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## One year later: Coordinated-entry locations see success

By Jake Abbott / [jabbott@appealdemocrat.com](mailto:jabbott@appealdemocrat.com) 13 hrs ago



The Life Building Center in Marysville is one of two coordinated-entry locations in the Yuba-Sutter area that help homeless individuals find the resources they need.

Jake Abbott/Appeal-Democrat

For the local homeless population, walking into either of the area's two coordinated-entry programs can be the first step to getting the help they most need. The locations have only been open for about a year, but program managers say the impact has been significant.

Rick Millhollin, executive director of Hands of Hope, said he would classify the first year as a huge success. Since first opening its doors in Sutter County on Sept. 1, 2017, as well as a second location across the river in November 2017, more than 1,800 homeless individuals from the area

have been assisted.

“The partnerships we’ve built with other organizations in the area to provide services together has been tremendous. These classes are also making a huge difference on the lives of our clients. They are actively taking part in classes and putting tools together to get back on their feet,” Millhollin said.

Hands of Hope, which is the lead agency that runs the local coordinated-entry locations, operates out of two locations, one out of the organization’s headquarters at 909 Spiva Ave., Yuba City, and one at the Life Building Center at 131 F St., Marysville.

“Coordinated-entry is a program or process where homeless individuals come in and take an assessment. Based on that, they get a score – the higher they score, the more of an emergency it is to address their needs,” Millhollin said. “We address things like homelessness, health, behavioral health, substance abuse and families.”

Along with case managers from other organizations like the Salvation Army Depot, Casa de Esperanza, 14Forward and the Yuba County Housing Support Program, officials meet once a week to look at a list of those most in need. Then, clients are matched with area programs that most meet their needs to help get them off the street as quickly as possible, he said.

Individuals also have an opportunity to take daily life skill classes at either of the locations. Classes assist them with skills like employment training, the job search, healthy habits, housing skills, effective communication, time and money management, legal assistance, substance abuse counseling, financial planning and network success.

“All of these services are provided by outside organizations that partner with us, such as Harmony Health, Yuba and Sutter counties’ One Stops, Health and Human Services departments from both counties, Section 8 and many more,” Millhollin said.

Chelsea Burke, coordinated-entry manager, organizes the life skill classes. She has been working in the area since April.

“I try to bring in people to help teach them life skills. We look for different people with different skill sets to help our clients in different areas,” Burke said.

The classes have seen a significant increase in participation in recent months. When she first started earlier this year, there were only about nine people taking classes in Yuba County. Since then, that number has grown to more than 230 people.

“We are seeing some success. We just brought in a Ready to Rent Housing Authority course too, which allows clients to earn a certificate saying they are ready to rent,” Burke said. “We are seeing more and more people getting on board wanting to help and provide services.”

## **Working together**

Millhollin said he believes the coordinated-entry programs are having a positive impact on the community as a whole.

“It’s been a combined effort, so we are cutting down some of the duplication of services in the area. It’s also about educating the public. The more organizations we work with, the more it can be publicized,” he said. “In the homeless community, the word spreads fast.”

In order to receive services, the individual must be homeless. When they walk into the facility, they are required to provide identification, a Social Security card for adults and proof of income, if any.

The Yuba County facility has averaged about 10-15 new intakes a week, while the Sutter County facility has seen about 5-6 intakes a week on average.

While many have received assistance through the program, there are some things out of its control.

“It’s single individuals having a hard time finding homes, and that comes down to affordable housing, which we have little of,” he said.

Another gap in services is the number of case managers available to handle the number of people seeking services.

“Anyone picked up by our outside agency gets a case manager, but we have a huge waiting list. There are only 184 beds available for single homeless people in the community. If they don’t get into a program, they are kind of in a holding pattern at the coordinated-entry sites. So that falls onto the laps of our limited managers to help with everything from employment and social security to housing.”

Overall, he said he was proud of his team's work over the last year, as well as the many other organizations that are helping in the effort.

"We deal with individuals at their worst in the difficult situations that they are living in, struggling day-to-day to survive. I have staff with huge hearts that give their all to make sure they are there to help," he said. "I'm also proud of the community participation. I'm a lifelong Yuba-Sutter resident, and this is the first time I've seen such participation. The outcomes have been phenomenal."

Millhollin said anyone looking to help or donate to the cause can follow the organization's Facebook page to see what type of donations are currently needed – (@YCHandsOfHope).