

Count *from A1*

disadvantaged individuals including St. Vincent de Paul's food bank and Beds for Freezing Nights.

"I would put emphasis on indoor shelter," Katz said. "A shelter is not a tent outside as far as I'm concerned."

A need to address the kinds of shelters offered for those who experience homelessness is a point echoed by recent research in Lane County.

Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), a non-profit out of Boston, Mass. focusing on human services, health care, homelessness and affordable housing, released a Public Shelter Feasibility Study and Homeless

Service System Analysis for Lane County last October. The study pointed out that the issue requires much broader and deeper attention.

"While emergency shelter plays a crucial role in addressing a person's immediate housing crisis needs," the report stated, "it is important to note that shelter alone cannot be a community's singular strategy to ending homelessness."

The feasibility study goes on to suggest a need for system-wide coordination among housing and services. Fleck is hopeful PIT counts will highlight the need for such transitions.

"I think we're going to see some big changes," said Fleck. "Right now we receive

certain types of housing but don't receive others and the report was suggesting that those be broader and more interconnected.

"I'm kind of excited to see how this may potentially change all of the aspects if we can afford it."

Fleck cited transitional housing and rapid-rehousing as particular needs in Cottage Grove.

"Most of the people who apply for housing assistance don't receive it," said Fleck. "Because we just don't have the funds or they don't qualify."

Last year, volunteers of the PIT count reported 1,642 people experiencing homelessness in Lane County, up from 1,529 the previous year. Indications are that this year

will see another increase.

The Cottage Grove count was conducted between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, requiring survey participants to claim they spent the previous night outdoors in order to be counted.

Because the numbers reflect only a single given night in the year, a need for thoroughness becomes quickly evident.

From a coordination perspective, Fleck found it uncharted territory.

"It's a new process with the county taking over the volunteerism and so I think it went well overall, but I think there are some things that could improve," he said. "You know, minor organizational stuff"

Linda Bravo, a community

service worker from Eugene, volunteered to help organize the Cottage Grove event. "I think it would be helpful to have longer hours next time," she said.

Of the more than 30 people who were anticipated as needed for the Cottage Grove area count, a total of 13 showed up.

Among them was Karen Munsell, who had hoped to meet face-to-face more of the kinds of individuals she's accustomed to helping in her food drive volunteering.

Her three-hour search resulted in a single survey participant.

Munsell was hopeful the process would yield "more accurate services offered to homeless and at-risk people in this community," she said.

Other teams from the morning's count had more luck finding participants. Volunteers from Creswell reported around 15 recorded surveys in their count.

Regardless of numbers, Katz found the experience rewarding.

"If you're an advocate, it's really important that you're knowledgeable about what you're advocating," he said. "So if I'm advocating for people who are unhoused, I should be out there in the trenches knowing what it is they're facing and trying to get as much information as I can."

Lane County is to submit the final PIT count data to HUD this April.

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Encourage children to floss

Children should learn that flossing is just as important as brushing.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH




Learning to brush their own teeth is a lesson all children must master. Although parents ultimately may have children who become proficient at brushing their own teeth, getting them to floss is generally more difficult.

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 41 percent of children aged 2 to 11 had tooth decay in their first teeth. Dental caries are common among children, likely because they have not become proficient at taking care of their teeth.

Soft, sticky foods are commonplace in young kids' diets, and these can promote decay. Even well-intentioned gummy vitamins can be sources of dental decay. Oftentimes, these foods become lodged between the teeth or on the surface of molars. If left in contact with the teeth for too long, food particles become a source of carbohydrates for oral bacteria, and cavities may appear as a result.

To remove food particles from between the teeth, children must floss, advises the American Academy of Pediatric Dentists. It is recommended that parents help their children to floss as soon as two teeth are touching and continue to do so until the child is around the age of 8, when a child should have enough dexterity to do it on his or her own.

Flossing is essential to making sure children do not experience cavities at an early age, and it can establish practices that promote oral health throughout life. Despite being so important, many parents fail to encourage flossing or are at a loss as to how to make it enjoyable and effective.

Although regular dental floss is one of the first tools for flossing, the dexterity required to wind the floss around little fingers and then thoroughly clean the teeth may discourage children. Parents can look into the wide array of flossing helpers available at the store. In fact, many age-appropriate flossers are now available that feature fun designs and smaller profiles to fit into kids' mouths more easily. Flossers may be attached to a handle to make back teeth more accessible and promote more effective flossing. Manufacturers such as DenTek, Butler GUM, Plackers Kids, Dr. Fresh, Oral-B, and Brush Buddies offer children's flossers.

Kids who shy away from flossing may be more likely to use a children's water flosser. In lieu of string floss, a water flosser uses a pressurized stream of water to dislodge food from between teeth. Although a water flosser may be more messy, children may enjoy the opportunity to "play" with water and the cleaning sensation provided.

To prevent the buildup of plaque and the development of dental caries, parents should educate children about proper flossing techniques.

Dr. Daniel McMaster, DMD

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