

Homelessness Declines in Stamford

By Nora Naughton

STAMFORD — The leader of the largest homeless shelter in Fairfield County said a recent study shows the progress made to get people off the streets.

But he says there's still a "mammoth task" ahead.

An annual snapshot of the homeless population in Stamford and Greenwich indicated an 18 percent decrease in the population of people on the streets and in local shelters, according to data released Thursday.



The Point-in-Time Count, conducted this year on Jan. 24 by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, found only 27 people on the streets during the 2017 headcount, all of whom were single adults. Another 226 people were accounted for in emergency and transitional housing. Most of them were also single adults.

"It has been a long haul to begin to make a dent in homelessness, and we are thrilled we have begun to turn the corner," said Jason Shaplen, CEO of Inspirica. "But it is important that we solidify and further advance these gains in the face of continuing economic pressure and possible funding cutbacks."

Chronic homelessness in the area has significantly declined, with only 12 people falling into that category this year — compared to 35 in 2016.

"The state and national goal was to end chronic homelessness by the end of 2016, and while we didn't quite achieve it, we came close," Shaplen said. "The next goal is even more ambitious. It's to end youth and family homelessness by 2020. We are excited to turn our attention to that goal, but it is a mammoth task."

The coalition's report of a stark decrease in homelessness in the greater Stamford area comes after a slight increase — 1 percent — in 2016. Last year's numbers were driven up by a 35 percent increase in unsheltered homelessness, though veteran chronic homelessness reached a functional zero.

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The decrease in Stamford and Greenwich, which are combined in CCEH's data, is ahead of the statewide decrease of 13 percent reflected in the study. Surveyors found a total of 3,387 people in the state experiencing homelessness. That's the lowest statewide statistic in the Point-In-Time Count's 10-year history.

Other western Connecticut cities saw homeless numbers decrease as well. Bridgeport saw a 13 percent decrease and Danbury's dropped 12 percent from 2016 to 2017, the coalition said. Norwalk's one-year decrease in homelessness was more dramatic at 31 percent.

Gov. [Dannel P. Malloy](#) said the state deserved credit for its programs to increase access to housing.

"Over the last several years, our state has built solid partnerships with local, state, and federal organizations to strengthen our housing needs in order to ensure that when someone becomes homeless, it is brief and nonrecurring," Malloy said in a prepared statement.

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