

WestHollywoodPatch

THE NEIGHBORHOOD FILES, GOVERNMENT

Homeless Count to Get Under Way in West Hollywood

Volunteers are needed to canvass the city Thursday as part of a nationwide effort.

By **Anne Louise Bannon** January 25, 2011

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority could use your help. The agency is counting the number of homeless people in the county, including West Hollywood, over the next three nights.

"We're shooting to secure four thousand volunteers," said Calvin Fortenberry, spokesperson for the agency, which is a joint agency of both the city and county of Los Angeles.

The Homeless Count is a nationwide project, done in January, as mandated by the Housing and Urban Development Department of the federal government.

"It helps us understand the magnitude of the homeless population in our area," said Leslie Isenberg, social services program administrator for the city of West Hollywood.

"We really need to know how many homeless people we have if we're going to help them," Fortenberry said.

This will be the fourth homeless count since the first one was done in 2005. The count not only tallies up how many homeless people there are, but counters also collect basic demographic information, such as age, race, gender and issues of substance abuse and mental health.

"There's a different entry point for different people. I don't think that we can definitively say that each homeless person is uniform in that way," Fortenberry said.

The important thing is to get people out there counting and volunteering. Most of the counts will start at 8 p.m. and run until 1 a.m., which Fortenberry agreed is not the most ideal time for people.

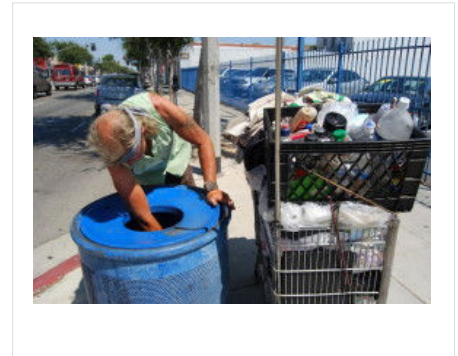
But just getting the word out can help. Also, volunteers will be needed to take supplies from place to place and other tasks that don't actually involve counting.

"We need to have those people out there, just being part of the effort, because that's what's going to get us an accurate count," Fortenberry said.

Isenberg said that several city employees will be participating in the Metro L.A. count on Thursday night, when the city of West Hollywood will be counted.

Volunteers can sign up at the [LAHSA.org](http://www.lahsa.org) (<http://www.theycountwillyou.org/volunteer/default.html>) website or show up at the West Hollywood Sheriff's Station, 780 N. San Vicente Boulevard, on Thursday at 8 p.m., Isenberg said. Training will be included.

Do you think there's a homeless problem in Weho? Tell us in the comments.



Interested in a follow-up to this article?



SEE NEXT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD FILES
Resident Spotlight: Andey Ast