

APPEAL-DEMOCRAT

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Local coordinated-entry facilities continue to serve those in need

By Lynzie Lowe



Services at the Life Building Center in Marysville have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with health and safety precautions including social distancing, limited capacity and wearing facial coverings.

While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted most aspects of daily life for the better part of the last year, the Yuba-Sutter area's coordinated-entry facilities have continued to provide services to the local homeless population.

Rick Millhollin, executive director of Hands of Hope in Yuba City, said the local coordinated-entry centers were able to stay open because they are considered an essential service for the homeless population and things stayed pretty much status quo despite having to implement many health and safety guidelines.

"We have stayed busy," said Millhollin. "We've even ramped up services during the pandemic."

Hands of Hope, which is the lead agency that runs the local coordinated-entry locations, operates out of two locations – one out of the organization's headquarters at 909 Spiva Ave., Yuba City, and one at the Life Building Center at 131 F St., Marysville.

At the onset of the pandemic, Millhollin said many in the homeless community went into isolation to prevent contracting the virus, but through continued outreach both sites have continued to stay busy.

Just last week, the Life Building Center completed the intake process for more than 30 homeless individuals, according to Millhollin.

“Some were new, some were returning, but the majority of them were new,” said Millhollin.

While continuing to offer services, Millhollin said they have been strictly enforcing COVID-19 guidelines for the health and safety of all that visit each site, which has added additional challenges.

According to Millhollin, there is limited space in the dorms since COVID-19 guidelines only permit two people at a time to a room and those that come to use the facilities to shower and wash their laundry must leave promptly after they have finished due to limited maximum capacity. Both sites also enforce social distancing and facial coverings.

In order to see a service coordinator, those receiving services must now schedule an appointment as well, said Millhollin, rather than follow the drop-in system that was used prior to the pandemic.

Millhollin said the community has really stepped up during these unprecedented months and Hands of Hope has continued to work closely with both counties, local law enforcement, the street nursing team and other community agencies to ensure that those in need are able to receive the services they need.

“I think the homeless community could really see the love from the community during the pandemic,” said Millhollin.

As things continue to open up, Millhollin said they are looking to resume the same level of services that were available prior to the pandemic.

“We had robust services at both locations prior to the pandemic and we want to get back to that as soon as we are able to,” said Millhollin.

When current COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Millhollin said Hands of Hope will work to bring back the many service providers as soon as possible.