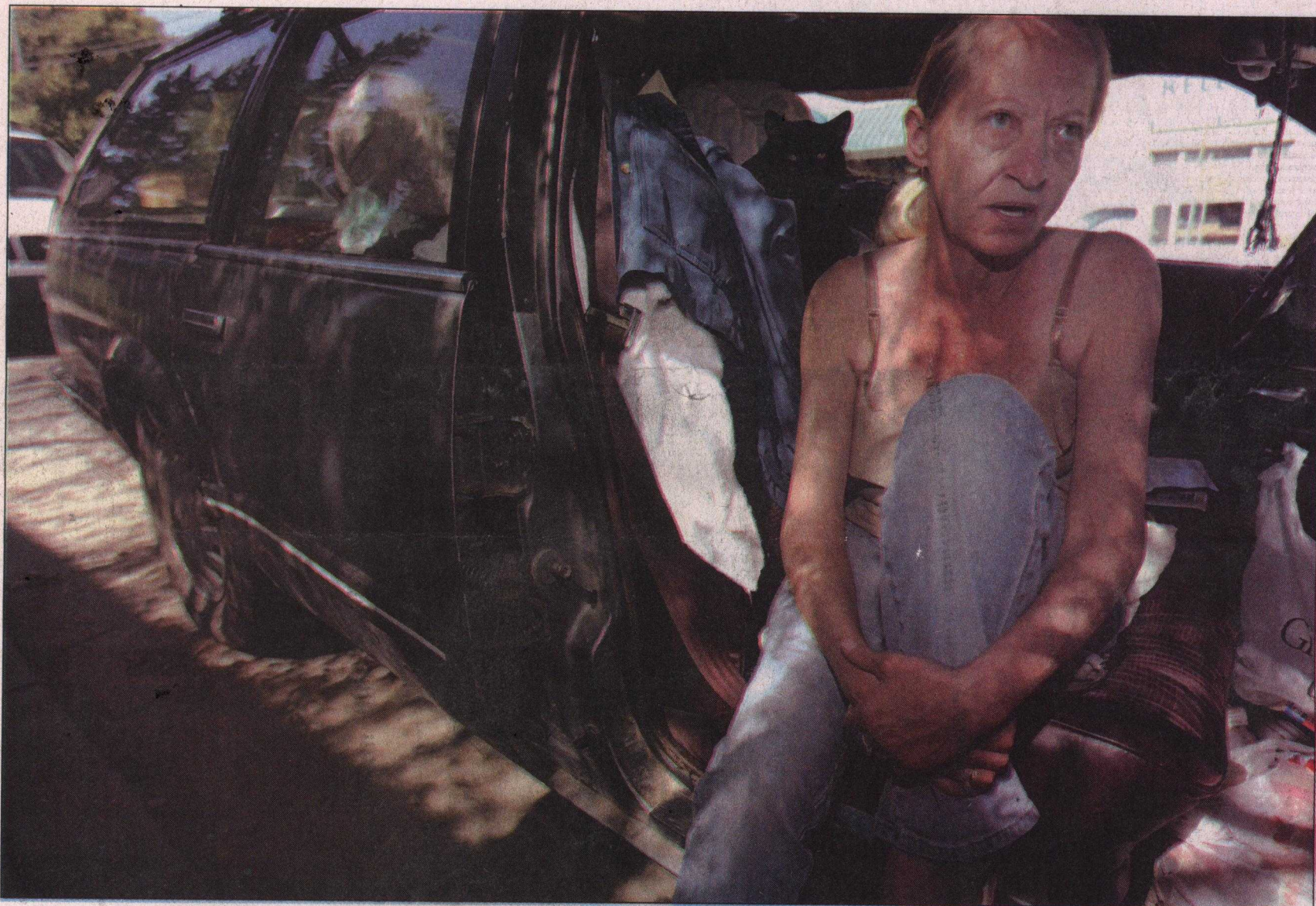


# Putting a face to the figures



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Gail Billings, a car dweller from Washington, would like to see more housing and employment help for the homeless if the cash can be found.

*Homeless - 2000*  
**Count of  
 homeless  
 could help  
 county  
 secure  
 federal cash**  
 ✓

By **BRIAN SEALS**  
 SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

About 50 people are expected to hit the streets, bushes, river banks and shelters in two-person teams March 22 for the first census of the county's homeless population in five years.

Applied Survey Research has been hired by the county to perform the survey. The Watsonville-based company conducted the last count in 2000, which tallied 3,293 homeless.

This census was sparked by new feder-

al requirements for acquiring money for homeless programs.

The information will be used by a team called the Homeless Action Partnership, a group comprising city and county staffers, police, churches, shelters and other organizations that work with the homeless.

"It's kind of looking at it holistically," said Teresita Hinojosa-Pereira, coordinator of the partnership.

Ask the local homeless, and their challenges are sometimes the same as many who have homes here: jobs and housing.

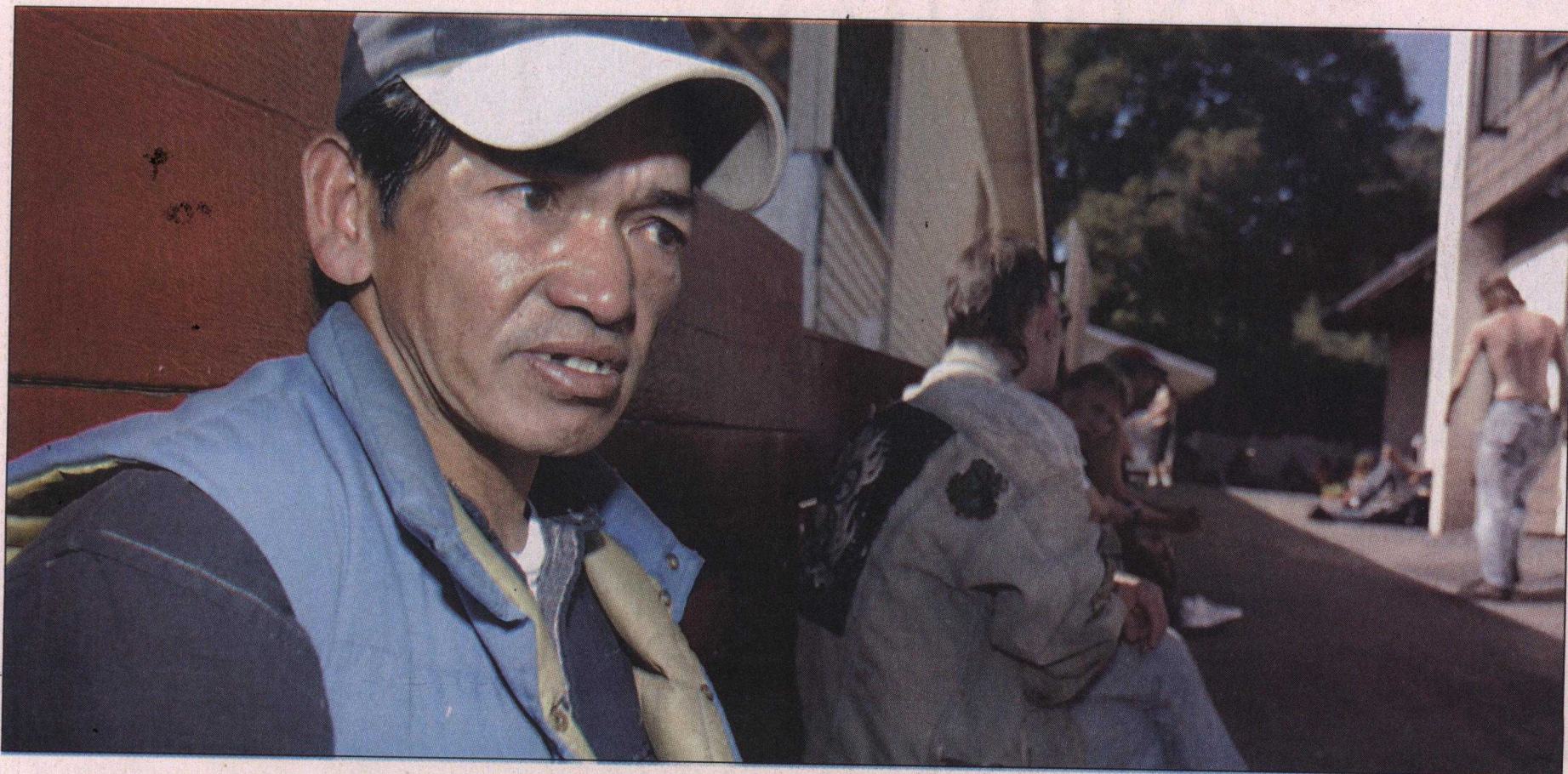
"The biggest challenge is just being able

*3-12-05*  
 to find a job and affordable housing, just getting a little help to get started," Gail Billings said Friday as she sat in her Chevrolet station wagon.

Billings said the problems are linked; getting work is difficult when you don't have an address.

Carlos Sanchez agreed. He said just finding a place to stow one's stuff and having access to a telephone are challenges. More transitional housing to help people get on their feet is needed, he said. Hauling around

See **CENSUS** on **BACK PAGE**



Carlos Sanchez hopes the upcoming homeless census leads to more money for transitional housing in Santa Cruz County.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

## Census

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a cart full of stuff and sleeping outside compounds the challenge.

"You can't get up and look for a job when you're exhausted," Sanchez said, sitting outside the St. Francis soup kitchen.

The people who benefit from social service programs are crucial to making the census a success, said Peter Connery, vice president of Applied Survey Research.

"Ultimately, you're trying to count some-

one who doesn't want to be seen or who wants to be out of the limelight," he said.

The search is expected to take teams to the usual haunts — the Pajaro River levee and the banks of the San Lorenzo River among them — as well as to shelters.

Information from the homeless steers counters to places only those without somewhere to stay would know — abandoned buildings, cars and tucked-away places in local forests, for example.

"It requires street smarts to be able to find them," Connery said.

He recalled the time in 2000 when surveyors found a man who had lived behind

the UC Santa Cruz campus for 15 years and was able to take them to hidden nooks and crannies where others were camping.

One aim is to make people comfortable enough to ask sometimes-personal questions about health and family.

"We don't divulge specific locations," Connery said. "There's a high degree of confidentiality."

In addition to counting the homeless, the effort will also survey about 400 people about their age, gender, whether they are veterans or have children, among other factors.

The census will be a statistical projection

based on the actual counts performed in the field, Connery said. The count will cost \$30,000, with \$15,960 coming from the county and the remainder paid by the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Watsonville.

The information will be used to seek money that supports a range of services. This year \$1.18 million in federal money was awarded to agencies in Santa Cruz County for services such as transitional housing and homeless health care, among others.

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