

Sno-Isle Libraries
Issues That Matter forum, "Homelessness Here"
Recorded Jan. 26, 2017
Lake Stevens School District Administration Bldg., Washington
Audio transcript



00:00:00 ***KENDRA TRACHTA***

I would like to introduce our moderator for this evening, Mayor John Spencer.

[APPLAUSE]

Besides being mayor of Lake Stevens, Mayor Spencer is past president of the Washington Foundation for the Environment, he's past chairman of the Western States Water Council, and a current board member of the Snohomish Health District, where he chairs the administrative committee. So here's an involved citizen who's a role model. Mayor?

[APPLAUSE]

00:00:39 ***MODERATOR (MAYOR JOHN SPENCER)***

Thank you, Kendra. So thank you very much. This evening, the layout for this evening is, each one of the panelists will get an opportunity to speak for 7-8 minutes, and then we're going to go into a Q&A, and we'll get an opportunity for all of you to ask questions of the panelists. I'm going to try to moderate that so that number 1, I keep the panelists' answers down to really direct answers, and number 2, make sure your questions are really pretty direct and just ask them a question. And then at the end of the evening, I know our panelists will be around for a little while if there was something that you were uncomfortable asking, who would like to chat with any one of them, they'll be here for a while after we wrap up. So you'll have that opportunity too.

I am really thrilled to see the number of people here this evening. This is great to see people turning out on this subject. It's a tough subject. It's a really tough subject. And as the mayor of Lake Stevens, I just can't help, but I've got to ask a question, just if you don't mind me asking this, how many are from Lake Stevens in this group? Okay. And then Snohomish?

[LAUGHTER]

It's about 50/50 there almost. How about East County? Any? An officer from the East County. Anybody from North County? Okay, we've got one here from North County. So we have a pretty strong East County, or I mean excuse me, Lake Stevens and Snohomish. So thank you all for being here.

In Lake Stevens, we're dealing with this issue every day, and it's one that we struggle with, to be quite honest with you, we struggle with this in terms of helping people find housing, helping people get into addiction relief kind of programs, dealing with the criminal side of it, and I know that the sheriff could talk a lot about the opioid background to some of the homelessness. But that's why we're here tonight, we're going to talk about homelessness.

And so our first speaker, let me introduce all of the speakers first, and then we'll start with the first speaker. Kristen Cane is our speaker, our first speaker, and she is the director of the development and policy for the Snohomish County Housing Authority. Kristen is there.

John Dyer, right here. John is the chief of police with the Lake Stevens police department. By the way, a brand new police chief here in Lake Stevens.

And then Julio Cortes over here is the public relations manager for Cocoon House.

And then Seanna Herring-Jensen clear at the end here, Seanna carries, wears a lot of hats. She's the program manager at the Arlington Community Resource Center. She is the coordinator for the Lake Stevens Family Center and the Granite Falls Family Support Center. So thank you, Seanna, for being here this evening. And by the way, she was coordinating the homeless count in these same areas, and so may have a little bit of insight into just the numbers, it's not final yet.

So with that, I would like to turn it to Kristen and you come on up and you've got this for 8 minutes.

00:04:22 ***KRISTEN CANE***

Okay, everyone can hear me? Okay. Thank you for the introduction. I am very happy to be here. I'm so happy to see this many people coming out to learn more about homelessness and talk about this issue. I've been working on the homeless issue in Snohomish County for over 10 years, and it hasn't been as high profile in the past as it seems like it's becoming both, starting in Seattle, but like has been said, this issue is spreading, it's getting bigger. And I think in response to that, we have more people interested. And so that's kind of where it starts. Let's have the conversation and figure out what we do about it.

I'd like to talk about the scope of homelessness and housing stability in the county, as well as sort of the overall general causes. What we're doing about it county-wide right now, also some sort of promising new developments and initiatives that might be of interest to folks. And then kind of finally some recommendations if you would like to be engaged of some of the things that you could do.

So starting with kind of trying to frame the scope of the problem, nationally, we have 10-11 million people that are homeless. About 25% of those are living in emergency shelters, transitional housing and other places not meant for human habitation. The other 75% are what we call doubled up. So they're living with other families. They're overcrowded, they're living in units that aren't big enough for everyone that's living in the unit, because they can't afford a place on their own.

In addition to that, we have over 11 million people nationally that are severely cost-burdened, which means they're paying more than 50% of their income for their housing costs. We, nationally, there's only 31 affordable homes for every 100 extremely low income people, and 25% of households that are eligible for housing assistance don't receive it because we don't have enough money to support housing programs and housing slots for folks. At the Washington State level, we have over 35,000 children that are homeless. Shocking.

In Snohomish County, I know Seanna is going to go a little bit further into the numbers here, but we get different counts because of course homelessness is not a stagnant issue. It's changing every day. There is different people becoming homeless, becoming housed. But in our county, we have a

system where through September 30th of 2016, there were over 1600 households in the county that were homeless and seeking housing. The average household size was about 2 people. Of those, 40% of those households are households with minor children where the average household size was over 3 people. In our county, there's only 16 affordable homes for every 100 extremely low income. Renter households, which is a short fall of about 16,000 homes.

And you've probably heard of the term livable wages, so in our county, to afford a 1 bedroom apartment at the average market rent, you have to make \$18 an hour. There's a lot of jobs in our county that don't pay that hourly wage. To afford a 3 bedroom apartment, you need to make \$30 an hour. So this is a problem with a really wide scope. It's very complicated, but in some ways, it's not, you know? You can kind of distill it down, which we'll talk about.

So also another statistic is the rental vacancy rate. So it's how many units are available for rent. This is always greater than 0, because there's always people moving out of units and renting units. But right now in our county, it's 3.5%, which is extremely low. That indicates that there just aren't that many units available. We hear stories about people that list units, and within 20 minutes, they have taken the listing down because they got 30 applicants. So this isn't just happening in Seattle, this is happening in our county. And the average rent for an apartment in our county is almost \$1500 a month.

For the causes of homelessness, so the main cause of homelessness is economic. Its insufficient income and it's lack of affordable housing. This, there's multiple sort of aspects of this. People making poverty wages, they're working a job, and they can't, they still can't afford, they're working a full-time job and they still can't afford a place to live. People that experience unemployment both for economic reasons and other reasons. The foreclosure crisis affected our county. We're still feeling the effects of that, even though a lot of the foreclosures have been processed. And it affected both homeowners and renters that were living in the units that got foreclosed upon. So it's a very widespread issue.

A few others, one of the main causes for women is domestic violence. There's also of course mental health and chemical dependency issues. And there's lots of folks that live in inter-generational poverty where they were homeless or extremely impoverished as children in their household, and they've become adults and they're having the same life experience. And their parents also had that experience, and so it's just a cyclical issue for those folks.

So at the county level, we have what's called a coordinated entry system. It matches up homeless households with housing options, and it prioritizes based on need. The rhetoric in the past was we need to end homelessness, we need to just end this from happening. But it's like saying that we're going to end fires from happening. There's always going to be homelessness. But what we're trying to do is make it rare, brief and hopefully one time for people. And that means that we need to have units available for when people get into a crisis situation and need housing.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been funding this at a pretty significant level within the Tri-County area of Snohomish, King and Pierce Counties to create the system that's been up and running for a couple of years now. And the Snohomish County Human Service Department is the lead on implementing it.

The way that we address homelessness and housing is we think about it as a continuum. So people often will start out entering into emergency shelters or transitional housing, or another option is rapid rehousing, where they get a very short-term time limited subsidy that falls off after a couple

of months. They can then transition from those types of programs into more permanent subsidized housing. So for folks with mental health and chemical dependency issues, they're often living in what we call permanent supportive housing. And then it also includes just the rent subsidized types of programs like Public Housing, Section 8, and other special programs that pay rental subsidy for folks that need that. And then eventually, affordable housing and market rate housing, just being able to afford an apartment. That's kind of the ultimate goal, and eventually for some that ends up being home ownership too.

So the Housing First approach has been used and the idea is you house people first, and you wrap services around. These folks cost our systems incredible amounts of money every year. Estimates are like \$50,000 per person a year for emergency and jail and police. And if we can house them, we can spend a lot less money.

There's a lot of other efforts going on in the county, and I hope to have more time to talk about that a little bit later. But really, advocacy and talking to your elected officials is something that's so important. There's a few events that I can mention at the end, there's also Homeless and Housing Advocacy Day that's happening in Olympia next month. So if folks are interested in getting more involved, they can talk to me after as well, and I have some information I can give out, so thank you.

00:12:24 ***MODERATOR***

Great, thank you very much, Kristen.

[APPLAUSE]

Speaking of talking to your elected official, I neglected to introduce Sam Low, our county councilman. Thanks for being here, Sam.

[APPLAUSE]

And I may not recognize other elected officials in the room, so if there are other elected officials here, raise your hand, because I want to recognize that you're here and taking the time to pay attention to this. Obviously thank you Sam, very much, for being here. And I know you have a special place in your heart for dealing with this, so that's really meaningful.

Our next speaker is John Dyer, our police chief.

[APPLAUSE]

00:13:10 ***CHIEF JOHN DYER***

I first want to thank the Sno-Isle Libraries for putting on this, making this forum possible. And certainly thank all of you for coming out to address what is a very important issue.

My perspective is going to be a little bit different, it's going to be from a law enforcement, I know these folks will be able to speak to some of the underlying issues a lot better than I will be. But what I'd like to do is take my time to talk about some of the issues we face, talk briefly about a little bit of background from a law enforcement perspective, discuss the problems facing the

communities and then talk about Lake Stevens police response, which is not going to be different from other areas as well.

So Lake Stevens, like many of the communities around us, face a problem of growing homeless population. While we don't have the large numbers seen, as was expressed earlier, of some of the larger jurisdictions, it still remains a problem, and it's a multi-faceted issue that has no easy answer. And I can speak for that from a law enforcement perspective.

So when talking about the homeless population, there are several types of homelessness across the continuum, and each one of those populations, there's a challenge for law enforcement. So just very briefly, transitional homelessness might be homeless that are folks that are homeless for short periods of time. And they are likely to be younger, and it's caused by some type of catastrophic event. And hopefully they're going to make the transition into stable housing in a short period of time. And they account for a lot, because there's a big turnover. And one of the big challenges was this group, because they're younger, and is they are very vulnerable to victimization themselves. So that's a challenge with that group.

Episodic homelessness are those who frequently shuttle in and out of homelessness. And again, typically younger, but they have more chronic issues, a lot of substance abuse. There are more issues causing it, which keeps them going in and out.

And lastly, of course, is chronic homelessness. People most likely would be a stereotype of homeless, and likely to be older, hardcore unemployed, and a lot suffering from disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues.

In looking at the causes of the types of homelessness, I found a good quote while researching for this. It's that they are not problem people, they are people with problems. And so this becomes a difficulty of the issue, because the underlying problems which cause homelessness are very complex. And they'll talk more about this, but the poverty and job loss was mentioned, mental health issues, substance abuse, lack of education training, lack of support of families, lack of affordable housing, physical health issues, and just the inability to be able to make decisions for themselves. So in dealing with the issues of homelessness, if we don't deal with the underlying problems, we're really doomed to fail.

So I'll go from a law enforcement perspective into the past. In my 33-year career, I've kind of seen this switch where in the past, the model used to deal with many of these issues was called Civil Commitments. And basically that was that folks were basically taken into custody and brought to an institutional setting. This gave way for many, many reasons. Away from that institutionalization to community services. Not the least of which is the issues of constitutional issues. And I'll just cite one small example of that. This is O'Connor vs. Donaldson, 1975, the finding of mental illness alone is not sufficient grounds for confining a person against their will. They must be found to be in danger of others or themselves to be able to take into custody.

So we moved away from the model that homelessness and the causes of it were not against the law. Of course, what then happened is they move that to community services, and over the years, those community services were cut by the billions for whether it's substance abuse, mental health issues. So those services were cut over the years, so this had the effect of releasing the most vulnerable onto the streets with no community support.

Now in the past, the law enforcement response has been strict enforcement of local laws. And this would recall the criminalization of homelessness. And what I mean by this is, some jurisdiction turns to criminal justice system to respond to homelessness. And some examples of this are measures that target homeless people by making it illegal to perform life-sustaining activities. Let me give you some examples. Like prohibitions on sleeping, camping or eating or sitting in public places, prohibition on storing personal belongings in public places, selective enforcement of neutral laws such as loitering or open container laws, sweep of city areas where homeless people are living, which often causes destruction of personal property, medications, a lot of different things.

So while the short-term solution may be there in that response, there are many problems associated with this response. For instance, a criminal record, if you add that to a person who is homeless, you have now just made it much more difficult for them to either get services or get the things that they need. Not to mention the already overburdened criminal justice system becomes even more clogged by detaining people who have not committed serious crimes. And again, the warrants, fines and the records will only make it more difficult to address these underlying issues. So while for a short period it may work, in the long-term, it's not a good solution.

So having said all of that, I don't want to downplay the issues that are faced by communities due to the homeless population and the underlying problems. Because the police do get calls on a regular basis about issues surrounding this, so we must address those issues. We can't say, we can't ignore those issues. And some of those might be, even if the homeless are not hardcore, violent offenders, areas adjacent to transient encampments do have a higher level of petty and serious crime, not related to those life-sustaining activities.

So we're talking about drug dealing and usage, disturbance, theft, you know, all of the other things that might come with that. Threats to business viability -- if these camps are close to these businesses, which they very often are, the business is threatened, become undesirable to the people that they're trying to serve. The cost -- the illegitimate use of public spaces, people may feel intimidated and not want to use these public spaces because they feel intimidated to go there. Naturally, the cost to society in homeless camps, unhealthy conditions, impact on environment and victimization of the homeless population themselves. So there are issues. There are really issues surrounding it.

So for the Lake Stevens Police Department, and I'm sure it's the same, we have a 2-tiered -- two problems. One is we have to answer the calls for service, which are a result of these issues, and do our best to mitigate the negative consequences. But secondly, we have to do our best in cooperation with these outside agencies to bring the needed service to the homeless population, get them the help they need, and that will long-term minimize those consequences.

I think I got a 30 second -- did I get a 30 second sign?

[LAUGHTER]

00:21:14 *UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE*

That's a 0.

00:21:14 *CHIEF JOHN DYER*

I got a 0 sign.

[LAUGHTER]

And so I'll be glad to answer, I was going to get into some specific strategies that law enforcement would use, but I'll be glad to answer those questions when the time comes, so thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

00:21:36 ***MODERATOR***

If you could bring those strategies to work tomorrow morning John . . .

[LAUGHTER]

Alright, our next speaker is Julio Cortes with the public relations manager for Cocoon House.

[APPLAUSE]

00:21:52 ***JULIO CORTES***

Great, thank you everybody. So first, thanks Sno-Isle Libraries for putting this together. This is an incredibly important issue that's not going to go away. So it's important for us to talk about as much as we can, and figure out what to do.

So again, my name is Julio Cortes, I'm a representative with Cocoon House. Cocoon House is a local non-profit that serves at-risk and homeless youth and families in Snohomish County, including here in Lake Stevens. I'm also recently a Lake Stevens resident, a couple of years ago. I love the city. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to talk about Cocoon House services and the type of youth that we've been running into while we're operating those services.

So the first service that I'm going to talk about is Cocoon House's outreach program. The outreach program stems from a drop-in center that we operate in Everett. This drop-in center is for any youth ages 12 to the age of 21. And it's a low barrier drop-in center, which means that any youth between, youth or even adult, between those age groups can come in, get a warm meal to eat, use our shower facilities, laundry facilities, or if they just want to come in and play a board game, they're more than welcome to.

What that allows us to do is build relationships with those youth and young adults. We've been very successful in making sure that those youth continue to come to that emergency, or to that drop-in center. What we do is we have peer mentors at that drop-in center who have been through our programs in the past, and are now being successful, be the peer mentors there. They're the ones that make contacts with these youth and engage them in our services. They talk about their successes, so whether they are turning 1 year clean and sober, or whether they just graduated and got their GED or high school diploma, we encourage them to talk about their successes.

And what happens is, those youth who may not be ready for services just yet start asking questions. How did you get clean and sober? Or how did you get your high school diploma? Those peer mentors are trained at that day center to immediately connect them to our staff who are in that second floor. We have an onsite drug and alcohol counselor that provides free drug and alcohol

evaluations and support groups, we have an education and employment coordinator upstairs that will help the youth with building a resume, a cover letter, getting them clothes to go to job interviews, a list of jobs around their area, whether they are here in Lake Stevens, down in Bothell, anywhere. And also help them with bus passes to get to those job interviews.

That drop-in center also is kind of a one-stop shop for youth who have been chronically homeless for a long period of time. A lot of the youth that we get in that drop-in center, they've been homeless, unaccompanied for multiple years. We've gotten kids as early as -- as young as 16 years old who haven't been in the home, or haven't been in school for a couple of years. So what that outreach drop-in center does, it allows us to build trust and relationships with those youth so we can offer them those services.

Out of that outreach drop-in center, we also operate our Safe Place Program. The Safe Place Program is what allows the Cocoon House to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Right? Homelessness doesn't end at 5:00 on a Friday, right? So we partner with other organizations, including the Sno-Isle Libraries. Every single Sno-Isle Library in the county, every single YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, community resource centers, are partners with Cocoon House. What we do is we have a diamond-shaped logo in the front of their building that says Safe Place. We do a lot of outreach to young people in schools, YMCA's, anywhere where there's a concentration of teens, to make sure they understand that when they see that diamond-shaped logo, it's safe for them to go in and ask for help.

The vast majority of the youth -- the teens that access the Safe Place Program aren't homeless. They're just a teen that's feeling unsafe. Sometimes they're just walking home, somebody creepy is following them. They can call directly to our hotline or go into one of those safe place sites. Anywhere in Snohomish County, Cocoon House is able to send one of our navigators to go and pick up that youth and bring them back to our emergency shelter until we can take them back home. So that's kind of what the outreach program does.

The second program is our Housing Program. Most people, when they hear Cocoon House, they think about our Housing Programs. So through the Housing Programs, we have two emergency shelters for youth ages 12-17. One is located in Everett, and the other one is located in Monroe. With these emergency shelters, we make contact with youth who are running away, who get kicked out of the home, or who have been chronically homeless for a long period of time, and are now ready to ask for services. We are a youth-led organization, so we need that youth to want the services. As soon as they come into our emergency shelters, we're in communication, we try to get into communication with their legal guardian to make sure that we do whatever we need to do to get that youth back home where they belong. So we do family reconciliation services.

Those emergency shelters are for youth ages 12-17 for 14 days, so they can just have somewhere safe. We would much rather have them in our shelters than out in the street. Within 48 hours of a teenager being out on the street in Washington State, they will get approached by a drug dealer, a gang member or somebody who is going to try to sexually exploit them. Youth are very susceptible to sexual exploitation. Last month, we had 5 young ladies at our emergency shelter in Monroe. All 5 were sexually exploited. So we were working with local law enforcement to get them connected to services.

But those are the youth that we want to get off the streets as quickly as possible. If we are not able to return those youth back home, and you know, for the vast majority of those youth, we can return them back home rather quickly. Because usually it's just family dysfunction, a fight. They got

kicked out because of whatever small reason. We're able to get the parents back in and communicate with them, get them connected to our Prevention Program, which I will talk about here in a little bit, and get that youth back home.

If we cannot get that youth back home because of domestic violence, it's unsafe, or any sort of abuse, we also operate a transitional living program in Everett with room for up to 20 youth. That's a long-term shelter where youth not only get a warm meal and a warm place to sleep. They also get life skills. So every youth that comes to that transitional living program, they have to be going to school, they do have life skills like how to open and manage your own checking and savings account, how to fry an egg, how to do your own laundry. We want to make sure that these teens get whatever tools that they're going to be needing to become responsible members of the adult community.

So we also operate another transitional living program up in Arlington, which is a team maternity group home. So it's your pregnant or parenting teen mothers who have been kicked out of the home, or who got pregnant on the streets and are now -- and now have a baby. 1 in 3 teens who were born to a teen themselves become a teen parent. So we're trying to break that cycle as well. We also provide life skills for those individuals there, but it looks a little bit different. It's more about taking care of their bodies and the bodies of their children.

Last but definitely not least is our Prevention Program. The Prevention Program is for any parent in Snohomish County that has a teenager. Whether Cocoon House is working with your teen or not, any parent could call our Prevention Program and get connected to -- it starts with a 90 minute phone consultation with the Master's level therapist just to talk, to see what's going on in the home and address those issues. Then we get connected to parenting classes, parenting support groups and Way Out Seminars. 87% of the teens that we see in our Way Out Seminars with their parent, we never see in our shelters. We want to prevent those youth from hitting the streets and coming into our shelters.

The need is there. Last year, Snohomish County School District reported over 3200 homeless students in Snohomish County alone. That's already a huge number. Cocoon House works with hundreds more teens who haven't been to school in a year or two. So they weren't even counted in that.

So as a community, we need to start to come together, talk about the issues. So I'm so happy that we're actually doing this. Talk about the issue and work together as partners to try and see what we can do together.

I think my time is up, so I have to . . .

[APPLAUSE]

00:29:48 ***MODERATOR***

Thank you, Julio. Our last speaker is Seanna. So Seanna, please come up.

[APPLAUSE]

00:30:01 ***SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN***

The tallest one in the group.

[LAUGHTER]

I am Seanna Herring-Jensen, and I manage the Lake Stevens Family Support Center that's right behind the library here. And we are a program of Lutheran Community Services. So I have been with Lutheran Community Services for about a year and a half now, and previous to that, I worked with homeless veterans. So I used to manage a one-stop center that had all of the wraparound services. So veterans are close to my heart, and that is something that's big in this town.

So when someone comes into the Lake Stevens Family Support Center, they come in usually help with their power bill, maybe some food to get them by, maybe their child needs some school supplies, maybe some clothes, blankets. That's a sign to us that something's wrong within the family. So we sit down, we talk with them, we find out what's really going on. Because if we just pass out food, they're going to be back next week and the next week and the next week and the next week. So they sit down with our resource and support specialist, we try to identify the problem.

And then you start learning what all is really going on in the family. If there's domestic violence, if there is bouts of homelessness, mental health issues, learning disabilities, developmental delays, the list goes on and on. I would say, I'm looking over here to Lori Morgan, she's our housing navigator. And she works to house families that are in crisis. She housed, last year, 19 families from Lake Stevens. So she's a very busy person, and very much in demand.

[LAUGHTER]

So when they come through and we've identified some of the issues, we do work to wrap services around them. It's not a one-time visit, and there is not a one-time fix. It can take months to get someone housed. So if you have a family with 1 parent and 2 or 3 children, all of those individuals get services, individual services. Because the kids are not getting addressed, they might get lost in the circle. So we can work with the schools and the teachers to make sure the child's taken care of. And if we see signs that there might be something else going on, we can call the appropriate counselors or personnel. So what we do is not defined by one definition. We are there to support the family and give resources and help them on their recovery out of poverty.

So that's what we do. So when anyone asks what we do, you name it, we are there. And what's not in the community, we work to provide. So we will work with partners to bring them into the community. So at the Lake Stevens Family Center, we have veterans employment services that come in, we have counseling services that come in, and we have Cocoon House that pops in and out, so social services comes in, DSHS comes in. So we are working on getting a larger center where we can start having more support groups and helping people find those mentors that are going to pull them up out of their situation. Because we do work better when we're together.

So one thing that I do want to address is 2 days ago was the PIT Count, which is an annual point in time count that HUD requires us to do if we want to draw federal funds to our area. It's a very big undertaking. We coordinated everything this side of the slew. We had Snohomish, Lake Stevens, Granite Falls, Darrington, Arlington, Marysville, Tulalip, Stanwood, I don't think I left anybody out. So we asked volunteers to come in on a Tuesday to help us go out and survey the homeless. And it was a form where we asked what caused them to be homeless and where they slept the night before. The numbers are not finalized, so right now, for this side, we have 323 homeless. So

that number is probably going to go up as the rest of the surveys get turned in. It may decrease, because if the form is not filled out completely, we can't count it. So we rely on volunteers. You don't have a lot of volunteers, you can't count all of the homeless that you need. That count last year was critical because unfortunately, it made Washington State the fifth in the country for homelessness. That's not little, that's big. We're in there with California and Nevada. So I was shocked, I didn't think Washington's was that big of a problem, but I've seen it grow just in a year and a half.

So some of the things that we are working towards, we're really looking at innovative things. Because we cannot supply all of the housing. We have to work with what's out there. So your police chief and your mayor here are amazing. They are very progressive, and are looking at other things that communities are doing, and they're trying to get ahead of the game. So on Tuesday, between Snohomish and Lake Stevens, there was only 34 counted. That's not bad. Except there was a camp of 20 that couldn't be counted because everyone ran. So we can't always go count everyone, because they're afraid that they'll get picked up, they're afraid we're going to turn them in to the police, they are very suspicious. So it's hard to get the accurate count, but we know they're there. So we will work on trying to bring those folks in for some services.

So some of the things that we're working on with the homeless population, and chief is very involved in it, we're trying to bring a community court to the area. So Lake Stevens helped to fund a psychiatric social worker who works with those that are on the street to help them get around their issues with the law. Because somebody can have 3 trespasses. Not a big deal, except if you can't make it to Everett or you can't pay your fine, you now have 3 warrants. There is no way that our housing navigator can get them housed. And all they were doing was sleeping in a park. So we are working to bring this innovative program here. And what that is is someone will come into the court, they will work with the judge directly, and with a defense attorney directly, and get the services they need with all of the providers there as resource there every week. So every week, we'll work to get those people off the street and get those things removed off their record. And so we're in process, we're hopefully going to have this in the end of spring. We're working on it.

[LAUGHTER]

We love Spokane's program, and they're going to go up and visit Olympia's next. Those are model programs. So the other things that are coming up, we're trying to develop a one-stop. So what that is -- how many of you try to go to WorkSource, WorkForce, Social Security -- any of those services that might be in Everett, how many of you have a hard time getting there? What if you don't have a car? So we're trying to help those that are most vulnerable to get the services they need, and they can't get to them. So we're working to bring them out to them. And anything that we can do to plug in that gap.

So this one stop would be a coordination of churches and agencies working together. So those are some of the things that we're working on right now. And working more with veterans' services -- so big deal -- and the senior services, that's another one. The homeless senior population is increasing faster than -- it's a shame. I'm just going to put it out there. It's a shame, someone who has raised a family is now living on \$700 a month and can't even afford a 1 bedroom to rent. So they're sleeping in their car with their cat or their dog. So those are our focuses. We're working with veterans, youth and seniors right now.

Okay? 30 seconds, I want to end before anyone else does. I have 30 seconds to go. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

00:37:45 **MODERATOR**

Thank you a lot, Seanna. And thank you, panelists. Before we get into the Q&A, I want to do a shout out to Joyce Bell. Where are you, Joyce?

[LAUGHTER]

Joyce and my wife were the founders of the Lake Stevens Family Center. How long ago was that?

00:38:06 **JOYCE BELL**

Long ago.

[APPLAUSE]

00:38:09 **MODERATOR**

Yeah. And some of you may not know this, but down 16th Street, there's a little house that's got 8 apartments in it. And we call it Avanti House, but that's where we're able to house young ladies who are in high school, either are pregnant or have young children. And they can live there because maybe their family doesn't care to have them at home anymore, they don't have a home. And they get counseling and they have a place to live and still go to school. So that was something else that, Joyce, thank you for doing that.

Another shout out I want to do is to the Sno-Isle Library, not because of what they're doing here tonight, but we did focus groups around the city to talk about building a new library. And one of the things that just stuck with me after those focus groups was hearing the youth, the young people that we brought into that, talking about why do you want a library? How would you use the library? What kind of services do you want in the library? And over and over again, just very quietly, and I didn't quite get it at first, was it's a safe place. So you talked about the symbol, yeah, pretty important.

So with those few remarks, I'll end. And I want to turn to all of you to ask any questions that you might have about this topic that you've heard about tonight. So who wants to go first? Yes, sir.

00:39:44 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

For Chief Dyer...

00:39:46 **MODERATOR**

We have a speaker, that's right, I forgot about that. We have a microphone for you.

00:39:49 **UNIDENTIFIED MALE**

Y'all do not have microphones. We will come to you.

00:39:53 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Thank you very much. Chief, you were going to touch on some specific strategies that the department has. Also, I wanted to ask you the question for the average citizen who is out in the community who encounters some of these homeless folks, any strategies that you might recommend as far as how to identify them, or maybe alert the different police entities as to their presence?

00:40:20 **CHIEF JOHN DYER**

I'll start with the first one, talking about different strategies. Like I said, we have kind of a dual responsibility to answer those calls for service, but also to provide services that are needed. So some of the strategies would be doing what we can to prevent camps from starting in the first place. Once they are started, it's very complex to remove those camps in a way that respects constitutional rights. So try to prevent the camps in the first place, encourage private property owners to secure vacant lots and buildings, work with property owners to clear brush in problem areas, and we can also work with code enforcement a lot of times to deal with the health type issues. So we have to answer those calls for service, and we have to try to minimize those impacts. But it gets difficult because we don't want to just make the problem worse, like we've been talking about.

So the other side of that coin is doing what we can as partners to bring service to these people so that long-term, the problem can be solved. So working with the family center, we talked a little bit about partnering with the public defender in a social worker program. Had the levy passed countywide, that was on the ballot last year, we would have used that money to embed a social worker in with the police department that did not pass. So that's what we're trying to get to that point. Work on education for both the community and the officers, and support anything we can for affordable housing, for support services, for mental health treatment, for drug treatment. And doing our best to try to get those resources to those folks.

As was stated a little bit earlier, if we come down hard on this population, it can work against us in that they will not have trust in us, so when we try to bring services, they're going to run away because they don't want the police dealing with it. So it's a difficult -- it's a double-edged sword that we have to, and I might defer the second part of that question as far as identifying and dealing. I might defer that to somebody else who might want to . . .

00:42:41 **MODERATOR**

Any one of the panelists want to add to that?

00:42:44 **CHIEF JOHN DYER**

As far as if you encounter somebody.

00:42:47 **JULIO CORTES**

So I can speak on the youth portion on that. So that's actually one of the biggest issues that we have is youth homelessness is very difficult to identify anywhere. Although they are homeless, they still want to dress just like their peers, they still want to hang out with their peers. I'm certain that the 3200 homeless students that are in their schools, I bet you 80% of those youth don't tell

their peers that they're homeless, right? So you might see a group of youth walking down the street, and there's no way really to tell if they're homeless or not. When you are able to identify that they're homeless is usually when you see them kind of veer off and start going to where they're actually staying.

Youth are very different from adult homeless individuals because they don't dress in the normal attire of a homeless person. They don't hang out in the normal areas that a homeless person would. Youth are very hard to spot, because they couch surf a lot from home to home to home. They sleep in cars, in motel rooms if they are able to get a lot of money. Unfortunately, we've seen a rise in sexual exploitation of these youth, so they are being controlled kind of where to go. And we've also seen youth who unfortunately rely on sex in order to get a warm place to sleep. So they are very difficult to spot, but if you know what to look for which is if they're veering off to certain areas, if they are carrying a lot of stuff with them, they are usually carrying everything they have.

So for the youth, at least, that's a good way to tell. If they're carrying a lot of stuff or kind of veering into locations that maybe a group of teens or just maybe one teen shouldn't be going to.

00:44:26 **CHIEF JOHN DYER**

And when you do see something like that, that's when you want to let the police know, okay, I saw this and this is what I saw. It helps out.

00:44:33 **MODERATOR**

Seanna, did you want to add to that?

00:44:35 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

I did. I kind of want to address panhandling, everyone's favorite topic. Please don't. Please, I know the communities are so caring and they think that giving someone \$10 is going to help them. You're helping the problem.

So we actually have cards in the back that say we care about you. I don't know if anybody picked them up. Those are what we call service cards. Take some -- yes, those. They are business card sized. It says we care about you, and it has our location. Hand those out. They can come in and get food. They can come in and get services. They can come in and talk to Lori and get into some housing. She can send them back to their family if it's in another state. She can get them there. So there's all kinds of things that can be done. They might not know where to go. So you're helping them by getting them to services. But by giving them cash, you're aiding the problem. And the community is so caring, I don't think they understand that. If you have the need to give something, hand them a can of stew, hand them something to help them eat. Okay?

00:45:35 **MODERATOR**

Okay, a question here. Go ahead. We have a microphone please.

00:45:38 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

I was once informed by a lady that helped out a lot of homeless on the streets that there is actually a group of panhandlers that are kind of controlled the same way the sex industry is controlled,

where they are sat on the street corner. If they don't receive enough money or whatever, then they are beaten or hurt or food is withheld from them or -- but by giving them the money, it's just antagonizing the issue because then they are given, they are turning around and handing it off to their money pimp or whatever.

00:46:15 *SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN*

It's encouraging the problem. So it's not helping the way people think it is. It's creating a larger problem. They have no need to go into services if they are making \$70 a day. And it drives me nuts. I see people hand \$20 bills out at intersections. I'm sitting behind them going no! But I can't stop it.

So the other thing when you encounter someone who is homeless, for us, we talk about this at all of our centers, look at them and say hi. If you have a conversation, say their name. No one says their name, and they are invisible. So if you're walking around a community and you're invisible, how do you think that makes you feel? Seeing all of you here today tells me the community cares - the community cares. So I don't know if they understand that.

So it's important to address them as humans. They are humans. They're in a really tough spot, and they're in trouble. And we have a lot of families on the street, not just those in drug and alcohol. There are more families than you know. There are more families in the encampments. We see those all the time, but they don't have the interaction with the chief and the department.

00:47:19 *MODERATOR*

Okay, let's, are there any questions on this side? I've got a bunch over there. Anybody over here? You've got your hand up first, so go ahead.

00:47:26 *UNIDENTIFIED MALE*

We have a microphone right here.

00:47:31 *AUDIENCE MEMBER*

I'm wondering if any of you have partnerships with local farmers to help feed the homeless.

00:47:38 *MODERATOR*

Any one of you want to do this?

00:47:41 *JULIO CORTES*

So Cocoon House actually does have a partnership with a couple of farmers, and they bring us some produce which allows us to provide healthier meals for the youth. So yeah, they are a great help.

00:47:53 *SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN*

And here in Lake Stevens, have all of you joined Being Neighborly on Facebook? It's time. So Being Neighborly, Lake Stevens.

My mic is having a hard time.

[LAUGHTER]

Being Neighborly, Lake Stevens, is a place where people come together and they are actually working to do community gardens. And last year, I think the food bank, they gave like 6,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables that were given out to the families at the food bank. So they're really trying to incorporate that.

00:48:22 ***MODERATOR***

The community garden will be up at Eagle Ridge Park, and we hope to have it ready for planting in April. My garden won't be ready then, but that one should be.

[LAUGHTER]

I saw some, yes ma'am, go ahead. I'm right behind you.

00:48:42 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

So I've noticed, the past couple of years, how low the numbers were for the Point in Time Count. So last year, I volunteered, and I was given a list to go to very common, normal places. My question is why do they do the Point in Time Contact in the middle of January when most of these homeless people are actually indoors couch surfing, you can't count them, versus the spring and the summer when they're out everywhere?

00:49:14 ***MODERATOR***

Seanna, that's yours.

00:49:15 ***SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN***

Drives me nuts, but it's the federal government. So they tell us, the last 10 days of January, this count has to happen. So each county files the date, and we do the count at the same time. So this happens all across the country during the last 10 days of January. And their belief is, because they are coming out to go to cold weather shelters, to go in to get something warm to eat. That they're huddling together out under the overpasses and overhangs. They're actually easier to spot in the wintertime than the summer. Summertime, they retreat into the woods, in the mountains, along the rivers. So we have -- I have not done a summer count. I would love to see the difference. But we do go, in the count now, the last, this year, we've gone to encampments. People actually go and they take a police officer with them or somebody from the military, because we use them as security, so the volunteers are safe, it's all based on how many volunteers you can get to help you count. You have 5 volunteers, you're not going to get a large count. So it's not accurate.

00:50:15 ***MODERATOR***

Any other? Yes, ma'am. Hang on, we have a microphone for you.

[LAUGHTER]

00:50:20 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Hi, thank you. To expand on that question with doing the summer maybe spring count, because people do go off to the river, is there a way, number one, to do, to put a local one together, even in just a portion of the county? If maybe a couple of cities or something like that.

And my second question is, I remember you had mentioned the Point in Time is only counted if the surveys are completed. What is your definition of completed and incomplete?

00:50:47 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

So the federal government gives us about 6 questions that have to be answered every year. The county will create some, the state will put out some. And that goes on what's called a survey. It's basically asking about if you're a veteran, if you're disabled, if you're homeless because of domestic violence, if there's children. So it goes through all of these different things. And each year, they kind of have a different focus. So we're starting to focus more on the youth count, so that's a big question. If any of that is not counted, let me back up a second, they don't have names on the surveys. So there is a code generated by the answers that are given. So if an answer is not given, that generates a new survey, and we're doubling the count. Does that make sense?

00:51:30 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

No.

[LAUGHTER]

00:51:31 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

So if I take -- if I take the last 2 letters of your last name, maybe the year you were born, and the first initial of your first name, I have a code on you. And your code goes into the computer with all of those answers. If your code comes back up and the answers are different, it's going to look like 2 different people. So they want to make sure it's filled out completely, and that the answers and the codes all match up.

00:51:54 **MODERATOR**

Alright. I got it now.

00:51:54 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

For double counting.

00:51:56 **MODERATOR**

Okay. We had other hands up over here. One way in the back, and then we'll come over to you, ma'am.

00:52:05 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Yes, acknowledging that this is a very complex issue to deal with, and certainly kudos to all of the people that are here tonight and those who are working to help address the issue of homelessness, so much of what we hear about is the after the fact work that's done. Finding people homes, finding people food and clothing, and all of those things. All of those are wonderful efforts.

I think my question is maybe directed more to the mayor and to our Snohomish County Council representative. What efforts are taking place to essentially where we can turn off the spigot? Or at least turn it down? And by that, as an example, we come from a middle class family. There are 2 people in our circle that I fully expect to be homeless in the next year. Both of them are working, one is elderly. She's almost 80 years old and still having to work because the minute that stops, she won't be able to afford to live here. Another is a middle-aged relative who is in the same position, is already working 6 days a week, can't work anymore. We fully expect both of those people to be homeless in the next year.

And so at some point, with all of the development that's taking place and all of the money and all of the focus on wealth, and all of the good things that happen in this county, I don't see, in my observation, meaningful efforts put forth to make sure there is affordable housing. Whether it's developers, however that has to play out, there's got to be a better answer than what we're doing. And I'm curious to see, from your perspective, what efforts are being put forth to fix it up front. And maybe someday these people will be out of a job. That would be ideal.

00:53:56 ***MODERATOR***

I'll give the short answer, then I'll ask if Sam wants to add a little bit to that. I'm going to speak to the -- at its very beginning of this root cause, and I think a lot of it has to do with making sure that children, really young children from birth to 3 years old, are ready for school, and their brains are ready to go to school, and they go to school and they get a good, quality education. If we don't address that at the very beginning, then we are going to have a population of people that go through our schools and are not going to get the education they need.

The other part of that though is you can't give a parent or a guardian a book -- who has a child, and they don't have food to eat, or they don't have housing. So one of the things, and it's interesting you asked that question, this morning I spent some time with the United Way representative, and we were talking about trying to maybe even find a way to bring the Lake Stevens Family Center and the Lake Stevens Food Bank together with some of these other social services all in one place, including the -- well, there is one program called the Dolly Parton library or Imagination Library, which a kid gets a book every month. And they also have a program supporting children from birth to 3 years old.

And bring that all together, but make it part of more of a developed program so that -- I don't care if it's 1 kid or 1000 kids, but if it's only 1 kid, we've helped a young person be prepared for school. And we know that if that brain isn't ready by 3 years old, they're going to struggle all the rest of their life. And we've got to address that. So that's something that -- and the United Way person, I forget her last name, Allison, was quite excited about.

On the affordable housing, it's a joke what we call affordable housing. \$300,000 is not affordable. And we've really got to begin to address it. The market, or the builders who are building to the market, probably are not going to be the ones who are going to build affordable housing. Because they are investing, they are building, and they are building to a market. It's going to take government intervention somewhere along the line to provide affordable housing, even if it's

transitional type housing. That's something I was asked, would the Lake Stevens City Council be favorable to that? Would they look at it in a positive way? And I can tell you that I don't know about the rest of you, but I think we've got one of the best councils. And I said my answer is yes. We bring -- start talking and get solutions out there, we'll move in that direction.

Sam, there's a microphone right behind you.

00:57:04 **SAM LOW**

Sam Low, Snohomish County Council. And I agree with Mayor Spencer 1000%. We're not doing enough on affordable housing. Up until 7 weeks ago, I was president of Lake Stevens City Council, so it's an issue that Mayor Spencer and I have worked on together and talked about. And I'd like to meet with you after, I'll give you my card and maybe we can meet at my office in Everett and talk more about it. Especially the need of the two that you've mentioned.

And also, I want to say, it starts with forums like this tonight. Kudos to Sno-Isle for putting this on. I think this is excellent. It starts with all of us. Just last month, and you're probably not aware, I was at Cocoon House in Monroe helping serve dinner. I'm the president of the Lake Stevens Rotary Club, and every month, we volunteer out of Monroe and cook dinner out there and get to know those kids. And those kids are super kids. One of them was a 4.0 student that was struggling. So I think it starts with all of us getting involved. Not just relying on the government to do it, but all of us doing a certain part and helping in this, and the dialogue that goes along with this.

This isn't my forum tonight, so I'm going to step down. But we can definitely meet after.

0:58:16 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

Could I also just add a little bit to that question about the supply of affordable housing? So, you know, like hearing about the senior citizen that is \$700 a month on Social Security, so our federal housing programs are directly targeted to folks like that. So the Section 8 program, our other rent subsidized housing programs of which we have a couple in Lake Stevens, they pay the rest of the rent so that the person living there only has to pay 30% of their income for rent. So if you have a senior citizen that makes \$700 a month, well they're only going to pay \$150 or \$200 a month in rent, and at least have a little bit leftover for food.

But the problem is revenue. We have 3700 vouchers for the entire county, we have 16,000 people that qualify for them. We have 8,000 people on our waiting list -- households on our waiting list. And there's not enough slots to go around for everyone. There's the federal government, the state government and the county government all fund affordable housing. It gets distributed throughout the county. Some communities in the county really want the money, and they want the projects. Some communities don't.

There is a group called The Alliance for Housing Affordability, which includes Lake Stevens as well as 13 other cities in the county. And we have been looking at some potential new revenue sources locally. With what's happened recently in the election and the new administration, we don't know what the support is going to be like at the federal level for housing anymore, and I'm expecting that really the state and the county and cities are going to have to step up and decide if this is an issue that they care about and the citizens care about, that we need to be willing to put some of our dollars into doing it.

Because we can't build affordable housing without public money. It doesn't pencil. You know? You can build market rate housing and it pencils, but when you're doing affordable housing and you're restricting rents, you're always going to have a funding gap unless you can get public money. And there's just not enough to go around. In our community too, we've gone from multiple years without even getting allocations from the state, and that money is going to Spokane County and other counties.

So I think as citizens of Snohomish County, we need to, you know, really put an effort into both looking at local resources for affordable housing as well as kind of lobbying at the state level and the federal level to make sure we're getting our fair share of public money for our community. And so that was kind of related to just talking to your state legislators, talking to your city council members, talking to your Congressional delegation and explaining to them that this is important. Because as I said at the beginning, this issue has always been so low profile, it's never been sort of the top issue. And when the elected officials don't hear that this is important, they're not going to spend money on it. And that's really what we need to be able to create more slots to create the affordability for people.

1:01:20 ***MODERATOR***

There is one other side to that equation, and that is we can work to try to reduce the cost of building those affordable housing. And that's something that our city council and planning agencies and others can work to building smaller houses, being able to get more on a lot, that kind of thing. And then we have to have a community that's willing to accept those kind of situations. We do have cottage housing codes on our books, and there's not been a single cottage housing setup occur here in Lake Stevens.

Other questions? Okay, the lady in the sweater with the nice flowers and the birds on it, yeah. Cardinals, I think those are cardinals, aren't they?

1:02:04 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Yes, right.

[LAUGHTER]

Is there anywhere that these guys can get bus passes? Because there are a lot of services in Everett that the Snohomish homeless go over there for, but they don't want to stay there because of the violence. They want to come back to Snohomish, so they're going back and forth every day practically. And by the end of the month, they've run out of money for bus tickets.

1:02:32 ***MODERATOR***

So your question was is there any place where they can get support for the transportation? Was that what the question was?

1:02:37 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Right, bus tickets.

1:02:39 ***MODERATOR***

Oh, bus tickets and other transportation. Would anybody here like to answer that question?

1:02:43 ***JULIO CORTES***

So this is Julio Cortes with Cocoon House. So at Cocoon House at our drop-in center in Everett, we do give individuals bus tickets to get to our location and then back home. But we also have advocates at that drop-in center who can come to the communities where those individuals are residing. So if a youth that's 15 needs support, we can come out to Snohomish. If a 22 year old needs some sort of support and wants to meet with a case manager, we can go out and meet them where they are. But at our drop-in center, we do provide bus tickets. I think it's like 3 or 4 a week, for those individuals to go back to their residences if it's in another city.

1:03:22 ***MODERATOR***

So the question is how about adults? Seanna?

1:03:26 ***SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN***

So we've tried, the bus transit system is not user friendly. It can take you hours to get to one location. So if your appointment times are in the morning, you're not going. So it has taken 2 or 3 bus changes for someone to get someplace. Getting a bus pass to them is very difficult. So we've tried, some of the bus passes were sold for cash in encampments. So we limit what we can do. Lori here has them for her programs for housing. So they have an appointment to get to, she makes sure they can get there, or someone comes out to them. So most of our services, I think even most of the partners bring somebody out to people to make sure they're there for their appointment and make sure the services come out to them. It's easier than trying to get them into Everett. So I hope that helps.

1:04:15 ***MODERATOR***

Okay, other? Yes, ma'am.

1:04:29 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

The focus really is on getting long-term housing, but we realize that people need shelters as temporary. So to talk shelters, are there reasons that keep people going from shelters short of transportation issues? Are the shelters generally at capacity? I'm looking at the long-term shelters like The Salvation Army's, and the short-term like the cold weather shelters. I know I've met some individuals and I've gotten various reasons of things like they have so many belongings that they don't want to go to the shelter because they can't transport them with them. Somebody I met that's in a wheelchair and disabled and diabetic, and just really has issues with the shelter that he uses because it's not really setup for him and he has difficulty getting in and out of the bathroom and doing insulin shots and things like that. So if you can address the shelters.

1:05:34 ***SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN***

I can. So emergency shelters around here, there's just a few. And usually it's a 30 day waiting list for emergency shelter. If you're lucky, it's 30 days. Women with children, yeah, and so we've

talked about -- we keep getting asked, open a shelter, open a shelter. It takes a lot. It takes a lot of volunteers, it takes overnight staff, it takes safety, it takes detox.

And some of the folks that come in are going to be under the influence. The cold weather shelters try very hard to keep out those that are under the influence or to keep out those that might be sex offenders, and there's all kinds of issues. So we're trying to figure out that happy medium.

And Utah had an excellent program that -- it's my dream program. Maybe someday soon, I hope. I'd like to pattern something after it. And safe parking lots is another idea where there's security, people parking the cars, they can sleep at night, and there's security in the parking lot to prevent the drug use and the needles and other things.

So there's all kinds of other options other than just the shelters. But that takes resources. So it always comes back down to the money. The problem is so large, we just don't have enough shelters. So I'm sorry.

1:06:46 ***MODERATOR***

Before I go to the next question, I just want to recognize Todd Welch, who is one of our Lake Stevens City Council members in the back. So thank you, Todd, for being here. Any other questions? Questions? Comments? Go ahead, Todd. He doesn't generally need a microphone, but go ahead, Todd.

[LAUGHTER]

1:07:02 ***TODD WELCH***

When it comes to the homeless count and how many we have out there, do we, and I'm sorry I came in a few minutes late. Do we categorize the homeless? As in when you're trying to fix -- I fix problems, that's the way I've always done things. I'm a technician. So there's people who are homeless because they're drug addicted, and that's going to be an issue. Or they're mentally ill, that's a big issue. Then you have the families or the individuals that are financially something happened catastrophic in their lives, and financially they're just, they fell off the grid for a minute, which are easier to fix. That's an easier fix than drugs.

When you spend your money, because to be honest, we only have so much money. There's a finite amount of cash and resources. So you have to kind of spend your money where it's best used. And when you have those people, are they categorized that way? Or is there just like, so the money is spent the best.

And then I have a second question real quick on the youth homeless. When you say that the families kicked them out of the house, say I don't want you here, as a parent of 3 kids, I understand I'm responsible for my kids until they're 18 years of age maturity. When it comes to funding, if a parent says I don't want this kid in my house, whether it be for whatever reason, does the state or government go out for them for child support? Just like you would as a parent. If someone is taking care of your kid, you give them child support. Does the state go back, or the government go back to them and force them to pay for their child's care?

1:08:31 ***JULIO CORTES***

Right, so we do. As soon as a youth comes into one of our facilities, we are in contact with their legal guardian. And if we run into a case where the legal guardian says just nope, I don't want my kid anymore, that's not an option, right? So we work very closely with the DSHS Department and CPS as well.

1:08:49 ***KRISTEN CANE***

Yeah, as it relates to your first question, it sort of works like a triage system, where folks come in, they have an intake, their needs are assessed, and people get prioritized based on need. And the folks that have the biggest need, that have the most serious challenges and disabilities and mental health issues, are the ones that get the first priority for housing slots and maybe Seanna or even Lori could speak a little bit more about how that actual intake works.

1:09:16 ***SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN***

Well, the PIT Count does categorize that. And you can look at the reports. Just go to Snohomish County, PIT, whatever year you want to look at, you can read the report and it does break it down. So this year's will come out in probably June or July, it will be finalized. And then there's a national one that comes out in November, and that just came out. So that's it. What did you say?

1:09:39 ***LORI MORGAN***

I can elaborate. I think Seanna pretty well covered it.

1:09:43 ***MODERATOR***

Okay. Okay Todd, answered okay? Alright. We have a question here.

1:09:51 ***GINA ANDERSON***

Hi there. Not a question so much. I work for the school district, and I run a program called McKinney Vento. It's a federal program that supports our students who are in transition, our students who are homeless.

So one thing that we do is find out, with counselors, with teachers, what are the students who are unaccompanied minors? They have left their home, if a family has lost their housing, and we work to stabilize the family as much as possible. And a big part of that is keeping them in their school of origin. So if we have a family who is enrolled in one of our schools, living in a shelter in Everett, we'll provide transportation to keep the student in their school. Because we know, as someone had mentioned, chronic homelessness is cyclical. If we can get our kids educated and keep them in stable schools so that they can get the resources that they need, they can graduate, they can try to break that cycle.

So if you do see someone in the community, if you know someone in your neighborhood, please reach out to me. My name is Gina Anderson. I work here at the district office. The program is called McKinney Vento, and again, the goal is to identify our families who need that support, identify our students, and get them the services that they need.

1:10:58 ***MODERATOR***

Thank you, Gina. That's great to know that. You're scratching your head, okay. Over here, question?

1:11:08 *AUDIENCE MEMBER*

I'm a local church planner and pastor, and I work with several ministries throughout the state. If -- say we wanted to not be obsolete. We wanted to actually do things that mattered, and we didn't want to hand out bus passes or Starbucks cards or, you know, have one day outreach a year. What would be things that we could actually do that would matter to the community and be helpful?

1:11:38 *MODERATOR*

Who would like to start with this one?

[LAUGHTER]

1:11:41 *SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN*

How much time do we have? The churches have -- you have a lot of ability that, you know, we're also faith-based. We're Lutheran Community Services. We're not allowed to do any ministering or anything like that. So we have -- our organization has so many different faiths involved. But the churches can offer a lot a safe place for them to go where they know they don't have to pray to get food. They're afraid to go in because they've been forced so many times. Where they can go, maybe they can help you clean. They want a place to belong and feel that they're not invisible, that they're important to this community.

And once people start having faith in them, they start having faith in themselves. Getting past that depression -- mental health issues, for all of you that have had health issues, you know when you're in crisis, you're not hearing or thinking through things clearly anymore. And so a lot of people are homeless, it's hard. It's hard to focus down on it. When you have a circle that's safe, they will return.

So trainings, opportunities to volunteer, have them earn something for their food, have them be a part of the community. That being a part of the community is probably the biggest connection of services we can offer them.

1:12:50 *KRISTEN CANE*

I'd also like to add something to that too, which is a much kind of bigger scale thing, and not every church would be able to do it, but a model that is really interesting is being used in South County and in King County is that churches with surplus land are partnering with affordable housing developers and service providers to build housing on their land.

And one example that's about to open up next month in Shoreline is called Ronald Commons. And it's really -- you're familiar with it, but yeah, so it's a really beautiful partnership between the church, between a service provider, Hope Link in this case, and then an affordable housing developer, Compass Housing Alliance, where the residents can be part of the church community, the church community can also provide services to the residents, you have other case managers and mental health specialists there.

So it's, you know, those are big projects that take many years, but as an affordable housing developer myself, I'm looking for churches in Snohomish County that would love to partner on something like that. I know there's other affordable housing developers that are doing the same.

1:13:50 ***MODERATOR***

Yes?

1:13:55 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

I would like -- tell me if I'm out of line, mayor. I'd like to put a plug in for the Lake Stevens Food Bank. They are looking to build a building. They're seeking funds to do that, whether it's the number of people they're serving, their location is not adequate for what they do. They will be building, hopefully, on the property adjacent to Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Lake Stevens here.

The other thing I'd like to promote, because I talked to the director today, is we do have, Ebenezer sponsors a community supper program every Thursday from 5-6:30. And one of the concerns is advertising, how we get the word out. They served -- last year, I was told their average service on Thursday evenings was 84. And they're not seeing a lot of the young people. They're seeing some families come in with kids.

So it's getting the word out that there are services available and things and places -- safe places for people to go. One of the things about the community supper program is different organizations, service groups, churches, youth programs, help serve that supper. And so there are opportunities out there, and it's getting the word out.

1:15:21 ***MODERATOR***

Okay. In terms of the food bank, let me just tell you that our kind senator, Steve Hobbs, from Lake Stevens, is adding an additional \$300,000 to a budget request that we have for our Lake Stevens Civic Center. And he's telling me that he's getting some pretty good traction in the legislature for that. And so the goal here is to work with the family center, I want to connect with [INDISTINCT]. Try to connect with the Boeing capital. The Boeing employees capital fund, and see if we can't really generate the synergy between the food bank, the family center and civic center here in Lake Stevens to actually not just create a place for all of that, but by people being in the same place, I think the services would pop and people would know about it, and they would know. If we have a kitchen where you have a food bank so you can teach people how to cook the food that they get, the vegetables that are donated, some of them don't even, what do you do with this potato? I've got 10 pounds of potatoes, what do I do with it? You know? They don't know. They've been buying their food out of a mini mart or a convenience food store.

So alright, enough [INDISTINCT]. Other questions? Yes, you have a question. Sure!

1:16:52 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Okay, so I have a tendency to get a little bit excited. So bear with me if I'm a little far out there right now. These forums are great for gaining information. And maybe I'm totally lost and I haven't seen anything, but when are we getting the other people in the community at a round table to share their ideas? Because I don't know about everybody else in this room, but everybody that I talk to, and I work at WorkSource with the youth center, and I work at Everett Community

College with the high barrier students, and I see a lot of homelessness gap between these kids who are youth and people that are 50, 60, 70 trying to go back to school to get that livable wage at \$18 an hour. And I'll tell you, none of my programs put it out there.

[LAUGHTER]

However, there are so many people that I talk to in this field that have so many great ideas, and we're getting information, but where are those ideas? And a lot of us, myself included, don't know how to go to the legislators, and we don't know how to hold those discussions. So anybody want to partner up on that? I'd be happy to work on it.

1:17:52 ***MODERATOR***

What I'm going to suggest, you have a great question. And I have to tell you that I've not had a free night this week. And I started this morning at, to be honest, I started at 4:00 this morning. So I'm not going to hold that forum.

[LAUGHTER]

But I think our family center, and I heard a pastor speak up about what can churches do? I would really like to see our faith-based organizations in this community. They don't have to be the sponsors of the services necessarily, but I think they can bring people together. We can talk, we can organize and distill out of that, what are the ideas that we can do? What is it that we can pay for? Either locally or through volunteer work or through our state legislature, and then move it forward. If it's moved forward through a place, like a new food bank or if it's moved forward through something else, other place, I think we could hit a homerun here in this community. And I will talk to our legislators, and the city council, all of us are going to Washington, D.C., the National League of Cities. And this is on our agenda.

The other thing I wanted to mention is our city council talked about creating a Veteran's Commission for lots of reasons, but for 2 reasons. We have a lot of vets in this community, we have a lot of Navy personnel here, and while there are a lot of vets that need support and services, there's also a lot of vets that are unbelievably capable, functional, and they want to get involved. And we think a Vet's Commission, we can do what you're talking about here, maybe use the Veteran Commission to begin to focus some of our efforts, not just to help other vets, but to help everybody in this community, help our young people in this community, help our children in this community. So the council is really excited about doing this, and we're going to get some expert advice on how to set it up so it's not something that next year we say oh, we tried, but you know, it didn't work. We're going to push forward on that.

Okay, as moderator, you're next. I'm going to let you make a comment, Seanna.

1:20:19 ***SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN***

In a couple of months, we're going to start our community assessment. Because our family center responds to the needs in the community, and there might be something going on in the community that we're not aware of. So I think having a forum to teach people how to work with their legislators is an excellent idea. And we will start doing our listening sessions. So please go to that, because we actually cover the wall with ideas and start narrowing them down, and find the partners. Because I guarantee in this room, some of you know some people in Foundations, some

of you work at Boeing, some of you work at places that have access to some funds that will help this problem. So we want to bring those people together.

1:20:55 ***MODERATOR***

So Seanna, will you make contact with, I didn't catch your name, but the [INDISTINCT]?

1:20:59 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Oh, you better believe it.

[LAUGHTER]

1:21:02 ***MODERATOR***

And we have a question right here. Go ahead, sir.

1:21:06 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

Hello. Actually, it's just a comment. To answer her question, I volunteer with a group called Results. And although homelessness is not specifically one of our issues, we do train people how to work with their Congressional delegations. And we are having an advocacy training on February 10th I think it is. We are results of Snohomish County on Facebook, and you'd be welcome to come to that. It is in Snohomish. We do also have regular meetings in this county. And by going to the Facebook or results.org, you can find out about these meetings.

1:21:57 ***MODERATOR***

Okay, great. Thank you, that's good information to have. We have a question right here. Go ahead.

1:22:05 ***AUDIENCE MEMBER***

First of all, a couple of shout outs. You were talking about the farmers earlier. Carlton Farms does a lot for the food bank I volunteer with in Everett. And kudos to them.

Also, on the advocacy point, the League of Women Voters, they do a lot on that. Actually, on Saturday, I'll be going to an advocacy workshop that they are putting on. So that's another avenue.

My question is, do we have any kind of coordinating body or organization that is keeping track of the services that are available so that when someone is in need, they know that okay, the community supper is on Thursday, the food bank is open right afterwards. They can go to the family center at these hours. There are so many things that are out there, and to try to have kind of a consolidated list of services would be really handy. And that would also allow the faith-based community to know where they could fit in. I know in Everett, there are a lot of suppers, and different churches have different nights. And you don't want to start offering services on those nights, because, you know, you start stepping on each other's toes. So there's a coordination that goes on. So I'm wondering if we can do a similar thing here.

1:23:28 ***MODERATOR***

I'm going to let Seanna speak to that, but the answer to your question is yes, that's one of the primary roles of the family center, is to have this sweep of what are all of the services or resources and services available? And then help people get to it. Plus dealing with this coordination. That's why I want Seanna to get in touch with Emily.

1:23:50 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

So right now, we have a really boring Facebook page. Not a Facebook page, sorry, website that's being revamped. And it will have a calendar on it so we can put everything that's going on in each community. The calendar right now is kind of hidden in there, and it's not user friendly. So we have flyers and information at the center that we pass out to people. And the other thing is the county keeps track of, as much as they can, and it's called coordinated entry. So someone can call - oh, there you go. The library has it too.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, so we try our very best. What we don't know is when someone starts something new and they don't put the word out to all of us that get the word out to that population. It's hard, and we want to use those services. So please send it our way, send it to the library. We all get the same emails back and forth, it's really important.

1:24:39 **MODERATOR**

So I'm going to have to, I'll take your question, but I do want to bring the Q&A to an end and let each one of our panelists have 30 seconds to a minute just to wrap up. So yes, go ahead.

1:24:51 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

So can we get an email address for those of us that are aware of services that are available in the community of where can we send that information?

1:24:59 **MODERATOR**

What's your email address, Seanna? It's on the sheet?

1:25:05 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

It's on the sheet you should have received. It's sjensen@lcsnw.org. It's on there. Don't send me kitty videos though please.

[LAUGHTER]

1:25:18 **MODERATOR**

Okay. Wow, thank you very much. This is pretty terrific. And I thank you for spending your evening here. I know you all have lots of things to do other than sit in another meeting.

[LAUGHTER]

So I'm going to start with you, John. You've got 30 seconds or a minute to wrap up your comments.

1:25:41 **CHIEF JOHN DYER**

Just, you know, I'm grateful to be part of this group. There's a lot of reasons we've gotten to this point. But this problem is almost always a symptom of an underlying problem. And law enforcement alone is not the answer to those underlying problems. So I'm grateful to be part of the effort, not just of enforcement of the laws, but also the issues of permanent housing, clinical outreach, case management and services. So I'm just grateful to be part of that process.

[APPLAUSE]

1:26:19 **KRISTEN CANE**

So just a few quick things. If you're interested in learning more about Coordinated Entry and the Homeless Housing System and Service System in the county, there's an event called Examining the Front Door of the Homeless Housing System. It's on March 9th at 7:30a.m. at the Everett Station. It's \$15. You can find out more on housingsnohomish.org. That's the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County.

I mentioned Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day in Olympia, which is February 2nd. You can register at washingtonlowincomehousingalliance.org. And they provide a lot of the training around how to talk to your legislatures and what the bills, you know, that are up right now at the state level are, so you can go in with information on that.

And what else did I want to say? Yeah, just thank you for coming and being engaged and interested in this issue. It's going to take sort of all of us in each of the communities to really address it. So thank you.

1:27:14 **MODERATOR**

Julio?

[APPLAUSE]

1:27:19 **JULIO CORTES**

Great, I just wanted to say it again. Thank you to Sno-Isle Libraries for putting this together. It's really important for us to get the word out on this issue. Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day, if you haven't been, please go. They do give you trainings there on how to talk to your legislative officials. I'm a board member with the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, and they're a great organization that can educate you the way you need to be educated to really make an impact with our elected officials. So again, thank you everybody for coming out. And if you want to learn anything about Cocoon House or youth homelessness, visit us at cocoonhouse.org, or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

[APPLAUSE]

1:28:03 **SEANNA HERRING-JENSEN**

Woohoo! Last but not least. Thank you so much for coming out, because you really, this is a great community. To see everyone here is really touching for those of us that work it every day to see that we're not alone in this. Sometimes it feels kind of lonely. And those that volunteer at the food bank and with the churches and at the schools, it feels good to know we're on the right path. Any ideas you have, please share. Please. Don't be afraid to speak up. We are going to do the listening sessions coming up in a couple of months. So if you want to go to our Facebook page and like it, or Being Neighborly Lake Stevens, you will get that information. It will be at the libraries, it will be through the schools. So please come and share your ideas and your thoughts. If you find a program someplace else that you think might be a good fit here, please share that. We're all in this boat together, and we're trying to help them. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

1:29:01 ***MODERATOR***

Thank you all very much. That brings us to -- you have, you're waving something at me. Oh, the evaluations. It's a pink slip.

[LAUGHTER]

1:29:11 ***MODERATOR***

The pink slip. So take your time to fill out the evaluations for us please. It's really important that we get that information to know whether this was of any value to you. I guess I put it this way. If you had other things to do tonight, how did this one stack up on whatever the scoring is? And let us know. Okay? So again, thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

END OF RECORDING [01:29:38]