

Resource event focuses on homeless

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In the January 2009 Homeless Count, there were 3,244 people experiencing homelessness in Marion and Polk counties. Approximately 1,100 were school-aged children.

We don't have final numbers from the January 2010 count yet, but even the 2009 numbers are staggering; 3,200 individuals is equivalent to the combined student bodies from two of our local high schools. That's larger than the populations of some of cities such as Aumsville, Gervais or Jefferson.

And ultimately, it's 3,200 more individuals than should be experiencing homelessness in our community.

On March 23, the Community Action Agency will partner with numerous agencies and service providers across Marion and Polk counties for the second annual Community Homeless Connect, a one-day resource event in which providers gather at one location to deliver needed services, resources, and referrals to people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.

Service providers will offer access to resources such as medical and dental care, benefits such as food stamps, housing options, legal aid, employment and training, parent support, and guest services such as hair cuts, bicycle repair, and other personal hygiene services.

During the 2009 event, providers were able to connect 778 homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless individuals with needed services and resources. The 2010 goal is to serve at least 1,000 individuals. To make this happen, Community Homeless Connect is looking for more than 250 volunteers to fill a variety of key roles, including:

Companion Guides: Volunteers will work one-on-one with guests to make sure they have a valuable experience. Volunteers will guide guests through the day and make sure they get all of the services they need. There is a specific need for bilingual volunteers.

Check-In: Volunteers will welcome guests, complete a registration process with each guest and conduct an interview that will help to identify services the guest needs access to throughout the day.

In-kind donations of prescription eye glasses are also need for distribution to homeless guests at the event. Drop off eye glass donations at Community Action Agency at 2475 Center St. NE Salem, OR 97301.

For more information and/or to sign up for these or other volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.Hands OnMWV.org](http://www.HandsOnMWV.org).

For more information and to contact event organizers about Community Homeless Connect please visit www.communityhomelessconnect.org

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