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2019 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT OF HOMELESSNESS RELEASED *SLIGHT DECLINE FROM 2017, CHALLENGES REMAIN*

Despite rising homelessness across California, Santa Cruz County's 2019 Point-In-Time count shows the number of homeless persons declined slightly from two years ago, according to a biennial count and survey of local homeless residents released today.

The total of 2,167 homeless persons represents a 3.6 percent decline from 2017. Nearly one-third are employed, and three-quarters were previously housed in Santa Cruz County before becoming homeless. Thirty-nine percent reported a disabling condition impacting their ability to live independently; approximately 30 percent reported suffering post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorder, and/or other psychiatric or emotional conditions; and loss of employment was the leading cause of homelessness.

One in ten reported increasing rent as the cause of their homelessness, a figure that has more than doubled since the last report.

"These numbers represent a one-time snapshot of homelessness on a particular night in Santa Cruz County," said John Connery of Applied Survey Research, which conducts homeless census operations throughout California using methodology recommended by the federal U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "I'd like to thank the dozens and volunteers and enumerators who made this count successful."

Since the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP) and its partners have implemented new programs and systems to improve the community's response to homelessness, including the continuing allocation of \$9.6 million in Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) funding. Allocations through HEAP funding, including the establishment of year-round shelter in North and South County and navigation services such as housing, medical and benefits assistance, were made after the January 31, 2019 count.

Other system improvements since 2017 include programs funded through a \$2.2 million federal Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project grant, as well as establishment of

the Smart Path Coordinated Entry System to assess homeless individuals and help allocate limited resources where they are needed most.

The City of Santa Cruz included the highest number of homeless persons of any jurisdiction, with 1,197. That was followed by unincorporated Santa Cruz County, with 515, and Watsonville, with 370.

One area of improvement was in chronic homelessness, which was reduced by one-third since 2017. However, youth homelessness is trending upward, and the local housing market is severely inhibiting the transition to permanent housing, with rental assistance and more affordable housing cited as top needs by homeless persons.

The biennial point-in-time count applies a federal definition of homelessness and does not capture all those experiencing housing instability, including adults and children living with friends and family, or those in hotels, hospitals or jails on the night of the count.

While the County Office of Education and local school districts helped identify 75 students and family members experiencing homelessness, the Pajaro Valley School District also counted 3,304 "students in transition" living with friends or family during the 2018-19 school year, a figure not represented in the point-in-time count.

Recent California point-in-time counts have demonstrated significant increases in homelessness, including in Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Alameda counties. Counties such as Marin, Santa Barbara, and San Diego have seen declines.

The full report will be posted on the website of Applied Survey Research, <https://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org>.

The HAP can arrange interviews with persons who have lived experience with homelessness. Please call the contact info above to arrange an interview.

ABOUT THE HOMELESS ACTION PARTNERSHIP

The Homeless Action Partnership is a collaboration of the County and each city within Santa Cruz County, along with local homelessness service providers. It acts as the federally-designated continuum of care for Santa Cruz County and helps allocate State and federal funding to address homelessness. The County of Santa Cruz serves as lead agency for the HAP.