

Help the homeless

Community forum to address needs, resources

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — With one of the coldest winters on record and snow still on the ground, citizens of Dallas began a community discussion: How can we help those who are homeless?

Brent DeMoe, director of Polk County Family and Community Outreach, and three other organizations will host a forum on homelessness Thursday from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. at Valley Life Center in Dallas.

DeMoe said the point of the meeting isn't to sit and listen to what agencies have to offer, but to have a conversation with people who want to help immediately, help in the near future, and make plans for down the road.

"This is 100 percent inspired by Facebook and social media and this community right here," he said. "We cannot solve this issue in one 90-minute meeting, but it's to get things started."

On Jan. 4 at the Dallas Service Integration Team meeting, someone from West Valley Housing Authority said the organization could use some coats, hats and gloves.

County Commissioner Mike Ainsworth was there and challenged the group to collect some — and quickly.

"It really just snowballed in such a positive way from there," said DeMoe.

It started with a post on the Dallas, Oregon Community Bulletin Board that morning. By noon, it had been shared 89 times, DeMoe said.

Donations poured into the Academy Building Resource Center, where West Valley Housing Authority is a partner organization.

"Conservatively, we had 500 coats donated, hats, scarves, gloves, clothing — new and used — boots, shoes," DeMoe said. "We got six brand new clothing racks

How can you help?

What: Community Forum: Local Solutions to Address Homelessness.

When: 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. on Thursday.

Where: Valley Life Center, 1795 SE Miller Ave., Dallas.

Of note: Free child care and refreshments will be offered.

donated to us. Now we can display things. We can organize things."

The donations were organized by volunteers and will be distributed to Central Resource Center and to Falls City and Grand Ronde, also.

DeMoe said he shouldn't have been surprised about how effective Facebook is in getting the word out about needs of the community — he uses Facebook regularly, himself — but he and his staff at Family and Community Outreach had never thought to post needs on the social media website.

He and his wife, Lisa, started going through the community bulletin to answer any question they could about what resources are available to people in need.

"What I'm finding is there are people who don't know about the resource center," DeMoe said. "There are people who don't know about the health clinic. There are people who don't know even about parent education."

A second Facebook page focused on helping homeless was created on Jan. 5, and that's when DeMoe realized he and his department and partners could help.

The community member who started the homeless page suggested getting a group together to discuss ways to help, DeMoe said.

"I'm thinking, why is it her that has to suggest that? Why aren't we getting a group of

people together? And why don't we include all of these people?" he said.

The Community Action Agency, Salvation Army, and the only shelter program in Polk County, Interfaith Hospitality Network, will join DeMoe at the forum on homelessness.

"I hope to say, if you're interested in warming shelters, Pastor Heather Wright's sitting right there; go to that table," he said. "If you're a church and you want to do this, get over there and do that. If you're here from a school and want to do a coat drive, start tomorrow. Get coats of all sizes and we will get those coats to everybody who needs them through these partners."

In Polk County, West Salem is No. 1 for homelessness, followed by Falls City and Independence, but that's not to say Dallas and Monmouth don't have homeless people, DeMoe said. The forum is meant to be countywide, not just for people in Dallas.

Free child care and refreshments will be available at the forum, donated by Mid-Valley Parenting and Community Financial.

RSVP is not required, but would be appreciated to Alinna Ghavami via email at Ghavami.alinna@co.polk.or.us.

OTHER FREE TRANSPORTATION TO THE CONNECT

If you are unable to ride CARTS or Cherrriots to get to the event, free alternate transportation is available. Community vans/buses will pick up and drop off from the locations below.

Monmouth/Independence	Central Community Resource Center (1610 Monmouth St.)
Falls City	Mountain Gospel Fellowship (257 N Main St.)
West Salem	1. United Methodist Church (1219 3rd St NW) 2. Wallace Marine Park (near walk-way bridge)

Approximate time vans depart from the above locations:
7:30am, 8:30am, 9:30am, 10:30am, 1:30pm & 2:30pm (last pick at 2:30pm)

Approximate time vans begin return trip / leave event:
10:00am, 1:00pm, 2:00pm, 3:00pm & 4:00pm

Grand Ronde	Grand Ronde Community Center (9615 Grand Ronde Rd) Pick up at 9:00 am and drop off at 3:30 pm
Dallas	Event van will be available to make looping stops in town to transport to the event.

Vehicles will have a sign on the side that says "Polk Community Connect". Look for the appropriate vehicle at your location stop prior to getting on the bus.

For more information or questions contact:

Valley Life Center (503-623-4116) OR Polk County Service Integration (503-623-9664 ext 2457)

POLK COMMUNITY CONNECT for the/ Itemizer-Observer

Free rides to the Polk Community Connect event at Valley Life Center on Jan. 25 in Dallas are available at the above locations and times.

Community Connect on Jan. 25

Itemizer-Observer staff report

DALLAS — On Jan. 25, Valley Life Center, 1795 SE Miller Ave., in Dallas, will be busy with volunteers feeding, clothing, and otherwise helping those Polk County residents who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

It's the Polk Community Connect, which runs from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Transportation is provided to and from the event for those who cannot make it.

Services available include

dental care, basic health screenings, pet care, bike repair, haircuts, clothing, backpacks, and camping items — all at no cost to those who need them most.

The clothing, backpacks and camping items are first come, first served.

Other resources will be available from a variety of providers including children and youth services; education information; job assistance; housing programs; veterans services; benefits information; behavioral health; and com-

munity mail service.

Free meals will be provided to those who need it.

The day also serves as the annual point in time homeless count, where volunteers in cities and counties all over the nation take a physical count of all they can find who are homeless.

To serve as a provider for the event, contact Alinna Ghavami, Service Integration, 503-623-9664 ext. 2457. To volunteer: polkconnectvolunteer@gmail.com, or call 971-599-3845.

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503-623-2373
Heidi at ext. 115 • Rachel at ext. 110
or Karen at ext. 118.

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GRAND OPENING!

Dallas Retirement Village celebrates the grand opening of Lodge Residences and Clubhouse

To mark its 70th anniversary and celebrate the much-anticipated grand opening of the Lodge Residences and Clubhouse, Dallas Retirement Village is having a special event for the public on

Wednesday, January 25 at 11:00 am

The fun begins with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11:30 am. Afterward, guests are invited to tour the new Lodge Residences and Clubhouse — with wine tasting and coffee sampling in the Clubhouse lounge, movie and snacks in the theatre and a performance by our resident drum collaboration. Appetizers and refreshments will be served.

For more details, call 503-623-9211

503-623-9211
225 NW Jasper St, Dallas, OR 97338
www.dallasretirementvillage.com

Dallas Retirement Village is a faith-based, non-profit organization open to all.