



NCWP Helps Conduct Survey of Westchester / Playa Homeless Population

By Booker Pearson, NCWP Board Member

On the evening of September 28, a snapshot of the homeless population within the boundaries of the Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa (NCWP) was conducted. The collaborative efforts included personnel and volunteers from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), U.S. Vets, Loyola Marymount University (LMU), the community at large and the NCWP. Invaluable support was also received from Los Angeles City Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, the Pacific Division of the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Airport Police Department.

The entire district was divided into 14 separate grids and covered on foot by teams of four or more consisting of both volunteers and professionals. Forty eight homeless individuals were counted along with an additional 50 vehicles where people appeared to be living.

The estimated demographics of the individuals were:

- Male – 40
- Female – 7
- Undetermined – 1
- Under 60 – 43
- Over 60 – 5
- African American – 14
- Asian – 2
- White – 31

Of the 50 vehicles, 45 were vans or RVs and 5 were cars.

Thirteen homeless people were interviewed, with a large percentage indicating that they were anchored to the community by having lived, worked, attended school or had relatives in the area. The other key findings were:

- The average length of homelessness was just under 5 years
- The average age of respondents was 54 years
- 54% reported serious health conditions
- 33% self report mental health issues
- 33% self report substance abuse issues

In a follow-up meeting of the NCWP Homeless and Vehicular Living Committee; LAHSA, PATH and community volunteers agreed to concentrate further outreach efforts in hotspot areas where homeless individuals and inhabited vehicles were concentrated. Additionally, a commitment was made to engender more collaboration and cooperation between all entities that address the needs of the homeless and their effect on the community. All participants felt that the homeless snapshot was of great value and will result in significant positive results for not only those unfortunate homeless individuals among us, but also the entire neighborhood.

Booker Pearson is a past Chairman of the Board of Upward Bound House, a non-profit organization that helps homeless children and their families find permanent housing. He is also a member of the Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa, where he holds the Senior Citizen seat.



Westchester's Homeless by the Numbers ...

The following information was obtained from Westchester's homeless population during interviews conducted by the survey team:

Cause of Homelessness:

Lost Housing	7
Lost Job	1
Mental Health	1
Substance Abuse	2
Other	4

Source of Income:

Job	1
Panhandling	3
SSI/SSDI/SSA	5
VA	1
Food Stamps	1
General Relief	3
Recycling	2
None of the Above	1
Other	1

Sleep Location:

On the Street	5
Car/Van	6
Encampment	1
Other	1

* Based on interviews with 13 homeless people who agreed to take part in the survey.
Note: some respondents gave more than one answer to some questions.

