



Paul Jackson gathers his belongings from his locker at the Homeless Community Resource Center before heading out to find a campsite for the night. Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

# Cities extend shelter times

By BRIAN SEALS  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

The county's two winter shelters opened for business last week, and this year they'll operate longer than they did the past two years.

The National Guard Armory in Santa Cruz and the Salvation Army shelter in Watsonville, as a result of new funding provided by the county and local cities, will offer winter shelter through April 15 rather than closing March 22, adding 24 nights.

"If we can afford to see it doesn't happen, no one should be out in the cold and rain," said county Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt, who initiated the change. "We all know March can be a very bad month. People need a warm, dry place to stay."

The cities of Watsonville and Santa Cruz approved their portion of new funds for the plan Tuesday, on the heels of approval by the county Board of Supervisors and the city councils of Scotts Valley and Capitola.

The Armory opened last week and about 35 people slept there each night, though it can hold about 100, said Ken Cole, director of the Homeless Services Center. The number swelled Monday night to 60 people, he said.

The extra days are helpful, he said.

"To have to close early is pain-

## Homeless get a break from the rain

Homeless 2000  
By SORAYA GUTIERREZ  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — The warm weather has been kind to the homeless this week, but once the winter rain starts pouring down, thousands of people living outdoors like Paul Jackson will struggle to stay dry.

Jackson, 50, was born and raised in Santa Cruz, and for the past five years he's been on the streets.

When it gets cold and rainy, he seeks shelter anywhere he can.

"I'm sleeping under a tree right now," he said earlier this month from the day center at the Homeless Services Center on Coral Street.

Homelessness is a nationwide problem, homeless center director Ken Cole said, and it's showing no signs of disappearing.

The 2005 Homeless Census Survey

**'I can't be outside tonight, it'll kill me. If you're homeless and sick, you're dead meat.'**

C.J. STOCK, 53

released in August put the number of homeless in this county at 3,371. Nearly 2,000 of those live outdoors or in their vehicles, like C.J. Stock, 53, who says he's been homeless for two years.

Stock, a street musician who plays guitar and wears a straw hat marked by some hard miles, says he can go to a park during the day. But when it rains, he says, it's not that easy. Many homeless people he knows sleep under a bridge or a tarp.

"I can't be outside tonight, it'll kill me,"

11 23 05  
Stock said recently, coughing. "If you're homeless and sick, you're dead meat."

Thirty homeless people died in 2004, according to the Homeless Services Center, many from cold temperatures or drug and alcohol abuse, or both.

One homeless man who calls himself simply J said some people dig a hole in the ground to keep warm.

The homeless are at higher risk for illness in the winter, and drying themselves and their belongings in wet weather isn't easy.

The day center on Coral Street provides shower and laundry services, as well as hot meals.

But the waiting lines for these services often are too long, J and a guitar-playing friend said recently in an interview downtown.

# Shelters

Continued from Page A1

ful and very hard on the clients we are trying to serve," Cole said.

Homeless people can eat a warm meal at the shelter off River Street and a seasonal bus transports them to the Armory above the DeLaveaga neighborhood.

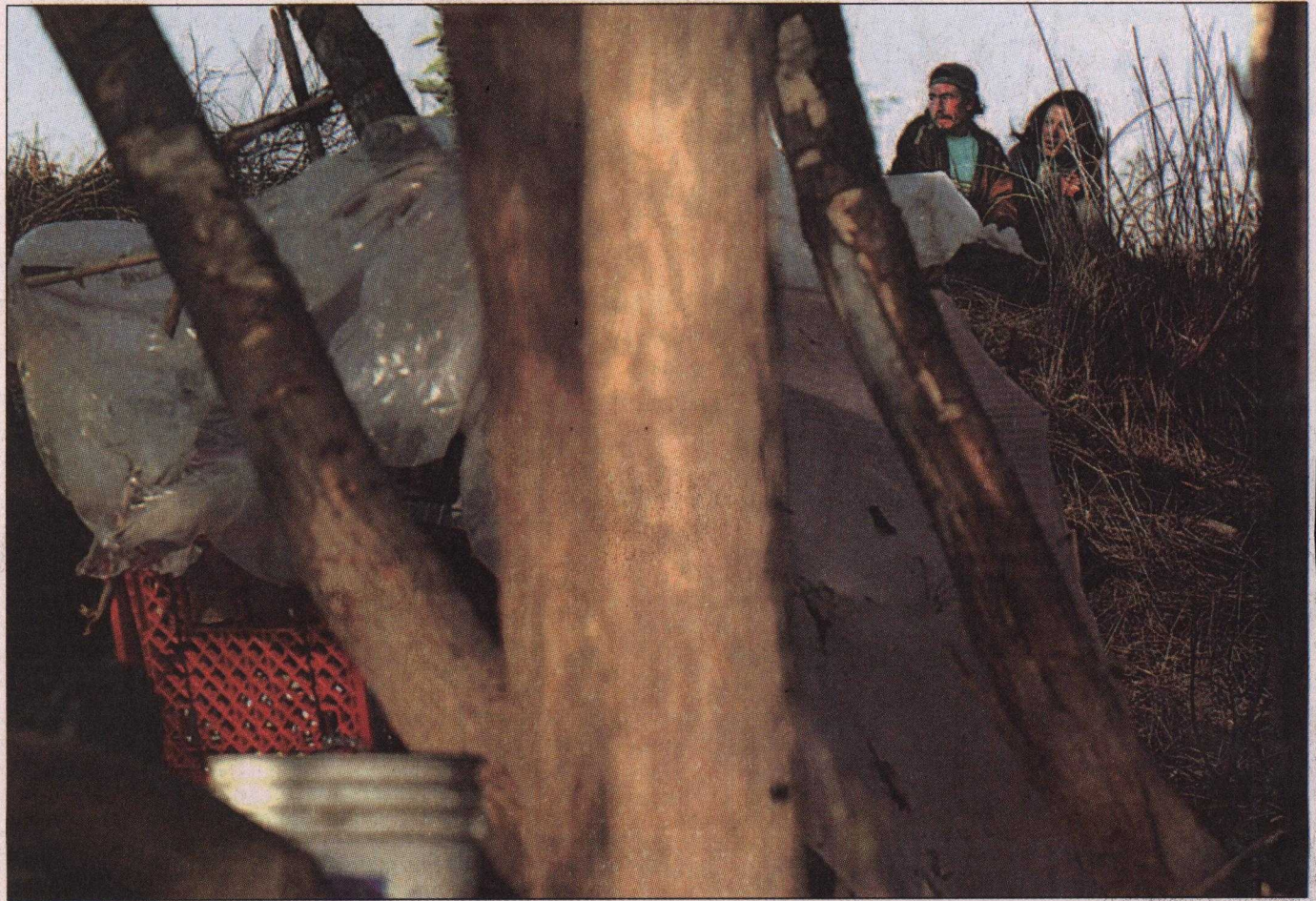
An estimated 3,371 homeless people live in the county, according to data compiled in spring by Applied Survey Research of Watsonville. About 79 percent of those counted were living without shelter, in the woods or in a car, while the remainder were in shelters, rehabilitation centers or jails, according to the census.

The county and its four cities chip in to fund the winter shelters.

The cost to the county and its cities is about \$168,500 to operate the shelters through April 15, with the 24 additional nights totaling about \$31,000.

For the Salvation Army, the emergency hours mean expanding its year-round operation to enable it to serve 30 people in addition to the 40-person year-round capacity.

Rent for the Armory has risen steadily in recent years, jumping from \$375 per night to \$380 last year. Meanwhile, money the state supplies for emergency shelter programs has dipped from about \$30,056 last year to \$23,382 this year.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

A homeless couple watches over their encampment on the Pajaro River levee Tuesday.

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# Rain

Continued from Page A1

They also cited the dangers of sleeping outdoors. The homeless are vulnerable to robbers and other attackers, they said: "No place is safe."

They recounted how a friend had been rousted out of his campsite last month at 3 a.m. and robbed of his possessions. And heroin users and dealers make the area around Highway 1 and the San Lorenzo River especially dangerous, they said.

But they agree Santa Cruz is a generous town.

"You've got to be stupid to go hungry in this town," said J's friend, who declined to give his name.

The homeless center's Cole said despite what many area residents believe, there isn't an abundance of programs to help the homeless.

"Relative to other communities, and based against need, there are not enough services in the county," he said.

Existing services such as the Emergency Winter Shelter Program at the National Guard armory in Santa Cruz and the Salvation Army shelter in Watsonville do help, he said, but they're a drop in the bucket.

The HSC Coral Street campus includes a family shelter, a day center and a community house.

Twenty-eight families can stay at the Rebele Family Shelter, which opened in May. Fifteen families have successfully moved out after staying less than six months, Cole said.

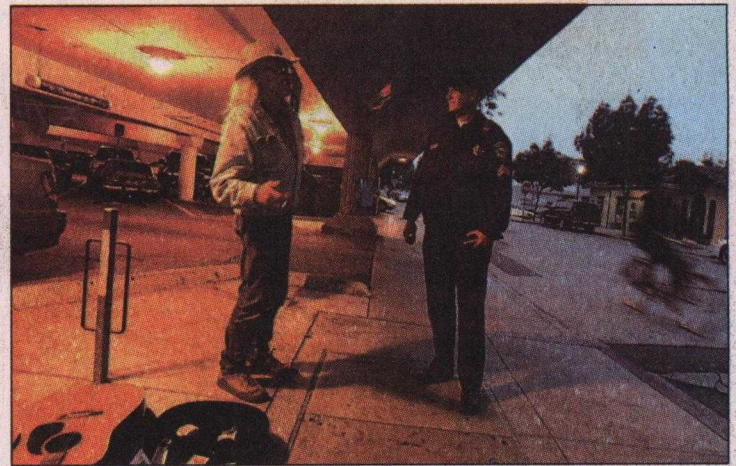
In addition, HSC and the Interfaith Satellite Shelter program work with 22 local churches to offer shelter throughout the year.

In Watsonville, the Salvation Army shelter is open year-round and extends its capacity during the winter, said Lee Kanellis, director of social services. Many people sleeping outdoors during nice weather crowd the shelter when it rains, she said. It's generally a night-to-night shelter, but people can stay up to 180 days, she said.

But there are only so many beds available, and sometimes people like Jackson get left in the cold, he said.

"All we can do is sleep in parks around here," he said.

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Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

C.J. Stock, who says he's been homeless for two years, has a friendly check-in with Santa Cruz police Sgt. Dan Flippo during Flippo's patrol in downtown Santa Cruz. Stock says he and local officers know each other and are on good terms.