

**For Immediate Release**



**United Way**  
Central and Northern  
Vancouver Island

## **United Way Funds Comox Valley Point-in-Time Homeless Count**

**Comox Valley, BC** – April 12, 2016 - The Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (The Coalition) conducted a housing and service needs survey based on the Federal Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count on April 12 at St. George's United Church. Honorariums included draw prizes, foot care, haircuts, snacks, notes made by local students and lunch (provided by the Salvation Army and organized through the Sonshine Lunch Club). United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island (UWCNVI) provided funding and support for the PiT Count.

In one day, 27 trained volunteers surveyed individuals who are staying in shelters, short-term housing and who are without shelter. The survey provides a “snapshot” of homelessness in the Comox Valley, as well as provides more in-depth information to help inform the five-year strategic plan regarding needed support services and housing.

Although PiT Counts are not always able to count all homeless individuals in the community, it will indicate the *minimum* number of people experiencing homelessness in our community. Other forms of homelessness, such as people staying temporarily with friends and trading sex for shelter, are not typically included in a PiT Count; however, in the Comox Valley, the survey was extended to more hidden forms of homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. Several shelters and agencies volunteered their time to collect surveys throughout the week.

The PiT Count will improve the Coalition's understanding of the needs and circumstances of the people who are affected by homelessness in our community. The survey will provide key data on gender, age, health, ethnicity and more.

“United Way donors in Comox Valley care about the homeless and want to be a part of the solution. While United Way already funds programs helping the most vulnerable in Comox, funding the PiT Count will give us data that we and our partners on the Homeless Coalition can use to help us determine what more needs to be done,” said Signy Madden, Executive Director at UWCNVI.

“This is the first national PiT Count in Canada with 31 cities participating and I am glad that we could share what we learned in the February PiT Count in Nanaimo with another Island community that our United Way serves.”

“Conducting a PiT Count has been a learning experience in figuring out what methods work for our community and the information gained through the surveys that will provide us with invaluable knowledge on our homeless population and our at-risk population,” said Jolene McElwain, PiT Count Coordinator and member of the Coalition.

The Coalition thanks the Cumberland Village Bakery for donating donuts, World Community for donating coffee, Subway for donating gift cards and the Comox Bay Care Society for organizing haircuts, a foot care nurse and providing hearing tests.

The Coalition is composed of 15 agency members working together as a collective to plan, coordinate, recommend and implement community responses to homelessness. For more

information on the Coalition and their five-year plan to end homelessness, visit [www.cvhousing.ca](http://www.cvhousing.ca).

UWCNVI conducted a PiT Homeless Count in Nanaimo on February 9, 2016. The information and expertise from this PiT Count helped organize the PiT Count in Comox. United Way works hard on tackling social issues in our community such as homelessness, and funds a number of projects that help gain insight and information on how we can help end homelessness in our communities.

- 30 -

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