



1,215 HOMELESS SAN DIEGANS ACCESS SERVICES AT THE 10TH PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT – DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO

*More than 70 service providers, 300 volunteers, and generous donations of
winter coats and rain gear by San Diegans*

SAN DIEGO, CA —For Zee, a homeless single mother with three young children, [The 10th Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego](#) today provided a potential path toward employment and housing after a year with no permanent home.

“Housing opportunities and employment information are the main reasons that I’m here,” said Zee, a former nursing-home aide who has been unable to find work since becoming homeless.

Zee added her name to a database list for housing and spoke to San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) representatives about a new program to help the homeless families of children attending the Monarch School, where her two oldest children are students.

She was among the 1,215 homeless San Diegans who attended The 10th Project Homeless Connect – a one-day resource fair – to be connected with services that address many of their immediate and longer-term needs.

Mayor Kevin Faulconer, the Honorary Chair for Project Homeless Connect, greeted homeless San Diegans, volunteers, and service providers as he walked through Golden Hall.

“It’s really a chance for all of our volunteers and fantastic service providers throughout the region to come and give people a little extra help and provide people the services they need. ... It’s about treating people with dignity and respect and helping people get off the streets, helping to change lives,” Mayor Faulconer said.

This year 1,215 homeless San Diegans attended Project Homeless Connect. The data below reflect the responses of those who answered survey questions as they entered Project Homeless Connect:

- 739 men, 457 women, and 3 transgender;
- 182 military Veterans;
- 1,026 single individuals;
- 92 single parents; and
- 1,113 unemployed.

“Project Homeless Connect presents an open door people can walk through. It’s my hope that when they do, they actually find their way to permanent supportive housing and get off the streets,” said Councilmember Todd Gloria, Chair of the Regional Continuum of Care Council, which coordinates millions of dollars annually allocated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for homelessness programs in the San Diego region.

More than 300 volunteers and 70 service providers joined forces to connect homeless San Diegans with services, such as haircuts, flu shots, dental screenings, and counseling for mental health, housing assistance and alcohol or substance abuse referrals.

“This is my second year at this fantastic event. Every year it’s becoming more efficient. It’s becoming very clear there’s a great process in place to try to provide services to those who are in need,” said Councilmember Chris Cate, who spoke with service providers at Project Homeless Connect.

SDHC President & CEO Richard C. Gentry said collaboration is essential to the success of Project Homeless Connect.

“I am thankful for the continued support this event receives from the community, from Mayor Faulconer and the City Council, to the hundreds of volunteers and service providers who gave their time, talent and donations to assist our most vulnerable San Diegans,” said SDHC CEO Gentry.

To help homeless San Diegans brave the wet winter weather expected due to El Niño in the coming months, donations collected for this year’s event focused on rain coats and jackets, blankets, umbrellas, gloves, additional rain gear, reading glasses, shoes, and new socks.

Jack, a 61-year-old former carpenter, was grateful for the blanket he received. He lived in a tent in a canyon near Mira Mesa until all of his belongings were washed away in recent rainstorms.

“Everything I owned is now gone to the Pacific. I have a sleeping bag, but it’s not enough in this cold weather,” Jack said.

San Diego Fire Chief Brian Fennessy said Project Homeless Connect benefits the entire San Diego community.

“Anything we do to give these folks a hand is just a really great thing,” Chief Fennessy said.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles provided up to 250 identification cards, double the number from the previous year. A State law that SDHC supported, which went into effect on January 1, waives the fees for homeless individuals to obtain the cards, which are needed to apply for many services.

Last year, the cost of providing State ID cards at Project Homeless Connect was covered by private donations.

A new ID card was among the services of greatest interest to John, who arrived at 3:30 a.m. to try to be first in line for Project Homeless Connect, where he also wanted to obtain care for his dog, legal aid counseling, clothing, and snack food.

John, who has been living on San Diego’s streets since January 3, said he is trying to obtain housing at St. Vincent de Paul Village.

“I don’t want to be homeless anymore,” John said.

For the second time, homeless San Diegans at Project Homeless Connect had the opportunity to add their names to a database list for housing.

This database, the Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System, allows homeless housing providers to instantly share information with each other. They use this information to screen homeless individuals for the most appropriate housing options based on who is most in need:

- Homeless San Diegans who have been on the street the longest; and
- The most vulnerable homeless San Diegans, based on their physical or mental health needs.

Amanda wanted to check her status on the database list at Project Homeless Connect because she needs permanent housing to qualify for a needed kidney transplant.

“It’s a hand up for those of us who are actually trying to get off the street,” Amanda said of Project Homeless Connect.

This year, more than 100 hairstylists – including San Diego City College’s Cosmetology Program and the Bellus Academy – provided haircuts to participants, more than triple the 30 hairstylists who provided the popular service last year.

Anticipating high demand for haircuts based on last year’s Project Homeless Connect, City College was also prepared to issue vouchers that any homeless San Diegans who might not be able to get their hair cut at the event before closing could use at a later time.

Homeless San Diegans were also provided with flu shots at Project Homeless Connect.

Heidi, a registered nurse who is studying for her bachelor’s degree in nursing at Point Loma Nazarene University, volunteered to administer flu shots.

“It’s making a difference, even just talking to them, making them feel like a person. It’s important for their self-esteem, and it makes me feel good,” Heidi said.

Father Joe’s Villages provided up to 1,200 warm meals for the homeless San Diegans who took part in Project Homeless Connect, and 40 staff who registered homeless San Diegans who lined up to receive services.

San Diego businesses and individuals also donated desserts, water and soda, and a wide variety of toiletries, such as toothpaste and shampoo to assist homeless San Diegans. STANCE of San Clemente donated 8,000 pairs of new socks, and SDHC employees also donated new socks through an employee sock drive.

Volunteers of all ages, including youth, also gave of their time to help make Project Homeless Connect a success.

Spencer Mudd, the 17-year-old son of SDHC Housing Construction Specialist Tom Mudd, had one of the busiest booths at Project Homeless Connect, handing out nonprescription reading glasses. As part of his work for an Eagle Scout badge, Spencer created his own fund-raising drive to raise the money to buy the glasses and staffed the booth with his mother Diana.

In addition, for the second year, 9-year-old Maya Bentley donated pillows for homeless San Diegans. The youngster gives up presents for her birthday every other year to raise money that she uses to purchase the new pillows through Maya’s Pillow Project. This year she had 100

pillows to distribute.

“Just the feeling of making someone else happy makes me happy, and that’s pretty much all that matters,” she said.

SDHC Commissioners Margaret Davis and Kellee Hubbard were among the hundreds of volunteers at Project Homeless Connect.

A week before the event, City Council President Sherri Lightner and members of the San Diego City Council launched a donation drive. Each of the homeless San Diegans also received a voucher they can exchange for additional clothing at the Humble Heart Thrift Store.

SDHC was the lead organizer for Project Homeless Connect for the sixth consecutive time, providing financial support and, through SDHC’s website, volunteer recruitment. Major organizing partners were the City of San Diego, Interfaith Shelter Network, Family Health Centers of San Diego and Father Joe’s Villages.

The previous one-day resource fair, The 9th Project Homeless Connect, was held on January 28, 2015, serving 1,145 San Diegans. [Read The 9th Project Homeless Connect Report.](#)

For additional information about previous Project Homeless Connect events and the homeless San Diegans they served:

[Project Homeless Connect - January 5, 2011 PHC held](#) – 660

[Project Homeless Connect – January 12, 2012](#) - 941

[Project Homeless Connect - January 30, 2013 PHC held](#)-7th 1,143

[Project Homeless Connect – December 4, 2013](#) -8th 854

[Project Homeless Connect – January 28, 2015](#)– -9th 1,145

For more information, visit www.sdhc.org

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