County, community partners working to end veteran homelessness

Seventy-two formerly homeless veterans in Snohomish County now have permanent homes thanks to a strategic partnership between Snohomish County and local nonprofit and social service agencies.

A Jan. 24, 2013, point-in-time count found 99 veterans living in various stages of homelessness. That snapshot spurred the county’s Veterans Homelessness Committee – a county, nonprofit and social service partnership – to take steps toward finding a solution. Thoughts became ideas, ideas became suggestions and suggestions became the committee’s plan – “Housing the ninety-nine.”

The committee declared that two key methods would allow them to provide housing for at least 99 veterans in Snohomish County. The first step was to increase outreach about programs available to veterans, targeting both urban and rural areas throughout the county; the second was to make existing housing programs more easily accessible to those most in need. By Aug. 31, 72 veteran households now have permanent homes as a direct result of this partnership.

“Our veterans made a commitment to protect us at any cost,” said County Executive John Lovick. “It is our duty as a community and as Americans to make a commitment to the health and wellbeing of our veterans. We cannot fail. This committee is a great example of our community coming together to provide hope and help for our former servicemembers.”

Further evidence of the progress being made by the committee is the dramatic decrease in the number of homeless veterans requesting services from Snohomish County’s Veterans Assistance Program. Back in 2009, a total of 262 homeless veterans requested assistance through the county program. As of August 15, 2013, that number has dropped to 32.

The tremendous success of this committee would not be possible without all of the partners working together. Those partners include Catholic Community Services, Volunteers of America, Department of Veterans Affairs, Snohomish County Human Services, Housing Authority of Snohomish County, Therapeutic Health Services, Community Health Centers, Senior Services, YWCA, Naval Station Everett, Salvation Army, and Worksource; it also includes service organizations such as the American Legion and the Veterans of
Foreign Wars.

The committee meets the second Wednesday of each month, rotating between the Salvation Army and Catholic Community Services in Everett. For more information about the program, visit http://snohomish.wa.networkofcare.org/veterans/content.aspx?cid=795, contact Jerry Gadek at 425-388-7367 or Gerard.Gadek@snoco.org.

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