



COMMUNITIES | NORTH COUNTY

Del Mar event connects homeless with services

Del Mar event brings together more than 35 programs, workshops in one-stop shop for people in need



By [Lyndsay Winkley](#) | 5:51 p.m. Nov. 14, 2012



Nancy Grzenia has her hair trimmed and styled Wednesday by Jennifer Giron, a student at Palomar Institute of Cosmetology, during an expo offering assistance and services to homeless and low-income people. Peggy Peattie • U-T

DEL MAR — When Adrian Quintero, 23, and his father, Arturo, 58, filled out paperwork to receive a free dental cleaning Wednesday at an expo at the Del Mar Fairgrounds designed to help the region's homeless, the younger man couldn't remember the last time he had seen a dentist.

“It’s really hard, this life,” he said, about surviving without a fixed address. “It is so cool we can get this done here.”

Quintero works for local churches that, in exchange, provide shelter for him and his father. Still, the two frequently forgo services such as dental cleanings for more important things — like food.

“Sometimes, if we can afford it, we travel to Tijuana to get work like this done,” Quintero said. “But most of the time, we just can’t afford it. Food is expensive.”

The annual expo, called Project Homeless Connect and hosted by the Alliance for Regional Solutions, is in its second year, said Laurin Pause, executive director of the Community Resource Center, an Encinitas-based nonprofit that is part of the alliance and organized much of Wednesday’s expo.

More than 35 North County services and programs that assist homeless and low-income populations participated in this year’s event. By gathering in one convenient location, a one-stop shop for people in need is created, Pause said.

“Maybe we’ll hook people up with that one service that will change that person’s life,” Pause said.

Last year, the event was held at California State University San Marcos and served about 150 people. This year, the program relocated to the fairgrounds and about 110 people attended.

Pause attributed the decline in attendance to the program’s relocation — Cal State San Marcos was not available this year — and to mediocre outreach efforts. Transportation to and from the event is difficult for many people, a factor that organizers are trying to address, she said.

“We’re advocating for keeping the event here at the fairgrounds because we can concurrently outreach for this event and our Holiday Baskets event, a more established program,” she said. “It’s a work in progress. We can build on it.”

Services offered to the homeless Wednesday included haircuts, health testing, legal services, dental cleanings, health screenings, shelter options, veterinary services,

employment workshops and assistance with job applications and résumés.

“Not to mention a nice, warm lunch,” Pause said.

Bill Grimes, who said he has been homeless for about three years, was headed for the Department of Motor Vehicles booth on Wednesday to get the process started on a new ID for his wife, Anne. They heard about the event through Interfaith Community Services in Escondido, a nonprofit social service agency. When asked why he and his wife attended the expo, Bill answered with a smile.

“It had our name written on it,” he said.

The couple said they have been homeless since Bill lost his job driving a tow truck.

For Wednesday’s event, shuttles brought homeless and low-income community members from all over North County to take advantage of the resources available.

The Grimeses hailed from Escondido, but homeless people from Encinitas, Oceanside and Carlsbad were also in attendance.

Ken Webb, 47, who has been homeless for almost a decade, said he heard about the event at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in Carlsbad. He was hoping to get an inhaler for breathing trouble and a new sleeping bag as cold weather approaches.

Last year, attendees — particularly those who were newly homeless — asked for local politicians to attend, Pause said. This year, Encinitas Councilwoman Teresa Barth and newly elected Encinitas Councilwoman Lisa Shaffer visited the expo.

Barth said she was surprised by just how many local resources were available to the North County community and praised the organizations for coming together.

“It connects so many people to so many services in a concentrated format,” she said. “The system can get so confusing and people get frustrated.”

And it’s not just people in need who get frustrated, said Nick Winfrey, community liaison for the Rancho Coastal Humane Society. The society partnered with the Drake Center for Veterinary Care for the second year at Project Homeless Connect to provide veterinary care and food for pets of the homeless.

Winfrey said it can be hard to connect with the homeless community. “It’s hard to serve people if they don’t know about the service,” he said. “That’s why this event is so great. People come to us.”

Pause said many programs in the area — shelters such as Operation Hope in Vista and 2-1-1 San Diego, a 24/7 phone line that connects people to community, health and disaster services — have difficulty reaching the people who need their resources most.

In North County, where public transportation is neither quick nor particularly reliable, getting people connected to local programs is sometimes easier said than done, Pause said.

“Trips across North County can take up to two hours,” she said. “It can be very discouraging for people. They give up.”

Project Homeless Connect helps funnel people to the right programs with ease.

“Hopefully, at the end of the day, we will impact people and it will be for the better,” said Pause.



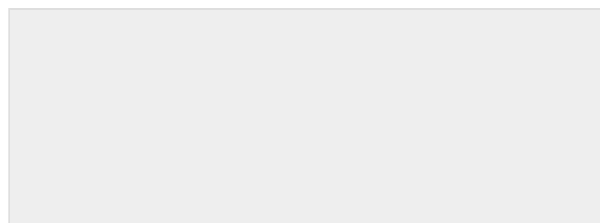
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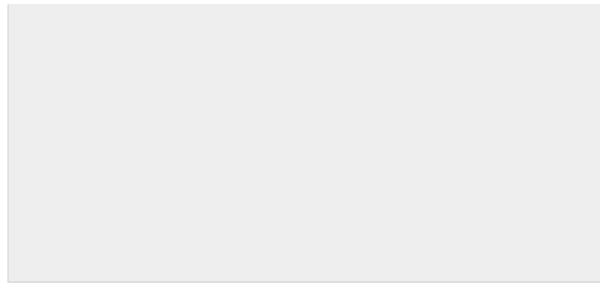
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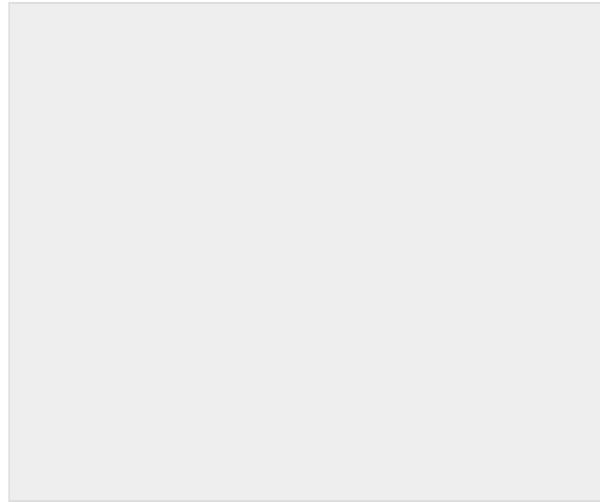
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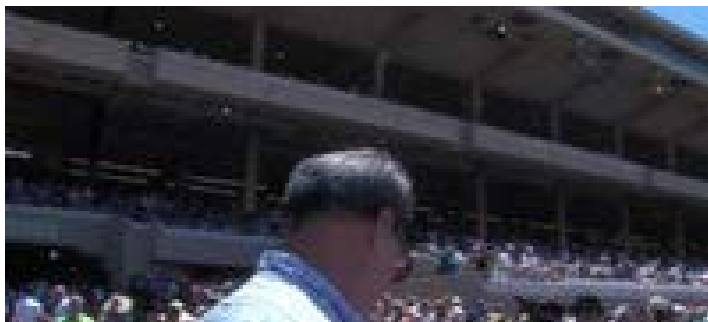
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