to some group(s) and put toward helping the down and out in the city/valley. Think how much good that money could have done if channeled elsewhere. I'm not opposed to the museum, but it does make me stop and think about "what if".

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