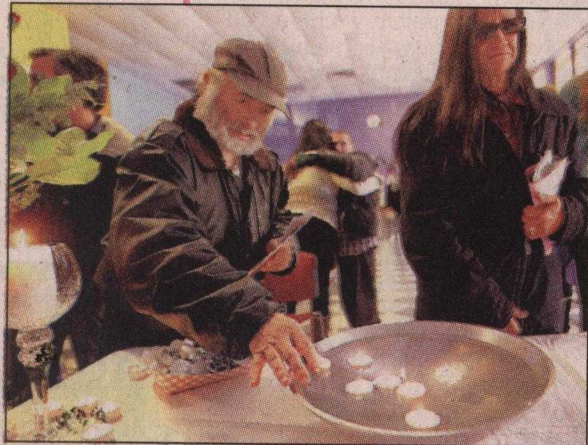


Rickey Lucas floats a candle for his homeless friend who died this past year. The Homeless Services Center held a memorial for the 37 homeless who died in Santa Cruz in 2013. DAN COYRO/SENTINEL



2013 REMEMBRANCE

Community remembers homeless who died

Homeless - 2000
12-20-13
Homeless Services Center holds 15th annual memorial

By KARA GUZMAN

kguzman@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Everyone, regardless of housing status, deserves a dignified death, said Matt Nathanson, county public health nurse.

Nathanson, along with nearly 150 community mem-

bers, gathered at a memorial for the homeless at Santa Cruz's Homeless Services Center on Thursday.

According to Nathanson, 37 homeless people died in Santa Cruz County this year, and 11 more from the community died while housed or traveling. The average age, 53, was around 30 years younger than the life expectancy for the general population, he said. The memorial, however, was about the people, not the numbers, said Nathanson.

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HOMELESS

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"We're all humans, which means no one of us is more deserving of dignity, quality health care or a place to call home," said Monica Martinez, executive director of the service center.

Martinez highlighted the work of 180/180, a multi-agency county initiative to help 180 medically vulnerable homeless people find long-term supportive housing by July 2014.

Since May 2012, the program has housed 120 people, said Phil Kramer, project director.

Kramer said the county's tight rental market creates a high percentage of unshel-

HOMELESS SERVICES CENTER

WHAT: Emergency housing, soup kitchen and case management

WHERE: 115 Coral St., Santa Cruz

TO VOLUNTEER OR

DONATE: Visit scshelter.org or call 831-458-6020

tered homeless people. Exposure to the elements exacerbates health conditions, he said.

According to the 2013 Homeless Census and Survey, 82 percent of the county's 3,536 homeless live on the street or in a car, aban-

doned building or camp.

Donald Powell, who lives in a motorhome at Santa Cruz's The Circle Church, attended the memorial to remember his friend Matthew Walsh.

Powell, who said he's been homeless since 1989, applied for housing with his wife through the county's Homeless Persons Health Project in April.

"With no credit rating, no rental history, it's really hard," he said.

Colin Campbell Clyde, another memorial attendee, said he found housing in 2010 with help from the health project.

In 2003, Clyde's girlfriend died, and Clyde, grief-stricken, was unable to hold a job and became homeless.

"If you talk to 10 different homeless people you'll get 10

different stories about how they got there," said Clyde, now an artist and peer counselor at Santa Cruz's Mental Health Client Action Network. "There's no one-size-fits-all solution."

Stephen Nelson, campus and community service coordinator at the Homeless Services Center, spoke at the

memorial about friends he lost this year.

Nelson, who after a divorce was homeless for nearly three years, said volunteering at the center helped him out of homelessness and addiction.

"It took a sense of self worth, a willingness to fight those demons," said

Nelson, who has won multiple awards for his service. "I should've been dead," Nelson said. "People have to know there's life after homelessness and addiction. Sometimes caring is enough."

Follow Sentinel reporter Kara Guzman at [Twitter.com/Karambutan](https://twitter.com/Karambutan)