County to honor homeless who died in the past year; special tribute planned for veterans at Dec. 20 event

Their deaths rarely make the headlines and might go unnoticed in the obituaries, but Snohomish County is committed to honoring the homeless men and women – civilian and military – who died this past year in our communities. The annual memorial is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20, in front of the courthouse building at 3000 Rockefeller Ave. in Everett.

The local event is part of the national homeless persons’ memorial day and will include a special tribute to veterans. It is held on or near the coldest day of the year to recognize the conditions homeless people face night after night.

The plight of homeless veterans is something particularly meaningful to Snohomish County Executive John Lovick.

“I’m reminded of the quote attributed to Theodore Roosevelt - ‘A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards,’” Lovick said. “It is our responsibility as a community to provide hope and help to our servicemembers.”

Reaching out to the homeless can be challenging, said Jerry Gadek, veterans’ service officer in the county’s veterans’ assistance program. Many people drop out of the system before they can be helped.

This event, organized by the county’s Veterans Homelessness Committee, is our way of saying, “we’re so very sorry you died alone, and as a community, we will do everything we can to stop this from happening anymore,” Gadek said.

Twelve people are expected to be honored this year, including Debbrah Pesce who was riding her bicycle across Highway 2 last December when a truck hit and killed her. For more information about the event, please contact Jerry Gadek at gerard.gadek@snoco.org or 425-388-7367.

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