

Countywide 'homeless connect' event set Jan. 28

SOLUTIONS | In its fifth year, a one day event endeavors to link those without homes to help

Washington County Project Homeless Connect, whose mission is to bring communities together to create and promote solutions that remedy the homelessness of their neighbors, will be held at Sunrise Church in Hillsboro on Jan. 28.

Project Homeless Connect is in its fifth year and is a main strategy in the county's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, which was adopted by commissioners in 2008.

The event is a one day, one-stop project designed to connect individuals in need to services and supports, as well as mobilize the community around this growing issue.

The Washington County unemployment rate has grown from 4.4 percent in January 2008 to 9 percent in October 2010, with the highest rate occurring in September 2009 at 9.9 percent. Since January 2010, the Oregon Employment Department has seen 18,182 new unemployment insurance claims in Washington County, the second highest in the state. Approximately 8,000 county residents are projected to have

their unemployment benefits end by or before June 2011 while remaining unemployed, possibly causing another upturn in the number of homeless people as 2011 progresses.

Washington County's 2010 one-night homeless count identified 1,383 homeless individuals, up from 1,243 in 2009. The 2010 numbers include 449 children under the age of 18.

Last year's Project Homeless Connect saw over

60 nonprofit, faith, public and private community partners and 275 volunteers work to provide services such as health and dental care, haircuts, food and clothing and connections to needed housing and social services to approximately 500 individuals in need. In addition, 65 community leaders attended a key leaders briefing, hosted by Vision Action Network, to learn more about the issue and how the community is responding.

Project Homeless Connect

is identified by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness as an innovation which moves people more quickly toward housing and stability and furthers the goals of community 10 Year Plans.