

**You Count in Renfrew-
Collingwood:
A Neighbourhood Response
to Homelessness**

Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Steering Committee

March 2010

You Count in Renfrew Collingwood: A Neighbourhood Response to Homelessness

Executive Summary

Renfrew-Collingwood's inaugural homeless count, called You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood, was initiated by the Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Steering Committee. Committee members knew that local service providers were experiencing cuts in funding and were reviewing the services they were offering. Establishing a clear idea of the number and needs of homeless in Renfrew-Collingwood would assist service providers in determining what current services are helpful, where there is overlap, which services, if any, are unnecessary, and whether additional services would be helpful.

The committee's decision to hold a homeless count was its most recent step in examining the issue of homelessness in Renfrew-Collingwood and working to alleviate the problem. Homelessness is not occurring in isolation in Renfrew-Collingwood and the community's efforts mesh well with the City's and the region's research, efforts and goals.

The count's goals were to:

- Create a model for a neighbourhood-based homeless count.
- Establish the number and, where possible, needs of street-based homeless in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- Start to establish a process and the related relationships necessary to get a better idea of the number of tentatively housed or "couch surfers" in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- Involve a substantial number of residents in the count, in order to offer public education to volunteers on engaging appropriately with homeless individuals and understanding the causes of homelessness. It would also provide them with the opportunity to get involved in the search for solutions.
- Identify potential housing stock in Renfrew-Collingwood by examining rental units available on October 14.

The point-in-time homeless count, held from 6-8 am on October 14 (during Homeless Action Week), identified eight street-based homeless individuals, ranging in age from 21 to 60, who reported having been homeless for anywhere from several months to 15 years. The homeless individuals who agreed to be interviewed pointed to drugs, addiction, high rent costs, prejudice against people on welfare, the lack of welfare, money or employment, their preferred way of life or their lack of past success at living in rental accommodation as being related to their homelessness. The count also identified 57 couch surfers ranging in age from two months to 60 years old. It must be

stressed that these are almost certainly undercounts of the actual numbers of both street-based and couch-surfing homeless.

The count included 140 volunteers. Evaluations showed that they largely had a very positive experience. Many praised City of Vancouver Outreach Coordinator Judy Graves' training. Volunteers expressed strong disappointment if they did not encounter a homeless person during the count. Many also reaffirmed their desire to help make a difference and alleviate the struggles of the homeless.

The committee secured funding for the count from an anonymous donor, the Kingsway and Joyce VanCity, the Renfrew Park Community Association, the City of Vancouver and Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

The following recommendations for action are clustered into eight areas: Future Counts, Community Mobilization and Education, Housing Access, Lobbying, Healthcare, Further Outreach, Communications and Resource Materials and the creation of a Homeless Count Manual. The committee will examine the recommendations and determine future action.

1. Future Counts:

- a. Concentrate the count in areas of Renfrew-Collingwood where homeless individuals tend to rest (as identified by local schools, outreach workers, businesses, Collingwood Community Policing Centre, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and past counts). Covering heavily residential areas is probably not going to turn up any additional homeless individuals.
- b. Hold the count throughout an 18-hour period, from 6 am to 12 midnight.
- c. Ensure one person in each count team has a car if they are assigned to a route more than a few blocks from CNH.
- d. Provide written training materials to back up count training sessions.
- e. Offer counters the opportunity to engage in role-playing, to back up the skills they learn about through pre-count training.
- f. Prior to the next count, consult with community agencies (such as schools, government ministries and health centres), groups and organizations (such as housing co-ops) to form stronger relationships and try to determine additional ways to track "couch surfers".

2. Community Mobilization and Education:

- a. Work with Windermere Secondary to find a meaningful way for youth to participate in and create homeless initiatives in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- b. Always include one story in each edition of the *Renfrew-Collingwood News* around the issue of homelessness. These could include ideas on how to help with the neighbourhood's homelessness alleviation initiatives, opportunities for donations or facts to counter myths about homelessness.

- c. Offer volunteers the opportunity to form a group that would be on call to go out in pairs to offer blankets, socks, warm clothing, food and hot coffee (and, possibly, a drive to a shelter) to homeless individuals during particularly cold nights.
- d. Publicize the opportunity for volunteers to set up drives for blankets, socks and sleeping bags to give to the homeless. Knitting groups could consider making scarves, hats and mitts for the homeless.
- e. Continue to seek ways to build on the human and material resources to tackle homelessness within Renfrew-Collingwood.

3. Housing Access

- a. Consider proactive ways to reach out to landlords –such as by advertising on Craigslist-- to find housing for clients.
- b. Examine the possibility of setting up a HEAT shelter in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- c. Follow the Norquay Residential Plan, as well as the Boundary-Ormidale parcel development process to ensure that housing options for disadvantaged and homeless individuals are considered/included.
- d. Continue to pursue social housing agreements with local developers, to increase the affordable housing stock in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- e. Start a process examining the City’s 2008 Homeless Action Plans’ priorities, to consider what Renfrew-Collingwood could provide locally.

4. Lobbying:

- a. Five of the eight street-based homeless interviewed mentioned they had an addiction. As the demand for detox and treatment beds outstrips supply, and the government has announced recent cutbacks to addictions funding, lobby the province to increase funding for addictions detox and treatment.
- b. Only two of the eight street-based homeless interviewed were receiving welfare/IA. While outreach workers can work with those who do not receive welfare/IA, the rates are low and the system somewhat inaccessible. Lobby the provincial government to increase rates and accessibility.
- c. Lobby the provincial and, perhaps, municipal government to provide incentives to encourage landlords to rent to disadvantaged persons.
- d. Lobby the provincial government for increased integration and flexibility of support services for the homeless so that they have increased trust for those services.
- e. Lobby the federal government for a national housing plan. Monitor federal action around homelessness (such as MP Libby Davies’ private members bill on homelessness or meetings between the federal government and Vancouver’s mayor) for further lobbying opportunities.
- f. Lobby the provincial government to provide funding to renovate, open and operate each of the sites the City of Vancouver owns that have been earmarked for development for supported housing.

5. Healthcare:

- a. Continue to establish and nurture links between Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health, CNH and the Progressive Housing Society, so that the sharing of services across boundaries for common clientele can continue and grow.
- b. Expand Evergreen's one-hour, monthly Saturday morning program that provides healthcare to the homeless and participants of Collingwood Neighbourhood House's Morning Star Program so that it is offered weekly, every Saturday.

6. Further Outreach:

- a. Find ways to reach out to those who are tentatively housed, in order to interview them and get an idea of their needs.
- b. Consider ways to reach more homeless with information about how to access food, clothing, shelter and bus tickets.
- c. Consider piloting an employment training program, to reintegrate those who get off the street and into housing, into the job market.
- d. Continue to design new supports and services for the homeless that promote integration and flexibility.

7. Communications and Resource Materials:

- a. Share service and program information among the various service providers in Renfrew-Collingwood, so they are aware of what is available locally. This could be achieved through a well-maintained website.
- b. Create a resource sheet to inform service providers on procedures to follow, and contact information, in the event they encounter a homeless person in need of care.

8. Homeless Count Manual:

- a. Provide the City with a proposal for CNH to create a neighbourhood-based homeless count manual and a process to mentor other neighbourhoods in carrying out a similar count.

You Count in Renfrew Collingwood: A Neighbourhood Response to Homelessness

Introduction

Renfrew-Collingwood's inaugural homeless count, called You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood, sprang from the neighbourhood's residents' desire to do something locally to help improve the lives of some of its most disadvantaged neighbours – those who are homeless. Initiated by the Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Steering Committee, the count attracted 140 volunteers, was helped along by donations from local businesses and tapped into a collective desire to work to help end homelessness.

The Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Steering Committee was formed in 2004 and includes representatives from Collingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH), Renfrew Park Community Centre, Evergreen Community Health Centre, Collingwood Community Policing Centre, Coast Foundation outreach workers contracted by CNH to work in Renfrew-Collingwood, local faith groups and the area's MLA and MP. It meets regularly to discuss the growing issue of homelessness in the community and the corresponding lack of services and limited communications between the various services providers. It examines local services and considers gaps in meeting homeless individuals' needs locally. The committee also considers prevention, education, sensitivity and attitudes around homelessness.

The committee's decision to hold a homeless count was its most recent step in examining the issue of homelessness in Renfrew-Collingwood and determining ways to address it locally. (For more information about homeless services in Renfrew-Collingwood please see Appendix 1.)

Homelessness is not occurring in isolation in Renfrew-Collingwood and the community's efforts mesh well with the City's and the region's research, efforts and goals. In 2003 the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness updated its "Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver: 3 Ways to Home", which outlined the three over-arching components essential to preventing and alleviating homelessness in this region: housing, income and support.

The City of Vancouver's "Homeless Action Plan", written in 2005 and updated for Vancouver City Council in a July of 2008, also addresses the three components identified in "3 Ways to Home", referring to them as improved access to income, more supportive housing and expanded mental health and addiction services. The City of Vancouver also has a Downtown Eastside Housing Plan calling for more social housing in the neighbourhood to replace the SRO stock of low-income housing; it also calls for social housing to be developed throughout the city and the Metro Vancouver region. The City's Social Housing Strategy calls for 450 new units of supportive housing for the

mentally ill and addicted to be developed across the city over the next 10 years, to accommodate Vancouver Coastal Health's clients. Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson has stated his desire to end street homelessness in Vancouver by 2015.

It's worth noting that Canada has no national housing program with national targets and funding for affordable housing, supportive housing and temporary shelters.

Count Preparations

The Goals

The decision to hold You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood flowed from the committee's desire to get some idea of how many homeless live in Renfrew-Collingwood. Any kind of a count will inevitably result in low numbers; it's hard to find mobile, street-based homeless individuals and extremely challenging to count those who are couch surfing. But the committee wanted to have some idea of the numbers and their needs.

While the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness holds a homeless count every three years, results are not broken down by neighbourhoods. During the last count in 2008, 1,576 homeless individuals were identified in Vancouver, representing a 16-per-cent increase in homelessness during the previous three years and a 135-per-cent increase over the previous six years. So while the committee knew that, according to the trends identified in Vancouver and the lower mainland, homeless was growing, it had no evidence of homeless numbers in Renfrew-Collingwood.

The regional count also includes information gleaned from interviews with homeless individuals. During the regional count, volunteers ask homeless people they encounter if they would be willing to answer a short questionnaire. Many agree to do so and the resulting information provides a rich demographic and needs picture of the homeless individuals living on our streets.

Committee members had heard anecdotally that the numbers of homeless seemed to be growing locally. For example the Morning Star Program (a breakfast and shower program at CNH for homeless individuals), attracts about 70 people a week, many of whom report having connections --such as family, friends, former housing, schooling or work-- in Renfrew-Collingwood, even if they now live elsewhere. CNH had to cap the program at 70 participants and implement a process of offering a substantial bagged lunch to further individuals who showed up, because the numbers of homeless showing up was outstripping CNH's capacity.

Committee members knew that local service providers were experiencing cuts in funding and were reviewing the services they were offering. Establishing a clearer idea of the number and needs of homeless in Renfrew-Collingwood would assist service providers in determining what current services are helpful, where there is overlap,

which services, if any, are unnecessary, and whether there are additional services that would be helpful.

At its May 2009 meeting, committee members decided to carry out a point-in-time homeless count in Renfrew-Collingwood over two hours during one day. Along with street-based homeless, the committee also wanted to get some sense of the numbers of tentatively housed individuals (also referred to as “couch surfers”) in Renfrew-Collingwood but as the timeline was short between the count’s approval and the date it would be held, this was viewed as a secondary goal of the inaugural count.

The committee also felt that a count covering all of Renfrew-Collingwood would involve a substantial number of volunteers: it estimated about 100. Another goal for the count would be to educate some of Renfrew-Collingwood’s general population around homelessness prevention, supports and resource referral. It felt that by involving local residents and teaching them how to engage appropriately with homeless individuals, by educating volunteers on the causes of homelessness, and by publicizing the count through local media, the count would indeed provide opportunities to offer public education on the issue and involve local residents in the search for solutions.

Finally, the committee hoped that counters could also identify potential housing stock, by noting addresses where “For Rent” signs were posted outside houses or apartments.

Therefore the count’s goals were to:

- Create a model for a neighbourhood-based homeless count.
- Establish the number and, where possible, needs of street-based homeless in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- Start to establish a process and the related relationships necessary to get a better idea of the number of tentatively housed or “couch surfers” in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- Involve a substantial number of residents in the count, in order to offer public education to volunteers on engaging appropriately with homeless individuals and understanding the causes of homelessness. It would also provide them with the opportunity to get involved in the search for solutions.
- Identify potential housing stock in Renfrew-Collingwood by examining rental units available on Oct. 14.

The committee secured funding for the count from an anonymous donor, the Kingsway and Joyce VanCity, the Renfrew Park Community Association, the City of Vancouver and Collingwood Neighbourhood House. The committee drew up terms of reference for the count and then determined that it would contract with a project coordinator to organize and run the count.

Count Set-Up

In early September 2009, the committee contracted Renfrew-Collingwood resident Jennifer Gray-Grant to coordinate the count. The committee decided to run the count from 6-8 am on Wednesday, October 14 during Homeless Action Week.

The committee and contractor determined that the count would cover all of Renfrew-Collingwood as bordered by East Broadway, Boundary Road, E. 45th Ave and Nanaimo Street. The area would be divided into 50 smaller areas; each would be covered by a pair of volunteers, referred to as “counters”, who would walk down every side of every street and lane, and carefully search every park, ravine, schoolyard, church property, railway tracks and industrial or commercial area looking for homeless individuals.

Committee members and board members at participating organizations were offered the opportunity to help with the count and were also urged to forward the application form and either a paragraph or one-page backgrounder (provided by the contractor) describing the count to all of their contacts. Renfrew-Collingwood churches, Windermere Secondary School, local service organizations, area businesses and federal, provincial and municipal politicians were also invited to help spread word of the count. The opportunity was also posted on the stophomelessness.ca website and SPARC forwarded the information to those living in Vancouver who had helped with the 2008 regional homeless count. The information was also posted on CNH’s website.

Volunteers were asked to attend a training session with the City of Vancouver’s Outreach Coordinator in the Housing Department, Judy Graves, who has worked in the area of homelessness for decades and has offered training to participants in Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness counts.

The coordinator contacted local outreach workers, the Collingwood Community Policing Centre, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, area schools, the local BIA, and Judy Graves, to pinpoint areas where, typically, homeless individuals are living or have been seen in Renfrew-Collingwood. The contractor and a sub-contractor, Rosanne So, met with Judy Graves and Jonathan Mark, GIS Manager, Information Technology Department, City of Vancouver, so that Graves and Mark could explain how they created the multi-dimensional maps for the regional homelessness count. Using the VanMap system, the sub-contractor created 50 area maps, covering each section of Renfrew-Collingwood. Where appropriate, she highlighted areas on each of the 50 maps where counters should pay particular attention, because homeless individuals had been seen in those areas in the past.

The coordinator created a media release, which was sent to media a few days before the count. (See Appendix 2.) The coordinator also contacted a number of businesses and organization, to solicit donation and help for the count.

Volunteers were told to arrive on the day of the count, at 5:30 am at CNH. After they checked in they would receive a number of items, in a large, ziplock plastic bag:

- A clipboard with 10 copies of the questionnaire counters would use to interview homeless individuals (See Appendix 3.) and a pen.
- The map for their route.
- 15 copies of a laminated card to hand out. This card included the names and phone numbers of four local organizations offering services to homeless individuals in Renfrew-Collingwood listed in English on one side and Chinese on the other. (See Appendix 4)
- Five copies of a backgrounder on the count, to give to anybody they encounter during the count who expressed an interest in knowing more about the event (See Appendix 5)
- One final information sheet for counters to review before they left the neighbourhood house to tackle their route. (See Appendix 6)
- Two copies (one for each counter) of a safety sheet, created by the City of Vancouver's Outreach Coordinator in the Housing Department, Judy Graves. (See Appendix 7)
- Two large identification buttons saying, "You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood" to identify counters are part of the count.
- Two sheets for listing any rental accommodation counters found in their area.
- Eight cigarettes (and a pack of matches to offer a light), and two sandwiches to offer to homeless individuals.

Prior to count day, the coordinator and two committee members also contacted a number of organizations that could help track couch surfers including: the Ministry for Children and Family Development, Evergreen Community Health Centre, Northeast Mental Health, the local Infant, Child and Youth Nurse Educator, the three local secondary schools (Windermere, Vancouver Technical and Killarney), BC Housing, area housing co-ops, Together We Can, the Vancouver Recovery Club, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, and the Kettle Friendship Society.

Finally, the contractor and sub-contractor assigned two counters to each route. Experienced counters and outreach workers were paired with first-time homelessness volunteers, for high-priority routes likely "housing" homeless individuals. The contractor and sub-contractor also prioritized the routes and arranged for some "floater" counters to show up, in case some counters did not show up on the morning of the count. These floaters would check in volunteers and then be available to fill in as counters, if needed.

Outcomes

Count Day

It was a dark, rainy, windy and miserable morning during the count. But, as many counters noted, wandering in the dark and dealing with the rain and wind served as a stark reminder of the kind of conditions the homeless regularly face.

Staff opened Collingwood Neighbourhood House at 5 am to start setting up, as volunteers were directed to arrive around 5:30. When counters checked in they received their route bag, a small baggie with cigarettes and matches, and two sandwiches. The organizers also went carefully over each counter's route map, to ensure they understand their route's boundaries. If their partner had already checked in, they were told the name of their partner and went off to find them in the multipurpose room.

A staff person, working with three students, set up the multipurpose room with tables and chairs and set out a light breakfast of muffins, fruit, juice, coffee and tea for volunteers. When the check-in line-ups grew long, counters were invited to grab a cup of coffee or a muffin first, and then come back a few minutes later to check in. The multipurpose room became quite a hub with counters chatting over their maps to plan how they would walk through their route and volunteers meeting one another and introducing their friends.

A student had created several posters: one outlined volunteers' jobs, another thanked donors and a third featured articles about homelessness. These were posted in CNH's lobby so volunteers could read them. The *Vancouver Courier* ran a front-page story that day, on the count.

A number of local politicians participated in the count: Vancouver Kingsway MP Don Davies, Vancouver-Kingsway MLA Adrian Dix, City Councillors Kerry Jang and Ellen Woodsworth, School Trustee Allan Wong and Parks Commissioner Sarah Blyth. Mayor Gregor Robertson arrived after 8 am to thank count participants for their efforts. On the day of the count, many volunteers expressed their surprise and delight at the number of politicians who also got up early and braved the elements to help with the count.

Most counters showed up, as promised; some called in the day before to report that they were sick and would not be able to help with the count. A few simply did not show up. The contractor and Judy Graves (who was at the neighbourhood house during the count, to offer advice to counters and organizers, and to observe the count), sat down with the group of volunteers whose partners had not shown up, prioritized the remaining routes, created new partnerships and sent out the counters. One pair of volunteers who returned fairly quickly offered to do a second route; three of the check-

in volunteers also offered to cover routes. That left only two residential routes, far away from main streets, uncovered.

All counters had returned to the neighbourhood house by about 8 am, as directed, to check back in and drop off their materials. They were invited to grab a cup of coffee and more food. Many counters stayed for a while, chatting about their experiences and comparing notes with other counters. Mayor Gregor Robertson arrived at about 8:15 am and chatted with the remaining counters. He expressed strong appreciation for the neighbourhood's efforts and was deeply interested in seeing similar counts in other parts of the city. In an interview with City-TV, he mentioned that Renfrew-Collingwood has always been a leader in community development work and with this count was once again providing leadership and a great example in a challenging issue.

Street-Based Homeless

Counters identified eight people (two females, six males) who self-identified as homeless. They also encountered one more person whom they strongly suspected was homeless (as he was carrying a sleeping bag and a substantial amount of cardboard) but he denied being homeless.

Of the eight people interviewed, two did not answer any questions beyond giving their age and verifying that they were homeless. Those encountered on the street ranged in age from 21 to 60. They reported having been homeless for between several months to 15 years. Four identified Renfrew-Collingwood or Collingwood as the neighbourhood they call home, one Kingsway, another Ontario. One also mentioned thinking of Vancouver, Regina and Burnaby as home.

In explaining why they are homeless, interviewees pointed to drugs, addiction, high rent costs, prejudice against people on welfare, the lack of welfare, money or employment, their preferred way of life or their lack of past success at living in rental accommodation.

None of the homeless people interviewed had stayed in a shelter the previous night. They explained their choice by saying that the shelter they visited was full or they couldn't get to one. Three people mentioned they dislike shelters saying people lose their belongings in them, they find them overwhelming or unsafe, or just don't like to associate with people. One person mentioned he just preferred to be on his own. Most have not stayed at a shelter in the past year; one mentioned staying at the Lookout shelter this year.

When counters probed for more information about respondents' desire or attempts to find housing they heard that four people wanted to find housing, one did not and one wasn't sure. They said identification assistance, money, application assistance and a doctor's note would help them find housing. Five said they are not on a housing wait list, one said he was. This last finding is particularly troubling as wait lists, in most cases,

are already years long and so if those who are most vulnerable are not even on the lists, the problem is even worse than the lists imply.

When asked what support they need, five responded “food”, three each said “clothing” and “shelter”, two said “bus tickets”, and one each responded “healthcare”, “showers”, “access to phones”, “reading material”, and “information and referrals”. One mentioned money.

When asked how people could make them feel more welcome in this community, people responded, “People look down on me, people gloat; don’t judge me”, and “I don’t know”.

Four of the respondents were alone, two were with a friend, one was with a pet and one said he was with a “street friend”. One respondent identified as Aboriginal and one person identified himself as German and Norwegian.

When asked, five of the homeless individuals said they get their money from panhandling and two said they received welfare or income assistance. Counters observed two were obviously sex workers.

Finally, five respondents cited addiction as a health problem, two cited medical conditions (in one case this was a respiratory problem as observed by the counters), one had a physical disability and one identified his mental illness. Counters observed that one man had a broken leg.

Tentatively Housed

The number of people who are tentatively housed in Renfrew-Collingwood is an important one to establish because those who are tentatively housed or couch-surfing are at great risk of falling into street-based homelessness. Unfortunately, however, it is extremely difficult to track couch surfers.

As noted above, the contractor contacted a number of agencies and organizations in an effort to get some idea of the number of those who are tentatively housed in Renfrew-Collingwood. As well, one volunteer spent time prior to the count meeting with the three local secondary school’s principals, so that they could brief their schools’ counselors on our desire to capture demographic information about any homeless students. (A retired principal on the North Shore helped with the last regional count and was able to establish that there were 37 couch-surfing students on the North Shore.) All three schools reported that there were no homeless/couch surfing students but counselors did comment that October is early in the year to know students’ housing situations that well.

There were a total of 57 people identified.

- Seven women
- 35 men (four are Aboriginal)
- 15 children and youth aged two months to 18 years (one is Aboriginal)

Where their ages were identified, the men and women ranged from 23-60. Some were staying in shelters, others were living temporarily with friends and some were going through treatment and recovery and knew they had nowhere to go after they completed the program.

During the week of the count, Morning Star Program volunteers also asked that week's 75 participants where they spent the previous night. Morning Star participants come from all over the city, and beyond (although many have links to Renfrew-Collingwood) so their numbers are not included in our couch-surfing numbers.

- Emergency shelter - 21 (3 women and 18 men)
- Single room occupancy - 16 (1 woman and 15 men)
- Own secure rental unit - 21 (3 women and 18 men)
- Temporary with friends or family - 2 (1 woman and 1 man)
- Recovery house or treatment housing: 1 (woman)
- Alternate housing like living in a vehicle or shelter that's not intended to be housing - 6 (1 woman and 5 men)
- Not sheltered - 8 (1 woman and 7 men)

Volunteers' Experience

The count attracted a very diverse group (from secondary students to seniors, across a broad range of ethnic groups) of over 140 people who were interested in volunteering. Unfortunately, many of the volunteers were secondary students who, it was discovered, could not participate in the street count because of safety concerns (and insurance coverage). Sixteen students took on support roles such as making sandwiches, assembling count packages and taking photographs during the count, for example, but many felt disappointed that they could not participate as counters and decided not to participate beyond receiving the training.

After the count, the 104 volunteers who participated on count day were offered the opportunity to fill out an evaluation form. Thirty-two evaluations were returned, for a return rate of about 31 percent. (See Appendix 8 for all responses.)

Several overall themes emerged from evaluators' responses and comments. First, evaluators were honoured, touched and inspired by Judy Graves' teaching. Warm praise for Judy's approach flowed through evaluators' responses to many questions. As one counter wrote on the evaluation, "It was WONDERFUL to hear from someone like Judy Graves and to glean from her experience of helping the homeless. So thankful for this opportunity!" Another wrote, "I was so touched at what a good soul (Judy) has. It really

showed in the way she presented information and spoke. I learned a lot from the presentation, and I know that I'll never look at homeless people as a threat again."

Flowing from this theme was a profound gratitude for the training participants received about homelessness. "The training was very informative and useful - this was the highlight of my involvement given that my party did not find any homeless person in the assigned area." Another wrote, "We have learned many appropriate ways to initiate communications with homeless, which are new to me, and very informative." Some evaluators expressed the excitement of how the training shattered their preconceived notions of the homeless. "I realized that I have been highly prejudicial towards those on the street, especially living in the DTES as I do. I am trying not to prejudge those who find themselves without a home, to the extent I have been."

The second pervasive theme was that many counters felt let down if they did not encounter a homeless person on their route. For many volunteers, participating in the count moved them far outside of their comfort zone and they really wanted to test their ability to talk to somebody who is homeless. "Because we didn't locate a homeless individual, it seemed like our efforts were wasted." Some remarked or hinted at how they initially felt disappointed and then realized it was actually a positive outcome if they did not encounter a homeless individual. "Even though I didn't find or speak to any homeless I came away more aware and have continued to speak about this experience to anyone who will listen. Spreading the gospel of Judy Graves."

A third strong theme was the desire to do more to help tackle the issue of homeless. "I think many of us would like to do more than just go out once a year. Could we be doing more advocacy or hands-on work to help with this huge issue?"

Another theme was that counters expressed strong admiration for a neighbourhood that would take on this issue, locally. "I continue to be in awe of the heart in this neighbourhood and the number of people wanting to help and support." Wrote another, "It was a sad reminder that the problems of homelessness are pervasive throughout the city – but at the same time encouraging to see a particular neighbourhood taking it upon themselves to bring awareness to and address the issues." As about half of the adult volunteers were from other neighbourhoods, it wasn't surprising that a number mentioned that they would like to participate in a similar count and process leading to some homelessness initiatives in their own Vancouver neighbourhoods.

Volunteers also mentioned how much they enjoyed meeting and working with other volunteers on this issue. "My partner and I got to know each other. I learned so much from her and about the neighbourhood we were assigned. We looked at the community, the houses, the yards, the stillness of the morning, in a whole new way. It gave me insight into how anonymous in many ways our society has become and how easy it is for people to slip from view." And finally, "It was SO GREAT! I enjoyed getting

to know my neighbours, and working together to help those less fortunate in our neighbourhood. The conversations after the count (over coffee and muffins) were also freaking awesome!”

Rentals

Three Windermere Secondary students combed through all of the Vancouver rental advertisements on Craigslist and the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Province* newspapers on October 14, making a note of the rentals in Renfrew-Collingwood. They found 49 on Craigslist, six in the *Province* and none in the *Vancouver Sun*.

Of the ads for one-bedroom apartments, the monthly rental costs ranged from a low of \$600 to a high of \$1,250 (on average \$900); for two-bedroom apartments there was a low of \$895 and a high of \$1,450 (on average \$1,100); for three-bedroom apartments there was a low of \$1,100 and a high of \$1,700 (on average \$1,400). Four houses were advertised ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,300 per month (on average \$1,625).

During the count, counters made a note of only three apartments that were advertised in front of the units. All three were in the Collingwood Village development.

Collingwood Village is the largest housing development in Renfrew-Collingwood. It includes a family housing co-op and many apartments in a variety of buildings. Here are the rental rates for market apartments:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------|
| • Junior | 368-457 sq. ft. | \$750 |
| • Studio/ Bachelor | 368-450 sq. ft. | \$735 |
| • 1 Bedroom | 430-600 sq. ft. | \$910 |
| • 1 Bedroom + Den | 665-700 sq. ft. | \$1155 |
| • 2 Bedroom | 700-890 sq. ft. | \$1200 |

Coast Mental Health maintains housing in Renfrew-Collingwood in the following houses:

- Champlain House – residential 6-18 units
- Tamarack House– residential 6-18 units
- Banyan House– residential 6-18 units
- Tilikum House– residential 6-18 units

Partners in Hope provides affordable housing listings (http://www.partnersinhope.ca/reports/housing_lowcost.php) for mainly shared accommodation. Few of the listings were for the Renfrew-Collingwood area. BC Housing provides access to a few units in and around Renfrew-Collingwood, accessible to Collingwood Neighbourhood House’s contracted outreach workers’ clients.

One outreach worker contacted prior to the count mentioned her success with using Craigslist to obtain housing for clients. She uses the free service to advertise that she's looking for housing for specific clients (eg a single mother with two children). She said she's found housing this way for a number of clients and has even had landlords drop the rental price and cover utilities when they see some clients' situations. She's placed people in housing in Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver and North Van. She works closely with the landlords, to show them that the individual, couple or family will have close support from her while they're renting the property.

Business and Community Participation

The Collingwood BIA forwarded a background description on the count, a wish list of needed donations, and an application form for volunteers to area businesses attending its AGM. Windermere Secondary Principal Rob Schindel offered to have the school's Culinary Arts Program provide a light breakfast for counters at no cost to the count.

The Social Planning and Research Council (SPARC) lent us pens to use at the count. The Grandview Highway Staples store donated 40 clipboards for the count. Collingwood Neighbourhood School also donated clipboards for the count, as well as over 50 extra-large ziplock bags. The Kingsway and Tyne Safeway store donated a \$30 gift certificate. The Kingsway and Boundary Starbucks donated many pounds of coffee; this coffee was used at the count, for volunteers, with the remainder going to the Morning Star Program. The Food Runners Program of the Food Bank donated many loaves of bread, for the sandwiches the volunteers took out with them, to offer to homeless individuals. Finally, Babylon Buttons sent in a donation of \$125 to help with count costs.

Further discussion

You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood met all of the committee's initial goals:

- It created a model for a neighbourhood-based homeless count.
- The count established the number and, where homeless individuals answered the questionnaire, some of the needs of street-based homeless in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- By working with local organization and agencies, the committee started to establish a process and the related relationships necessary to get a better idea of the number of tentatively housed or "couch surfers" in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- The count involved a substantial number of residents and provided them with -- as evidenced by the comments in their evaluations-- deeply meaningful education around engaging appropriately with homeless individuals and understanding the causes of homelessness. The count and the follow-up work are providing volunteers with opportunities to get involved in the search for solutions.

- The count identified rental housing stock in Renfrew-Collingwood that was available on Oct. 14.

As this was the first neighbourhood count, there were some learning opportunities. The count was carried out for a two-hour time period because, for this initial count, we thought it would be best to have everybody counting at the same time. This is efficient, creates a strong sense of camaraderie and, according to the outreach workers, the 6-8 am timeframe catches homeless people where they are sleeping. The count certainly was efficient and it obviously created a strong sense of camaraderie but following the count several volunteers who also live and work in Renfrew-Collingwood noted that it did not capture many of the individuals who panhandle along Kingsway, for example, because they would not be around before mid-morning.

As well, sending people to strictly residential areas meant that they were very unlikely to encounter any homeless people. On their evaluations, counters expressed a high level of disappointment when they did not encounter any homeless individuals. Year to year, it's unlikely that we will continue to attract such a high number of volunteers if they know they will likely not encounter any homeless people. And, in fact, we know that it's unlikely homeless individuals would sleep in residential areas away from main streets.

Therefore it may make sense to concentrate our efforts on areas where homeless people have been seen in the past. It may be less efficient but more accurate to hold the count over an 18-hour period, from 6 am to midnight. Outreach workers have said that the best time to encounter homeless individuals is when they're sleeping, from 6-8 am or 10-12 midnight. Considering that a number of homeless individuals (panhandlers, sex workers) work along Kingsway during the daytime, it may make sense to have people covering several shifts throughout the day, concentrating heavily on Kingsway but repeatedly covering the areas where they're most likely to encounter homeless individuals. Experience from the regional count has shown that homeless individuals self-identify if they have already been interviewed or counted by a count volunteer, so it's unlikely that this system would result in double-counting of individuals.

One of the main reasons for homeless in Renfrew-Collingwood is the lack of affordable housing or even shelters. A count gives us an idea of the extent of the problem, of the number of people homeless and on the street or homeless and relying on the forbearance of friends and family. It also gives us some idea of the services homeless individuals require. These are important measures. But in order to reduce homelessness the neighbourhood needs to consider a broad range of efforts, including lobbying for housing. The City of Vancouver's 2008 Homeless Action Plan presents its 13 priorities, listed according to the continuum of housing and support.

1. Emergency shelters, transition houses and safe houses
2. Transitional housing

3. Supportive housing
4. Independent affordable housing
5. Employment assistance services and training programs
6. Legislative reform to provide adequate levels of income
7. Prevention services
8. Outreach services
9. Drop-in centres
10. Health services
11. Mental health services
12. Addiction treatment and services
13. Research, planning and capacity building

Members of the Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Steering Committee considered each of these areas and created a matrix showing which services should be prioritized and what is and is not available in Renfrew-Collingwood and included their further comments. (See Appendix 9 to view the matrix.)

In Renfrew-Collingwood we have no emergency shelters, transition houses, safe houses, SROs, or the low-barrier housing needed for clients dealing with addiction issues. It may be time for the committee and the community to start examining this list and considering what could be offered locally to the homeless living in our midst.

Over the years, groups have protested against the building of housing co-ops in the community. In particular, there was a huge outcry against the location of Synala Housing Co-op, which houses mainly Aboriginals. Over time, this fear has evaporated as co-ops have blended well into the neighbourhood and have not caused undue problems. In fact, some of them provide housing for those with mental illness, incorporating them seamlessly into the neighbourhood. Further, there are about eight group houses sprinkled throughout the neighbourhood, without any serious issues. It's likely that a shelter and other staged/supported housing would blend similarly well into Renfrew-Collingwood.

An internal CNH report said local service providers feel that there are insufficient links between service providers, making it difficult for the various agencies to be aware of exactly what services exist in Renfrew-Collingwood. There should be some way to link service providers with one another, or at least inform them of each others' services and programs.

Numerous service providers noted that there is a need for more sharing of information among service providers. For example, several staff at Evergreen said they felt that a resource sheet, outlining procedures to follow if somebody encounters a homeless person in need of care, would be very helpful. They felt that the sheet should also include contact information to those who could provide support.

Recommendations

1. Future Counts:

- b. Concentrate the count in areas of Renfrew-Collingwood where homeless individuals tend to rest (as identified by local schools, outreach workers, businesses, Collingwood Community Policing Centre, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and past counts). Covering heavily residential areas is probably not going to turn up any additional homeless individuals.
- c. Hold the count throughout an 18-hour period, from 6 am to 12 midnight.
- d. Ensure one person in each count team has a car if they are assigned to a route more than a few blocks from CNH.
- e. Provide written training materials to back up count training sessions.
- f. Offer counters the opportunity to engage in role-playing, to back up the skills they learn about through pre-count training.
- g. Prior to the next count, consult with community agencies (such as schools, government ministries and health centres), groups and organizations (such as housing co-ops) to form stronger relationships and try to determine additional ways to track “couch surfers”.

2. Community Mobilization and Education:

- a. Work with Windermere Secondary to find a meaningful way for youth to participate in and create homeless initiatives in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- b. Always include one story in each edition of the *Renfrew-Collingwood News* around the issue of homelessness. These could include ideas on how to help with the neighbourhood’s homelessness alleviation initiatives, opportunities for donations or facts to counter myths about homelessness.
- c. Offer volunteers the opportunity to form a group that would be on call to go out in pairs to offer blankets, socks, warm clothing, food and hot coffee (and, possibly, a drive to a shelter) to homeless individuals during particularly cold nights.
- d. Publicize the opportunity for volunteers to set up drives for blankets, socks and sleeping bags to give to the homeless. Knitting groups could consider making scarves, hats and mitts for the homeless.
- e. Continue to seek ways to build on the human and material resources to tackle homelessness within Renfrew-Collingwood.

3. Housing Access

- a. Consider proactive ways to reach out to landlords –such as by advertising on Craigslist-- to find housing for clients.
- b. Examine the possibility of setting up a HEAT shelter in Renfrew-Collingwood.

- c. Follow the Norquay Residential Plan, as well as the Boundary-Ormidale parcel development process to ensure that housing options for disadvantaged and homeless individuals are considered/included.
- d. Continue to pursue social housing agreements with local developers, to increase the affordable housing stock in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- e. Start a process examining the City's 2008 Homeless Action Plans' priorities, to consider what Renfrew-Collingwood could provide locally.

4. Lobbying:

- a. Five of the eight street-based homeless interviewed mentioned they had an addiction. As the demand for detox and treatment beds outstrips supply, and the government has announced recent cutbacks to addictions funding, lobby the province to increase funding for addictions detox and treatment.
- b. Only two of the eight street-based homeless interviewed were receiving welfare/IA. While outreach workers can work with those who do not receive welfare/IA, the rates are low and the system somewhat inaccessible. Lobby the provincial government to increase rates and accessibility.
- c. Lobby the provincial and, perhaps, municipal government to provide incentives to encourage landlords to rent to disadvantaged persons.
- d. Lobby the provincial government for increased integration and flexibility of support services for the homeless so that they have increased trust for those services.
- e. Lobby the federal government for a national housing plan. Monitor federal action around homelessness (such as MP Libby Davies' private members bill on homelessness or meetings between the federal government and Vancouver's mayor) for further lobbying opportunities.
- f. Lobby the provincial government to provide funding to renovate, open and operate each of the sites the City of Vancouver owns that have been earmarked for development for supported housing.

5. Healthcare:

- a. Continue to establish and nurture links between Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health, CNH and the Progressive Housing Society, so that the sharing of services across boundaries for common clientele can continue and grow.
- b. Expand Evergreen's one-hour, monthly Saturday morning program that provides healthcare to the homeless and participants of Collingwood Neighbourhood House's Morning Star Program so that it is offered weekly, every Saturday.

6. Further Outreach:

- a. Find ways to reach out to those who are tentatively housed, in order to interview them and get an idea of their needs.
- b. Consider ways to reach more homeless with information about how to access food, clothing, shelter and bus tickets.

- c. Consider piloting an employment training program, to reintegrate those who get off the street and into housing, into the job market.
- d. Continue to design new supports and services for the homeless that promote integration and flexibility.

7. Communications and Resource Materials:

- a. Share service and program information among the various service providers in Renfrew-Collingwood, so they are aware of what is available locally. This could be achieved through a well-maintained website.
- b. Create a resource sheet to inform service providers on procedures to follow, and contact information, in the event they encounter a homeless person in need of care.

8. Homeless Count Manual:

- a. Provide the City with a proposal for CNH to create a neighbourhood-based homeless count manual and a process to mentor other neighbourhoods in carrying out a similar count.

Appendices

Appendix 1

There are a number of services in Renfrew-Collingwood that reach out to the homeless. Some services are so successful that the programs have to be capped; at the other extreme, there are gaps.

Outreach, Food and Drop-In

One successful initiative is the Morning Star Program which offers participants the opportunity to take a shower (about one-quarter decide to have a shower), pick up some clean, used clothing (dry socks are most popular) and eat a substantial, nutritious breakfast. Once a month, Evergreen Community Health Centre provides nurse-practitioner and mental health support for program participants. Homeless individuals can receive wound care, footbaths or help for episodic illnesses. They're also able to engage with the nurse-practitioner as their primary healthcare provider. (It would be helpful to expand this support so that it's offered at every Saturday.) Outreach workers are also on hand to chat with participants to help them with acquiring identification, accessing supports or searching for housing.

CNH started the program in 2003 as a Wednesday and Saturday breakfast program for Renfrew-Collingwood community members. After noting the number of homeless individuals attending the program, in 2004 the neighbourhood house developed a mission statement for the program and hired a Homeless Program Coordinator. In 2005 it renamed the program the "Breakfast and Shower Program for Homeless," adding the offer of showers and clothing. Evergreen Community Health Centre started providing a nurse-practitioner to be present once a month at the program. In 2006, continued complaints from parents of children in CNH's childcare program eventually resulted in the cancellation of the Wednesday program but the Saturday program continued. While funding continues to be a challenge, the Saturday Morning Star Program, is popular and regularly serves about 70 participants. It regularly attracts more than 70 participants but organizers had to cap the program at 70 individuals; they offer others who show up a substantial bagged lunch.

Staff make contact with Morning Star participants and offer them the opportunity to work with staff on finding housing. Staff work with such clients throughout the week.

Under a contract with Coast Mental Health, CNH offers two days of outreach into the Renfrew-Collingwood community, with workers combing through the neighbourhood or following up on referrals to work with homeless individuals.

Pacific Community Resources (PCR) provides youth and family services in Vancouver and Surrey including: alternate schools, family counseling, and drug-and-alcohol counseling.

They also run youth centers (one on Broadway in Vancouver and two in Surrey), and offer outreach and employment programs. PCR offers Skytrain outreach, seeking to connect with youth found on or around Skytrain and its stations.

Last year, the Renfrew-Collingwood Homelessness Steering Committee worked with Dr Jim Frankish of UBC's Centre for Population Health Promotion and Research, as well as Vancouver Coastal Health's Population Health Team, to create a report on the Morning Star Program and the broader issues around homelessness and community inclusiveness. Copies of this report are available from CNH's website at www.cnh.bc.ca/homelesscount.htm.

Health Care

Often, a homeless person's first point of contact with the social services system is through the healthcare system. In the vast majority of cases, people who are homeless are coping with some form of a mental illness. They also tend to have other medical concerns, such as foot problems, colds, pneumonia, or skin wounds. They often have addictions issues or concurrent disorders with both mental health and addictions issues.

In Renfrew-Collingwood, Vancouver Coastal Health's (VCH) Evergreen Community Health Centre, an urban primary care clinic, focuses on Vancouver residents with complex health care needs and/or physical, social or economic barriers, which may make it difficult for them to access primary health care services elsewhere. The centre collaborates and integrates with VCH mental health services, addiction services, public health programs, other community agencies and acute care providers. It places a priority on complex, vulnerable, and/or marginalized persons who are not well served by the fee-for-service system including those living with: multiple chronic conditions, mental health problems, addictions, physical disabilities, social isolation, poverty, and homelessness. All clients of Evergreen Primary Care have access to all members of the Primary Care Interdisciplinary Team.

Evergreen's services for the homeless include:

- Primary Care Drop-In from 9-11 am Monday to Thursday (homeless clients are given priority on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings).
- Primary Care Drop-In on the third Saturday of each month for Morning Star participants from 8:30-10 am. Wound and foot care are available at this time.

Evergreen's mandate is to serve people in the northeast health region which includes Hastings-Sunrise, Renfrew-Collingwood and Cedar Cottage. Evergreen notes the limitations to providing care to homeless persons are related to the nomadic nature of the client's lifestyle; for example, clients often cite "Metrotown" as their home base but this area, however, falls outside of Evergreen's service boundaries.

Evergreen's primary care staff who serve homeless people have reported their clients are presenting increasingly complex conditions; for example, many homeless persons suffer concurrent disorders, generally a situation involving psychiatric illness in combination with substance use addiction. Treating these patients effectively requires the support of other teams within VCH as well as the support of the community.

VCH's Northeast Mental Health Team provides multidisciplinary service to individuals who suffer from a serious and persistent mental illness and whose functional impairment requires a broad range of coordinated services provided by an interdisciplinary team. Diagnostically, clients primarily fall into one of two categories:

- 1) Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, and
- 2) Mood disorders, i.e. bipolar and major depressive disorders

The team also provides services to individuals with co-occurring disorders such as personality disorders, substance abuse/issues, mental challenges etc. Some of the characteristics that describe individuals from these populations include:

- history of multiple psychiatric hospitalizations
- unstable housing and/or relationships
- difficulties with activities of daily living
- high risk for co-occurring medical conditions
- refractory treatment history
- high risk of causing harm to self or others

There are also two addictions teams located in the Evergreen and Vancouver South areas. Each site has core services that include the provision of counseling for youth, adults and seniors, prevention workers and needle exchanges. Both also have a doctor on staff providing medical services and methadone management of addictions. Homeless persons seen in these clinics are either self-referred or brought in by outreach workers. VCH operates from a client-centered philosophy meaning that the client's goals for treatment dictate, within reason, their treatment goals. With addictions this can mean treatment goals may be focused on either harm reduction or abstinence.

The nomadic nature of the homeless affects some agencies' ability to provide services. Evergreen's mandate, for example, is to serve people within a specific catchment area, including Renfrew-Collingwood and several other neighbourhoods. VCH's mandate is to serve residents of Vancouver. Evergreen's area abuts Central Park, where numerous homeless sleep. Central Park, however, is located in Burnaby, which is the Fraser Health Authority's (FHA) area. Burnaby's Progressive Housing Society (PHS) also works with the homeless in Central Park and Burnaby. Therefore CNH and PHS need to keep in touch about programs and services, because they may be serving some of the same clientele. There have already been some connections established between CNH and PHS and these should be further nurtured so that sharing of services, where possible, can be encouraged.

The nurse outreach program at the BC Centre for Disease Control was designed in response to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic to provide clients with education about sexually transmitted infections (STI) and HIV/AIDS. Nurses work at various times, seeking to reach street-involved, marginalized and hard-to-reach populations who are active in sex and drug cultures and are not accessing traditional health care services.

In Renfrew-Collingwood the nurses meet more sex workers, needle users and couch surfers than street-living homeless people. When they do encounter homeless people, they provide them with STI and HIV/AIDS information and refer those in need of assistance to the downtown agencies, nurses and organizations like Triage, that deal specifically with homeless people and have the resources and knowledge to assist them. In the course of their work they also become aware of the work that other agencies do and will hand out their cards to homeless persons when appropriate.

Dual Support Services

Car 86, which is staffed by a Vancouver Police Officer and a Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) social worker, has two shifts: 4 pm-2 am, seven days a week, and from 7 am-3 pm Monday through Thursday. Car 87 is staffed by a Vancouver police officer and a psychiatric nurse from Greater Vancouver Mental Health Services (GVMHS). It provides service over two shifts, covering from 7 am-2 am, seven days a week. The public cannot call these services directly; they are dispatched through the police, MCFD or GVMHS. If a person calls one of these three services for help, that agency will dispatch Car 86 or Car 87 if required.

Housing

Most of the subsidized housing in the Lower Mainland is accessed through a central intake at BC Housing. Outreach workers help clients fill out an application but the wait time for subsidized housing can take up to five years. BC Housing has given outreach providers five fast-track spaces for clients but the criteria is so strict that most people living on the street do not qualify. (The criteria include being able to live independently, not actively addicted, able to get a hydro bill in their name, on disability, over 55 or a single parent and having a need to be connected with support in their community. For example, if they have a mental illness they need to be connecting regularly with professional help.)

Outreach workers can also help clients to access long-term, stable housing through Mental Health Housing Services (MHHS). This is through partnerships between VCH and various housing providers such as the Coast Foundation, Kettle Friendship Society, MPA Society, Portland Housing Society, St. James Community Services Society, Raincity and Katherine Sanford Housing Society (which operates two group homes in the Renfrew-Collingwood area). This housing is accessed through an internal coordinator at MHHS. The coordinator and case managers assess clients and then place them on a wait list

until appropriate housing becomes available. Clients are contacted when an appropriate unit becomes available. In emergency housing situations doctors and case managers work with the client to discover available options. Clients requiring immediate housing are referred to shelters and short stay centers.

Coast Mental Health, which assists people with a mental illness in their recovery, offers a variety of programs to “improve the lives of people with a mental illness by providing practical and pragmatic help such as housing, jobs, community, rehabilitative social and recreational opportunities, food, clothing and basic life skills training.” Most of the clients Coast houses are on disability social assistance, which provides the client with approximately \$900 per month. In order to be housed in a mental housing unit the client must have a chronic and persistent mental illness and functionally need support to live in the community, as per the Coast Mental Health mandate. Although most of Coast’s clients come to the organization through Mental Health Team referrals, it also accepts referrals from general practitioners and psychiatrists.

The wait for housing can be years long. Coast has various streams of housing, all of which have different wait lists. Some of its units offer 24-hour support with medication, meals and activities; others offer less support. Their total number of residential housing licensed care units is just under 400 units; coast has just under 1,000 people currently living in supportive housing, with 500 people on the waitlists.

The shortage of supportive units forces outreach workers to house people in Downtown Eastside (DTES) SROs, which can compromise their health and negate any progress they may have made with their addictions. Outreach workers will often house a person in an SRO, until something more appropriate is available. Most low-barrier housing in Vancouver is in DTES SRO units. This poses many problems for people who want to be housed but do not want to live in the heart of the addiction crisis in Vancouver, in units that are isolated and infested with bed bugs, rodents or other insects. Many SROs are expensive (about \$500 per month), unclean and confine clients in a lifestyle many want to move to the suburbs to escape. There are no SROs in Renfrew-Collingwood.

Two years ago, PCR began developing a youth housing program. Currently a scattered site, PCR is working toward the goal of an integrated service that youth may enter anywhere along a continuum of need. This would include housing services ranging from shelter spaces to independent living units.

PCR has recently opened a supportive, five-bed facility in East Vancouver which brings their current total of units to approximately 20 (none are in Renfrew-Collingwood).

Appendix 2



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www.cnh.bc.ca

Media release
For immediate release

October 8, 2009

Renfrew-Collingwood Marks Homeless Action Week with a Neighbourhood Homeless Count

Vancouver – On October 14, 100 volunteers will comb through Renfrew-Collingwood looking for homeless individuals. The event, which will take place during Homeless Action Week, will give service providers in Renfrew-Collingwood some idea of the extent of homelessness in the neighbourhood.

“The number of homeless in Vancouver rose by 16 per cent during the previous three years and a whopping 135 percent over the previous six years, according to the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness,” Vancouver City Councillor and Renfrew-Collingwood resident Kerry Jang said. “While those results give us some sense of the extent of the overall problem, we want to track homelessness in Renfrew-Collingwood, to establish the numbers and needs of the homeless population in this neighbourhood.”

Those planning to work with Jang on October 14 as counters are Renfrew-Collingwood residents Vancouver-Kingsway MP Don Davies, Vancouver-Kingsway MLA Adrian Dix, Vancouver Park Board Chair Raj Hundal, Vancouver School Trustee Allan Wong and their colleagues Vancouver City Councillor Ellen Woodsworth and Park Board Commissioner Sarah Blyth. They’ll join about 100 residents of Renfrew-Collingwood and beyond. Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson will welcome volunteers at Collingwood Neighbourhood House as they return from counting.

The count is being organized by the You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood Committee which includes representatives from Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Evergreen Community Health Centre, Renfrew Community Centre and the Collingwood Community Policing Centre.

For more information please contact You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood Count Coordinator Jennifer Gray-Grant at 604-451-9855.

Appendix 3

You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood 2009

Questionnaire

Answer the following four questions whether or not people agree to be interviewed:

Age: ____ Gender: _____ Nearest intersection or facility to where found _____

Does the person appear to be homeless? __ Yes

1. Do you have a place you pay rent for?

Yes No

(If yes, end survey.)

2. How long have you been without your own place?

days weeks months years

3. How long have you lived in Vancouver?

days weeks months years

4. Where do you call home? (Probe for city, neighbourhood.)

5. What are the main reasons you do not have your own place? _____

6. Why did you not stay in an emergency shelter, safe house or transition house last night?

Turned away – Full

Turned away – Inappropriate

Didn't know about them

Dislike (Specify _____)

Couldn't get to it

Able to stay with friend

Other (Specify _____)

7. Have you stayed at a shelter in this past year?

Yes No

If yes, how many different times in the past year have you stayed in a shelter in Vancouver?

8. Do you want to find housing?

Yes No

9. What would help you to find housing?

Money

Transportation

Application assistance

10. Are you on a housing wait list?

Yes No

11. What support do you need?

Food Clothing

Recreation Shelter

Healthcare Access to phones

Bus tickets Reading material

Showers Information and Referrals

12. How could people make you feel more welcome in the community?

13. Who is with you today? Are you:

Alone

With a partner

With child(ren) Age(s) _____

With a pet

Other (specify _____)

14. Do you consider your self to be an Aboriginal person?

Yes No No answer

15. What ethnic or cultural groups do you identify yourself with? (Canadian, French, English, Salish, Metis, Chinese, South Asian, African, Mexican, etc.)

16. Where do you get your money from? (Check all that apply. If more than one source, ask what is the major source of your income? Place an * by the major source.)

Welfare/IA CPP

Disability benefit EI

Employment (F/T) No income

Employment (PT/Casual) Panhandling

Binning/Bottle collecting Financial support from family

Other (Please specify _____)

17. Do you have the following health problems:

Medical condition Yes No

Physical Disability Yes No

Identification assistance
 Other (Specify _____)

Addiction Yes No
Mental Illness Yes No

Appendix 4

The following information was included on the card counters handed out during the count. All of the content was translated into Chinese on one side.

The card was headed, "Renfrew-Collingwood Services for the Homeless" and listed: Homeless Outreach Workers - 604-613-2396; Saturday morning shower and breakfast program, Jo-Anne Stephens - 604-435-0323; Aboriginal Homelessness Outreach - 604-251-7200 ext 364; and Youth Housing, Broadway Youth Resource Centre - 604-709-5720.

Appendix 5

The following information was included on the backgrounder sheet, headed: You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood 2009: Background Information.

On October 14 from 6-8 am, 100 volunteers in Vancouver's Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood will carry out a homeless count.

Concerned individuals from Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Evergreen Community Health Centre, Renfrew Park Community Centre, Collingwood Community Policing Centre and various groups in Renfrew-Collingwood, first met last May to discuss holding a neighbourhood homeless count. While Renfrew-Collingwood has a number of services that reach out to the homeless, the committee felt that a count could help with planning for efficient local services and strengthening local outreach. The committee also felt that the count could serve as a tool for public education about homelessness. Further, the committee hopes to identify potential local housing stock.

The count will take place in the area bordered by Broadway, Boundary Road, East 45th Avenue and Nanaimo Street. It will include those living on the street and, where possible, those who are tentatively housed. After the count has been completed the committee will produce a report, with recommendations, to share. For more information please contact Jennifer Gray-Grant at 604-435-0323.

Appendix 6

The following information was included in the final information sheet counters received just before going out to walk through their assigned area. Titled, "You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood 2009 - Count Day!, the sheet included the following list.

1. Meet your partner and review your map together. Determine your approach to the area. If you have any questions, ask volunteers at the registration table for assistance.
2. Please use the bathroom one last time before leaving! If you need to use a washroom this morning, ask at a school. Most schools have an engineer on site by about 6:30 am.
3. If you are approached by members of the media, feel free to share one of the copies of the backgrounder with them. If you are approached by the media while you are interviewing a homeless person, stop the interview immediately and move away from the homeless person, bringing the media with you. We have promised to protect the privacy of every homeless person. Please let them know that we will have a set-up interview at 8:15 am outside of Collingwood Neighbourhood House, if they need to get pictures. If they have further questions, ask them to contact Jennifer Gray-Grant at Collingwood Neighbourhood House at 604-435-0323.
4. If you encounter a homeless person who is in an emergency, call 911 and stay with the homeless individual until the ambulance arrives.
5. If you have any questions or problems during the count, call Jennifer at 604-435-0323. Please do not hesitate to call!
6. After you have finished searching through your area, return to Collingwood Neighbourhood House to check back in and return all of your forms and package materials. Please return to CNH even if you did not find any homeless people or see any rental signs. If you will be arriving at CNH later than 8 am, call Jennifer at 604-435-0323 to let her know when you expect to return.

Appendix 7

The following information was included in the safety sheet handed out to counters. Titled "Safety Rules for the Homeless Count" the sheet reminded people to:

- Look after yourself tenderly
- Make sure you go into the street feeling happy
- Eat a good breakfast, have your coffee, stabilize your blood sugar
- go to bed early the night before so you are rested and relaxed
- do not use alcohol or recreational drugs for at least 12 hours before you go into the streets

What to wear:

- Comfy, thick soled, closed toed, tie or Velcro-on shoes or boots, no high heels (think WCB)
- "West Coast Mink" ie layers, Gore-Tex over polar fleece over t-shirts over jeans

What to bring:

- a little back-pack instead of a purse
- a pen that will write when it is cold or wet
- a scarf or an extra layer of clothing in case it is cold
- Kleenex and disinfectant hand wipes
- less than \$20
- a cell phone

What NOT to bring:

- an umbrella as it can look like a weapon if it is down and will separate you from people if it is up.
- a purse or briefcase: make best use of your pockets
- a camera, good jewelry or anything of obvious value
- more than \$20
- anything that is or might be mistaken for a weapon

How to be safe:

- Your best protection is your own middle class, considerate good manners
- Never try to act cool or tough - it is OK to be a nerd, to be shy, to feel awkward, to be uncomfortable.
- remember - you are standing in their "bedroom" be respectful of privacy, and of how frightened they may feel
- make sure you have not backed anyone into a corner. People need to know they can get away from you.
- speak to homeless people using the tone of voice you would use with a friendly co-worker
- always speak with as much respect as you would use in a conversation with the Mayor
- remember that many people living in the streets are highly intelligent and accomplished, many are artists, musicians, poets, writers. Be careful not to make assumptions.
- use simple rather than complex sentences. While intelligent, people who are sleeping rough are traumatized and highly stressed. Keep your conversation direct, warm, and simple.

- always say please, thank you, excuse me, I'm sorry. Remember: they don't have to do this!
- If someone is angry, volatile, threatens, swears at you, or tells you to go away then immediately apologize for disturbing them and leave.
- remember that almost all homeless people will very much enjoy your interest in them, and the opportunity to tell you about themselves and their lives.
- homeless dogs are much better behaved than middle class dogs. Respect their owners' authority over them.
- Have a wonderful time getting to know your Renfrew-Collingwood neighbours.

Appendix 8

Here are the results for the specific questions. Where counters answered on a numeric scale, 1 would be “poor” and 5 would be “excellent”.

Question 1: How did you feel about the training you received to carry out your job with the count?

Eighteen evaluators gave this question a five, six gave it a four and three gave it a three.

Comments:

It is always a pleasure to hear Judy Graves speak and learn from her. I appreciate Judy's perspective on working with, and approaching, people without shelter. Telling Judy to "f**k off" is not one of my prouder moments, however. (Judy had asked him to do so, in order to illustrate how to handle that kind of situation on the street.)

Judy Graves is excellent.

I was inspired by the training. Having sat through many hours of Pro-D in my life, I was impressed with the thoroughness of training received.

I learned so much from the training that goes beyond the actual work of the count and I appreciated that. I think all neighbourhoods and citizens should have an opportunity to learn from Jennifer and Judy, this would help to unravel the stigmatism and abuse of homeless people that is so prevalent in our culture and mainstream media.

Training was good, but we did not encounter any homeless to see how well the training set in.

I did not attend but heard it was excellent

Trainer was both inspiring and creative in her approach.

We have learned many appropriate ways to initiate communications with homeless, which are new to me, and very informative.

Not sure what I missed at the training but I think written format should be sent out to all.

You provided everything we needed to know in terms of form completion and Judy's streetwise presentation was terrific.

Although the training and information session was interesting and fun, I found it a little bit useless in regard to my job (which was finding rental ads). Don't get me wrong - I'm not complaining, but I think that maybe the under-18 youth shouldn't have to listen to how to approach the homeless people as we were not doing that job.

Judy is great. Your info helpful, too

Training was very good. Thank Judy.

The training was interesting and very informative.

Detailed and practical

Judy Graves is an amazing speaker and inspiration!

I wasn't worried about meeting and interviewing someone (although we didn't find anyone in our very residential, well-manicured area).

Judy Graves is awesome; my second time being trained by here was just as good as the first time.

It was WONDERFUL to hear from someone like Judy Graves, and to glean from her experience of helping the homeless. So thankful for this opportunity! I felt thought there was so much information to absorb and learn in 2 hours! Maybe what can help us are notes in hand, more interaction, role-playing in groups/pairs, etc. to get as much of the senses involved, so we can remember better? I think if you also emailed out beforehand some of the handouts that we went over w/ our partner, that would help too, then we can review the information again before the Count.

I thought the training was very thorough.

Question 2: Were you clear about your job description?

Twenty-two counters gave this question a five, five gave it a four, two gave it a three.

Comments:

The training was excellent

Yes, the modeling provided by Judy left no doubts in my mind.

I felt confident and clear about my role but was still very unsure about how to proceed if, say, we found someone sleeping a backyard or between houses. E.g. going on to people's property?

Well organized and supportive instructions.

The job description was clear and concise.

With the handouts and the training, I am clearly told what I should do for this job.

Partially my fault for missing the training. But still self-explanatory.

Absolutely.

Jennifer did an excellent job with organizing the volunteers - she was always there and happy to answer any questions we had!

I think I understood everything, but to show that I have to work with different people (homeless).

I was somewhat confused about my job as a photographer.

It was absolutely clear what we were to do.

Question 3: How did you feel about the number of e-mail messages you received about the count?

Nineteen counters gave this question a five, two gave it four, seven gave it three and one gave it a one.

Comments:

Any more e-mails and it would have been confusing.

Still awaiting results.

Kept me in touch, read them all, and provided me with the information I needed.

I didn't receive many and this was good, and this kind of training and activity does not lend itself to too much being done over email. It needs to be face to face.

Understood in clear and concise manner....very respectful of busy people's time.

A greater volume of communication would have been appreciated.

Just about right.

A few days before the count would be better as I wasn't sure about what to expect til I got to Collingwood.

Fine – not too many or too few.

The reminder e-mail was sent a bit late the day before (7:15pm).

Perfection.

About e-mails, after long time waiting, I felt very good.

All information was understandable and delivered straight-forwardly.

There were enough and not too many - good.

I would recommend to send off the emails earlier, for example, like 2-3 days before the count (as opposed to the day before), as I don't check my email every day, so I didn't get the last e-mail until I came home from the count!

I wasn't overwhelmed with information, but had enough information to understand what was asked of us.

Question 4: Overall, how do you feel about your work with You Count in Renfrew-Collingwood?

Eleven counters gave a five rating to this question, 12 gave it a four, four gave it a three and one gave it a two.

Comments:

Not sure we covered the area adequately - the interviews took approximately 10 - 14 minutes, so we covered the rest of the area quickly - don't think we missed anyone, but hard to say for sure. Otherwise it was great.

I was impressed with the organization, purpose, and sense of community generated.

I enjoyed setting up breakfast.

I feel great, my partner and I got to know each other, I learned so much from her and about the neighbourhood we were assigned-we looked at the community, the houses, the yards, the stillness of the morning, in a whole new way. It gave me insight into how anonymous in many ways our society has become and how easy it is for people to slip from view.

Continue to be in awe of the heart in this neighbourhood and the number of people wanting to help and support. I enjoyed meeting new people and I was able to see the neighbourhood I work in from a different lens. Although we didn't find anyone in our area, we did publicize our interest to keep a look out with neighbours we came across for effective referral and identified some areas where pan handlers situate themselves.

Though it was an interesting experience – we did not find any homeless in the area we covered. Therefore I was a little disappointed with the experience as a whole.

Because we didn't locate a homeless individual, it seemed like our efforts were wasted. Maybe a suggestion, especially for more residential areas, is to have a "bike" search party quickly cycle around to locate any homeless people. If one is spotted then they'll radio in a "walker" to do the interview.

Probably would have rated higher if we had been able to record/meet/find a homeless person.

It worked out well, but I just felt bad that I couldn't do more! I know that there was an age restriction... maybe in a few years I'll be able to help out more prominently.

I felt fine about not finding anyone - in some ways that's a good sign. Interesting that we didn't see any for rent signs - I guess people don't necessarily want their neighbours to know? Only advertise on a website or newspaper?

You count people were very pleasant and kind people.

I wasn't able to contribute much to the Homeless Count itself, but I am looking forward to the years to come.

I forgot to look for rental properties!

Even though I didn't find any homeless people to interview, I feel that I put all of my energy and effort into the work.

We didn't find anyone, so I'm wondering whether we could have gone out to help another group.

Our area was strictly residential and therefore low potential for homeless people. We covered the area in about 45 minutes. I would have preferred a larger area to cover.

It was SO GREAT! I enjoyed getting to know my neighbours, and working together to help those less fortunate in our neighbourhood. The conversations after the count (over coffee and muffins!) were also freaking awesome!

Question 5: Do you have any suggestions for improving volunteers' involvement in a Renfrew-Collingwood homeless count?

Continued education, and publishing stories of people's experiences in the Collingwood paper may be of use, also prior to next census publish some of the stories to allay any fears, assumptions or misperceptions.

Maybe start homeless count in evening would be better.

No, it was for a set amount of time, for a set purpose.

Not at the moment.

Give notice that a car may be required to reach the census area. A few of the individuals I spoke with before the count didn't have a car and travel time would have taken up much of the time allotted for the count.

Thank to everyone else that had put in the extra effort before hand, all I had to do was turn up for the count. Thank you all. A list of suggestions for extra volunteering would have been inviting!! But that was already covered.

My suggestions have been made and considered. I am looking forward to hearing from the volunteers.

More communication with volunteers.

No, I feel the overall training along with the count were appropriate, considering it was the first time it took place in Renfrew-Collingwood area.

Do a bit analysis before draft the area.

Maybe do the count in early September with warmer/dryer weather.

Follow up information on what the numbers were and what will be done with that information.

To reach a remote area, ensure one of the two volunteers has a car. For those who wish, arrange for car pooling to in order to reach CNH in the early morning.

I personally thought that the involvement was pretty good - I know that Mr. Schindel, our principal, was working amazingly hard to help recruit. The only other idea I would have would be to ask other high schools around the area to help as well.

Somehow to make sure that everybody shows up and to prepare subbing partners for those who will be with no partner. This would save time on the actual morning of the count because we lost around 20 min. for pairing up those who had a "no-show" partner.

Hmm.. I think it is hard to do a general call and then be sure about their motives. When my partner and I were out, another "couple" came driving up to us - they had finished their area and not found anyone. They had been told that there may be people in Renfrew park and were on their way to look and probably would have, had they not talked with us and we told them that we were doing that area. They didn't get the reasons that it was important to only go in their assigned area.

No suggestion yet.

I wasn't able to go out on the count myself, and am not completely sure about the volunteers' involvement, however, maybe another event can be run another time for youth to get more involved.

I didn't know any volunteer needs or information until I register for this through "More than Gold" campaign. Promoting the needs of volunteer will be needed, I guess.

Yes, it would have been good to have counters looking on both sides of the streets. Sometimes the streets were so big we had to zigzag back and forth and this means we could have missed someone sleeping out. Otherwise it would be good to have explicit instructions on which way to go/how to look for people in our area ie. walk up one side and down the other...

No.

I think many of us would like to do more than just go out once a year. Could we be doing more advocacy or hands-on work to help with this huge issue.

No. It was extremely well organized.

Honestly, I think you guys are doing an amazing job in getting volunteers involved!

No

More explicit instructions on how volunteers were supposed to complete the survey would have been useful. The walk through of the each of the questions at the training was excellent, but it would have been useful to have those instructions, (i.e. where to provide additional info, when to read out the list or answers and when not to, etc.) actually written into the survey.

Question 6: Did your involvement in this count change you, your attitudes or perceptions in any way?

No, but I have been working with people living outside for several years.

Yes, it made me more aware of the homeless in our area. I thought more about where they might be seeking shelter and making their "nests." When we went out counting at 6:30 a.m., I got a first-hand impression of what it must be like on the streets and some sense of the vulnerability the homeless feel.

My involvement did not change me in this count.

Yes, I have spoken to many of my friends of what I learned. The responses have been interesting; everything to ridicule to finding knowledge in unexpected people. Generally it appears that people are very uncomfortable to feel empathy for the homeless.

Yes, please see comment 4 (I feel great, my partner and I got to know each other, I learned so much from her and about the neighbourhood we were assigned-we looked at the community, the houses, the yards, the stillness of the morning, in a whole new way. It gave me insight into how anonymous in many ways our society has become and how easy it is for people to slip from view.) I think that all communities should take part in this.

I expected the volunteers to all be residents of the neighborhood. For whatever reason the volunteers I ended up talking to were not residents but instead individuals with a keen interest in homelessness, addictions counseling, etc.

As a newcomer the training prior to the count, helped in understanding how to deal, and better able to handle certain situation. But I understand that there is so much more to learn.

Gentle reminder on how difficult life is for them. I got up early, I pondered how hard that was for me until I thought of their daily struggles.

Yes – I realized that I have been highly prejudicial towards those on the street, especially living in the DTES as I do. I am trying not to prejudge those who find themselves without a home to the extent I have been.

Somewhat! As it was my first time and it was not what I should expect!! However, I felt the training was very helpful.

Yes, know the homeless problem from another different perspective.

I feel good on being able to contribute something to the community. Besides, waking up early and taking a walk in the dark is a fresh, enjoyable experience. I used to be scared of the homeless people and would walk away from them, but now I look at them at a more positive perspective.

No

More empathy for homeless and gratitude for my warm, dry, and relatively luxurious home.

The training was very informative and useful - this was the highlight of my involvement given that my party did not find any homeless person in the assigned area.

It did to some degree. I was actually really inspired by the speaker at the orientation - Judy, I think her name was. I was so touched at what a good soul she has. It really showed in the way she presented information and spoke. I learned a lot from the presentation, and I know that I'll never look at homeless people as a threat again.

No

No

I was happier that day.

The training really provided me with different takes on homelessness in our community. I was able to take away many different ideas and facts on the lifestyles of the homeless. I am truly passionate about this unfortunate issue that many people have to face, and I will continue to look into it, pursuing projects that may be able to help out people in our community.

Yes, it encouraged me to think about how I can involve more in helping community and homeless people.

Yes, I experienced that even the smallest gesture can bring a lot of happiness.

No. I'm aware of the problem. I'm also aware of the federal and provincial governments' creation of the conditions for this to happen. It is also clear that some neighbourhoods, mine included, are not friendly to homeless people.

No.

Yes - we need major social housing, and integrated holistic services for homeless Canadians!!! After hearing Judy talk in greater detail about the lives of homeless people, their difficulties, challenges, suffering - I realized that we don't just need

"services of mercy," we need to change the sucky parts of our system to make it (more) just, so that everyone, especially the homeless and poor, can partake in social inclusion and the life of our society, and not be stigmatized and left out.

I think it filled-in information on the real hardships that the homeless go through on a daily basis.

No, I live on the cusp of the DTES. I have much compassion.

It was a sad reminder that the problems of homelessness are pervasive throughout the city – but at the same time encouraging to see a particular neighbourhood taking it upon themselves to bring awareness to and address the issues. Walking through the alleys and seeing how clearly private space is demarcated and protected, we realized just how difficult it would be to be homeless and find shelter away from the main streets and commercial areas. I was also reminded of the complexities of the issue and the limitations of homelessness research: The one homeless individual we came across on the count denied being homeless – said he had just been locked out of his house, despite having a sleeping bag, and a complete cardboard set-up. It was a very different type of response than what we heard last year doing the count in Vancouver when we were speaking with people in a shelter, very willing to discuss why they were without a stable home.

Question 7: If we were to hold an annual count, would you participate again next year?

13 people said yes.

I would participate again next year if there is a count.

I'm under 18 but if I had a chance I would.

Yes, but I would also like to do one in my own community of Sunset.

If I was still around then yes definitely.

Undecided.

Absolutely.

Depend on the time

Yes but don't look forward to waking up so early. Maybe on a holiday (eg Thanksgiving or labour Day) that way those who would otherwise need to go directly to work on a weekday can relax a little more after the count rather than rushing to work.

If I'm in Vancouver at the time, yes.

For sure!

Probably

I'd love to participate next year.

I would most definitely participate in the count next year.

I hope so, if time allows.

Yes, if I am living here I would like to participate.

Absolutely

Depends on my schedule.

Question 8: Other comments or thoughts?

Just that the more we educate our community, the better we will be able to serve individuals who have little; and in the process possibly reduce or eliminate the stigma associated with homelessness.

I was inspired by the other volunteers: the number and the interest they displayed. I'm also impressed that our elected officials participated.

Even though I didn't find or speak to any homeless I came away more aware and have continued to speak about this experience to anyone who will listen. Spreading the gospel of Judy Graves

I can only do my part, the neighborhood is better off when there are resources and people who are willing give a helping hand to someone who is temporarily down on their luck. I will willingly help those who want my help! Thanks for the opportunity.

I would like to thank all who were involved in the count especially you Jennifer, for beautifully coordinating this event, your high level of energy and enthusiasm that was inspiring to us all. Also, the time and effort put into preparing food, coffee, sandwiches for homeless, maps and so on by other volunteers are very much appreciated.

If we can get to know our counting partner earlier (ex. on the training session), we'll have a better arrangement, such as who brings what, who will drive, etc. It will also save me time on the counting date just to find my partner.

My only 'complaint' was that my partner seemed to be there to further his job prospects rather than find homeless people. He spent the majority of time telling me about his job search and asking for my advice. He then wanted my contact info. He did little if any looking and I felt like I was the only one 'on task'. He was a very nice man and I understand he's a new immigrant who is very under-employed given his qualifications but I hadn't anticipated nor wanted to be providing job counseling when I had volunteered for a homeless count.

The count was well-organized. Kudos. I'm looking forward to receiving the results.

Great organization, can't wait to help out again.

I didn't encounter with homeless that day, I wonder whether it's because of rain. Would it be better (more accurate) if we did the counter earlier than October?

I was so glad to meet other like minded people and be involved in the count at the community level. It makes me really happy to know there are others who care enough to volunteer their time to this important issue.

I would like to see more initiatives like this in other neighbourhoods so that people can get help all over Vancouver

I hope that this helps to supply advocates and people working with homelessness with some support and information that is useful.

I'm so thankful and proud to be a member of our Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood! I know that if I ever end up on the streets here, that there are not only services available to me, but more importantly people who actually give a damn and CARE about me. I was wondering if in the near future we can partner with other neighbourhoods, ones that don't have as many resources or volunteers, so that we can share our abundance, and help make our city a better place. Sometimes, I feel that we have it good here because we're a middle-class neighbourhood, but other neighbourhoods that are made up of predominantly the working poor may not have the resources we have (because they pay less taxes cumulatively or something stupid like that). And that's not right.

I'm not sure having a count at this time of year works well in our area. Its not an area that has a lot of shelter during the rainy season. I expect that during the summer, you would find more homeless residing here.

9. You may add a story here or e-mail it to me later. None received.

Appendix 9

	Priority	Avail. in R-C	Gaps	Comments
Emergency shelters, transition houses and safe houses	Medium (these could be here or in other communities but there is a need to provide transition, supportive and affordable housing)	No	There are no emergency shelters, transition houses or safe houses in R-C.	These are the safe houses for women (and children) fleeing abuse. This area includes youth and Aboriginal youth transitional housing.
Transitional housing	High	We don't believe so	Large gap	Housing for people moving from treatment to recovery or other transitions. It is for a limited time, anywhere from two weeks to two years.
Supportive housing	High	No	Gap	There is no limit on the length of stay. Individuals are linked to support services by people in the building but the services may be located on or off site.
Independent affordable housing	High	Synala, Luma etc.	There are a number of social housing options in R-C.	Housing co-ops and Vancouver housing are examples but there are not enough to satisfy demand.

Employment assistance services and training programs	Medium	No		These are necessary to assist homeless individuals to reintegrate into society but such programs tend to be very challenging. Providing housing first, then employment has better long-term success.
Legislative reform to provide adequate levels of income	High			BC Income Assistance rates are not sufficient to sustain the basic needs of an individual or family.
Prevention services	High	Just for youth		
Outreach services	Medium (we've made a good start here)	Yes	We need more hours of outreach	
Drop-in centres	Medium (we've made a good start here and having one or two more would help.	Morning Star Program offering shower and breakfast		
Health services	High	Evergreen's fast-tracking of the homeless during weekly drop-in hours; monthly visits by a Nurse-Practitioner to the Saturday Morning Star Program	Need more hours of support here	

Mental health services	High	Some at Evergreen	Large gap	
Addiction treatment and services	High		Together We Can has 44 beds	
Research, planning and capacity building		<p>Several documents have been created: the UBC research document, the Mapping document and the Sensitivity document.</p> <p>Knowledge and capacity of people at CNH and in the community through working with the homeless for the past five years.</p>	Need to continue learning about how all communities can reach out to the homeless .	The committee hopes to tap into the knowledge, passion and energy of count volunteers to do further work locally around homelessness.