

Homeless

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"We are aware that there are homeless children, but they're being counted through the school districts. Our practice is to not get children away from school during school hours," Wright said.

She also has heard and understands the concerns of people at risk of homelessness who have been helped at the event in previous years.

"I'm acutely aware that by limiting our guest list that there are people who feel their needs aren't being adequately met," she said.

Wright said Dallas and other communities host events — particularly back-to-school events like Dallas Family Night Out — that better serve families. Also, the Polk Resource Center, located in the Academy Building in Dallas, is open five days a week to serve individual and families who are struggling with basic needs.

"I'm really confident and really grateful for the resource center. I've been promoting that they're there, that they are available, and that they have a connection to food, to furniture, and to clothing on a regular basis — and all the agencies

You can help

Volunteer: Sign up at: Polkconnectvolunteers@gmail.com or call 971-599-3845.

Donate: Items needed are: Tents, sleeping bags, tarps, flashlights and batteries and new socks and underwear.

Sign up as a provider: contact Amber Hoffmann at Hoffmann.amber@co.polk.or.us.

Contribute: Financial donations can be made to Living Hope City Church at P.O. Box 260, Dallas, OR, 97338.

that would be represented," she said. "Not all community, especially of our size, have something that functions as well as the resource center does."

Wright said her hope for the 2018 event is to get accurate information on the number of homeless people in the county — and help them find solutions their unique situations.

"We were only able to survey 102 (unsheltered) homeless last year, and we know that number is way, way



Itemizer-Observer file

The Polk County Homeless Connect event will only focus on helping those who are homeless.

low," she said. "Our goal is to do a better job with the survey, and for those who are surveyed, that we make sure they are invited to a relief day."

CTE

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Meanwhile, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee — a group of Dallas education and business representatives — is making plans for the program's future.

Kal Anderson, a member of the group and the general manager at Mak Metals, said designing the "employability score" is important work, for business owners and students.

The score would measure non-academic traits such as work ethic and professionalism in the work place.

The committee has broken up into teams to create definitions and scoring methods for each facet of the score. He volunteered to work on "fundamentals," such as getting to work on time. Anderson said that is a great need.

"We as a company have had to work around and create our own program to teach those fundamentals," Anderson said.

He said it's not just re-

cent high school graduates that lack the knowledge of what it means to be a professional. He said he's had to mentor workers twice his age about the importance of those traits to keeping a job.

"The benefit to the employer is you have more educated kids that you can easily hire and not have to worry about if they are ... not fit or prepared for this job," Anderson said.

While he believes the group is making good progress, the full benefit of the new programs won't be seen for years to come.

"I think we're getting there," he said. "There isn't a whole instant return on all this. We can't say we need all these programs and boom, we have them. We have to look for funding, we have to reteach all the teachers. There's a time investment on the school district side and there's investment for industry. We have to be able to be convinced of the benefit as well."

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