



SAN DIEGO  
HOUSING  
COMMISSION

**News Release**

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## **230 ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR TWO MAJOR HOMELESS EVENTS NEXT WEEK**

*The 11<sup>th</sup> Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego and the “We All Count” county-wide census of homeless individuals are important to addressing homelessness*

**San Diego, CA** — An additional 230 volunteers are needed to support two major homeless events that are taking place next week – the annual [“We All Count”](#) census of homeless individuals (100 volunteers) and [The 11<sup>th</sup> Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego](#) (130 volunteers), for which the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) is the lead organizer.

“San Diegans, of course, are known for coming together to help those in need. That’s why we know that we can count on hundreds of volunteers each year to make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable residents,” said San Diego Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer at a news conference to call on San Diegans to volunteer for these two events that are crucial for addressing homelessness in the city of San Diego and the region.

The first 100 volunteers are needed to interview homeless San Diegans and count homeless individuals throughout the county for “We All Count,” which begins – rain or shine – at 4 a.m. on Friday, January 27. This count is essential to obtaining millions of dollars in Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to address homelessness locally.

“Getting this right requires literally hundreds of volunteers. People who are going to walk the streets, peek in the canyons, and check out the parks and find the homeless people wherever they might be, including our shelters. We need volunteers in every single community in San Diego,” said San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts.

These volunteers are needed to join the more than 1,500 who have already signed up for “We All Count,” which includes 637 County employees.

Two days before “We All Count,” 130 volunteers are also still needed for The 11<sup>th</sup> Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego, a one-day resource fair that connects homeless individuals with services that address many of their immediate and longer-term needs.

“By bringing more people in for services, we get a better picture of the individualized need of our homeless population. That not only helps us connect them to the services that can help, but ensures that the programs we design and support are oriented to the unique situations which they all face,” said Councilmember Chris Ward, whose district includes Downtown San Diego, and who donated a blanket to Project Homeless Connect.

Project Homeless Connect will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, January 25, in Golden Hall at the San Diego Concourse, 202 C St., San Diego. Volunteers on the day of the event will help homeless individuals access the services available on-site. Volunteers are also needed to help set up the venue the day before the event.

Donations of new or gently used clothing and blankets are also needed to help homeless individuals brave the cold and wet winter weather.

“I’m happy to tell you that we have already received some very major donations: 7,000 pairs of socks from STANCE; 1,000 hygiene kits from the Downtown Fellowship; and 500 jackets from the San Diego Rescue Mission; but our need is extremely great,” said Councilmember Chris Cate, who added a donation of socks and shoes.

Donations can be dropped off at Golden Hall from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, January 24.

Of greatest need are:

- New sweatshirts and “hoodies” (size large and up);
- New reusable ponchos;
- New small and medium blankets;
- New or gently used closed-toe-shoes;
- New or gently used backpacks; and
- New nonprescription reading glasses.

“The success of Project Homeless Connect is a result of real collaboration between the San Diego Housing Commission, the City, the County, our major organizing partners, private sector donations, service providers, and volunteers,” said SDHC President & CEO Richard C. Gentry.

Last year Project Homeless Connect assisted 1,215 homeless San Diegans. More than 300 volunteers and 70 organizations provided services such as haircuts, flu shots, dental screenings, identification cards from the California Department of Motor Vehicles, counseling for mental health, housing assistance, and alcohol or substance abuse referrals.

“The San Diego Fire-Rescue Department often provides services to these vulnerable San Diegans who live on our streets during medical emergencies. When people dial 9-1-1 during a life-threatening situation, help usually arrives first in a fire engine. Interviews conducted during registration for Project Homeless Connect give us an overview of the medical needs of the homeless population we serve,” said San Diego Fire Chief Brian Fennessy.

SDHC’s report on The 10th Project Homeless Connect, which was held on January 27, 2016, provides a profile of the homeless men and women who attended. The profile is based on a survey of the participants conducted at the resource fair:

- 84.4 percent were single participants;
- 60.8 percent were men;
- 62.7 percent were ages 45 or older;
- 91.6 percent were unemployed;
- 56.9 percent had no cash income of any kind;
- 49.1 percent had a physical disability; and
- 17.4 percent has a developmental disability.

In the days leading up to the event, the San Diego Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team will be handing out flyers to homeless San Diegans to provide them information about Project Homeless Connect.

"It's really important to have the different service providers under one roof at the same time to help our homeless individuals get the services that they need," said police Lt. Carole Beason of the Homeless Outreach Team.

Father Joe's Villages will provide 1,200 meals for the homeless San Diegans who participate in the one-day resource fair. Deacon Jim Vargas, President and CEO of Father Joe's Villages, said Project Homeless Connect provides a good opportunity to connect with homeless individuals.

"Our hope is that while we're there with the other service providers, we're able to welcome them, show them some hospitality, some love and compassion, and also entice them to come in to the various services providers just like Father Joe's Villages, and get the help that they need, whether it's medical, finding employment, or otherwise so that they can secure employment, have an income and then be able to provide for themselves and secure housing, and that's what it's all about," Deacon Vargas said.

To volunteer for "We All Count" visit [www.rtfhsd.org](http://www.rtfhsd.org)

Volunteers for The 11<sup>th</sup> Project Homeless Connect can sign up by visiting [www.sdhc.org](http://www.sdhc.org)

### **Background:**

#### **"We All Count"**

The "We All Count" annual census of homeless individuals is required by HUD from cities and counties in regional Continuums of Care that receive Federal funding for homelessness programs.

In addition, interviews of homeless individuals will take place on the streets or in shelters and other locations throughout the county from Friday, January 27, through Tuesday, January 31.

The San Diego Regional Continuum of Care Council, chaired by SDHC President & CEO Gentry, is responsible for completing the "We All Count" homelessness census each year.

The Regional Task Force on the Homeless coordinates the count on behalf of RCCC, with the help of hundreds of volunteers.

#### **"The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Project Homeless Connect"**

This is the seventh year that SDHC is the lead organizer for Project Homeless Connect – Downtown San Diego, providing financial support and volunteer recruitment through its website.

Major organizing partners are the City of San Diego, Father Joe's Villages, Interfaith Shelter Network, and Family Health Centers of San Diego.

For more information, visit [www.sdhc.org](http://www.sdhc.org)

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