

Community learns about plans to end homelessness

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Hundreds converged at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum Annex last week to participate in Winston-Salem's first-ever Project Homeless Connect. The project is an initiative of the city's 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness, a multi-organizational effort that implements various programs and services to help people get off the streets once and for all.

"The original idea for Project Homeless Connect started in San Francisco, as a service project as part of their work to end chronic homelessness in their city," related Andrea Kurtz, implementation director of Winston-Salem's Ten-Year Plan. "That model has spread across the country."

Winston is not alone in its effort to end homelessness. More than 300 communities in 49 states are also trying, combining the resources and expertise of government agencies, faith-based communities, nonprofit organizations and concerned individuals, to create an innovative and effective manner of addressing the problem of homelessness through programs like Project Homeless Connect.

"The purpose behind Project Homeless Connect is to try and bring all of the service providers who serve people who are homeless or having housing problems into one place for one day, so that it's easier for people who need those services to get them," said Kurtz. "We have over 50 agencies represented here today."

The comprehensive nature of the project was one of its most important components, Kurtz said.

"We have pretty much every service you can imagine, from the health department providing STD screenings and health screening services, mental health providers working with people, housing services, employment services, all on site," Kurtz said. "If we could imagine it, we tried to get it here."

Several local and national leaders were also in attendance,



Andrea Kurtz holds the award she received.



Philip Mangano speaks.

including Mayor Allen Joiner, who spoke at the event, and Philip Mangano, executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, which oversees the various ten-year plans.

Mangano presented Kurtz with an award for her tireless efforts on behalf of the homeless, both through volunteering and through her work with the project.

"It was very overwhelming," she said of receiving the honor. "I do this work because it's important to me; it's important to my community ... I never dreamed that I would be getting a volunteer award from the President."

Although there are many cities that are seeing declines in the levels of homelessness as a result of their ten-year plans, Mangano said that Winston-Salem has displayed a rare collaborative spirit that is sure to make it a frontrunner in the struggle to end chronic homelessness.

"I think that there's a very good partnership here in Winston-Salem. The mayor, I think, has been very good in bringing together people around a lot of different issues," he remarked. "Homelessness is not the exception there. Even today with this Project Homeless Connect, we're seeing the corporate presence here - American Express has sent ... 40 people that are volunteering here to help their homeless neighbors ... United Way is here, and in my past visits, I have seen other people from the

business and the corporate community participating.

"That kind of partnership in communities, that absolutely correlates with how well the Ten Year Plan rolls out," he continued. "It's not enough just to have government, it's not enough just to have the faith community - you need to have a partnership that spans government and the private sector to get the job done. I absolutely see that here in Winston-Salem, so we're looking for great things to roll out of Winston-Salem, in terms of not simply servicing homeless people, but solving their homelessness."

Heart

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- secondhand smoke;
- Lower blood pressure if necessary;
- Follow a healthy diet low in grease, cholesterol and salt; and
- Engage in regular physical exercise and maintain a healthy weight.

All people should get regular medical checkups, especially those at high risk for heart disease. Many effective drugs can control hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes; your healthcare provider can help you deter-

mine the best regimen for you. Coronary artery disease and many other types of heart disease can be prevented; it is essential to identify your risk factors and take steps to reduce them!

- Contribution by Sarah Fahey

For further information or questions or comments about this article, call toll-free 1-877-530-1824. Or, for more information about the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health, visit www.wfubmc.edu/minority-health.

Obesity

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workers' compensation claims. Because the BMI takes into account both a person's height and weight, it is considered the most accurate measure of obesity. For Americans, a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered normal; 25 to 29.9 is considered overweight, and 30 and above is considered obese.

The researchers found that workers with a BMI greater than 40 had 11.65 claims per 100 workers, compared with

5.8 claims per 100 in workers within the recommended range. In terms of average lost days of work, the obese averaged 183.63 per 100 employees, compared with 14.19 per 100 for those in the recommended range. The average medical claims costs per 100 employees were \$51,019 for the obese and \$7,503 for the non-obese.

The body parts most prone to injury among obese workers were the lower extremity, wrist or hand, and back. The most common causes of these injuries were falls or slips, and lifting.

Dispute

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Artman wrote in the letter, which came in response to an earlier letter from Watson and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who have called the Cherokees' vote discriminatory.

A spokesman for Watson said the congresswoman is drafting a bill to keep the Cherokee Nation from receiving millions of dollars in federal funds. She wants the BIA to require the tribe to restore citizenship to the freedmen descendants.



Artman

spokesman Mike Miller said only the tribe, and not the BIA, can determine the requirements for tribal citizenship.

"The Cherokee people have fought for centuries to preserve our rights of self-governance, through forced relocation, genocide and outright land theft," Miller said.

Miller said the March vote was not racial in nature.

"We proudly count African-American Cherokees among our citizens," he said.

Miller said that when members of Congress learn the facts of the debate, they will side with the Cherokee Nation.

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—Aquita Burrus C'05
Business administration major, sociology minor

"I had a degree in architecture, but I had always thought about going to medical school. Medicine appeals to me because it brings together the things I enjoy so much - the creative and the technical."

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