

# HOMELESS A count of 1900

## Homeless surveyed for first time in county

By GUY LASNIER  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A "state of emergency" exists in Santa Cruz County because of the large number of homeless, according to the authors of a three-month survey of housing and shelter needs of the homeless.

More than 1,900 people were homeless at the end of March, including 721 sheltered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the survey found. The survey will be released to the public today.

The study by the Short-term Housing Coalition found 1,187 people including 235 children — 20 percent — living in shelters, automobiles or on the streets.

Added to that were another 721 people, including approximately 400 children, housed in FEMA trailers or senior homes. Those people could become shelterless unless affordable homes are found by the time FEMA programs end in 10 months.

The survey was conducted March 29 and 30 is the first attempt to get an accurate county-wide count of the homeless. It followed by two weeks the highly-publicized "homeless night" count by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The survey is a "reliable though very conservative count," its authors concluded.

Christine Johnson-Lyons, chairwoman of the Short-term Housing Coalition, said the survey was launched after government agencies challenged the coalition to prove the number of homeless. The coalition began work in January when it spun off from the county Housing Task Force formed after the earthquake.

"We need to make sure there is no longer a denial of reality of the homeless crisis in Santa Cruz County," said Johnson-Lyons, also the executive director of the Community Action Board.

Johnson-Lyons said the coalition wants local authorities to declare a "state of emergency" in hopes that state and federal authorities will do the same.

Shelter Project director Paul Brindel said he was "reshocked" by the results. "It is as horrible as it ever was and has gotten worse," he said.

The coalition members plan to take the survey to more than 30 different public and private agen-

Please see HOMELESS — A

# Homeless

Continued from Page A1

cies in the next month to encourage action.

"We want to light the fire," Johnson-Lyons said. "It's not just a health and safety issue," she said, "but a fiscal issue. It's the old adage of pay now or pay later."

Of 543 people questioned in shelters — including 27 who refused to answer but not including people housed by FEMA — 51 percent said they were homeless because of the earthquake. The survey visited 13 shelter programs March 29, including motels participating in CAB's motel voucher program.

The survey also counted probable homeless in vehicles at 20 low-cost gas stations and shopping centers from Davenport to Watsonville and the San Lorenzo Valley March 29 and 30 from 10:30 a.m. to

2:30 p.m.

On the morning of March 30, people were counted in areas likely to be transit points for homeless who live out of doors. The homeless were not interviewed, so no information on their situations is known.

Fifty-seven children were counted in vehicles and 17 counted as without any shelter, according to the survey.

Among the homeless living in shelters, 96 households, or 33 percent were from Santa Cruz, 78 or 26 percent were from Watsonville.

Thirty-two percent of households, including children, said they were from out of the area.

Survey data was tabulated by Applied Survey Research of Santa Cruz. It was funded by Northern California Grantsmakers Task Force of Homelessness.