

# Whittier Daily News

Volunteers turn out to count homeless

**By Ben Baeder**

**Staff Writer**

**Wednesday, January 26, 2005** - WHITTIER -- A group of 43 volunteers fanned out in Whittier on Wednesday night to count the city's homeless population.

Armed with yellow hats, flash lights, pencils and paper, volunteers on foot and by automobile canvassed the city looking for people living in cars, camped out in bushes or sleeping on porches.

The tally was part of the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, a three-day, countywide effort by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Many of the volunteers were homeless or were formerly homeless, and many of them knew where to look for people sleeping on the street, they said.

Wednesday night's Whittier tally was still in progress at 9:45 p.m.

By tonight, volunteers working with the homeless authority will have counted homeless in about 25 percent of the county's neighborhoods, said Siri Khalsa , a homeless authority spokeswoman.

By combining the "street count" with data from shelters, courts and recovery programs, the authority in about five months will estimate the county's homeless population.

The count was mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which asked communities across the nation receiving federal homeless-recovery money to justify the expense.

Last year, Los Angeles and Los Angeles County received about \$52 million in federal money earmarked for homeless services, according to the homeless authority.

Francis Swift, the director of the Southeast Drug Court and Youth Services Creative Alternatives Youth Services Programs in Downey, volunteered for the tally with three friends.

"This is so neat," she said. "It's a chance to like be part of history."

When completed, the count will be the most comprehensive ever conducted in the county, according to officials from the homeless authority.

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