

LOCAL NEWS

For one family in Redlands, annual homeless survey leads to housing



Nelly Young, 8, plays in the car as her mother Kimberly Young, 41 from Maine, speaks with volunteers who took part in the Redlands Point in Time homeless count Thursday morning January 25, 2018 in the western portion of Redlands. Young, who is homeless and living in her minivan with her 3 daughters ages 7, 8 and 13, came to California to escape the winter in Maine. Teams went throughout the city searching for the homeless and to provide basic essentials and assistance. The count helps determine how much federal funding the county will receive for homeless services. (Photo by Will Lester-Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

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PUBLISHED: January 25, 2018 at 6:30 pm | UPDATED: January 26, 2018 at 2:16 pm

Editor's note: Staff writer Sandra Emerson accompanied a team of volunteers in the annual Point in Time homeless survey. Below is an account of what she and volunteers found.

REDLANDS >> Kimberly Young and her three young daughters awakened early Thursday, Jan. 25, after sleeping overnight in the minivan that carried them from Maine to the West Coast.

When our group – volunteers with the San Bernardino County annual homeless survey, accompanied by myself and a photographer to chronicle their findings – met Young and her children, it was immediately clear they needed help.

For several hours Thursday morning, volunteers fanned out in Redlands and across San Bernardino County for the annual Point in Time survey to canvass the homeless population. This year, volunteers were instructed to give special attention to unaccompanied homeless women.

Volunteers considered Young, 41, unaccompanied and called supervisors for assistance. Young's face lit up when she heard she would receive help.

Young told our group she suffers from bipolar disorder and supports her children on disability pay. She drove her family to California from Maine for the warmer weather and they found themselves in Redlands a few days ago, she said, without money for gas and needing services. She said she only recently discovered the food pantry and clothing at Family Service Association of Redlands. Housing, however, had eluded them.

"We don't care in the whole world where we live," she said, "we just want to live."

Overwhelming system

Our team discovered Young and her daughters after deploying early Thursday from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Redlands. We visited an area near California Street and the 10 Freeway, fully armed with bags of toiletries and extra items added by volunteers.

Volunteers with the Point in Time count had been instructed to collect information about the homeless population in Redlands, a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for agencies, such as the county, that receive federal funding for homeless-support programs.

In 2017, [Redlands recorded the second-largest homeless population in San Bernardino County](#). Last year, volunteers found 164 homeless individuals in the Point in Time count. This year, [volunteers hope to see lower numbers](#), reflecting the efforts made by the city and service organizations to assist the homeless.

Thursday morning, we took a path along the railroad tracks, stepping over litter and debris from former encampments before coming to an orange grove where someone had cut a hole in the fence surrounding the property.

Mother of 3 from Maine finds herself homeless in Redlands

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The Rev. Cheryl Raine, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Redlands, led the group into the grove.

Our first encounter was with Bill, a 54-year-old man who declined to give his last name, living in a tent south of the freeway. Bill said he was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force who had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other physical ailments.

"Once you're in this," he said, "trying to get out is a nightmare."

For Raine, who joined the Redlands count for the first time this year, finding a way to provide resources to the homeless is important.

"Obviously from our conversations, it sounds like some of the system, at least from the client's perspective, is just overwhelming," she said. "So how do we design a system where it's not so overwhelming?"

A team effort

Volunteers got a glimpse of the struggles clients face when a count coordinator indicated help would not be coming for Young and her children.

Young was not considered unaccompanied since she was with her children.

Volunteers were unsure where to turn. They did not want to abandon the family and their two dogs — Malibu and Cooper — and thankfully accepted the phone number for Philip Mangano, president of the American Roundtable to Abolish Homelessness, whom I had previously contacted.

Mangano, known for his dedication to helping the homeless, set things into motion.

While Young did not qualify as an unaccompanied homeless woman, housing unsheltered children is the highest priority for the county, said Mangano, who was with Supervisor Josie Gonzales and Maria Razo, the executive director of the county Housing Authority, at the time.

The trio assured everyone they would get Young and her children help immediately.

“Our intentionality and focus of county resources are for that population,” Mangano said. “So it was great to get that call. Certainly when anybody finds a woman with children that overrides all other priorities.”

Mangano told the volunteers to send Young to Family Service Association, and two of the volunteers, Jenn Maxwell and Katherine Wormley, both case managers with U.S. Vets in Colton, accompanied the family to the nonprofit on Lawton Street.

Although the plan for the day had been to only collect information for the county, Maxwell was happy to connect someone to services.

“I think today the opportunity presented itself where we could actually connect her with something,” she said. “And using our resources, all of our brains together and before you know it, she can find housing. I think it was a team effort.”

A San Bernardino County sheriff’s deputy with the Homeless Outreach Proactive Enforcement Team worked with association staff to secure Young a motel room through Monday, while efforts to secure more permanent housing got underway.

Young gratefully accepted the help, and offered her thanks before filling out paperwork in the association lobby.

“We did not plan on waking up to this this morning,” she said.

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