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## **MAKING CONNECTIONS—845 HOMELESS SAN DIEGANS ACCESS SERVICES UNDER ONE ROOF AT THE 12<sup>TH</sup> PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT**

**SAN DIEGO, CA** – Many homeless individuals made obtaining housing assistance a priority today at [The 12th Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego](#), including Tameka, who said she slept on B Street the night before.

“I’m here picking up blocks, trying to make sure I can build a new life for myself,” said Tameka, who has been homeless for a year.

Tameka completed an assessment that helps identify the most appropriate housing options for homeless individuals and who are the most vulnerable. Eyeglasses and employment assistance were among the additional service she looked forward to receiving.

Tameka was one of 845 homeless individuals who participated in Project Homeless Connect, a one-day resource fair held at Golden Hall at the San Diego Concourse. The San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) is the lead organizer of the event.

“Beyond the numbers, it’s about the individuals who are coming through the door, the individuals who need that help and support, and find that caring, nurturing event,” said Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer, who shook hands with volunteers, service providers and homeless San Diegans in line for Project Homeless Connect. “I can’t say enough about our Housing Commission and the fact that they organized so many people — the range of services and the volunteers.”

Participants were able to access service providers at 90 booths and receive assistance from more than 400 volunteers, including 51 students from High Tech Middle School and 35 students from San Ysidro High School.

“With 10,000 Homeless San Diegans on any given night, everybody has a different range of needs. Not everybody needs that one haircut or that one dental screening. So people are able to come in here and pick and choose the services they need, under one roof,” said City Councilmember Chris Ward, the Honorary Chair of this year’s Project Homeless Connect, who also met with homeless individuals and volunteers, including answering questions from High Tech Middle School students.

Services included flu shots and Hepatitis A vaccines; haircuts; dental and health exams; employment and housing assistance; and identification cards from the California Department of Motor Vehicles. In addition, child care and veterinary care were available, and attendees also received donated hygiene kits, blankets, clothing, and shoes.

“Whether we’re providing services for one person or 1,000, we had a good reason to be here and meet the needs of homeless San Diegans. This is the second year of a downward trajectory, but it is too soon to draw conclusions from the numbers. However, even if the numbers are beginning to show a decrease, the needs remain great, and the community needs to continue to respond,” SDHC President & CEO Richard C. Gentry said.

Staff from the programs of SDHC's [HOUSING FIRST – SAN DIEGO](#) homelessness action plan, as well as the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance program, were on-site to help Project Homeless Connect participants, like Ana and her 10-year-old son.

Ana said they have been living in a church in East Village since August, after she lost her job as a school cafeteria worker.

“This time we're going to see if we can update Section 8 and get a couple referrals,” Ana said. “I don't know what my luck is going to be, but let's see what happens this year.”

In addition, the Regional Task Force on the Homeless provided staff to help homeless San Diegans with an assessment known as the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, which is an essential step toward identifying housing opportunities. Project Homeless Connect participants lined up inside Golden Hall throughout the day for the opportunity to complete this assessment. Gordon Walker, CEO of the Regional Task Force, also was on-site at Project Homeless Connect.

Jennifer King, a registered nurse and professor at Point Loma Nazarene University who has provided health services at four Project Homeless Connect events, was on hand with her students to help vaccinate attendees against the flu.

“There's so many health organizations represented here that it gives them a choice of how to get into care, and just in a space that they're more comfortable in. Sometimes a clinic is scary. This is a bit more welcoming,” King said.

City Councilmember Chris Cate also visited with volunteers and participants at Project Homeless Connect.

Kurt, who volunteered through the local meet-up group San Diego Baby Boomers, said his experience when he moved to San Diego approximately 40 years ago helps him identify with the challenges Project Homeless Connect participants face.

“When I first moved here, I lived in my van for a month and showered down at the beach at outdoor showers—pretty cold in January. It was a difficult time, and I thought, helping anybody in this situation—I mean some of them don't even have a vehicle and live on the street, and that's rough.” Kurt said. “As long as I can come down here, I'll be here.”

Additional volunteers included SDHC Commissioner Margaret Davis and former Commissioner Roberta Spoon.

This was the eighth consecutive time that SDHC served as the lead organizer of Project Homeless Connect. SDHC's major organizing partners are the City of San Diego; Father Joe's Villages; Family Health Centers of San Diego; and the Interfaith Shelter Network.

For more information about SDHC, visit [www.sdhc.org](http://www.sdhc.org).

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