

For Immediate Release

Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count in Duncan

Duncan, BC – On Tuesday February 21st, 2017 the United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island, in collaboration with the Tze Tza Watul Community Advisory Board and other community partners, will be conducting a Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count and Housing Needs Survey in Duncan, BC.

A Point-in-Time Count takes place over the course of one day. Trained volunteers and staff from local service providers will count and survey individuals who are staying in shelters, short-term housing and who are without shelter. The PiT Count will provide a “snapshot” of homelessness in Duncan and give insight into who is homeless and why. The information will be used in local plans to help the homeless and the neighbourhoods that are impacted by increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness.

Many committed local agencies have come together to plan and participate in the Point-in-Time Count. Representatives from the RCMP, local municipalities, service providers such as Warmland House and Outreach, Cowichan Valley Basket Society, United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island, Cowichan Housing Association and more are participating in the 2017 winter count. A summer count is also being planned to get a sense of the difference between the winter and summer homeless populations and trends.

“Homelessness is a major concern in Duncan and the Cowichan Valley right now and our long, cold winter has made things more acute,” says Signy Madden, Executive Director of United Way. “We – the local funders and service providers – require current data to be able to understand the scope of the need and who is in need whether veterans, seniors, young people, etc. Fortunately there are many passionate individuals and agencies working with us on this year’s Count.”

“Every segment of our society must be treated with dignity and respect and be given the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution. The face of homelessness is changing and we have to adapt to provide the adequate support to communities to build capacity to help homeless population’s lead valuable lives. The Government of Canada is committed to helping meet the needs of communities across the country to prevent and reduce homelessness and to explore innovative ways to address specific homeless populations.”

– The Honorable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

The PiT Count will indicate the *minimum* number of people experiencing absolute homelessness in our community. Other forms of homelessness include, people staying temporarily with family or friends, trading sex for shelter, people who are in long-term transitional housing but whose housing and health are still not stable, and others who may be inadequately housed such as people living without heat because they cannot pay for hydro or living in buildings that were not intended as residential units. People experiencing these housing challenges are not typically included in a PiT count but will be included as part of the Housing Needs survey conducted the same day.

The PiT Count and Housing Needs survey will improve the community's understanding of the needs and circumstances of the people who are affected by homelessness in our community. The count and survey will provide us with the key data on gender, age, ethnicity, and patterns and experiences of homelessness.

The Duncan PiT Count is being supported through funding provided by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy program. To encourage the homeless to participate in the survey, "care kits" of supplies will be handed out at various locations. The PiT Count "magnet event" and lunch will be held at St John's Church Hall at 486 Jubilee St. in Duncan with free services such as chiropractic and acupuncture, donated goods and a hot meal offered.

Volunteers are still needed for the day of the Count and training will be provided ahead of the count. To find out how you can volunteer contact Joy Emmanuel at Joy.turningtimes@gmail.com.

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