



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

News Release

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**AN OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT –
INCREASED SERVICES AND LARGE DONATIONS ASSIST
1,016 HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AT
THE 11th PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT –
DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO**

More than 350 volunteers and close to 90 service providers helped at the one-day resource fair

San Diego, CA —David carried clothing donations in his arms today at [The 11th Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego](#), but for a far different reason than when he was one of the homeless individuals who attended this resource fair in 2015.

This time, David, a 53-year-old Point Loma resident who works full-time today as an airport parking dispatcher, was volunteering to help the 1,016 homeless San Diegans who attended Project Homeless Connect to get the services they need to begin to get back on their feet, just as he did.

“I reach out to people like this because I was there, and I understand,” said David, who added that Project Homeless Connect helped connect him with the Serial Inebriate Program that helped him turn his life around.

San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer greeted homeless individuals and thanked the volunteers at Project Homeless Connect.

“I’m just so thankful for all of the volunteers for coming out. They are making a difference. Today, it’s about connecting people with help—helping them get back into housing, helping them get the services they need, and showing the kindness and compassion that helps define who we are as San Diegans,” said Mayor Faulconer.

More than 350 volunteers and close to 90 service providers assisted homeless individuals and families at Project Homeless Connect.

“Every person who walks through these doors has a need, has a story. That’s what is most important as we serve hundreds of homeless San Diegans today,” said President & CEO Richard C. Gentry of the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), the lead organizer of Project Homeless Connect.

First-time new services, such as eye exams, as well as an increase in major donations of socks, non-prescription reading glasses, jackets, sweatshirts, and blankets provided homeless San Diegans with resources to meet their immediate and long-term needs at Project Homeless Connect.

Major donations for Project Homeless Connect from companies and organizations increased, such as 7,000 pairs of new socks from STANCE; 500 new and gently used jackets from the San Diego Rescue Mission; as well as 143 new, nonprescription reading glasses from the SDHC employee donation drive.

Lt. Carole Beason of the San Diego Police Department Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), which handed out flyers to let homeless San Diegans know about Project Homeless Connect, said homeless individuals looked forward to this resource fair.

“Many of them were excited that they were going to have this opportunity to come out here and get some of the services that they need to start getting themselves back on track,” Lt. Beason said.

Early in the day, Kurt – who said he sleeps on the streets downtown in the Gaslamp Quarter nearby – had already crossed most of the services he had hoped to receive off his list. He had obtained warm clothing and housing information, and was looking forward to getting a haircut and a warm meal.

“This helps a lot. It’s just a one-stop-shop. For those who come here for help and have a plan of the services they want to receive, this is the place to come to,” Kurt said.

La Maestra Community Health Centers performed eye exams at Project Homeless Connect, fulfilling a need that had been among the most requested services at Project Homeless Connect in previous years.

Also for the first time, representatives from the SDHC’s 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative, which includes the “Housing Our Heroes” Landlord Outreach Program, helped homeless Veterans start their search for housing or connect with a service provider that could refer them to the program. SDHC’s 1,000 Homeless Veterans Initiative will provide housing opportunities for up to 1,000 homeless Veterans and is part of **HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO**, SDHC’s three-year Homelessness Action Plan (2014-17).

In addition, more than 100 homeless San Diegans were registered for a database list for housing at a booth staffed by volunteers from the Regional Task Force on the Homeless.

Additional service providers participating in Project Homeless Connect for the first time included: the Susan G. Komen Foundation, which provided referrals for free health exams; the San Diego Public Library, which provided information about its programs, services and obtaining library cards; and HEAL – Homeless Empowerment through Art & Leadership, a nonprofit that provides opportunities for artistic self-expression for homeless individuals.

One of the volunteers at Project Homeless Connect was Shavonne, a former recipient of Federal rental assistance who is now a homeowner and the owner of a childcare business. Shavonne participated in the SDHC Achievement Academy, a state-of-the-art learning and resource center and computer that provides programs that emphasize career planning, job skills and personal financial education at no cost to Federal rental assistance participants and public housing residents.

As she walked into Golden Hall and saw the faces of the homeless individuals eager with anticipation for the services they would receive, Shavonne could put herself in their position as she reflected on the services she's been fortunate to receive.

"It really brought warmth to my heart," she said. "Today is the day they brought all of the services to them. They didn't have to go look for it, call around, wait on hold or hope that they get to the right place. They're actually here, they're doing intake, they're offering screenings, the DMV is here, you can get IDs here – it's amazing. So I'm happy to be a part of it,"

Returning services provided to homeless individuals on-site included medical exams and additional health services from the Family Health Centers of San Diego's mobile medical unit; and haircuts from Bellus Academy, along with additional hairstylists and barbers. The San Diego County Dental Society and the San Diego County Dental Hygienists' Society provided dental screenings.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles once again provided identification card registration for Project Homeless Connect participants, who need the cards to apply for jobs, housing and additional services. The U.S. Social Security Administration was also on-site to register participants for benefits.

Father Joe's Villages also provided 1,200 hot meals for homeless San Diegans at Project Homeless Connect.

Additional returning services include mental health and substance abuse referrals; flu shots; pet care services; and counseling for housing, employment, and legal services.

A U.S. Marine Corps Veteran who served from 1980-1991, including combat in the first Persian Gulf War, 57-year-old William, received a variety of services at Project Homeless Connect.

"I was getting ready to do a haircut and eyeglasses, vision. I got some clothes. I'll be ready to get a meal in a little while. I just got a flu shot. And I'm trying to get some dental work done. ... My day is going good so far, and I'm looking forward to more better days," said William, who has been homeless for a month after losing his job in security.

For the last three weeks, he has been living in interim housing at Connections Housing Downtown through PATH San Diego. He is working on obtaining benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

San Diego City Councilmembers Chris Ward and Barbara Bry stopped by Project Homeless Connect to speak with homeless individuals and volunteers.

Project Homeless Connect volunteers today included SDHC Commissioners Gary Gramling, Roberta Spoon and Margaret Davis.

In addition, also among volunteers today were close to 100 students from San Ysidro High School and from the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program at Innovation Middle School in Clairemont Mesa, who are also donating kits with hygiene supplies.

Wi-Fi service provided by Cox Communications allowed for a real-time count of the participants at Project Homeless Connect, which included information they provide about themselves in response to a voluntary survey when they enter the resource fair. The answers also provide crucial data about the participants. SDHC will compile the results of the surveys into a report.

The previous one-day resource fair, [The 10th Project Homeless Connect](#), was held on January 27, 2016, and served 1,215 San Diegans.

This year is the seventh consecutive time that SDHC was lead organizer of Project Homeless Connect, providing financial support and volunteer recruitment through its website. Major organizing partners were the City of San Diego, Interfaith Shelter Network, Family Health Centers of San Diego, and Father Joe's Villages.

For more information, visit www.sdhc.org

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Media Contact:
Maria Velasquez, Chief Communications Officer
San Diego Housing Commission
619-578-7560
mariav@sdhc.org